

## MT PRIMER FOR EVERYONE

*Technology as Translation Strategy*, ed. Muriel Vasconcelos (SUNY Press, Binghamton, NY, 1988, 243 pp., ISSN 0890-4111). Price: US\$15.

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This compilation of thirty essays on all aspects of computer technology for translators – from general issues to actual MT systems – begins with an account of the office automation field: getting the most out of wordprocessing and surviving in an environment alien to most foreign language character sets. The only gap here is that there's nothing on optical character recognition.

Networking and electronic mail get their share of attention, with a keen tip on how to cheat time zones with a network of bureaus equipped with fax machines – and get that superspeed job done on time. Similarly, terminology tools are featured, the main focus being on local lexical databases and their uses both for large agencies and individual translators. Several essays deal with the relatively new but vogue concept of the translator's workstation.

The book's main theme is of course machine translation – both batch and interactive. Practically every commercial system in existence is described – including those micro-based systems becoming increasingly attractive to the independent translator.

Full coverage is given to the practical aspects of MT: how to choose a system and make it work; how to introduce it into a potentially hostile translating environment; the intricacies of postediting; and the role of developer-translator collaboration. The whole is rounded off with an expert prognosis by MT commentator W.J. Hutchins.

The book is written at the layperson's level, and is very much oriented toward practical concerns. It's something like a digest of the last few years' British ASLIB proceedings, but with a North American flavor.

The essays are fairly short – on average 10 pages. And in some cases they're *too* short on detail. Clearly, the emphasis is

more on diversity of testimony than depth. But then, it's an MT primer – not a cutting edge work. It certainly fulfills its goal of acquainting translators with a technological challenge they'd be ill advised to ignore.

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