

Message from Academia Europaea Hermann Maurer

I am writing this for the EATCS Bulletin with a large dose of nostalgia: I was quite involved in EATCS in its beginning as Secretary and Bulletin Editor, from 1977 to 1981. Let me, reminiscing, mention a few historical facts concerning the Bulletin¹, first.

After EATCS was officially founded in 1972 the Bulletin issue one was edited by Maurice Nivat in 73, issue two by Giorgio Ausiello in 76. I was elected EATCS Secretary and Bulletin editor at the 4 th ICALP (Turku, 1977). The regular appearance (three issues a year) was started by me with issue three: I am happy that some of the logo-design and structure that we introduced (particular the ideas to include technical papers) is still in use. With issue four the Bulletin crossed the 100 page limit and included photos for the first time². It continued to grow, so that mailing became a serious financial issue. It was only possible due to support of the University of Karlsruhe and later Graz University of Technology where I was also able to host the 6 th ICALP (1979). I continued as Bulletin editor till 1981 (no.14). Then Grzegorz Rozenberg took over. It is certainly he who shaped the Bulletin, expanding its scope, the number of technical contributions and reports on activities, adding DARDARA cartoons and turning each Bulletin in a veritable book, often exceeding 500 pages. Rozenberg edited an incredible 66 issues (15-80, from 1981 to 2003!). With issue 111 that appeared October 2013 the Bulletin is still going strong. The current issue is the second one edited by the new Bulletin editor Kazuo Iwama from Kyoto who invited me to write this message.

So far I have not done justice to the title of this message concerning Academia Europaea (AE for short). But here is my first chance: Kazuo Iwama became member of AE in 2012, and is actually the only member³ from Japan.

Before I do what I am supposed to do, tell a bit about AE, let me reminisce a bit more about those years when I was working in theory. I had the chance to publish papers with giants in their field like Arto Salomaa, Grzegorz Rozenberg, Maurice Nivat, Werner Kuich, Emo Welzl, and many others. Some are unfortunately not with us any more, like Seymour Ginsburg or Derick Wood, others have changed their fields like Karel Culik II or Thomas Ottmann. A bit later I started to also work on algorithms and data structures and more applied areas, to some extent with already famous scientists like Jon Bentley or Franco Preparata, and more and more with emerging scholars from my own group of Ph.D.'s, like Juergen Albert, Lutz Wegner, Herbert Edelsbrunner, Emo Welzl, Dieter Fellner and Jennifer Lennon, to mention a few. http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Maurer_Hermann/Publications shows that my first 80 or so journal publications deal with theory, but the next hundred are mainly in applied areas. In my research, I moved away from theory in the eighties, chiefly for pragmatic reasons: when I took on the job as founding professor for Informatics (computer science) in Graz/Austria in 1978 I was forced to cooperate with industry to get enough backing to build up a sizeable group: Informatics in Graz has grown to about 400 researchers this way. But my heart continued to remain close to theory. This is also based on a belief that I have often stated: a break-through in Informatics is almost always due to theoretical research (whether it is in cryptography, data-bases, information retrieval, computer graphics, machine learning, etc.).

¹ For a fairly detailed history of EATCS see the contribution by Ute and Wilfried Brauer for the 25 year anniversary at <http://eatcs.org/index.php/about-the-association/article/497>

² Manfred Kudlek became official Photo Editor a few years later and has recorded much of EATCS history

³ Academia Europaea is very selective with foreign members, the large majority of its members are in Europe

In 2000 I was elected member of Academia Europaea (AE), nominated by two colleagues in theory. I became Chair of the Informatics section of AE in 2009. This allowed me to re-establish contacts also with colleagues in theory that I knew from 20 years earlier. AE had 70 members in the Informatics Section when I took over. When I resigned (moving to the board of AE) Nov. 15, 2013, AE had 200 members in the Informatics Section. Quite a few of those new members also come from theory. If you want to see who is in AE in the Informatics section in your country, select your country and the section Informatics in the membership database, i.e. on http://www.ae-info.org/ae/Acad_Main/List_of_Members .

Although AE is quite a powerful organisation (with e.g. some influence with ERC and its grants) some of you may not know much about it, so let me give you a few details:

“Academia Europea (AE for short) is a European, non-governmental association acting as an Academy. Its members are scientists and scholars who collectively aim to promote learning, education and research. It was founded in 1988. By now it has about 3000 members including leading experts from the physical sciences and technology, biological sciences and medicine, mathematics, the letters and humanities, social and cognitive sciences, economics and the law.”

This is the official wording. It is a bit on the modest side. By having a glance at ae-info.org, the information server of AE, you can see what I mean. AE has 20 sections, covering humanities, the letter, law, social sciences, natural sciences and life sciences. Official HQ is in London, two “knowledge hubs” are in Wroclaw and Barcelona, respectively, and there is the information hub ae-info.org (run by my group in Graz). If you look there under “members with special distinctions” you find that members have obtained 52 Nobel prizes, 4 Turing awards, 12 Field medals, 22 Lasker Awards, 5 Abel- , 7 Goedel- and 40 Wolf prizes. If you add to this a few thousand honorary doctorates⁴ and the fact that most members are also members in national academies you can see that AE has assembled a good portion of the European research elite.

AE is supporting and conducting many seminars and conferences. Particularly worth mentioning is the annual conference: I consider it one of the best general conferences that exist. Absolutely top researchers from a mix of areas are presenting state of the art and beyond, but (this is what makes this meeting very special) at a level so that educated persons from other areas can understand all important points. The next annual meeting is in Barcelona, July 16-18, 2014: it will be an event worth coming to. It is also the first time that a computer scientist, Kurt Mehlhorn from U. Saarbruecken, will receive the highest honour AE can bestow, the ERASMUS Medal. He will hence also give the Erasmus lecture, always one of the highlights of the meeting. That this medal goes the first time to Informatics is an indication that AE is taking Informatics more seriously than it did in the past. It is not a coincidence that the annual conference in 2015 will be organized by a leading Informatics group in Germany, Fraunhofer Research. The two organizers Dieter Fellner, MAE and Peter Seidel, MAE are both top computer scientists and members of the AE. They are allowed to add MAE (Member Academia Europaea) to their name since they are members of AE.

AE is also publishing a high quality journal, “The European Review” that is available electronically like this Bulletin but, and this goes much against my grain and I have been desperately trying to change it, accessible only for members or through subscriptions

⁴ I am not sure which member has the largest number of honorary doctorates, but I know that at least one member who is approaching 30 (Carl Djerassi has 29 so far, I believe).

(personal or a library). I must congratulate EATCS for its much better open access policy of the Bulletin.

Let me finish by saying that I hope I will be able to see many of you again, or get to know you, in my role as member of the board of AE. I wish EATCS, the Bulletin, TCS and ICALP continued success.

Thanks for allowing me to write this message. If I can be of any help concerning information on AE do let me know!

Cordially,
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