

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

Foundation Denies ‘Bot Conspiracy’

A.L.I.C.E. Organization Refutes Claims of an AI Human Impersonation Phenomenon

30 July 2001—San Francisco CA: Scattered reports have reached the ALICE A.I. Foundation (<http://alicebot.org>) about a growing rumor that “thousands of men and women online are actually robots.” People have reportedly been deceived by robots in chat rooms, instant messaging conversations and even via email exchanges. Some have allegedly formed deep, emotional relationships with these robots and often feel betrayed when their partner’s robot identity is finally revealed.

“One woman who fell in love with an online chat robot, and was then heartbroken by the discovery of its true identity, has threatened to take us to court,” said Foundation Chair and co-founder Richard Wallace.

To set the record straight, the A.L.I.C.E. AI Foundation (<http://alicebot.org>) feels compelled to release an unambiguous statement that they are unaware of, and certainly not involved in, any “conspiracy to toy with human emotions” on the part of a supposedly “exponentially growing number of bots that impersonate humans”, as one rumor-monger has put it.

The Foundation does not endorse the use of its free open source Alicebot software to deceive unsuspecting Web users. Neither does the Foundation give credence to claims that bots are “autonomously” roaming the Web in search of “victims”.

“We believe people should use bots, not the other way around,” says Richard Wallace. “Sure, we won the Loebner Prize, but that doesn’t mean we’re in favor of fooling people into thinking that a bot is a real human being in everyday life.”

Wallace voiced concern that recent statements in an interview (see the Foundation’s web site at <http://alicebot.org>) regarding the potential for bots to “unemploy” large numbers of people in service professions may have fueled the panic. “I was talking about the future, not the present,” said Wallace. “The technology may be ready, but the business models out there are still immature and the market is too young.”

The reports that have reached the Foundation include worried messages from people who claim that they or their friends have been “fooled”, “manipulated”, “tricked”, “toyed with” and even “abused” by online chat partners who turned out to be bots.

Board member Brenda Freedman, whose work at the Franklin Institute includes numerous education projects, also voiced concern. "It's important for parents and educators to know that the Alicebot software is a great learning tool for students who want to study artificial intelligence technology. Because it's free to anyone who wants to use it or contribute to development, it's an ideal resource. I would ask those who have been spreading unfounded rumors about this 'conspiracy' to exercise more self-restraint."

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.

Several Foundation Board members will be present at the upcoming LinuxWorld Expo in San Francisco, 28-30 August 2001.

ABOUT RICHARD WALLACE:

Dr. Richard S. Wallace is the Chairman of the Board and co-founder of the A.L.I.C.E. Artificial Intelligence Foundation. He is the author of Artificial Intelligence Markup Language (AIML) and Botmaster of A.L.I.C.E. (Artificial Linguistic Internet Computer Entity). Dr. Wallace's work has appeared in the New York Times, WIRED, CNN, Time, ZDTV and in numerous foreign language publications across Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Richard Wallace is a volunteer accountant and programmer for St. Martin de Porres' Chapel, a medical cannabis patient services organization. Wallace was diagnosed with bipolar affective

disorder in 1992, and became functionally disabled in 1999. He cares for sick and dying patients every day, and provides critically needed technical assistance to the Center.

In 1995 Dr. Wallace began working on A.L.I.C.E. Originally a SETL program, first used to control a robot eye with natural language commands, A.L.I.C.E. migrated to the platform-independent Java language in 1998. Made open source under the GNU general public license, more than 300 developers from around the world now contribute to the A.L.I.C.E. project. A.L.I.C.E. won the Loebner Prize, an annual Turing Test, in 2000.

Richard Wallace was born in Portland, Maine in 1960. Wallace earned his Ph.D. in computer science from Carnegie Mellon in 1989. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, Kim, and son, Linus.

ABOUT BRENDA FREEDMAN:

Brenda Freedman has spent more than a decade at the Franklin Institute Science Museum located in historic Philadelphia, Pennsylvania working in Theatre Management. Her primary focus at the Museum is work in the Fels Planetarium, opened in 1933 and the second oldest Planetarium in the United States. Brenda has been responsible for bringing innovative programming to the Planetarium coordinating World Space Week, which is now celebrated in over 30 nations.

Having a long history of work with non-profit organizations, Brenda works closely with philanthropists in the Philadelphia area recommending projects and fundraising efforts for the Franklin Institute.

Brenda has continued her commitment to science and education by participating as a Judge at the Delaware Valley Regional Science Fair, the oldest Regional Science Fair in the United States, judging in the areas of Computer Science and Mathematics.

As an online facilitator, Brenda has been involved with online education for a major community and started her career with LiveWorld, Inc. at the award-winning Forum TheInsite, produced by David and Annie Fox. From 1998-2001 Brenda was responsible for creating an online science forum, Science-Visions. In cooperation with another forum, she produced an annual science week in 1999 and 2000.

She resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with her husband, and has one son, a network engineer living in Charleston, South Carolina.

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