

Document conference in Bremen

A new subject for a conference, the production of multilingual documents, brought technical writers, technical publication managers, computer experts and translators from all over Germany to Bremen in October 1990.

The conference had been organised by the business promotion service of the Bremen city authority, and attendance was by invitation only. Five themes were picked out for discussion, Analysis of the problem, Integration, Market potential for integrated document handling systems, Current availability of such systems, and New directions.

The interface between technical authors and translators in the European Commission was dealt with by Dimitri Theologitis, Luxembourg, while Henning Børgesen, head of IBM European Language Services, Birkerød, Denmark, described how IBM was handling its translation requirement, and introducing computerised tools. Jørgen Danielsen, a partner in the translation company Schönau and Danielsen, Rendsburg, told how recent developments were introducing more non-translation aspects into their business. Translation was increasingly capital-intensive, and the requirements for data processing know-how were becoming more complex. In the discus-

sion which followed this session, four subjects emerged as areas of concern, the compatibility of hardware and software, quality assurance, advantages and disadvantages of in-house translators against outside services, and organisational problems.

Geoffrey Kingscott, editor of *Language International*, surveyed the present state of the art in the integration of multilingual document production, and put forward proposals for educating documentation users, particularly in smaller and medium-sized firms, and for a new orientation in the training of both technical authors and translators. Heinz-Dirk Luckhardt, of Saarbrücken, described how the Saarbrücken Translation Service, developed at the University of the Saarland, could serve as a model for producing multilingual documentation, while Dr Gerhard Meyer, of Triumph-Adler AG, reported on the current state of development of the Translator's Workbench project, which his firm is creating in collaboration with a number of partners under the aegis of the ESPRIT programme. Discussion centred mainly on the integration of technical authors and translators, or at least on their better mutual understanding, and on introducing technical tools into the working environment of translators.

In session three, Patrick Little, of Philips, Nuremberg, described his firm's experience with the introduction of the Siemens' METAL machine translation system, while Edith Kroupa, head of the translation service at Mercedes Benz, Stuttgart, described the operating procedures of her department. The reorganisation and professionalisation of multilingual document production was dealt with by Dietrich Juhl, of a technical documentation company based in Dortmund. He criticised many companies for failing to think through their documentation procedures, or to keep pace with the growing complexity of products or the greater demand for multilingualism in product literature.

Session four brought descriptions of existing publishing and office information systems from Leonhardt Schnorrenberg of Océ-Deutschland and Günther Leue of GeoNet Mailbox Systems.

In the final session Joachim Hemer, of the Fraunhofer Institut für Systemtechnik und Innovationsforschung, an institution closely associated with the organisation of the conference, looked at the back-up service now needed for multilingual document production, while Michael Schaar of the translation co-operative Intra, Stuttgart, talked about the role of information management in multilingual document production.