

## Preface

Some people believe Artificial Intelligence is the most exciting scientific and commercial enterprise of the century. Others raise distress flags, fearing eventual misuse. Still others scoff, arguing that the technology will come to nothing. One thing is clear, however: Artificial Intelligence generates passion, and passion stimulates hyperbole-riddled rhetoric, and that rhetoric dangerously obfuscates. It is hard to tell if the field's promoters are pied pipers leading us to the disappointment of excessive expectations or missionaries beckoning us to almost inconceivable opportunity.

Wishing to clear the air, Howard Austin, the field's Wall Street ambassador, proposed an unusual colloquium. His idea was that MIT's Industrial Liaison Program would work with F. Eberstadt & Company, a prominent investment banking firm, to bring together four groups of people: one group to supply the academic perspective, another group to represent the hard core, financially oriented people, a third to represent the industrial research and development people who can look at the questions from both sides, and a fourth to represent solutions-oriented people, who use Artificial Intelligence, sometimes without admitting it, because there is a job to be done.

Everyone agreed that the proposed mix of views made sense. Dr. Austin, J. Peter Bartl and Constance A. Marino of MIT's Industrial Liaison Program, Loretta Kulak and Philip K. Meyer of F. Eberstadt & Company, and Karen A. Prendergast of MIT's Artificial Intelligence Laboratory proceeded to make the Colloquium happen.

The result was a spectacular success. The colloquium attracted twice as many attendees as the previous record-holding colloquium hosted by the Industrial Liaison Program (on genetic engineering). More important, however, the colloquium exposed exciting views, together with heated differences of opinion. Frank P. Satlow of the MIT Press realized that both the views and the opinions should be

recorded and made widely available. This book, consisting of edited transcripts of the colloquium talks, is the result.

The illustrations were done by Elizabeth B. Heepe. Daniel C. Brotsky, Priscilla M. Cobb, Boris Katz, Dikran Karagueuzian, Helen I. Osborne, and Carol A. Roberts also helped enormously in the development of the book.

P. H. W.

K. A. P.