

LISA: Back for More

Thanks to LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association), translation service suppliers, (potential) customers in the software world, and associated allies are getting to know each other better.

Localization industry shakers and movers gathered in Heidelberg, Germany, for LISA's second annual meeting this past April. The Heidelberg event, which was held at the IBM Scientific Center on the banks of the Neckar river, was sold-out well in advance. With a judicious mix of presentations, panel discussions, demonstrations, and networking, the two-day conference achieved a balance that served the needs of the hundred-plus attendees well. LISA's managing director, Mike Anobile, succeeded in designing an event which was intimate enough in size for people to interact easily, large enough to represent a very strategic cross-section of this industry, and secure enough for people to be comfortable about talking about their businesses with direct competitors.

The highlight of the conference program might well have been the presentation of Ron Fournier, president of Lexi-tech (Moncton, Canada). Fournier detailed the formidable Lexi-tech operation, built from the ground up around the Logos MT system. If Fournier's presentation was slightly controversial, it was because he has probably gone further than anyone else in the translation business in decomposing the translation and document production processes to their underlying operations and optimizing these to the furthest possible degree. To do this, Lexi-tech has required very large jobs, deep pockets, long-term vision, and a strong management style, things to which not all translation vendors have access. Hence the discomfort among some members of the audience quarters with Fournier's message.

LISA has considerably grown in membership over the past year. Whereas the charter members of LISA were localization industry veterans such as IBM, DEC, Unisys, Apple, and Microsoft, together with a couple of large translation service suppliers, the association now sports lots of new faces, including relative newcomers to the localization business, such as Novell, SunSoft, and AutoDesk. Other welcome new members include translation software suppliers Logos, Trados, and Star. LISA is expanding in other ways as well, with three or so smaller LISA forums planned per year to complement the main annual event.

Perhaps the best measure of LISA's success is that there is talk of trying to get a similar organization off the ground in the US. Among other things, this could respond more directly to the needs of the smaller localization service vendors there. Most LISA members, however, have dealings both in the US and Europe and would prefer not to have the additional overhead of a second such organization. Tentative plans are in place to hold at two of the LISA forums in the US during the coming year. Hopefully, this will satisfy those North Americans who would like a taste of LISA.

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