The translator's word processor

by Peter Arthern

Readers who have been following this series of articles will remember that in the July issue of *Language Monthly* we gave an initial check list of questions a translator should ask before buying a word processing system. Last month we reported on work going on in the steering committee and now we give you, below, the list of questions the committee members bore in mind when analysing the reponses to our questionnaire. Taken with the questions we gave in July, these questions represent a more refined approach to judging whether a system under consideration meets a translator's requirements.

I would like to add here, as a personal contribution, that finding a sales company which can provide a complete package of hardware, software, installation, training and maintenance is just as important, if not more so, than finding the "right" system.

Having said that, here is October's contribution to our developing specification.

Screen

Colour

Swivels? Tilts?

Representation of page
- width (how many characters?)
- depth (full A4 page?)
- split screen/windows?
- WYSIWYG?

Keyboard

Physical aspects
- size
- layout
- numerical pad?
- keys

Character set(s)
- what characters are available?
- how are they selected?

Printer

Type of printer
- dot matrix
- daisy wheel
- laser

Appearance of text

How controlled?
- software (from keyboard)
- on printer

Selection of characters

Do daisy wheels have to be changed to print complete character set?

Paper feed
- single sheet
- hopper
- continuous stationery

Is "typewriter" option (i.e direct printing of one letter at a time as keys are struck) available?

Programme

What does the system do, and how easily does it do it?

Straight-forward typing
- can cursor be placed anywhere on 'page' to start typing?
- how are margins set?
- automatic margin justification?
- how are tabs set?
- how is line spacing set?
  - what possibilities are there?
  - are different spacings represented/ visible on screen?
- how easy is it to correct mistakes, i.e. delete and retype, 'type over' etc.
- underlining

Facilities for amending text

- delete characters?
- delete lines?
- delete paragraphs?
- delete pages?
- insert text (new)
- re-position text

Use of text from memory
- how is text stored?
- how is it called up for re-use?
- how is it inserted in new text?
- is old text retained somewhere, unchanged for further use?

Copying text (ie recording new text) how is new text copied into memory?

Control of character set, font, underlining, italics etc.

Communications

Can the equipment be connected by cable to other word-processing equipment, central computer etc. in the same building, so as to operate in conjunction with this equipment?

Can text be transmitted by telephone links (via modems) to other word-processing equipment or computers, so that it can be printed in locations remote from the spot where it is being created?

Compatibility

Can the equipment operate in conjunction with all other equipment and/or software produced by the same company?

Can it operate in conjunction with hardware and/or software produced by other companies?

If so, which?

Instructions manual

Is the **lay-out** clear?

Is it logical?

Are the **instructions** clear?

How easy is it for a person used to typewriters (trained typist or 'two-finger typist') to learn to use the equipment.