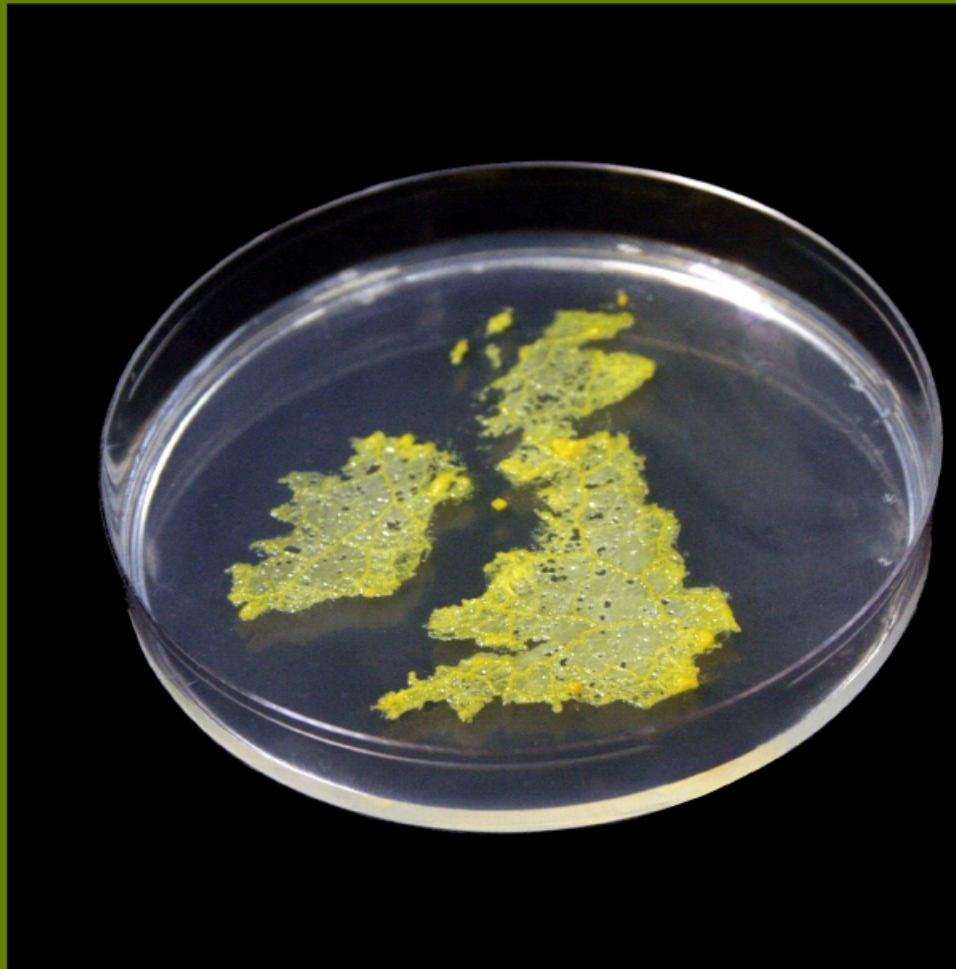


ARTIFICIAL LIFE XI



Proceedings of the Eleventh
International Conference on
the Simulation and Synthesis
of Living Systems

edited by

Seth Bullock, Jason Noble,
Richard Watson, and Mark A. Bedau

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Preface

The Eleventh International Conference on Artificial Life marks the twenty-first birthday of the conference series, which was founded in 1987 by Chris Langton at the Santa Fe Institute. As you might expect, over twenty-one years the community has grown, matured and stabilised around some key ideas, individuals and questions. However, while artificial life now, as then, continues to investigate the fundamental properties of living systems through simulating and synthesizing biological entities and processes in artificial media, there are signs that the field may be on the cusp of a second wave driven by new developments in molecular, cellular and systems biology, and renewed widespread interest in complex systems of many kinds.

The rise of synthetic biology (constructing artificial living cells, engineering with living biological materials, etc.) and systems biology, with its focus on biological organisations above the gene (e.g., proteomics, metabolomics, etc.), means that topics proper to artificial life are becoming key research areas across science and engineering. Additionally, the kinds of agent-based simulations and complex systems methodologies pioneered within artificial life are growing in importance within a large number of fields (ecology, economics, sociology, transport, etc.). This makes ALIFE XI a potential watershed event at which artificial life has the opportunity to engage with, and offer a stimulating home for, some of the largest and most interesting of modern research questions.

Over the last twenty-one years, the ALIFE conference series has, along with its European sister conference ECAL, played an important role as a meeting place for researchers from diverse disciplines. Biologists, physicists, chemists, computer scientists, engineers, economists, linguists, geographers, psychologists, mathematicians, anthropologists, philosophers, musicians and artists have come together to exchange ideas and inspiration. In doing so, many have found an informed audience for work that may have been considered peripheral to the interests of their home disciplines. Maintaining this diversity of ideas, tools, approaches and cultures is something that we feel is extremely valuable.

One measure of artificial life's success is that the community's research has had an influence on the mainstream work within adjacent disciplines. What was once somewhat marginal is increasingly central: witness the growth of interest in complexity, self-organisation, adaptation and simulation across a broad range of fields. Moreover, Alife has had a hand in the genesis of entirely new research communities in areas such as unconventional computing and self-* computing. If Alife is to remain healthy, there must be a continuing reason for researchers to keep coming back to the melting pot within which some of these ideas were incubated.

With this in mind, our aim was to make the meeting as open and attractive to researchers from as wide a range of disciplines as possible—our watchword was “inclusivity”. In order to involve as many relevant kinds of academics as possible at ALIFE XI we have experimented with radical changes to the format and delivery of the conference. By allowing both full papers and abstracts to be submitted for presentation at the conference and inclusion in this proceedings, we hoped to engage not just with ALIFE's established core community, but also researchers from disciplines where conferences are not associated with published proceedings, e.g., many parts of biology.

For such conferences it is standard practice to submit abstracts only and for no lasting record of the conference to be published. We were also conscious that there are many Alife academics for whom a full conference paper may not look like a good return on the investment of time and effort required. For both of these groups of people, the opportunity to make a presentation based on a 500-word abstract may make the difference between attending the conference or not. The fact that ALIFE XI received roughly the same number of full paper submissions as ALIFE IX and X, but also received a similar number of abstracts on top of that is evidence that this has indeed been the case. Given this, we believe that the new format will maintain the character and quality of ALIFE whilst lowering the “barriers to entry” that may have existed in the past, opening it up to a more diverse and representative community of researchers.

ALIFE XI sees many firsts for the conference series. For the first time in its history, the conference visits Europe, being hosted in the United Kingdom by the University of Southampton at the nearby historic city of Winchester, known for its 11th-century cathedral and 12th-century castle. For the first time, the conference will be truly multi-track with around 180 talks taking place over three-and-a-half days. While it might not be ideal for delegates to have to choose between competing parallel sessions, we feel that allocating every accepted submission an oral presentation offers the best opportunity for each researcher to present their work clearly and effectively to the delegates that have a substantive interest in it. Also for the first time, the conference proceedings will be published by MIT Press as an open-access online volume containing all accepted papers and abstracts. Rather than receiving an expensive and heavy book at registration, conference delegates (and anyone else) will instead be able to freely access the entire conference proceedings online. In addition to obvious economic and environmental advantages, this arrangement should enable delegates to make informed decisions regarding which talks to attend at the conference, and should also increase the impact of conference papers outside the immediate community of delegates attending the conference.

We received a total of 275 submissions (145 full papers and 130 abstracts), each of which was reviewed by three referees. Of these, 95 full papers and 85 abstracts were selected for presentation at the conference and publication in this proceedings. At the time of writing we have registered over 250 delegates for the meeting itself. Our thanks to all those who submitted papers and abstracts to the conference.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who served on the programme committee for their assistance in shaping the direction that the field is taking and helping achieve a high level of quality across the accepted submissions:

Andrew Adamatzky	Alastair Channon	Nicholas Geard
Fernando Almeida e Costa	Andy Clark	Steve Grand
Takaya Arita	Dave Cliff	Patrick Grim
Wolfgang Banzhaf	Bob Damper	Jennifer Hallinan
Lionel Barnett	Kerstin Dautenhahn	Inman Harvey
Randall Beer	Manuel de Pinedo	Paulien Hogeweg
Josh Bongard	Ezequiel Di Paolo	Owen Holland
C. Titus Brown	Marco Dorigo	Gregory Hornby
Joanna Bryson	Alan Dorin	Phil Husbands
Chris Buckley	Arantza Etxeberria	Auke Ijspeert
Larry Bull	Chrisantha Fernando	Frederic Kaplan
Lola Ca namero	Sevan G. Ficici	Jozef Kelemen
Angelo Cangelosi	Dario Floreano	Jan Kim
Peter Cariani	David Fogel	Lex Kraaijeveld
John Cartlidge	Daniel W. Franks	Daniel Ladley

Tom Lenaerts	Andrew Philippides	Charles Taylor
Kristian Lindgren	Daniel Polani	Rene te Boekhorst
Hod Lipson	Jordan Pollack	Peter Todd
James Marshall	William Rand	Elio Tuci
Barry McMullin	Luis Rocha	Richard Vaughan
J. J. Merelo	Jonathan Rowe	Paul Vogt
Julian F. Miller	Graeme Ruxton	James Watson
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Ulrich Nehmzow	Anil Seth	Janet Wiles
Stefano Nolfi	Eric Silverman	Kai Willadsen
Charles Ofria	Kenny Smith	Hywel Williams
Pierre-Yves Oudeyer	Andrew Smith	Peter Wills
Alexandra Penn	Susan Stepney	Simon Worgan
Rolf Pfeifer	Tim Taylor	Klaus-Peter Zauner

We would also like to acknowledge the valuable input of several additional reviewers:

Christos Ampatzis	Anders L. Christensen	Christopher Strelhoff
Prasanna Balaprakash	Rob Mills	Colin Tosh
Alexandre Campo	Martin Nilsson Jacobi	

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We were very lucky to secure the services of a truly excellent array of world-class keynote speakers: Andrew Ellington, Takashi Ikegami, Eva Jablonka, Stuart Kauffman, and Peter Schuster. Our thanks to them for taking the time and effort to contribute to the conference.

Andrew Ellington received his BS in Biochemistry from Michigan State University in 1981, and his PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from Harvard in 1988. As a graduate student he worked with Dr. Steve Benner on the evolutionary optimization of dehydrogenase isozymes. His post-doctoral work was with Dr. Jack Szostak at Massachusetts General Hospital, where his lab developed methods for the *in vitro* selection of functional nucleic acids and coined the term ‘aptamer’. Dr. Ellington began his academic career as an assistant professor of Chemistry at Indiana University in 1992. In 1998 he moved to the University of Texas at Austin and is now the Fraser Professor of Biochemistry. Dr. Ellington’s lab continues to develop functional nucleic acids for practical applications, including aptamer biosensors, allosteric ribozyme logic gates (aptazymes), and internalizing nucleic acids that can deliver siRNAs to cells. A next leap forward will hopefully be to develop synthetic genetic circuits that can perform amorphous computations. Ultimately, though, Dr. Ellington’s first love remains origins of life research, which oddly melds with translational research initiatives in that it is the ultimate biotechnology challenge.

Takashi Ikegami is Associate Professor in the Department of General Systems Sciences, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo. He is a long-standing member of the Artificial Life community, with work spanning a diverse array of concepts, such as chaotic

itinerancy, self-organisation, autopoiesis, and embodiment, applied to a range of behaviours including coevolution, learning, language, social behaviour and song, in systems of birds, robots, children, flies, cells, and even oil droplets. These interests are unified by a focus on understanding the fundamental behavioural dynamics of embedded, embodied, evolving and adaptive systems.

Eva Jablonka is a geneticist known especially for her work on epigenetic inheritance. Her research with Marion Lamb is in the vanguard of what has been described as an ongoing revolution within evolutionary biology. In their current book, they describe how the growing body of evidence for the evolutionary role of epigenetic processes is putting increasing pressure on the dominant neo-Darwinian paradigm. Jablonka is a professor at the Cohn Institute for the History of Philosophy of Science and Ideas at Tel Aviv University and was awarded the Landau Prize of Israel in 1981 and the Marcus prize in 1988.

Stuart Kauffman originally trained as a physician and is now a biologist and complex systems researcher. His primary work has been as a theoretical biologist studying the origin of life and molecular organization. His seminal models of autocatalytic sets, gene regulatory networks and fitness landscapes allowed him to develop an extremely influential account of the way in which self-organisation within biology can generate “order for free”. He currently holds a chair spanning the departments of biological sciences and physics and astronomy at the University of Calgary where he is the director of the Institute for Biocomplexity and Informatics. A MacArthur Fellow and a Trotter Prize winner, his latest book *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion* was published this year.

Peter Schuster is a renowned biophysicist, known for his work with Manfred Eigen in developing the quasi-species model. His main research interests are bioinformatics and structure prediction of ribonucleic acids, the study of mechanisms of biological evolution by means of molecular models, the design of molecules for predefined purposes as well as the application of inverse methods in computational systems biology. He is full professor of theoretical chemistry at the University of Vienna. In 1992-1995 he was the founding director of the Institute of Molecular Biotechnology and head of its Department of Molecular Evolutionary Biology in Jena, Germany. He is member of the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, is the editor-in-chief of *Complexity* and is currently President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. In 1995 Peter Schuster received the Phillips-Morris Award and in 1999 the Wilhelm-Exner Medal.

We would also like to recognise the invaluable assistance provided by the people who helped to make the conference happen: the postdocs, postgrads and MSc students in the SENSE group at ECS, Southampton, Denise Harvey, the group secretary, the ECS finance group, Joyce Lewis and Sarah Prendergast, for help with posters and other materials, C. Titus Brown for running the submissions website, MIT Press for agreeing to experiment with an entirely new model for delivering a conference proceedings, Hannah Lane and her team at the University of Winchester Conference Office who were outstanding in their support, efficiency and professionalism, and in particular, Nic Geard who has been central to the smooth running of the entire operation from start to finish.

By way of conclusion, it seems appropriate to remind the readers of this proceedings volume that, over the last two decades, some of the highly speculative ideas that were discussed at the field's inception have matured to the extent that whole new conferences and journals devoted to

them are being established: synthesising artificial cells, simulating massive biological networks, exploiting biological substrates for computation and control, and deploying bio-inspired engineering are all now cutting-edge practice. It is our intention that the ALIFE conference series continue to provide an opportunity for those working across these topics to get together and exchange ideas and results, showcasing the best current work in the field, highlighting new directions for investigation, and providing a platform for world-renowned keynote speakers. Our thanks to all who have attended and made this possible.

A note on the cover

We chose to promote the conference with an image that is in some sense itself an example of artificial life: a real organism artificially encouraged to adopt the shape of the host country (plus Ireland). The cover of this proceedings volume features a photograph of a single-cell creature, the slime mould *Physarum polycephalum*, that was grown over a period of between twelve and twenty-four hours in a petri dish. While we have tidied the image up a little, it is essentially undoctored. The slime mould was grown by Soichiro Tsuda, and photographed by Soichiro, Nic Geard and Seth Bullock. The initial idea was proposed by Richard Watson during a particularly creative lunch.

In order to achieve the shot, we used a piece of acetate with an appropriately shaped hole as a template, and grew the slime mould across this area. The network of microtubules that you can see forms spontaneously as the creature grows, and reflects the self-organised system of nutrient transport that the slime mould uses. Since *Physarum* does not enjoy acetate as a habitat, it is relatively easy to remove the template and leave behind the organism, which has adapted to the niche it was offered by creating a living map of the the United Kingdom (and Ireland).

The organising committee of Artificial Life XI,

Seth Bullock (Conference Chair)
Jason Noble (Program Chair)
Richard Watson (Proceedings Chair)
Mark Bedau

Southampton, June, 2008

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