

The translator's word processor

by Peter Arthern

Having received a number of helpful responses to the questions we put when we launched the Translator's Word Processor project in the April issue of *Language Monthly*, for which we thank our respondents, the steering committee met in London on June 17.

Before going on to a brainstorming session which produced initial outline specifications for the word processor, the committee decided to set up a small Technical Group of three members (Peter Arthern, Robert Clark and Pamela Mayorcas-Cohen) who will be responsible for refining and filling out the specifications, and then converting them into technical specifications for the system hardware and software.

The first decision taken in the brainstorming session was that the Translator's Word Processor must be modular, i.e. designed and constructed in such a way that various additional facilities can be plugged into a rugged basic word processor consisting of screen (VDU), keyboard and computer.

Even at this basic level, it will probably be necessary to provide for

alternative printers, depending on the translator's client's requirements, or the use to which the printed text is put (see the article on this project in the July issue of *Language Monthly*).

Further additional features, some achieved by plugging in hardware, some by additional software, and some by a suitable combination of the two, could be:

- various types of supplementary memory store, such as hard disc, Winchester disc and optical disc;
- communications facilities, via modem and telephone line to other Translator Word Processors or compatible word processors in other locations, or as part of a multi-user system in a translation agency or in a translation department in industry or in Government service;
- creation and consultation of glossaries;
- computerised translation aids;
- data processing facilities for the management of a translator's business.

Further research will show which of these possibilities should be made available and may indicate others not listed here. We would welcome comments from readers on this specific question.

We then threw our thoughts down on paper, concerning the basic elements of the TWP, concentrating on the screen, the keyboard, the printer, the software and the instruction manual. These unstructured comments are now being worked up into an initial draft specification by the Technical Group, while each member of the Steering Committee is analysing some of the questionnaires which have been returned to us.

After this draft specification has been checked against the data sheets resulting from analysis of the questionnaires it will be refined further and then sent to the members of the Steering Committee, and a number of "correspondents" for their comments.

When the Technical Group has analysed all comments received in this way, we shall need to start consulting technical experts and carrying out tests and experimenting in order to translate the specifications so far drawn up from the translator's point of view into technical specifications for the system hardware and software.

Communications on this subject can be sent to the Project Leader, Peter Arthern, at the *Language Monthly* office.