

# An Update on DAYDREAMER, A Computer Model of Human Daydreaming

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## Abstract

I present an update on DAYDREAMER, a computer model of human daydreaming and emotions. Daydreaming and emotions are important capabilities for artificial intelligence systems because they make it easier for humans to relate to them. I discuss the DAYDREAMER architecture, the history of DAYDREAMER, the impact of DAYDREAMER, and what it will take to build a daydreaming machine.

## 1 Introduction

Daydreaming consists of recalling past experiences, imagining alternative versions of those experiences, and imagining possible future experiences. DAYDREAMER is a computer model of human daydreaming and emotions (Mueller, 1990).<sup>1</sup> DAYDREAMER is embedded in a simulated real world. It accepts input world states and actions, produces output actions that modify the state of the world, and generates daydreams in English.

Why build a daydreaming machine? Daydreaming serves useful functions of learning, creative problem-solving, and emotion regulation in humans that can also be useful in machines. DAYDREAMER demonstrated its ability to learn, generate creative solutions, and improve its emotional state through daydreaming, just as humans do. More importantly, as we incorporate artificial intelligence into our daily lives, it will be helpful for AI systems to share human characteristics such as daydreaming and emotions so that humans can relate to them.

Here is sample output produced by DAYDREAMER:

REPERCUSSIONS1

Input: *There is an earthquake in Mexico City.*

What if there is an earthquake in Los Angeles? My apartment collapses.

My possessions are destroyed. I am killed. I feel very worried.

I have to go to the doorway. I have to get insurance.

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<sup>1</sup>DAYDREAMER consists of 18,262 lines of Lisp code and is available at <https://github.com/eriktmueller/daydreamer>

What if there is an earthquake in Los Angeles? I go to the doorway. I get hit by a falling plant. I get hurt. My possessions are destroyed. I feel very worried.

I have to move the plant away from the doorway. I have to buy insurance from some company.

External action: **I go to State Farm. I pay Sally.**

Input: *Sally gives me the insurance.*

I am insured. I feel very pleased.

...

(Mueller, 1990, p. 8)

What has happened since I wrote DAYDREAMER? In this paper, I present an update. I summarize the DAYDREAMER architecture, present a history of DAYDREAMER, and discuss the impact of DAYDREAMER. I conclude with a discussion of how we would go about building a daydreaming machine today.

## 2 DAYDREAMER Architecture

DAYDREAMER includes the following elements:

- **Personal Goals:** Basic goals to preserve possessions, form friendships, maintain self-esteem, and so on.
- **Daydreaming Goals:** Meta-goals to reduce negative emotional states and learn through daydreaming.
- **Emotions:** Emotions that influence and are influenced by daydreaming.
- **Planning:** Generating a sequence of actions to achieve a goal.
- **Episodic Memory:** A memory of real and imagined experiences.
- **Learning:** Improving future behavior and thought in response to real and imagined experiences.
- **Creativity:** Generating fanciful daydreams, recognizing and exploiting accidental relationships among goals, and generating new possibilities when stuck.
- **Natural Language Generation:** Generating daydreams in English.

### 2.1 Main Loop

DAYDREAMER generates daydreams by performing processing on behalf of top-level goals. Each top-level goal is associated with one or more emotions. The main loop of DAYDREAMER is as follows:

1. Select the top-level goal with the highest emotional motivation, which is equal to the absolute value of the sum of the values of the emotions associated with the goal.
2. Perform one unit of planning on the top-level goal. This may activate or terminate top-level goals and subgoals, perform imaginary or real actions, modify the values of emotions associated with goals, and associate new emotions with goals.
3. Go to step 1.

## 2.2 Planning

Planning applies planning rules and inference rules to a goal, in order to generate daydreams as well as to perform actions to achieve goals in the simulated real world.

Planning rules specify how to achieve a subgoal by breaking it down into subgoals and actions. An example planning rule is that, for a buyer to purchase an item from a seller, the buyer must transfer money to the seller, and the seller must transfer the item to the buyer.

Inference rules specify how to generate inferences. An example inference rule is that, if one person likes something that the person believes another person likes, then the first person will like the second person.

## 2.3 Daydreaming Goals

DAYDREAMER has the following daydreaming goals:

- **RATIONALIZATION**: Reinterpret a failure to reduce negative emotions resulting from the failure.
- **ROVING**: Shift attention away from a failure.
- **REVENGE**: Generate daydreams of revenge.
- **REVERSAL**: Generate daydreams in which a past or imagined future failure is avoided.
- **RECOVERY**: Generate daydreams in which a goal that failed in the past succeeds in the future.
- **REHEARSAL**: Generate possible daydreams for achieving a goal.
- **REPERCUSSIONS**: Explore and plan for hypothetical future situations.

## 2.4 Learning

DAYDREAMER stores its real and imagined experiences in episodic memory. The experiences are represented as planning trees. Planning trees are indexed in episodic memory by subgoals, emotions, people, and other features.

Two mechanisms enable learning in DAYDREAMER:

- DAYDREAMER learns by adding planning trees to episodic memory and later applying them to new goals. As the system operates, planning trees that might be relevant to the current goal are retrieved from episodic memory using various features. The retrieved planning trees are then used to guide generation of plans for the current goal. Parts of several planning trees retrieved from episodic memory can be combined in a novel way.
- DAYDREAMER learns by creating new planning and inference rules. After a REVERSAL daydream in which a failure is avoided, DAYDREAMER creates new rules to prevent similar failures in the future.

## 2.5 Creativity

Three mechanisms support the generation of creative daydreams in DAYDREAMER: planning, the serendipity mechanism, and the mutation mechanism.

Planning can generate fanciful daydreams by using low plausibility planning rules. An example of a low plausibility planning rule is that one can become a star by studying to be an actor.

The serendipity mechanism recognizes the unexpected applicability of a planning rule that has just become salient, to some active top-level goal. First, the mechanism conducts an intersection search through the rule connection graph from the planning rule to the top-level goal. Second, valid plans returned by the search are applied to the top-level goal. DAYDREAMER produces the following daydream using the serendipity mechanism:

### LAMPSHADE-SERENDIPITY

Input: *Lampshade*.

What do you know! I remember the time Karen thought highly of the comedian because she thought he was funny. She thought he was funny because he wore a lampshade.

... I have to wear a lampshade. ...

(Mueller, 1990, p. 14)

Corneli, Jordanous, Guckelsberger, Pease, and Colton (2020) develop a model for assessing serendipity capabilities in systems and conclude that “the model shows good evidence to support Mueller’s assertion that [DAYDREAMER] does have serendipity potential” (p. 32).

The mutation mechanism helps the system get unstuck when an action cannot be performed. It does this by permuting or generalizing objects of the action or by changing the type of the action entirely.

### 3 History of DAYDREAMER

I started working on DAYDREAMER in 1983 at the University of California, Los Angeles, under the supervision of Michael G. Dyer. My original idea was to create a dialogue system that would “think even when you are not talking to it, and also for it to think about other things while you are talking to it, like humans do” (Mueller, email message to Michael G. Dyer, October 4, 1983).

I immersed myself in the psychological literature on daydreaming (Freud, 1908/1962; Klinger, 1971; Singer, 1975; Varendonck, 1921). Working closely with Dyer, Kenneth Mark Colby (who had developed the PARRY chatbot and simulation of a paranoid patient [1975]), and other UCLA graduate students such as Uri Zernik, Scott Turner, John Reeves, and Charles Dolan, I started developing DAYDREAMER.

The most significant influences on DAYDREAMER from the field of artificial intelligence were the following:

- Dyer’s (1983) computer model of emotion,
- Wilensky’s (1983) work on planning and meta-planning,
- Schank and Abelson’s (1977) scripts, plans, and goals,
- Minsky’s (1977) theory of the mind as a society of intercommunicating and conflicting entities,<sup>2</sup> and
- Meehan’s (1976) story generation program TALE-SPIN.

In 1985, I presented papers about DAYDREAMER at the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI) and the Conference of the Cognitive Science Society (Mueller & Dyer, 1985a, 1985b).

In March 1987, I completed DAYDREAMER and my doctoral dissertation, *Daydreaming and Computation: A Computer Model of Everyday Creativity, Learning, and Emotions in the Human Stream of Thought* (Mueller, 1987). Ablex later published a revised version of my dissertation as a book, *Daydreaming in Humans and Machines: A Computer Model of the Stream of Thought* (Mueller, 1990).

After graduating, I went to work at Morgan Stanley, where I applied my ideas about daydreaming to creating a system called ExperTik, which hypothesizes the state of the New York Stock Exchange limit order book based on the Consolidated Tape System (CTS) and Consolidated Quote System (CQS) data streams. ExperTik was later incorporated into Morgan Stanley’s Aestar algorithmic trading system.

In 2000, I joined the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center. There I focused my attention on the problem of commonsense reasoning (Mueller, 2006, 2015), which I felt was the main bottleneck in DAYDREAMER and many other AI systems.

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<sup>2</sup>Minsky’s (1986) book-length treatment of these ideas, *The Society of Mind*, was published just as I was finishing my dissertation. A few years later, Minsky (1994) wrote that my ideas on daydreaming “indicate an important direction of research” (p. 312).

## 4 Impact of DAYDREAMER

DAYDREAMER has been cited by artificial intelligence researchers and computer scientists, including Andrae (1998), Gu, Mishra, and Clark (2021), Newell (1991), Pearce, Meadows, Langley, and Barley (2014), Rapaport (2012), Riley (2021), Rowe and Partridge (1993), Ushida, Hirayama, and Nakajima (1998), Wills and Kolodner (1994), and Winston and Holmes (2018).

DAYDREAMER has been cited by cognitive scientists, psychologists, and social scientists, including Atkinson (1998), Johnson-Laird (1993), Karniol and Ross (1996), Mildner and Tamir (2019), Moffat and Frijda (2000), Pfeifer (1988), Regis (2013), Schimmenti, Somer, and Regis (2019), Sun, Wilson, and Lynch (2016), Tokosumi (2001), Wehrle and Scherer (2001), and Weinstein, Deci, and Ryan (2011).

DAYDREAMER has been discussed in popular books (Davis, 2002; Fries, 2009; Martin, 2004) and in the popular press (BBC Radio 4, 2002; McAuliffe, 1986; United States Information Agency, 1986).

The main contributions of DAYDREAMER are in the areas of cognitive architectures, affective computing, story generation, and night dreaming.

### 4.1 Cognitive Architectures

A cognitive architecture is a set of process and data elements that work together to perform functions we associate with intelligence such as perception, learning, language understanding, planning, and reasoning.

DAYDREAMER is a more comprehensive cognitive architecture than the architectures that preceded it such as ACT\* (Anderson, 1983) and Soar (Laird, Rosenbloom, & Newell, 1986). Whereas previous architectures model rational behavior and thought, DAYDREAMER incorporates emotions and creativity into a model of behavior and thought.

DAYDREAMER influenced the MoCog1 cognitive architecture (Gevarter, 1991), which was developed at the NASA Ames Research Center. Gevarter states that “there has been a dearth of computer programs emphasizing the role of affects” and that DAYDREAMER “is the most sophisticated such program thus far developed” (p. 2). Greco (1994) cites DAYDREAMER as a “step in the direction of model integration” (p. 30) in his article on how to integrate different psychological models.

### 4.2 Affective Computing

DAYDREAMER is an early work in the field of affective computing, which is concerned with developing systems that can recognize and generate emotions, to make them more user-friendly.

Picard (1997) mentions DAYDREAMER in her book, *Affective Computing*. She states that DAYDREAMER “is not only able to perform reasoning about emotions, but it also uses the appraisal process to generate an internal emotional state that influences the system’s planning, learning, recall, and pro-

duction of hypothetical scenarios, or daydreams, exploiting the influences of mood-congruent memory retrieval” (p. 222). In his book *The Emotional Brain*, LeDoux (1996, pp. 37, 70) cites Dyer (1987), who discusses three computational models of emotion, BORIS, OpEd, and DAYDREAMER, in support of his proposal “to put cognition back into its mental context—to reunite cognition and emotion in the mind” (p. 39).

In his book on instinctive computing, Cai (2016) says:

In addition to the episodic memory of experiences used by constraint-free planning and rehearsal, remarkably, DAYDREAMER includes an emotion component that updates its emotion states arising from goal outcomes, such as scary feelings while being chased by a monster before the daydream is over; a personality model that provides the style for guiding the constraint-free planning; and the domain knowledge of interpersonal relationships and commonsense. (p. 241).

He adds:

The daydream research accidentally continued in the Google Research group in 2015. Artificial intelligence researchers trained artificial neural networks to recognize objects in images. . . When engineers tried to visualize the intermediate results inside the deep layers, they found hallucinating images. . . . The research team called the phenomena Deep Dream. (p. 242).

### 4.3 Story Generation

The field of story generation is concerned with building systems that generate stories. Interactive fiction systems allow the reader or player to participate in and influence the story.

Although DAYDREAMER generates daydreams rather than stories, it is often cited in discussions of story generation systems. Ogata (2016) explains:

DAYDREAMER is a computer program that simulates the consciousness of daydreaming, with a consistent character and a narrator. . . . [A]lthough this system is not a narrative generation system, strictly speaking, it synthetically implements various interesting mechanisms and techniques related to AI and cognitive science that include, in addition to goal-oriented planning associated with emotional states, the generation of external stories (occurring in the external world), creativity processing by serendipity, scripts for detailed expansion of an episode, various narrative knowledge representation techniques using semantic networks and frames, and so on. (p. 20)

Similarly, a review of interactive drama systems mentions DAYDREAMER even though it is “not strictly a story generation system” (Arinbjarnar, Barber, & Kudenko, 2009, p. 24).

DAYDREAMER is cited in work on Oz, an early architecture for interactive fiction with goal-based, emotional characters (Bates, Loyall, & Reilly, 1992, 1994; Reilly, 1996).

DAYDREAMER has been cited by other researchers in story generation and interactive fiction, including Guerrero Román and Pérez y Pérez (2020), Ryan (2018), and Ryan, Brothers, Mateas, and Wardrip-Fruin (2016).

#### 4.4 Night Dreaming

Night dreaming shares some similarities with daydreaming. Both involve imaginary events; night dreams tend to be more bizarre (Mueller, 1990, pp. 224–231).

DAYDREAMER influenced the metaphor-based model of night dreaming of Baylor and Deslauriers (1986). Baylor and Deslauriers (1989) argue that “the kind and quantity of mechanisms that are postulated by Mueller for human daydreaming are also necessary to account for basic processes of night dream construction” (p. 566). Deslauriers and Baylor (1988) state that DAYDREAMER “must serve as a touchstone for any subsequent theory of dream production” (p. 501).

A prominent researcher of sleep, night dreaming, and daydreaming, Antrobus (1999), calls DAYDREAMER an “excellent computer model of content sequences in daydreaming” (p. 6). Fisher (2009) states that my “analysis of daydreaming illuminates the literal/figurative difference that would differentiate between a ‘daytime’ and a dream mode” (p. 148) in his book on logic and figurative thinking.

### 5 Toward a Daydreaming Machine

How do we go about building a daydreaming machine today? It is still a difficult problem because, as I demonstrated, daydreams have very complex form and content.

Neural language models (Brown et al., 2020; Devlin, Chang, Lee, & Toutanova, 2019; Radford et al., 2019), which are trained on large text corpora, could be fine-tuned on a daydream corpus to generate daydreams.<sup>3</sup> But the resulting daydreams are unlikely to be realistic.

To build a daydreaming machine that produces realistic daydreams requires (1) representations of goals, meta-goals, emotions, autobiographical events, and commonsense knowledge, and (2) processes for planning, creative problem-solving, memory storage and retrieval, learning, and commonsense reasoning. Either the machine has to learn these representations and processes from data, the machine has to incorporate architectural elements that correspond to these representations and processes, or some combination of the two.

Building a daydreaming machine is a difficult problem because daydreams are complex. But, if we wish for computers to be friendly to humans, they will need daydreaming capabilities.

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<sup>3</sup>Ahson (2000) proposes a neural model of daydreaming in robots.



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