

Letters

■ Editor:

Recently I circulated the Waltz taxonomy of AI (see *AI Magazine*, Vol. 6, No. 1) to a few colleagues in the AI planning community to get their input on updating the planning section. Judging from their vigorous comments about the state of the current taxonomy, I wonder if AAAI might not consider a broader review with the goal of updating the entire taxonomy and maintaining it as a professional service to the AI community. It not only serves to organize and present the field, but provides a common baseline lexicon by which we all can interact.

A flexible, living taxonomy, and the discussions necessary to maintain it, could become the basis for a healthy self-assessment activity for the AI community. For example, one could (in theory) match up the sessions and papers in the AAAI & IJCAI conferences with sections in the taxonomy and thereby gain some sense of current relative interest and, over time, the evolution of the discipline. Similarly, one could track AI Ph.D. thesis topics, the distribution of research funding, the emergence of new research areas, and the position of the discipline as a whole relative to other fields. A taxonomy could be a valuable service to those who serve the AI community at large, such as libraries, publishers, reviewers, and conference organizers. It might even serve to balance the perspective of the popular press or as a global context for the choice of topics in beginning university AI courses.

I'm surprised in a way that AAAI hasn't already undertaken this effort, as do other professional organizations (e.g., the mathematical societies maintain similar taxonomies, in part to support the organization of the *Mathematical Reviews*). Taxonomies are living things; however, maintaining one shouldn't be an undue burden. It could be published annually in the *AI Magazine* with requests for updates/refinements, and made available via FTP from some central server.

Dr. Northrup Fowler III
Rome Laboratory

■ Editor:

In a move that will (I hope!) be matched by other academic developers of AI software, I have decided to make the MVL theorem proving system available by anonymous ftp from Stanford.

The MVL system includes the following features:

1. Support for a wide range of knowledge representation schemes, including:
 - a. First-order logic
 - b. Nonmonotonic reasoning and circumscription
 - c. Assumption-based truth maintenance
 - d. Probabilistic reasoning
 - e. Modal operators of knowledge and belief
 - f. Temporal reasoning
 - g. "Anytime" reasoning
2. Loop detection and recursion control in the underlying theorem prover.
3. The ability to handle negative subgoals containing free variables, as in the Prolog fragment

$$f :- \text{not}(g(X)).$$

$$g(A).$$
4. A fast unifier that includes an occurcheck and full support for sequence variables.
5. Complete documentation.

The system is written in standard Common Lisp and has been ported to a wide range of machines (Sun, Mac II, NeXT, Lucid, Allegro, Symbolics, Hewlett-Packard, Explorer) without difficulty. To obtain it, ftp to t.stanford.edu, and use either "ftp" or "anonymous" as your user name, followed by any password you wish. Get the README file from the directory in which you find yourself, and follow the instructions there to obtain the system. I would appreciate it if you would avoid business hours Pacific time, since I am typically using my machine quite heavily then.

Matt Ginsberg
Stanford University



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