

## **The Good (and the Bad) News about Machine Translation**

While *Machine Translation: An Introductory Guide* has all the hallmarks of dry academic text (typeset in TEX, copious references), it turns out in fact to be an accessible, highly readable introduction to MT. The *Guide* was written by five researchers associated with the University of Essex's Computational Linguistics and MT Group (one has since left). Formerly a Eurotra bastion, it is now, so to see, a gravity point for the study of real-world MT.

The *Guide* caters to a diverse public. Early chapters present a lively discussion on some of the practical implications of using MT and typical scenarios from the translators point of view. The middle chapters delve into more profound linguistic matters and will keep aficionados of parse trees happy. Later chapters tackle subjects of strategic interest, such as input (the subchapter on sublanguage MT is particularly worthwhile) and that eternal hornets' nest: MT evaluation.

One thing the *Guide* does not offer is descriptions of specific systems (operable and otherwise). For that, you must turn to the more technical 1992 *Introduction to Machine Translation* of John Hutchins and Harold Somers. However, neither of these two volumes evaluate specific systems; you will have to look elsewhere for that kind of information. Be that as it may, the *Guide's* five authors have rendered the translation community a fine service through their skillful dissection of the underlying linguistic issues with which both developers and (potential) users of MT are confronted.

*Machine Translation: An Introductory Guide*, D. Arnold, L. Balkan, R. Lee Humphreys, S. Meijer, L. Sadler, NCC Blackwell, 1994, ISBN 1-85554-246-3, UK£35