

Foreword

The emergence of scientific achievements from the field of artificial intelligence has triggered opportunities to tackle new problems in which the computer formerly had no role. If we have not achieved all the goals of automating cognition yet, our years of research are rewarded by what we feel can have a major impact on everyday operations in the workplace.

The AAAI Conference on Innovative Applications was organized by the American Association for Artificial Intelligence to illustrate how the implications of AI research and development are starting to affect all areas of today's world, particularly those areas that concern commerce and industry. We feel such a forum can further the exchange of information on what really works and what the problems are as AI makes the transition from the research laboratory to industrial practice. We also believe tackling these new and innovative applications will lead to better technology because we will find and remedy current deficiencies when solving "real" problems.

A question we never fully resolved was what truly constitutes "innovative." For example, does innovative mean that an application must advance the state of the underlying AI technology? Or, must the application be a new unreported different one? Or, can the innovation be in the integration of AI with standard DP systems? At the current rate of development of this field, "innovation" itself has a changing definition. Some applications are likely to be the last of a first generation when developments were heroic acts and enterprises very difficult to reproduce. Most examples, however, illustrate how the use of AI technology has become not only effective but also economically feasible. They show the integration of AI into the standard DP environments as well as its introduction in the softer sciences and the management of human affairs beyond the more classic problems.

The sample selected from this year's application shows how AI has now successfully been applied to a wide spectrum of domains and tasks. We believe we have selected an interesting group of results from many submitted papers. To many applications in the making, and to those of great interest, we have suggested that they resubmit for next year's conference. We hope our selections and this conference will contribute to what we all believe is a very significant technology.

—Herbert Schorr & Alain Rappaport
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