

**Award Acceptance Speech
for the Donald E. Walker Distinguished Service Award**

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Many thanks to the IJCAI Trustees for the privilege of joining such a distinguished group of recipients and for allowing me to be here today.

I particularly appreciate their excellent timing, doing so 20 years after the IJCAI, for which I was in charge as the Chair of the Board of Trustees in the beautiful small town of Chambéry in France.

It is 25 years after I got started with the German Research Center for AI (DFKI for short) in 1988, that has now more than 400 researchers on its payroll. It's also 25 years after I got involved into the International Computer Science Institute (ICSI for short) at UC Berkeley, where I am still serving on the Executive Board.

And there is another case of a 25th anniversary today: It was also in 1988, that the Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence series (LNAI for short) commenced publication, initiated by my colleague Joerg Siekmann from DFKI. Till today, more than 1500 volumes have been published in LNAI comprising more than 57000 articles in the Springer Link digital library and resulting in millions of chapter downloads each year. Since 2008, I am editing this series together with my colleagues Randy Goebel and Yuzuru Tanaka.

At this IJCAI, many of the workshops and some co-located conference proceedings will appear in our series. We always try to spot promising new directions of AI and support excellent young research communities by upgrading their workshop notes to the level of LNAI proceedings in the early phase of their development.

In my opening speech at IJCAI 1993 in Chambéry, I presented the decision of the Board of Trustees, that the Distinguished Service Award, which was established in 1979, is renamed to the Donald E. Walker Distinguished Service Award to honor Don, who shaped the IJCAI organization for more than 20 years as the Secretary Treasurer.

Chambery was the first conference since 1969 that Don had missed due to very bad health. He died of cancer shortly after IJCAI in November 1993 – and today, 20 years later, many of the principles of the IJCAI organization that Don has established are still in place.

He left a large open space in the IJCAI organization. I have been in touch recently with Don's wife Betty, who had often helped to sell back issues of IJCAI and ACL proceedings at the conference desk. She told me that his three daughters and four grandkids are all in different disciplines, however none in computer science.

Don Walker guided me like a father through the complex IJCAI world.

What I learned from him is that building bridges is most important for research: bridges between people, bridges between disciplines, bridges across the diverse areas of large fields like AI, and bridges between world-wide research organizations – always being inclusive, not exclusive as Barbara Grosz and Jerry Hobbs wrote in their remembrance of Don. In the 25th anniversary issue of the AI Magazine, I wrote that the acronym "AI" can also be spelled out as "Avant-Garde Informatics", since AI is always pushing computational methods to their limits. Thus, I found that it also important to build bridges between AI and the many other subareas of informatics, and between academia, industry and politics.

Don Walker constantly reminded the trustees and IJCAI conference committees of the importance of safeguarding both dimensions of diversity by building bridges: bringing together researchers from around the world and across all fields of AI.

Chinese proverbs are famous. One of them says: "If you are exploring new territory, you need stable bridges"

It was a pleasure for me to serve as a bridge-builder in Don's spirit. I'd like to thank everyone who supported me in building some new bridges. I couldn't have done it without you guys.

Thank you all again and enjoy the conference!