

## THE JALPAC KISS OF LIFE

*"A Japanese View of Machine Translation in the Light of Considerations and Recommendations Reported by ALPAC, USA," published by JEIDA (the Japanese Electronics Industry Development Association), Kikai Shinko Kaikan 3-5-8 Shiba Koen, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105, Japan. Tel: +81 (3) 433 1941. Fax: +81 (3) 433 6350*

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Popularly known as the "JALPAC Report," (see LT#15 for a preview), this 200-page industry guide contains quite a laborious point-by-point comparison between the decidedly unperspicacious ALPAC Report (America, 1966) and the economic and above all technological realities of Japan in the 1980s.

This decade wins hands down. An appendix in the current report lists the enormous number of changes that have occurred in tooling, human translator training, and industrial perspectives over the past quarter of a century.

The actual report soaks up a mere 20 pages, but the rest is dedicated to a wide range of appendices containing comments, statistics on the translation busi-

ness, comparative examples of two-way Jap.-Eng. MT output from various rigs, and more or less complete lists of Japanese and "overseas" MT systems.

Although you won't get company addresses or fax numbers, this is as good a brief info source as you'll find on either research or commercial MT. (By the way, does anyone know anything about Carozelia Japan or Catena Resource MT systems, please?)

Far more interesting, however, than the rather obvious macro-differences between the natural language processing environments of 1966 and 1989 is the vivid glimpse this report offers into the organization and economics of the ¥ 800-bn-a-year Japanese translation market, just as MT stands poised to transform it.

Using a JEIDA market survey polling some 1,800 users or providers of translation, the JALPAC Report offers a useful overview about what's going on and what people think about it.

Mind you, with only 6.4% returns on questionnaires, the general picture inevitably contains a lot of extrapolation, which unfortunately vitiates any global appreciation of the situation. However, the

detailed results are so intriguing as to occasionally suggest typing errors.

For example, the ratio of capable translators among graduates of translation schools is given by one translation company as two for every million! A breakdown of languages translated obviously gives overwhelming precedence to Japanese and English, but an unexplained 7,000 pages a year are given for translation between English and - English. If you've seen Japanese "advertising English," perhaps you'll understand why.

The current pre-MT technological environment also offers some surprises for the Western observer. Wordprocessors are apparently used mainly for producing clean copy, since translation fees rise when wps are used. The report refers, however, to "interesting cases" in which translators actually input translation via a wp, by golly!

Japanese operational MT systems are roundly judged as inadequate, and most potential user firms inevitably want high-end rigs demanding little or no revising. On the other hand, translation companies condemn the poor level of technical writing in Japan, which complicates the trans-

lation process, whether machine or human. Another noteworthy criticism concerns the lack of interest on the part of development teams in integrating translators into MT environments.

In spite of all these hiccups, Japan is

clearly streets ahead of where the US was in 1966, above all because it has a powerful vision of the real implications of MT for its own economic development. In the words of this report: "Work is proceeding to establish machine translation technol-

ogy as the basic technology for future high-level information processing. This is visualized *in addition* to the desire to develop a practical MT system." (my italics). Nothing like that to get development subsidies pouring in, is there?