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TOSHIBA MT: SUSHI AND SAUERKRAUT

Japanese machine translation efforts (extensively reported on in EW #14) are beginning to bear fruit – and not just in and out of English.

At the mid-August Machine Translation Summit II in Munich, Fujitsu demonstrated the Japanese-German version of its Atlas II computer translation system to research-

ers, engineers, manufacturers, users, government officials, and press attending the conference.

The system, which Fujitsu describes as "a framework for multilingual translation with an interlingual approach," was developed in collaboration with West German software house ARIS Software-Entwicklung GmbH and under the supervision of Stuttgart University's Professor Hanakata. It is based on a German lexicon of 50,000 words and 12,000 grammatical rules.

Under a Fujitsu-ARIS agreement concluded in 1986, Fujitsu provides the system's translation processor, grammar for the analysis of Japanese, and Japanese dictionary. ARIS is responsible for the research and development of the German generation component.

The system runs on workstations such as the Fujitsu S series and Sun series 3 and 4. On a Sun 4/110, it can translate Japanese to German at a speed of 6,000 words per hour.

Fujitsu demonstrated it translating "real-time" news bulletins as they came over the wire from the Japanese Nikkei Telecom database, thereby precluding the suspicion of any crafty behind-the-scenes pre-editing.

Unfortunately, the demonstration was a letdown. The German output would have sent Martin Luther rushing to the outhouse. It ranged from "very raw indeed" to incomprehensible. Many on-lookers, uninitiated in the ways of MT, gazed bemusedly on, while muffled guffaws could be heard from members of the press.

Fujitsu is, however, planning to improve output quality by customizing the system to the individual needs of high-volume users. Target applications include the translation of business contracts, technical documents, manuals, and other commercial texts.

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