

## The Knowledge Warehouse

Robin Williamson, writing in the second issue of the *International Publishers Bulletin* of 1987, describes the coming into existence of one of the world's first 'active electronic archives'. It is UK-based, developed by Publishers Databases Limited in London, and its aim is 'to build a store of electronically held works from which data can be extracted and manipulated to provide a base for new knowledge works aimed at new markets'. The presuppositions are straightforward:

- Most 'knowledge' currently published exists in an electronic format as part of the business of creating traditional printed pages by means of modern technology.
- Because of this, machine-readable data is being created virtually as a by-product of conventional publishing. This data should be stored in one place (at least in the electronic sense of 'one place'), and then indexed for easy access.
- Once the storing and indexing have been done, it is then possible to edit and blend all sorts of originally independent 'books', as long as all the legal, commercial and copyright factors have been properly taken care of.

● The end-product is new, customized material, published primarily in electronic form, tailor-made special 'encyclopedias' that could have been brought together by no other means.

Phase 1 of the Knowledge Warehouse is close to completion: a pilot project and general feasibility study in which 'all the objectives for which it was set up were achieved'. Phase 2 will be the setting up of a Knowledge Warehouse Trust, to balance the interests of publishers, libraries, and the academic world. Funding will be sought and 'full-scale archiving' will begin. Currently, the project has been 'funded by Publishers Databases Limited (PDL), a private company formed by 35 publishers of printed material in English to explore and exploit new technological developments in information and telecommunications systems, with the assistance of the UK's Department of Trade and Industry and the British Library, and is supported by the UK Publishers Association'.

The technological delivery system for materials that the Warehouse may produce will probably be the CD-ROM (compact disc, read-only memory), on which 'major works from a dozen or more different publishers' might be 'manipulated, reformatted and presented with additional material and special search software' for a 'new marketplace in need of fast off-line access to the material'.

## Getting at the fax

The facsimile copier is hardly new. The first patent for such a machine was taken out in 1843 by the Scottish inventor Alexander Bain. It is only very recently, however, that the 'fax' has come into its own. And it has come into its own with particular effect in Japan, where Buddhist priests use theirs to receive prayers from people unable to visit their temple in person, and the novelist Giichi Fujimoto for example transmits whole manuscripts by fax in order to meet a publishing deadline. On 15 June 87, *Time* magazine reported as follows on Japan's enthusiasm for

equipment that transmits text and pictures by telephone:

'The Japanese have always had a special interest in fax as a way to avoid the difficulties of keyboards. The Japanese language consists of Chinese ideograms and kana syllables that must be painstakingly transliterated into Roman characters for telex or computer transmissions. With fax machines, the Japanese simply send a picture of their text.' Not so long ago fax was a slow and expensive business, but over the past ten years transmission times have been dramatically reduced. The three minutes per page possible in 1976 has now been shrunk, thanks to

improvements in scanning and squeezing data, into 30 seconds or less – for transmission anywhere in the world.

As a result, there are now some 1.5 million 'fax machines' at work in Japan, and Matsushita Graphic Communication Systems is the world's largest 'faxmaker'. *Time* adds that there are 'Panafax PX-100' machines at

each end of the hotline between the United States and the Soviet Union, so that the superpowers can in an emergency exchange essential maps and drawings: 'They are routinely tested every hour by sending pictures of encyclopedia articles on such noncontroversial subjects as water lilies and tsetse flies.'

## **Bilingual fliers**

A Canadian airline, until recently known as CP Air, has adopted a new name-cum-logo that ingeniously conforms to the nation's bilingual policy. Their new name replaces a contentious vowel with an arrowhead. French speakers supply the 'e' of CANADIEN, while Anglos stick to CANADIAN.



# English teaching to the year 2000

In July 1987, the Coalition of English Associations held an intensive three-week conference in Maryland, USA, bringing together 60 representatives from all levels of English teaching in the United States: from elementary through secondary to college, including the trainers of teachers. The groups involved included the NCTE (the National Council for the Teaching of English), the Modern Language Association, the Association of Departments of English, the College English Association, and the College Language Association. An NCTE press release states that the conference 'yielded an unprecedented level of agreement about how English should be taught over the rest of this century'. Points on which participants agreed include:

● The need for 'a learner-centered curriculum in which the individual students learn to become inquirers, able to participate fully both in continuing to learn and in a democratic society'.

- The view that tests 'ought to concentrate on the complicated skills of relating information' and 'on shared problem-solving in the learning process, rather than competition'. Such an approach was seen as useful in counteracting the acquisition of 'fragmentary knowledge how to make sense of the knowledge you acquire, rather than with learning bits of it for tests'.
- An acceptance that 'teachers can no longer settle for formalistic, mechanical instruction in language. They have to deal with it in a social context, and deal with the great variety of students' language.'
- The likelihood 'that it has become impossible to teach a literary canon, in any past sense, but rather, that we will have to sample more systematically the literatures of America and the world, to introduce students to the kind of world they have to live in.'
- The fact that 'in an era of single parents, two-job families, and greater diversity of population, the schools are having to supply aspects of students' education that the home once provided'.

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# English-language journalism in Japan

Kosei Minamide in Osaka has sent us the following table with the most recent data on English-language newspapers published in Japan.

#### English Newspapers in Japan

name	foundation	circulation	subscribers
Asahi Evening News	1954	25,209	general
Japan Economic Journal	1963	33,540	general
The Japan Times	1897	54,239	general
The Japan Times Weekly	1960	10,000	general
The Daily Yomiuri	1955	43,000	general
Mainichi Daily News	1922	52,800	general
Asahi Weekly	1973	210,000	student
The Student Times	1951	190,000	student
Mainichi Weekly	1972	210,200	student

#### Quoted from

Japan's Periodicals in Print, 1987 Edition, Published by Media Research Centre (Sukai Biru, 5-10-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo, 160 Japan).

# Cambridge ELT

# Learner English

A teacher's guide to interference and other problems Edited by **Michael Swan** and **Bernard Smith** 

As a teacher of English as a foreign or second language, have you ever wished you knew more about your students' mother-tongues?

Learner English is a practical reference book which compares the relevant features of the students' own languages with English, helping you to predict and understand the problems your students have.

The chapters describe and explain the most important typical mistakes of learners who speak Dutch/Flemish, Scandinavian languages (except Finnish), German, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Greek, Russian, Farsi, Arabic, Turkish, Indian languages, West African languages, Swahili, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai.

The book is accompanied by a cassette with recordings of learners, illustrating the various accents described in the book.

For further information on all Cambridge ELT publications, please contact Claire Stanfield, ELT Publicity Controller, Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU



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