

Comments from EurAI on the Occasion of the 80th Birthday of Wolfgang Bibel

On behalf of the European Artificial Intelligence Association, formerly the European Coordinating Committee for Artificial Intelligence (ECCAI), I am delighted to wish Professor Wolfgang Bibel a very happy 80th birthday.

EurAI would not exist if it were not for the inspired leadership of Wolfgang Bibel in the late 1970s. He was amongst the first to realise that Europe needed an AI association to help support collaboration amongst European AI researchers, as well as provide a higher level of international visibility for European research. He took the initiative to write to many leading figures in the European AI community to advocate for such an association. The initiative received overwhelming support leading, ultimately, to the establishment of ECCAI, the European Coordinating Committee for Artificial Intelligence, which is today called the European Artificial Intelligence Association.

The first ECCAI-sponsored European Conference for Artificial Intelligence (ECAI) was held in 1982 in Orsay. At this conference (with 282 registered attendees from 20 countries) the ECCAI statutes, which had been worked out in the meantime, were approved, and Wolfgang Bibel was elected as the first ECCAI Chair.

At a national level in Germany Wolfgang led the national program on Automated Deduction in Germany. He was heavily involved as one of the founders, in a sense, of the AI community in Germany. His scientific and organisational leadership has been widely recognised. For example, he is a fellow of the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), a fellow of EurAI (formerly ECCAI), of the German Gesellschaft für Informatik (GI), and he received the Donald E. Walker Distinguished Service Award from IJCAI, the Silver Core from IFIP, the Herbrand Award from CADE Inc., and the EurAI Distinguished Service Award, amongst many others. He has also served as President of the International Joint Conferences for Artificial Intelligence.

Wolfgang Bibel has had an enormous impact on the field of Artificial Intelligence (or Intellectics, as, I believe, he likes to say). He has worked in the fields of automated deduction, architecture of deductive systems, knowledge representation and inference, planning, learning, program synthesis, as well as applications of AI in disciplines like Psychology, Sociology, Education, and Politics, producing more than 200 publications, including more than 20 books. He has served on more than a dozen boards of journals and book series. For example, he has served as Section Editor of the Artificial Intelligence Journal.

As well as being the current President of EurAI, I currently co-chair the European Commission's High-level Expert Group on AI which is trying to help Europe maintain its global leadership in AI. Not only would EurAI not exist without Wolfgang, but we would not even be in a situation in Europe where we have an international debate on how to grow AI here. It's an honour for us all to stand on the shoulders of giants like Wolfgang without whom European AI would not be as strong as it is today. As a community, we owe so much to Wolfgang Bibel.

On behalf of EurAI, we would like to wish Wolfgang a very happy 80th birthday.

Barry O'Sullivan
President of EurAI