EDITORIAL

Out of my mind...

This issue marks the end of volume 12 and my last issue as editor in chief. In 1981 when Lee Erman (then chairman of the Publications Committee) asked me to take over the editorship of a fledgling magazine, I assumed it would be a 2- or 3-year responsibility. I never expected to still be doing it 10 years later. I also never expected it to be such a pleasurable avocation. The pleasure comes from several directions: sitting in an honored position to observe developments in AI all over the world by being the recipient of dozens of papers every year; working with an excellent supporting staff of coeditors, assistants, and production people; and receiving compliments from colleagues for doing a good job.

From my privileged point of observation, just by looking over the four issues of volume 12, I think the evidence is clear that AI is alive and thriving: research in case-based reasoning (spring and summer issues), knowledge sharing (fall), and probabilistic methods (winter); critical analyses of text-understanding systems (fall), expert systems that succeed (fall) or fail (spring), and even our entire research methodology (spring); new approaches to familiar tasks such as diagnosis (winter); and refreshing overviews of the field by established scholars (Minsky, Bobrow, and Schank). Needless to say, it has been a pleasure to read these articles and to pass them on to you.

My assistants in this endeavor deserve most of the credit for converting the concept of a magazine into reality. Mike Hamilton has been in charge of the production end of the magazine since 1984, so I have worked closely with him during most of my reign. He works quietly in the background, bringing the magazine to life four or more times each year I feel lucky to work with someone so competent in all phases of production. On the editorial side, many thanks and kudos to Polly Rogers Panela (who opted for motherhood a couple of years ago) and Ellie Engelmore for "sweating the details." There's so much to do between first receiving an article and finally turning it over to the production side of the house for publication: getting reviews; going through countless iterations and communications with the authors; working with the copyeditor, the graphic designers; and on and on. Keeping it all organized and attending to every detail is what Polly did and what Ellie continues to do so conscientiously. I couldn't have lasted this long without them. Thanks are also owed to my coeditors: Bruce d'Ambrosio (book reviews), Peter Patel-Schneider (workshop reports), and Bill Clancey (AAAI News) for their excellent contributions. And to all you anonymous reviewers out there: Good work! Finally, my hat is off to Sunny Ludvik for her relentless effort to preserve a standard of style in the magazine, despite the protests from many authors and sometimes even from me, and to Dianne Erickson and Jim Marin at Spectra Media for their contribution to the overall "look and feel" of the magazine.

In this job, the compliments are rare and the complaints are well done, but I tend to remember only the former. The magazine is the most tangible benefit of membership in AAAI. I therefore choose to interpret the fact that our membership has been keeping fairly steady over the past few years as a very big but silent compliment on the work we're doing.

However, 10 years is a long time. It is now time to step down, move on, and turn the magazine over to the next generation that can bring new ideas and energy to the job. I can think of no more capable people for this stewardship than my associate editors Elaine Rich and Ramesh Patil. I wish them well and hope they enjoy the experience as much as I have. As senior editor, I will continue to help them in a consulting capacity as long as needed, so it's not a total good-bye.

Bob Engelmore