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Annual Review of Computer Science
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CONTENTS

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Common Lisp, <i>Scott E. Fahlman</i>	1
Using Reasoning About Knowledge to Analyze Distributed Systems, <i>Joseph Y. Halpern</i>	37
The Emerging Paradigm of Computational Vision, <i>Steven W. Zucker</i>	69
Nonmonotonic Reasoning, <i>Raymond Reiter</i>	147
Logic, Problem Solving, and Deduction, <i>Drew V. McDermott</i>	187
Planning, <i>Michael P. Georgeff</i>	359
Language Generation and Explanation, <i>Kathleen R. McKeown and William R. Swartout</i>	401
Search Techniques, <i>Judea Pearl and Richard E. Korf</i>	451
Vision and Navigation for the Carnegie-Mellon Navlab, <i>Charles Thorpe, Martial Hebert, Takeo Kanade and Steven Shafer</i>	521

HARDWARE

Techniques and Architectures for Fault-Tolerant Computing, <i>Roy A. Maxion, Daniel P. Siewiorek and Steven A. Elkind</i>	469
---	-----

SOFTWARE

Knowledge-Based Software Tools, <i>David R. Barstow</i>	21
Network Protocols and Tools to Help Produce Them, <i>Harry Rudin</i>	291

THEORY

Computer Algebra Algorithms, <i>Erich Kaltofen</i>	91
Linear Programming (1986), <i>Nimrod Megiddo</i>	119
Algorithmic Geometry of Numbers, <i>Ravi Kannan</i>	231
Research on Automatic Verification of Finite-State Communication Systems, <i>F. M. Clarke and G. G. L. Long</i>	269

vi CONTENTS (*continued*)

APPLICATIONS

Computer Applications in Education: A Historical Overview, <i>D. Midian Kurland and Laura C. Kurland</i>	317
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INDEXES

Subject Index	557
Cumulative Index of Contributing Authors, Volumes 1–2	564
Cumulative Index of Chapter Titles, Volumes 1–2	565

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VISION AND NAVIGATION FOR THE CARNEGIE-MELLON NAVLAB

*Charles Thorpe, Martial Hebert, Takeo Kanade,
Steven Shafer, and the members of the
Strategic Computing Vision Lab*

Department of Computer Science, Carnegie-Mellon University,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213

1. INTRODUCTION

Robotics is one place where Artificial Intelligence meets the real world. AI deals with symbols, rules, and abstractions, reasoning about concepts and relationships. The real world, in contrast, is tangible, full of exceptions to the rules, and often stubbornly difficult to reduce to logical expressions. Robots must span that gap. They live in the real world and must sense, move, and manipulate real objects. Yet to be intelligent, they must also reason symbolically. The gap is especially pronounced in the case of outdoor mobile robots. The outdoors is constantly changing, due to wind in trees, changing sun positions, even due to a robot's own tracks from previous runs. And mobility means that a robot is always encountering new and unexpected events, so static models or preloaded maps are inadequate to represent the robot's world.

The tools a robot uses to bridge the chasm between the external world and its internal representation include sensors, image understanding to interpret sensed data, geometrical reasoning, and concepts of time and of motion over time. We are studying those issues by building a mobile robot, the Carnegie-Mellon Navlab, and giving it methods of understanding the world. The Navlab has perception routines for understanding color video images and for interpreting range data. CODGER, our "whiteboard," proposes a new paradigm for building intelligent robot systems. The CODGER tools, developed for the Navlab and its smaller cousin the

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