

寄せ書き

# Congratulations to Japanese Society for Evolutionary Computation

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I am delighted to have been asked to extend my congratulations to the newly formed Japanese Society for Evolutionary Computation. So, let me say, congratulations, and ask, what took you so long?! Research in genetic algorithms and evolutionary computation in Japan has a rich and interesting history reaching back to the 80s and 90s, and my own interactions with Japanese researchers reach back to the early 90s. Given the strong work and many excellent researchers, not to mention what is perhaps the liveliest environment for GA/EC industrial application on the planet, I think researchers around the world will now join me in welcoming this, its newest scientific society, with a sigh of relief and a sense that it is past due.

When I started my PhD studies with John Holland and Ben Wylie at the University of Michigan in 1980, some might be interested to note that my introduction to genetic algorithms occurred, to a great extent, by chance. After signing up for the standard artificial intelligence class, going to class, and finding that it was cancelled, I found another course, a course called Introduction to Adaptive Systems taught by a faculty member named John Holland, and the rest, as they say, was history.

My direct introduction to Japan came in an equally unexpected way. In particular, I was minding my own business on 26 November 1991, when I received an e-mail invitation to address the 1992 Information Processing Society of Japan on genetic algorithms. The invitation came from Dr. Matsuo of Fujitsu Laboratories, and I remember how excited I was to receive it, but that excitement was small in comparison to my first actual visit. I remember my first visit as a whirlwind of meishi, sake, sushi, Shinkansens, and seminars. I resolved to get to know the country and its researchers better, and many years later, I can say that I have been to Japan many times, that I have a genuine fondness for the country and its people, and that my own younger son, Zack, decided to study Japanese in high school in tribute to a trip we took when I was a visiting prof at Tsukuba University near Tokyo.

My labo, the Illinois Genetic Algorithms Laboratory (IlligAL), has played host to many fine Japanese professors, students, and industrial researchers. I won't embarrass them by listing their names here, but there have been a number of times in the labo where a visitor to IlligAL might think they had just walked off the streets of Shinjuku or Osaka. Those were happy times in IlligAL, and I will miss my Japanese visitors very much, but it is with a little sadness and a touch of regret that I announce that IlligAL is closing on 31 December 2010. After 26 plus years in academic life and a little over 20 years at the University of Illinois, I am resigning my tenure and my endowed professorship and going into private change consultancy practice ([www.threejoy.com](http://www.threejoy.com)).

One of the joys of the last five years has been to take my learning in GAs and EC and turn it to problems of philosophy and engineering as well as to the transformation and modernization of engineering education. Staring at computer simulations of artificial organizations is remarkably good training for trying to design social systems that evolve new processes into place.

And a new society is a new organization, and it will face challenges and growing pains as it tries to make its mark. Therefore, I wish you all the wisdom that a life of studying GAs and EC can bring, and though my own life course is taking a bit of a turn in a somewhat different direction, please know that I will have one eye on the lookout for my many friends in The Japanese Society for Evolutionary Computation. Given the quality of its people and ideas it can hardly help but be a smashing success, something I am quite confident will come to pass.

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