



McGill

C e n t r e f o r

Intelligent Machines

Volume 8, Number 2, February, 1994

Newsletter

A NOTE OF THANKS

The university insurance office and the people at CIM would like to congratulate the students and profs who acted quickly in containing the water to the fourth floor when a pipe burst in January and prevented the spread of the flood to other floors and from causing excessive damage. There was minimal inconvenience thanks to your quick action, and the university has responded promptly in helping us to clean up the conference room which was the area which received the most damage. You did a great job!

(AN ELECTRICAL ENGINEER IN LOVE)

ST-VALENTIN

La première fois que nos regards fuyants se sont rencontrés, jaillit une *étincelle* dans mon coeur, je ressentis cette *impulsion* qui me poussait à sonder ton âme. Les paroles étaient inutiles, nos êtres *vibraient* déjà à la même *fréquence*, nos esprits communiquaient sans *protocole*.

Au *courant* des mois qui suivirent, ce sentiment indéfinissable *s'amplifiait*. Sans faire de *bruit*, tu t'es *infiltrée* dans ma vie. A bout de *résistance*, je succombais au *magnétisme* de ton charme. Je t'adorais de tout mon *potentiel* d'amour. Nous avons connu alors un bonheur *transformateur*, dont les mots n'osent pas mesurer l'*intensité*. Mais au *fil* des années, ta passion *s'atténuait*, notre relation se *déstabilisait*. Tes *entrées et sorties* devenues *incontrôlables*, me mettaient la *puce* à l'oreille. La *tension* s'établissait entre nous. Lors de tes absences prolongées, j'*oscillais* entre la confiance et l'*incertitude*. Finalement, le moment que je redoutais arriva: tu es partie un matin sans laisser

d'*adresse*, une lettre d'adieu *mise à terre* signalait la fin de notre rêve. Mes *capacités* de compréhension étaient dépassées. Sans *énergie*, je *déchargeais* ma douleur dans les sanglots...

Longtemps après, ta présence est restée *vive dans ma mémoire*, tes éclats de rire *résonnent* encore des fois à mes oreilles... Les coups de l'*horloge* me réveillent de ma *transition*. Le soleil dehors brille dans toute sa *puissance*. Le *court circuit* de la vie ne sera pas *interrompu*...

Un ingénieur électrique illuminé

Submitted by Georges Hasswani



IRIS PRECARN CONFERENCE

The IRIS/PRECARN conference provides a forum for the presentation of the research results of the IRIS and PRECARN associates, provides an opportunity for critical review, and encourages further interaction and cooperation among university and industry researchers working in the field.

The 4th annual IRIS/PRECARN conference will take place June 21-23, 1994 in Toronto. The conference will blend 'results-oriented' presentations by university researchers involved in the IRIS program with those of industry, university, and government researchers working in PRECARN research projects. People are being

asked to register by February 25 and students are invited to participate in the poster session where three prizes will be handed out for the best posters.

Anyone interested in finding out more information on the conference can call me at 4132 or send me a message (jmb @cim.mcgill.ca).

NEW PEOPLE AT CIM

WELCOME TO the following people:

Soumen Sarkar is a new graduate student in M.Eng (Thesis) Program in the Mechanical Engineering Department. His thesis advisor is Prof. E. Papadopoulos. Previously he was a graduate student in Ecole Polytechnique. He has completed a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Production Engineering at Jadavpur University, India. He is interested in working in software development or robot control, simulation for response of a dynamic system.

Other than his studies and research, he enjoys music and plays the guitar, mouth organ, and drums. He also enjoys sports and plays soccer, badminton, volleyball etc. Apart from this he loves to act in drama, skits etc. Photography is also one of his major hobbies. He told us he wanted to come to Canada because his country is too hot but found out Canada is too cold! He says he has learned to like our weather.

Wolfgang Seyfferth received his M.S. (1989) and Ph.D. (1993) in mechanical engineering from the Technical University of Munich, Germany. From '89 to '93 he was a research associate with Prof. F. Pfeiffer at the Institute B of Mechanics in Munich. Major research topics included robotics and the dynamics of mechanical systems with unilateral and friction constraints. He was awarded a "Feodor-Lynen" research grant by the "Alexander von Humboldt" foundation for a minimum period of one year beginning January 15. He will be working with Prof. J. Angeles on the dynamics of mechanisms with clearances and friction. His

personal interests include squash, SCUBA diving and travelling (South-East Asia).

Julie Payette has joined us to do her thesis work on robotics workstations in space under the supervision of Professors Hayward and De Mori. Julie is a full-time member of the Canadian Astronauts Program.

NEWS AND EVENTS

☞ **Robert Rohling** (BE) and **Jiming Liu** (Mining) have successfully completed their doctorates. We wish them lots of success and happiness.

☞ **Rene Peyrard** has returned to his homeland (France) escaping 'les affres de l'hiver Canadien'. Rene will be working at the Centre de Morphologie Mathematiques, Ecole des Mines de Paris.

☞ **Renato De Mori** received the title of IEEE Fellow in recognition of his contributions to symbolic and quantitative methods of signal interpretation and understanding. Congratulations!

ETHICS, SECURITY, AND OTHER HORROR STORIES

Maybe the ancient Greeks were right describing life as a struggle of two opposite forces. Certainly, we have examples, for instance, the usage of our computer facilities. On one side, we envision (and would like to have) a place where there are few rules and no need for guidelines or for someone to decide what is good for the users since we assume that every user behaves in a "responsible way".

On the other side, if someone does not behave "responsibly" (which always happens, as the history of mankind would show); then the impact of his actions are likely to upset the overall community sooner or later. Once the community can

no longer tolerate "irresponsible actions", corrective measures are taken; and since we have the ability to learn, we write guidelines to discourage future "irresponsible" behaviour and to protect the bad apples from themselves, the good apples from the bad apples, and the organization from the lawyers. But since every action has its price, these guidelines will be at the expense of some of the good apples' liberties and to the delight of the guideline-makers (what are they anyways, bad apples, good apples?, they are not apples?...)

How much of these liberties are to be taken away? How much will the good apples agree to give up for a non-disruptive environment? I guess we have been trying to answer these questions for several thousands of years not to mention the fact that, normally, bad apples are not completely bad, neither are good apples completely good. Certainly, here at McGill we have been playing the guideline-making game concerning computer usage, for about a year now. The end result? who knows.

Security is called in place when we have external bad apples. Electrical Engineering computer facilities were hit by a set of rather rotten apples and they have had a rather rotten time rebuilding their systems. The bad guys (some would say 'curious') exploited a bad password and lax security mechanisms. Although we have security structures in place, we are not shielded. A break-in could also happen to us (hope it won't) if we insist on using poor passwords, have a negligent systems staff, the crackers outsmart systems people, and we are dealing with classified information. The first level is the strongest and you can help to keep it that way.

For the last horror story, please read the CIM computer usage guidelines posted (and probably ignored) on gopher.

Submitted by Carlos Perez

CIM TOP TEN

From the home laboratory in room 418:

Top 10 ways to beat the cold winter blues:

- ⑩ Snuggle up with your favourite robot.
- ⑨ Relax in front of a full colour image of a roaring fire.
- ⑧ Import two tons of sand from Cuba to spread on the lab floor, then impose a Bermuda shorts and sunglasses dress code.
- ⑦ Be thankful that the starvation at the 1992 CIM Christmas party is over a year behind us.
- ⑥ Find the most remotely held conference you can and submit a paper to it, regardless of when the conference is or how many errors are in the paper.
- ⑤ Get involved in helping the poor folks who still use the vi editor.
- ④ Unwind by removing braille labels from McConnell elevators (oops, too late).
- ③ Rest easy knowing the managerial staff is behind you all the way.
- ② Increase funding for graduate students (hint, hint).
- ① Ignore Mike Parker's winter clothing suggestions.

Submitted by Paul Mackenzie