

## Using MT for Japanese information

*Machine translation of on-line searches on Japanese databases, by Jon Sigurdson and Roger Greatrex, published 1987 by the Research Policy Institute, University of Lund, PO Box 2017, S-220 02, Lund, Sweden, ISBN 91-86002-59-7, paperback, 143 pages, 100 Swedish kroner.*

It can be done. This is the interesting and valuable conclusion of this unusual report.

For some time now there has been considerable concern in the West about the disparity between the amount of information going into Japan about our technological developments, and the amount of information coming out. The problem has been that many Japanese have learned English, which is now something of a second language in Japan, but on the other hand Japanese seems an impenetrable language to the west.

The Commission of the European Communities, as reported in *Language Monthly*, is concerned at this disparity and is setting up its own automatic translation project as a remedy. The Science Reference Library in London has made great advances in tapping into the Japanese information flow, and in September 1987 organised an international conference in Warwick which will probably prove to be of seminal importance. The United States government is also anxious to finance schemes for getting hold of Japanese information.

The authors of this report show that it is possible to unlock the door in a comparatively unsophisticated way, and they also show not only that it is high time we did so, but that once past the language barrier there is quite a free flow of information available, often organised on to databases.

The authors have not only shown both perseverance and ingenuity in using machine translation to extract information from Japanese databases, but they also seem to be in touch with what is going on in a number of overlapping areas — information science, database construction, machine translation, especially MT systems operating between Japanese and English, and developments in telecommunications.

And they also show that machine translation works. The examples given of raw MT output, without post-editing, are admittedly clumsy and sometimes obscure.

"In a basic industry including an automobile Japan has excellent competitive power. As the environment over automobile industry changes rapidly a joint enterprise brings an important meaning. Austin Rover selected Honda as a partner as a result of prudent examination. The success of this joint enterprise originates in an effort for the maintenance of balanced stable relation of both company. A big benefit was brought about by the joint enterprise. The strength of the competitive power of Austin Rover itself is one of the benefit."

But at least one knows what the subject matter of the abstract is, and that is the idea of database searching. The authors have proved their point.