

A.L.I.C.E. AI Foundation

Promoting the adoption and development of Alicebot and AIML free software.

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Alice: The Only Bot At LinuxWorld

Foundation To Represent Bot Technology at Industry Expo

20 August 2001—San Francisco CA: Does your bot run on Linux? Alice does.

Alice, an award-winning natural language bot, will be the only bot technology represented at this month's LinuxWorld Expo (<http://linuxworldexpo.com>), to be held in the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, California. Several members of the A.L.I.C.E. AI Foundation (<http://alicebot.org>), which distributes and promotes the Alicebot/AIML software, will be on hand to demonstrate the technology, which is supported and developed by a free software community of over 350 people worldwide.

"No other bot technology matches our level of commitment to the free software and open source communities," says Noel Bush, former VP of Engineering from Artificial Life, Inc. Bush "defected" from the proprietary bot world to co-found the not-for-profit organization that promotes and manages the development of a technology invented by Dr. Richard S. Wallace, and first released under the GNU General Public License six years ago.

"John Perry Barlow told us that 'information wants to be free'," quips Bush. "Well, we say, bots also want to be free. This is the technology that will automate important parts of our lives someday. It ought not to be bottled up and shrouded in secrecy."

Although originally implemented in a little-known language called SETL, A.L.I.C.E. was ported to Java in the mid-nineties and has enjoyed a steady increase in popularity ever since. The core implementation and its successive revisions have spawned compatible versions in C, C++, and other languages, using a variety of Web-based interfaces. Alicebots are running worldwide on a variety of platforms, the most popular of which is Linux.

Most critical to Alicebot's appeal is its foundation in AIML, an XML-based "Artificial Intelligence Markup Language". "Proprietary vendors are walling themselves off," says Bush, "because they can't support industry standards like XML without exposing the limitations of their technologies. If any of the proprietary vendors were to release a DTD or W3C Schema for their systems, the folly of the exorbitant license prices they charge would be revealed in an instant. Anyone could knock off a compatible engine within a couple of days."

Bush has zeroed in on the secrecy of proprietary bot vendors as symptomatic of the insecurity faced by companies who use closed-source methods to hide the uncertainties and insolubilities latent in "cutting-edge" technologies like natural language bots. An essay on the Foundation web site, "Don't Pay A Lot For That Bot", details the argument.

Since Richard Wallace released his software to the world, tens of thousands have chatted with his A.L.I.C.E., whose "brain" has now grown to contain over 40,000 AIML categories, or units of "knowledge".

"Openness is key to our success," says Wallace. "The automated feedback system I call 'targeting' allows us to rapidly identify gaps in Alice's brain and incorporate them into the standard AIML set. That set has formed the basis for numerous other Alicebots out there on the Web. The benefit that this technology derives from working in an open, collective manner is one of our greatest strengths. My 'minimalist' approach to bot design has its roots in robotics and study of perception, but the evidence that we have mastered a large territory of language comes not only from last year's Loebner Prize victory, but from the ease with which anyone can take the Alicebot engine and Alice brain and adapt them to a wide variety of purposes."

A.L.I.C.E. won last year's coveted Loebner Prize, a competition designed to pit bots against one another to determine which is most successful at "fooling" a judge into thinking that the bot is human. A.L.I.C.E. will participate again this year, when the competition is held at the London Science Museum in October.

Wallace and Bush will join Brenda Freedman at the Expo. Freedman is a seasoned online facilitator and organizer of educational programs, whose career includes an ongoing ten-year position at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute Science Museum and the coordination of World Space Week, a program celebrated in over 30 nations. She is also a contributor to the Space Reporters Network at Space.com. "Alice is just right for the educational community," says Freedman. "Closed, proprietary approaches are too afraid to risk opening up the engine in the way students need in order to learn. Alicebot/AIML is free for the asking and completely transparent in its workings. You can't ask for a better learning tool."

Foundation members invite all attendees to drop by the booth (#369) and learn more about this exciting technology.

ABOUT THE A.L.I.C.E. AI FOUNDATION:

The A.L.I.C.E. AI Foundation was founded in 2001, as a non-profit organization with the following mission:

- DISTRIBUTE Alicebot and AIML Free Software. We distribute our advanced AI software source code freely to schools, research labs, nonprofits and other organizations, and to individuals.
- PROMOTE the adoption and development of Alicebot and AIML technology.
- DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN standards for AIML, the AIML pattern language, Alicebot implementations, and Alicebot interfaces (Responders).
- PURSUE AND PROMOTE research and development in natural language and artificial intelligence technologies.
- PROVIDE education and training resources to promote the adoption of AIML technologies.
- WORK closely with and advise commercial entities engaged in AIML, development to develop standards, plan future programs, and evaluate research and development.
- ALLOCATE public and/or private funds as appropriate to organizations, agencies or individuals who can provide AIML, programs or products of high quality if they are deemed beneficial to the community.
- PLAN AND HOST periodic conferences and meetings as required to accomplish the general goals of the organization.

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