Editing MTNI, 1992-1997
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In 1991 at the third MT Summit in Washington I was approached by Makoto Nagao and Muriel Vasconcellos. I had heard that an international association was being planned, but I knew no details. It was therefore a considerable surprise for me to be asked to be the editor of a newsletter for the new association. Although I had written quite a lot about machine translation, I had no experience at all of editing a newsletter. After much hesitation and many second thoughts, however, I accepted the invitation to start one. What it should look like, where it should be printed, who should contribute, and how often it should appear were all matters left in my hands.

Virtually all that was agreed at this time was that the first issue should appear the next January (1992), that issues should be printed at three or four monthly intervals, and that each regional association should be responsible for the printing and distribution of the newsletter to its own members. I had six months to set the operation in motion.

My first step was to ask for advice from Geoffrey Kingscott, whom I had known for a number of years, and who was the editor and publisher of *Language Monthly* (later *Language International*). We discussed content, layout, getting contributions, printing, distribution, and much more. Geoffrey's company Praetorius agreed to undertake the designing of the newsletter and the printing of copies for EAMT. The intention was that the newsletter should have a uniform appearance in each of the regions. The other associations were to be sent electronic copies of the complete newsletter issue, with the design and layout decided by Praetorius and myself, from which they could print and distribute copies for their members.

As for the name of the newsletter, I thought of various possibilities but decided in the end on something quite simple: *MT News International*. The name seems to suit its function well – at least nobody, to my knowledge, has yet suggested an alternative.

It may be noted that from the beginning we had considered an electronic newsletter – either instead of, or in addition to, a traditional printed one – but it was felt by all concerned (i.e. the founders, the IAMT Council, and the regional associations) that many members did not have the facilities to receive it in that form, and that most members probably preferred hard copy in any case. The possibility of electronic distribution was left for a later date.

What was the newsletter to include? Most obviously it had to carry news about the associations (IAMT, AMTA, EAMT, and JAMT – shortly to become AAMT), e.g. association bylaws and regulations, notices for members, reports of meetings and assemblies, and notices and announcements of conferences and workshops. Also, it should include reports of any conferences and workshops related to MT held by other organisations. There should also be a calendar of forthcoming events, meetings, workshops and conferences. For meetings directly devoted to MT there were of course more details, e.g. calls for papers, invitations to participate, and registration forms when appropriate.

What else? An important function of the newsletter was to provide information about new MT systems, new companies, new products, new research projects, and so forth. Each issue contained extracts from press releases, items from other journals, information downloaded from the internet, etc., reviews of recent

publications – including substantial ones for the various JEIDA reports – and lists of articles related to MT appearing in magazines and journals. In addition, the newsletter included reprinted articles or extracts from other journals, e.g. the *AAMT Journal* (translated with help from various members), *Language International*, and *Language Industry Monitor*.

To assist me, regional editors were appointed – initially they were Tom Gerhardt for Europe, Joseph Pentheroudakis for North America and Hirosato Nomura in Japan. Later Jörg Schütz became the European representative and David Clements represented North America. Through them I made contact with possible reporters of conferences and reviewers of publications, and they sent me notices of new products and services and other items for inclusion.

As most editors of newsletters know, persuading busy people to write (and submit promptly) is a time consuming and often frustrating experience. Quite often, as far as conferences and new publications were concerned, I found myself doing reports and reviews shortly before deadlines. Most problematic of all was trying to persuade users of MT systems to write about their experiences. From the beginning there was plenty of news to cover the interests of researchers and vendors, but for the users it was always a struggle.

The early issues of MTNI did contain some more substantial items from time to time. There were Muriel Vasconcellos' survey of MT users (no.6, September 1993), Karin Spalink's proposals for an evaluation methodology (no.9, September 1994), the obituary of Paul Garvin by Christine Montgomery (also in no.9), the space devoted to recent patents (no.10, January 1995), and the major survey of MT users by Colin Brace, Muriel Vasconcellos and Chris Miller, with an annexe of current commercial MT systems (no.12, October 1995). And, believing that readers ought to be interested in the history of MT, I wrote a series of articles ("From the archives") marking MT events of thirty, forty or more years before..

Getting the first issue out took me longer than expected – in hindsight, not surprisingly – and the first issue was not distributed to members until March 1992. However, from that time onwards I was particularly concerned that all deadlines should be met. There is nothing worse than for a newsletter containing current information to be published and distributed when the news has become old or outdated. As I had a full time job, I did not feel that I could physically and mentally produce an issue four times a year, and so an early decision was made to publish three times a year. The decision has certainly caused confusion, since many people assume that such a publication ought to be quarterly and so they expect to receive four issues for their membership. However, I took the view that I would rather be on time with three issues than risk being persistently late. After the first issue, MTNI was timed to appear in January, May, and September.

The first two issues of MTNI were printed separately in Europe, the United States, and Japan. It was, however, soon concluded that separate printing would be too expensive. It was agreed that from no.3 onwards EAMT's copies should be printed together with the AMTA copies in the United States, and that the EAMT copies should be sent in bulk mail to the EAMT offices in Geneva, from where they would be sent out to members. This arrangement continues to this day. What this decision meant was that the responsibility for DTP and printing was transferred to the AMTA regional editor, Joseph Pentheroudakis. I supplied him with the contents, and with indications of what should appear where; but he prepared the publishing layout and supervised the printing – with some assistance from his colleagues at Microsoft. It

is to the great credit of Joseph that he performed this job so well that publication of MTNI was rarely more than six weeks after I had put together each issue.

In the first three years, MTNI gradually increased in size, from about 20-25 pages in 1992 to some 30-40 pages during 1995. However, it was becoming evident that the income of IAMT from membership subscriptions was not keeping pace, and from this date onwards the size of issues had to decrease. It meant that coverage could not be as full as hoped; items less central to MT were dropped completely, fewer details were included about conferences, about new products and about current research projects, and the more substantial articles ceased.

There had to be other changes. It was becoming more difficult for Joseph to continue with the publishing side, and in 1994, Muriel Vasconcellos proposed that the DTP and printing should be taken over by Jane Zorrilla, who had performed great services for the *ATA Chronicle*. Jane refashioned the MTNI masthead and designed a new IAMT logo, and she introduced other improvements in layout and format – with the results much as they are today. In addition, in order to reflect more realistically the actual dates of publication and distribution, it was decided to change the dates given on the masthead: first, by shifting a month to February, June and October, and then as February/March, June/July, etc. But, for various and multiple reasons, delays in printing and distribution continued – which was most disappointing for everyone.

By this time, I had been made president of EAMT in 1995, and I was due to be President-elect of IAMT after the MT Summit in 1997. I decided that I could not to continue to be MTNI editor – in my view, nobody ought to have more than one official duty in the association – and at the meeting of the IAMT Council in October 1997, I resigned and proposed that Muriel Vasconcellos (then coming to the end of her period as IAMT president) as my successor. She had already been active, unofficially, in the backroom processes with Jane Zorrilla, and it seemed appropriate that she should take over fully. Muriel continued as editor until early in 2001, since when the editorship of MTNI has been in the capable hands of Laurie Gerber.

I enjoyed my period as editor; it was hard work but most rewarding, even if frustrating from time to time. From a personal point of view, it kept me in touch with the rapid developments in MT and I enjoyed contacts with all the leading characters and personages of what continues to be a fascinating and challenging part of the 'language industry'. My performance as editor I leave to the judgement of others.

Readers may like to know that electronic versions (HTML) of back issues of MTNI are being made available on the EAMT website (www.eamt.org). So far, issues 1-6 have been downloaded; more will follow shortly.