Artificial Intelligence

Thane Durey

John McCarthy

John McCarthy was an American computer scientist and cognitive scientist. Dr. John McCarthy was one of the founders, and who is credited with coining the term, “artificial intelligence” in 1955 in connection with a proposed summer workshop at Dartmouth College.

Dr. McCarthy was born on September 4, 1927 in Boston Massachusetts. He received his B.S. in Mathematics in 1948, and received a Ph.D. in Mathematics from Princeton University in 1951. After short-term appointments at Princeton, Stanford University, Dartmouth, and MIT, he became a full professor at Stanford in 1962, where he remained until his retirement at the end of 2000.

Dr. McCarthy championed mathematical logic for artificial intelligence. Trained as a mathematician, he was responsible for seminal advances in the field and was often called the father of computer time-sharing. This was a major development of the 1960s that enabled many people and organizations to draw simultaneously from a single computer source, like a mainframe, without having to own one. In 1958, he created the Lisp computer language, which became the standard AI programming language and continues to be used today, not only in robotics and other scientific applications but in a plethora of internet-based services, from credit-card fraud detection to airline scheduling; it also paved the way for voice recognition technology, including Siri, the personal assistant application on the latest iPhone 4s.

John McCarthy received multiple awards and honors throughout his life. He was awarded the Turing Award from the Association for Computing Machinery in 1971, the Kyoto Prize in 1988, the National Medal of Science (USA) in Mathematical, Statistical, and Computational Science in 1990, he was inducted as a Fellow of the Computer History Museum in 1999, awarded the Benjamin Franklin Medal in Computer and Cognitive Science from the Franklin Institute in 2003, inducted into the IEEE Intelligent Systems’ AI’s Hall of Fame in 2011 for the “significant contributions to the field of AI and intelligent systems”, and finally, he was named as one of the 2012 Stanford Engineering Heroes.