

Sharp MT at Oxford

The multinational Sharp Corporation, whose head office is at Osaka in Japan, recently welcomed UK government minister *Michael Heseltine* on the occasion of the official opening of their new laboratories on the Oxford Science Park.

Sharp Laboratories of Europe Limited are particularly active in four fields of research: information technology, optoelectronics, imaging technology, and liquid crystals.

In the information technology field considerable emphasis is being placed on multilingual communication. Ian Johnson, formerly with Lexpertise, Switzerland, and currently secretary of the European Association for Machine Translation, was recruited by Sharp two years ago to set up a research group working in the field of natural language processing.

After an initial feasibility study, the group established multilingual machine translation as their research theme. Over the last two years the number of researchers working on the project has grown steadily. There are now five members in the team, and this will be expanded to nine over the next few months.

This reflects Sharp's interest in expanding in the field of machine translation. The company already has its English to Japanese MT system, DUET, and will shortly be releasing a Japanese to English version. In addition, a subsidiary, the European Docu-

ment Center, is to be set up in Hamburg to translate Japanese- and English-language manuals into German, French, Swedish, Italian and Spanish. Sharp will transmit the translated manuals overseas using in-house digital information networks.

The idea behind the Oxford research project is to carry out advanced research on machine translation between different European languages and between Japanese and European languages. To this end they are building up a research team which will be both multinational (they already have researchers from the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan working on the project) and multidisciplinary (a blend of computational and linguistic skills).

Ian Johnson told *Language International* that the research project is proceeding very well. Papers are being published (e.g., in the proceedings of COLING 1992) and patents are being applied for. The team has already undertaken one collaborative research project with the Edinburgh University Centre for Cognitive Science and they are involved in another collaborative project. Their partners are the Cambridge University Computer Laboratory, the Edinburgh University Centre for Cognitive Science and the Cambridge University Press. The project is called "Integrative Language Database" and is an integrated tool for multilingual corpus analysis and dictionary database construction. The project has been accepted for funding by the UK Department of Trade and Industry under its Speech and Language Technology Initiative.