Our contribution to BCS 79 (4th, 5th, 6th January) roused both much interest and much discussion.

We took half a stand (shared with the Microform group - computer output on microfilm) from which we distributed advertising leaflets for this group, took orders for Professor Loh's Bibliography of Machine Translation, and pointed to piles of Acta Mathematica Sinica (translated by Prof. Loh's CULT system) and Bulletins of the ALLC (Association for Literary and Linguistic COmputing, with whom we have a special relationship) as appropriate. Most importantly, we were able to discuss with both the general and computing publics the background to the machine translation problem and dispel the variously-held beliefs "MT is easy", "MT is impossible", "MT is unnecessary" and "MT is out of fashion". Discussion was catalyzed and focussed by the program supplied by David Wigg, which illustrated translation between English and French. Our thanks are due to Quantime Ltd. who made computer time freely available to us for this online demonstration, and especially to David for his hard work in providing the program.

On the Friday morning, despite snow and ice, it was "standing room only" to hear presentations by Prof. Knowles (in the chair), Dr. R. Johnson, Prof. Yorick Wilks, Gerry Keil and Dr. Margaret Masterman, all of whom vied for the title 'best speaker at BCS 79'; the title for 'fastest speaker at BCS 79' having already been claimed byby Dr. Masterman on the grounds that she is the only person in Europe able to talk faster than Prof. Wilks! It was a great pity that we had insufficient time and space to do full justice to our speakers, all of whom were constrained to rush their presentations in an overcrowded room. None the less, the whole session was an enormous success and by common agreement ran on past its alloted time: lunch was adjudged by all the audience to be less important and less interesting.

Dr. Johnson pointed out that there is a backlog of 10^{12} words in Canada alone required by legislation to be translated between English and French, but no space to house the human translators. The European Commission is investing about 370 man-years in its EUROTRA system which will try to be an advance on existing MT systems (notably SYSTRAN) by (i) separating grammars from algorithms, (ii) paying more attention to dictionaries, (iii) placing more emphasis on semantics and (iv) searching for interlingual representations.

Prof. Wilks underlined some of the arguments showing the essential contribution of Artificial Intelligence to solving the MT problem.

Mr. Keil spoke about the MT software in Europe today, and gave a description (cruelly foreshortened by lack of time) of the stratagies being adopted by EUROTRA for its Transfer Representation scheme.

Dr. Masterman set current MT work both in its historical context by comparison with pre-existing MT systems now working, and in its 'spatial' context by contrast with the behaviour of human translators, which is itself insufficiently known and analysed, and sounded a note of hope for the future practical developement and utility of MT.

Our thanks are due to everyone who helped make this group's contribution so interesting and stimulating.