

Somers, Harold (Ed.) (2003) *Computers and Translation: a Translator's Guide*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Pp. 349. £78.04 (hardback) ISBN: 15 881 1377 9

C*omputers and Translation: a Translator's Guide* is designed to demonstrate what computers can and cannot do to support translators. Contributors to the book include both academics and representatives from translation software development and distribution companies. Each of the book's 17 chapters concludes with a 'further reading' section, helpfully pointing the reader to more in-depth texts related to each topic. A list of bibliographic references also supports each chapter.

The book begins with three chapters by Harold Somers (The University of Manchester, UK), in the first of which he traces the history of machine translation (MT) and computer-aided translation tools (CAT tools). In chapter two, Somers provides an overview of the tools that are likely to form part of a translator's workstation today; and in chapter three describes the process of creating translation memories, and explains how a translator can assess the advantages and disadvantages of translation memory tools.

Lynne Bowker (University of Ottawa, Canada) then describes a range of term banks and terminology management systems, and briefly discusses the benefits these systems might afford translators. Bowker's chapter concludes with an explanation of terminology extraction tools designed for retrieving terms from text corpora. The chapter appears to be geared towards translators working in an in-house, or team setting, and so little attention is devoted to the sorts of terminology systems that might be used in a freelance translation context. Given the high proportion of freelancers in the translation sector today, this seems an unfortunate omission. Likewise, the lack of focus on electronic and online dictionaries is disappointing.

For translators considering moving into localisation, then the chapter by Bert Esselink (L10nbridge, Amsterdam, The Netherlands) provides a useful starting point. Esselink explains what localisation involves, emphasising how it differs from conventional translation. He outlines the stages of a localisation project and describes the software typically used to support each stage.

In chapter six, Somers returns to the theme of CAT tools, this time considering their availability (or rather lack of it) for translators working in so-called minority languages, such as Hindi, Urdu and Tamil. Somers

suggests some strategies (addressed largely at software developers) to help address the dearth of computer aids for these languages.

The focus of chapter seven is on translator training in higher education establishments. Here, Sara Laviosa (Università degli Studi di Bari, Italy) discusses in particular the use of text corpora in translator training.

From chapter eight onwards (a total of 10 chapters from pages 119-349), the book is devoted to machine translation (MT). These chapters begin with an explanation by Doug Arnold (University of Essex, UK) about why translation is problematic for computers. This is followed by a discussion of the role that linguistics can play in helping MT researchers to find solutions to MT problems. Other chapters in this section of the book consider topics such as online MT systems, MT evaluation, post-editing, and using MT in language teaching environments. From a translator's point of view, perhaps the most useful chapter is John Hutchins' thorough summary of commercially-available MT systems and other translation tools. This summary by Hutchins (University of East Anglia, UK) helpfully considers tools for use in both in-house and freelance translation contexts. It is a pity that this comprehensive overview chapter is not placed earlier in the book as it would set the scene very effectively for many of the topics covered in other chapters.

For the average translator (who today, in the UK at least, is likely to be working freelance rather than in-house), *Computers and Translation: a Translator's Guide* probably has too much emphasis on MT and the difficulties associated with its development, and not enough on CAT tools and other resources, such as online databases and dictionaries. This imbalance of coverage arguably limits the book's accessibility and relevance to translators.

In his introduction, Somers explains that the book is intended for 'translators and other professional linguists (technical writers, bilingual secretaries, language teachers even)'. Again, given the book's emphasis on MT, it would have been prudent to include translation software developers and researchers in this readership list. A key problem here is the book's misleading title. On the cover we are led to believe that it is a guide for translators; once inside the front cover, we find it really is not: it is a book about computers and translation, meant to be of interest to a wide variety of stakeholders in the language and translation sector, and not tailored specifically to the needs and interests of contemporary translators. A much-needed addition to the book (for both translators and others in its intended readership) is comprehensive coverage of user studies and real-life experiences of implementing translation technologies.

Despite the above concerns, the book would make a useful addition to a translator's reference library, alongside more focused guides, such as Frank Austermühl's *Electronic Tools for Translators*.

References

Austermühl, F. (2001): *Electronic Tools for Translators*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing

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