

KogWis'08

9. Conference of the German Cognitive Science Society

The 9. Conference of the German Cognitive Science Society was held at the TU Dresden from September 28th to October 1st. The conference was organized by Leon Urbas, Thomas Goschke, and Boris Velichkovski. In accord with its topics, KogWis'08 drew participants from a wide range of disciplines. Overall more than 100 participants came to KogWis'08. Most of the participants were from Germany or from German speaking countries; only few international participants found their way to Dresden.

1 Topics

Given the multi-disciplinarity of cognitive science, KogWis'08 comprised contributions from computer science, philosophy, (psycho)linguistics, psychology, and neuroscience, among others. In 24 technical sessions (called symposia) topics such as, for example, free(dom of) will, cognitive interaction technologies, eye-movements in cognitive research, spatial cognition, and neural-symbolic integration were discussed. Generally these symposia and the conference as a whole were marked by interdisciplinarity. For one, the number of contributions from the different disciplines differed less than they had on some of the previous KogWis. In particular, both philosophy and computer science / AI were represented by a substantial amount of contributions. Furthermore, a felicitous step to foster the scientific exchange between artificial intelligence and cognitive science was to have the invited talk of Ruth Byrne jointly with the concurrent JELIA conference. Importantly, a mix of disciplines was not only represented at the conference in general, but also in most of the symposia. The symposium on free will and several symposia concerned with human-computer interaction, for instance, brought together researchers and views from various disciplines. Thus, as previous conferences of the German Cognitive Science Society, KogWis'08 mirrored the breadth of the research field in terms of topics as well as disciplines and their intersections.

Compared to the previous KogWis, there were, however, at least two trends regarding topics which seem worth mentioning. First, whereas KogWis'07 featured a series of talks on brain imaging, this research field was present at KogWis'08 only to a lesser extent. Second, the number of contributions concerned with (human) spatial cognition—though this topic was already well represented at KogWis'07—further increased. This seems to be a general trend in the cognitive sciences judging from a similar development at recent CogSci conferences.

2 Main Conference

The first day of the conference was devoted to the presentation and discussion of the ongoing work of 12 Ph.D. students in the doctoral colloquium. The following three days consisted of symposia and the poster session. The selection of symposia and

Holger Schultheis

poster session presentations was based on short abstracts. After a careful review of all submitted abstracts the best were chosen for presentation at the conference. Overall 109 contributions (16 posters, 93 talks) were accepted. These presentations constituted an impressive three-track program of symposia which were interleaved with excellent invited talks given by Benjamin Tatler, John-Dylan Haynes, Ruth Byrne, and Michael Tomasello.

All sessions I attended consisted of very interesting talks which lead to lively discussions often continued after the sessions' end.

One aspect which could be improved in future conferences is to more clearly define whether the official conference language is German or English. Instead of leaving it to the presenters and the symposium organizers to choose a language, it seems desirable to consistently use a single language for the whole conference.

2.1 Awards

For the first time, KogWis'08 awarded a publication-based best paper award. In contrast to previous best paper awards, the idea was to base the distinction on a previous publication which is unrelated to the conference. The best paper award has gone to Tobias Schlicht (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) for his work "Ein Stufenmodell der Intentionalität".

In addition to a best paper, a best poster was honored. Thorsten Zander, Sabine Jatzev, and Matthias Rötting (TU Berlin) received the award sponsored by the Brain Products GmbH for their poster "Examining causes for non-stationarities 2: The loss of controllability is a factor which induces non-stationarities."

3 Summary

The above can, unfortunately, only highlight some aspects of KogWis'08. Detailed information on the topics of the different sessions and presentations is available from the official conference website: <http://www.kogwis08.de>. On the whole, KogWis'08 was a very well organized and stimulating event! The only downside was that the sessions were too interesting to leave enough time to explore the beautiful center of Dresden.

I am looking forward to KogWis 2010 which is going to be organized by Heike Wiese (Universität Potsdam).

Contact

Holger Schultheis
Transregional Collaborative Research
Center SFB/TR 8 Spatial Cognition
Universität Bremen
schulth@sfbtr8.uni-bremen.de