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# The Herald

## The CAIAC newsletter

The purpose of this publication is to keep you informed of the latest developments at CAIAC and in the Canadian AI community in general. We present news about recent events as well as upcoming deadlines of interest. Every issue features an interview with an eminent member of our community.

*Ce bulletin est également disponible en français.*

For more information about the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Association (CAIAC), please visit our website at <https://www.caiac.ca/>. You can also follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn!](#)

## Upcoming Events

- Canadian AI'2020 paper submission deadline: 17 January 2020
- Best PhD thesis Award nomination deadline: 31 January 2020
- Best MSc thesis Award nomination deadline: 31 January 2020
- Lifetime Achievement Award nomination deadline: 31 January 2020
- Distinguished Service Award nomination deadline: 31 January 2020

## CAIAC Award Recipients

2019 is a big year for awards! It was our great pleasure to award not one but two prizes for lifetime achievement and distinguished service, in addition to honouring the graduate student in AI with the best master's thesis, and the best paper and student paper at the Canadian AI conference.

The lifetime achievement award is presented to an individual to recognize a lifetime of scientific excellence and outstanding contributions to the field of Artificial Intelligence. The Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to an individual to recognize outstanding service to the Canadian Artificial Intelligence community.

The winners for this year are:

- **Stan Matwin**, Dalhousie University, CAIAC Lifetime Achievement Award.
- **Robert Holte**, University of Alberta, CAIAC Lifetime Achievement Award.
- **Peter van Beek**, University of Waterloo, CAIAC Distinguished Service Award.
- **Vlado Keselj**, Dalhousie University, CAIAC Distinguished Service Award.
- **Richard Moulton**, University of Ottawa, CAIAC Best Master's Thesis Award.
- **Frédéric Piedboeuf, Philippe Langlais, Ludovic Bourg**, Université de Montréal, Canadian AI Best Paper Award.
- **Mahtab Ahmed, Robert Mercer**, University of Western Ontario, Canadian AI Best Student Paper Award.



# Interview with Robin Cohen



**Professor at the University of Waterloo**

**Winner of the CAIAC 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award**

**CAIAC:**

*What are your research interests?*

**Robin Cohen:**

My research is currently focused on trust modeling in multiagent systems and on applications to social networks. I also have a longstanding interest in the social implications of computing and in user modeling.

**CAIAC:**

*What is, in your opinion, the most important development in Artificial Intelligence that took place in recent years or is in the process of taking place?*

**Robin Cohen:**

I think that the fact that researchers in the field have finally begun to reflect on the social implications of their systems is significant. AI has received increasing attention within organizations today as an avenue for performing improved decision making. This has resulted in concern about whether the solutions being proposed can be trusted and accepted. A wealth of workshops and conferences have emerged within our research community, examining issues of fairness, transparency, accountability, ethics and social good. While it is a positive to see concern for these social issues, we need to be careful to acknowledge that we may not be expert in deciding how to develop viable approaches; our expertise is in

computer science and thus we should continue to contribute technological solutions.

**CAIAC:**

*What advice would you give to young graduate student who are interested in AI?*

**Robin Cohen:**

At the moment, AI is a very popular subject of study. Competition to be accepted into AI programs is quite fierce. Students should first of all be ready for the day when AI is no longer the darling of computer science. They should go into the field for their passion about the subject and its potential: the opportunities for research are wide reaching and the challenges enticing. Each student should also strive to acquire a unique profile of talents and accomplishments: not just academic achievement but investment in examining critical applications and also volunteering at events which bring together prospective new students interested in AI.

**CAIAC:**

*Do you have any other comments or thoughts you would like to share about the state of AI research in Canada today?*

**Robin Cohen:**

The pace with which AI has grown in Canada recently has been unmatched. There are many opportunities today for employment at research centres, in industry and in academia. I think our challenge will be to continue to imagine new models, theories and subproblems to examine, in order to keep the field vibrant. Of course, we also need to continue to receive support from government for our efforts. With so many excellent researchers in the country, the Canadian AI conference should continue to reach out to individuals with world class stature, to showcase their accomplishments and to inspire the next generation. If we can promote as well the rising participation of women and other underrepresented groups in the field within our country, this will also help to encourage important future growth of AI in Canada. I am especially proud to be the first female recipient of CAIAC's Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Biography:**

**Dr. Robin Cohen** has made significant and sustained contributions to AI, including to the areas of computational linguistics, user modeling, temporal reasoning, plan recognition, agents, and trust and reputation modeling in electronic marketplaces. Her recent work on trust and reputation models has

received a lot of attention, especially the surprising result that trust models presented in the literature contain vulnerabilities. Prof. Cohen is also widely recognized for her leadership in graduate education in artificial intelligence and her graduate student mentorship and supervision. Under her supervision, graduate students have won significant awards including the Governor General Gold Medal, the Alumni Gold Medal, the Outstanding Achievement in Graduate Studies Award, and CAIAC Best Ph.D. Thesis Award. Many of her students have gone on to distinguished careers of their own as faculty members at various universities and in industry. Dr. Cohen has served on many program committees including AAAI, IJCAI, and AAMAS, and has been program co-chair of the Canadian AI Conference in 2002. She has served on the editorial boards of Computational Linguistics, User Modeling and User Adaptive Interaction, and Computational Intelligence. Dr. Cohen has been awarded with CAIAC Life Time Achievement Award and became Fellow of CAIAC in 2018.

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## News from OBVIA



**INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATORY  
ON THE SOCIETAL IMPACTS  
OF AI AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY**

The International Observatory on the Societal Impacts of AI and Digital Technology (OBVIA) is a research group founded following a call for project launched by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec in May 2018 and won by the team led by Professor Lyse Langlois (Université Laval). With a budget of \$7.5 million and launched on December 3, 2018, OBVIA is a hub that brings together the expertise of 18 universities and colleges in Québec.

Based on a critical interrogation of technological innovations, the mission of the Observatory is to raise crucial issues and to identify plausible solutions for the problems and opportunities arising from the development of AI and digital technology.

More than 160 researchers from the three main research sectors (humanities and social sciences, health, and sciences and engineering) are working in interdisciplinarity and intersectoriality. Their work is guided by the Montréal Declaration for responsible development of AI, which is the ethical framework for the work of the Observatory. OBVIA also

promotes values of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

The Observatory's activity is structured around 4 functions and 7 research axes:

1. *Research and creation* allows research projects to be carried out to enrich knowledge on the societal impacts of AI through scholarship programs and calls for innovative projects (the second will be launched in winter 2019);

2. *Monitoring and survey* aims to organize a scientific and strategic watch on the data and work made by the Observatory and by other institutions as well. This function also aims to take the pulse of Quebec society about AI and digital technologies;

3. *Deliberation* provides support in facilitating public debate and wide-ranging consultations, thus giving a voice to civil society and opening up dialogue with stakeholders;

4. *Public Policies* enables the Observatory to engage in major debates, consultations and commissions on public policies in the field of artificial intelligence and digital technology and to provide scientific and analytical support to public decision makers.

The 7 thematic research axes are: Arts, Media and Cultural Diversity; Industry 4.0, Work and Employment; Environment, Smart Cities, Territory and Mobility; Ethics, Governance and Democracy; Law, Cyberjustice and Cybersecurity; Education and Empowerment; Sustainable Health.

The Observatory's research teams can rely on more than a hundred partnerships with research centres, non-governmental organizations, companies or government actors and various groups in Québec, Canada and abroad.

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## Canadian AI'2019 Report

The 32nd Canadian Conference on Artificial Intelligence took place in Kingston, Ontario at Queen's University, May 28 to May 31, 2019, and was collocated with the 45th Graphics Interface Conference (GI 2019) and the 16th Conference on Computer and Robot Vision (CRV 2019).

The conference co-chairs, Marie-Jean Meurs (UQAM) and Frank Rudzicz (University of Toronto) did a wonderful job!

AI 2019 attracted 132 submissions. Each submission went through a double-blind review process and was reviewed by at least two program committee members. Based on the

recommendations of the committee members, 27 submissions were accepted as long papers (20%) and 34 submissions as short papers (26%). In addition, the program included eight papers presented at the Graduate Student Symposium, chaired by Colin Bellinger and Elnaz Davoodi, which ran an independent review process, and 4 papers in the Industry Track, chaired by Eric Charton. The accepted papers were collected into a volume and published in the Springer Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence Series (LNAI 11489).

The best paper award went to Frédéric Piedboeuf, Philippe Langlais, and Ludovic Bourg for their paper titled “Personality Extraction Through LinkedIn”. The best student paper award went to Mahtab Ahmed and Robert Mercer for their paper titled “Efficient Transformer-based Sentence Encoding for Sentence Pair Modelling”.

The conference was enriched by four keynote speakers, who are leaders in the field from academia and industry: Sven Dickinson (University of Toronto; Samsung AI Research), Chad Gaffield (University of Ottawa), Nancy Ide (Vassar College), and Maite Taboada (Simon Fraser University). We are grateful to them for their time and participation in this event. The AI 2019 program greatly benefited from these exceptional contributions. The conference also included a wonderful tutorial on Deep Learning for Natural Language Inference, given by Xiaodan Zhu from Queen's University.

The organization of such a successful conference benefited from the collaboration of many individuals. We would like to thank all members of the Program Committee for providing significant and timely reviews. Thank you to Colin Bellinger (National Research Council) and Elnaz Davoodi (Deepmind) for organizing the Graduate Student Symposium and Chris Drummond for chairing the event. Many thanks to Eric Charton (National Bank) for organizing and chairing the Industrial Track. And finally, our deepest gratitude to the AI/GI/CRV General Chair, Michael Greenspan (Queen's University) and the AI-2019 co-chairs, Marie-Jean Meurs (UQÀM) and Frank Rudzicz (University of Toronto) for organising the main conference and making sure everything ran smoothly.



From left to right: Marie-Jean Meurs, Chad Gaffield, Marina Sokolova and Frank Rudzicz

## News about Canadian AI'2020



Preparations for the Canadian AI'2020 conference are under way. The conference will be held in Ottawa, Ontario from May 13-15, 2020. As usual, in addition to the main conference, there will be a Graduate Student Symposium, Tutorials and an Industrial track. Both long (12 pages) and short (6 pages) papers are invited.

General co-chairs (of AI.CRV):

- Marina Sokolova, University of Ottawa
- Chris Drummond, National Research Council of Canada

Conference co-chairs:

- Xiaodan Zhu, Queen's University
- Cyril Goutte, National Research Council of Canada

Graduate Student Symposium (GSS) co-chairs:

- Pooya Moradian Zadeh, University of Windsor
- James Wright, University of Alberta

GSS Sponsorship Chair:

- Danny Silver, Acadia University

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.caiac.ca/en/conferences/canadianai-2020/home>



# CAIAC News

## New Members of the Executive Committee

At the CAIAC Annual General Meeting held during Canadian AI'2019, two new members were elected to the executive committee:

- Richard Khoury, Université Laval, was elected Vice President.
- Denilson Barbosa, University of Alberta, was elected secretary.

We would like to thank the outgoing members – Cory Butz, University of Regina (past president) and Marina Sokolova, University of Ottawa (past secretary) for their years of service. We are very grateful for your dedication to CAIAC!

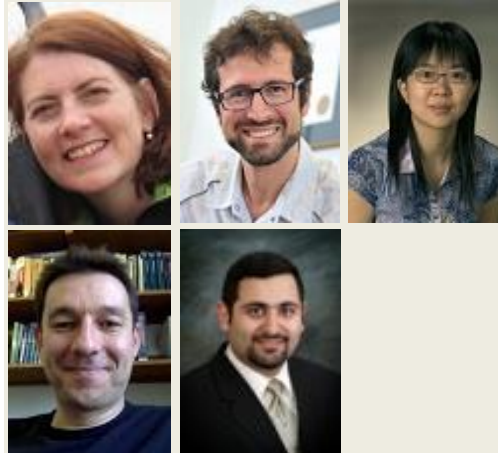
## Consultation on Open Access Proceedings

Many members have inquired about the possibility of changing the proceedings of the Canadian AI conference to an Open Access model. We plan on holding a consultation of CAIAC members to gather feedback regarding this important decision. Please share your feedback by filling in [this survey](#).

## Social Media

Thanks to Gabriel Murray (University of the Fraser Valley), CAIAC is now on social media. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#)!

## CAIAC's Executive Committee



**President:** Leila Kosseim, Concordia University (president@caiac.ca)

**Vice-President:** Richard Khoury, Université Laval (vp@caiac.ca)

**Treasurer:** Xin Wang, University of Calgary (treasurer@caiac.ca)

**Secretary:** Denilson Barbosa, University of Alberta (secretary@caiac.ca)

**Past President:** Ziad Kobti, University of Windsor

Our purpose is to organize and sponsor a number of events. In particular, we are responsible for the Canadian AI Conference, Dissertations and Master's Thesis awards, the Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Distinguished Service Award. We also plan new activities and services for the AI community in Canada. We operate by holding monthly (or more frequent, when needed) Skype meetings to set up events and discuss new projects. The role of the president and vice president is to oversee the proper operation of the organization. The treasurer manages CAIAC's finances and the secretary records all internal and external communications and manages the website. If you have ideas about how to improve the services provided by CAIAC, please do not hesitate to contact us at the e-mail addresses provided above. We welcome your comments and suggestions!

