

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

Bots Will Unemploy You

A.L.I.C.E. Creator Richard Wallace Predicts Bots Will Put Millions Out of Work

29 May 2001—San Francisco CA: In a recently-posted interview at <http://alicebot.org>, Richard Wallace makes the startling claim that bots such as his A.L.I.C.E. will put people in service professions out of work.

"People who concern themselves too much with hypothetical moral problems have a somewhat distorted sense of priorities," says Wallace. He castigates Sun Microsystems co-founder Bill Joy for proposing regulation on a business that is "relatively harmless in the grand scheme of things."

But at the same time, says Wallace, there is one realistic possible outcome of current work in natural language technologies: unemployment for millions of service professionals. "The concept that AI will put call centers out of business is not far-fetched. Many more people in service professions could potentially be automated out of a job by chat robots," says Wallace.

Wallace's "A.L.I.C.E." (Artificial Linguistic Internet Computer Entity) software is of a breed commonly known as "chat bots". Chat bots hold conversations with human beings, usually through a text interface but sometimes using speech.

The six-year-old A.L.I.C.E. project has had over 300 contributors to its development. Released under the GNU GPL promoted by Richard Stallman's Free Software Foundation, A.L.I.C.E. has successfully beaten commercial competitors such as Artificial Life's SmartEngine in head-to-head competition at the Loebner Prize 2000 contest.

A.L.I.C.E. is currently being used on the web site for Steven Spielberg's upcoming film *A.I.* Response to the bot has been tremendous, sparking lively discussions all over the net. Remarkably, Spielberg's team chose the software over commercial competitors without once contacting Wallace. "It's just the magic of open source at work," says Wallace. "We are no more affiliated with them than is Linus Torvalds because they use a Linux server."

In the new interview, Wallace discusses the state of the technology with former Artificial Life VP of Engineering Noel Bush, who has "defected" to the free / open source camp and worked with Wallace and two others to form the new A.L.I.C.E. AI Foundation. Bush pins down Wallace's true story about releasing A.L.I.C.E. under the GNU GPL, which Wallace calls a "fortunate accident of history."

Wallace also expands his views on A.L.I.C.E.'s technology, rebutting critics who dismiss the A.L.I.C.E. technology as "trickery". "No other theory of natural language processing can better explain or reproduce [our] results," says Wallace. "You don't need a complex theory of learning, neural nets, or cognitive models" to build a successful chat bot, according to Wallace.

The maverick scientist reveals more of his personal background, and his decidedly fractious relationship with academia. "The most charitable thing I can say about my training in A.I. is that I learned what doesn't work," he says. "Academia is seriously out of touch with reality in artificial intelligence."

In addition to his role as the guardian of the active Alicebot development community, Wallace plays another "revolutionary" role, as a volunteer accountant and programmer for St. Martin de Porres' Chapel, a medical cannabis patient services organization. He is engaged to speak about A.L.I.C.E. and AIML at the same organization on July 9 as part of the Chapel's lecture series.

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:

- 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.

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.

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