

ESSLLI'99 - The Eleventh Summer School in
Logic, Language and Information:
-a student view report

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During the second and third weeks of August 1999, the Utrecht University opened its doors to host The Eleventh Summer School in Logic, Language and Information (ESSLLI'99).

This event, organised under the auspices of the European Association for Logic, Language and Information (FoLLI), has developed into an important meeting place and forum for discussion for students and researchers interested in the interdisciplinary study of Logic, Language and Information.

Meeting its traditional very high standards, the school's intensive scientific program consisted of over 50 courses and workshops, together with four plenary evening lectures and a student session. In addition to its scientific content, industrial recruitment activities and a social program were also held at ESSLLI'99.

The 45 courses, ranging from a foundational level requiring no specific background knowledge, to an advanced level specially addressed to an audience of Masters or PhD students, covered the following areas: Logic, Language and Computation, Language, Logic and Computation, Computation, and Logic and Language.

Highlights of the scientific program, w. r. t. the KRR area, would include the following courses:

- *A Logical Approach to Building Agents, Active Databases and Workflows: Representing and Reasoning about Actions* by Baral, Lobo and Scherl, covering several approaches to the design of autonomous agents namely by means of the language A, Situation Calculus and GOLOG. Application of these techniques to formalize active databases and workflows were also covered.
- *Foundations of Cognitive Robotics* by Hölldobler and Thielscher, laying down an introduction to the axiomatization paradigms of Situation Calculus, Fluent Calculus and Event Calculus, to continue with a formalization of reasoning about simultaneous actions and continuous change, planning (partial-order and hierarchical), all applied to an application domain.
- *Default Logic: from Theory to Applications* by Niemelä, introducing Default Logic and its most important subclasses corresponding to logic programs, explaining relevant expressivity and complexity results as well as presenting implementation methods behind recent computational breakthroughs. The Smodels system was also presented.
- *Reasoning with Logic Programming* by Pereira and Alferes, providing a logic programming integrated framework for representing knowledge and reason about classical AI topics and applications such as taxonomies, hypothetical reasoning, abduction, paraconsistent reasoning, revision, diagnosis, updates and actions. The first part of the course was devoted to an introduction to extended logic programs, their semantics and their relation to other non-monotonic reasoning paradigms.

Of the eight workshops organized, it is worth mentioning the absence of one specific to the Logic and Computation area of ESSLLI'99 - this could be altered for the 2000 edition of ESSLLI. Nevertheless, for those interested in agents, the workshop on *Foundations and Applications of Collective Agent Based Systems (CABS)* organized by van der Hoek et al. would have been interesting.

In the evening, the plenary gathered for the invited lectures *Mysteries of Order* by Eva Hajicova, *Homo Sapiens as Homo Ludens* by Johan van Benthem, *Understanding Constructive Semantics* by Sergei Artemov, and *Language and the Brain* by Patrick Suppes. Johan van Benthem's lecture was followed by a surprise commemoration of his 50th birthday.

The student session was a good opportunity for participants to show their work and receive valuable feedback. Despite of some absentees, causing several last minute changes in the program, good papers were presented, the Kluwer Best Paper Prize being awarded to *Towards Discontinuous Grammar* by Matthias T. Kromann.

Throughout the 2 weeks in Utrecht, several social events were organized: from guided tours to a reception hosted by the Mayor of Utrecht, from a football match to disco parties, just to mention a few, the social program was very pleasant not only to relax for a while but also to establish the so important contacts with fellow young researchers.

Overall, the summer school was a great success. The organization was quite efficient and, more important, the scientific program was quite coherent and of a very high level, this opinion being shared by many other participants.

More information about ESSLLI'99 can be found at <http://esslli.let.uu.nl>. Furthermore, a CD-ROM with most of the course notes and other relevant material is being compiled by the ESSLLI'99 organization.

To conclude, allow me to suggest the participation in future editions of ESSLLI to all those students and researchers interested in the covered areas, and hope to see you in Birmingham next year!