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Preface

This book contains 37 scientific papers and 8 system description papers accepted for presentation at the Fifth Congress of the Italian Association for Artificial Intelligence (AI*IA). The Congress of the AI*IA is the most relevant Italian event in the field of Artificial Intelligence, and has been receiving much attention from many researchers and practitioners of different countries. The fifth congress, this year, is held in Rome, and is organized into 11 scientific sessions and one demo session.

The papers report on significant work carried out in the different areas of artificial intelligence, not only in Italy, but also in other countries both inside and outside Europe. Areas such as automated reasoning, knowledge representation, and planning continue to be thoroughly investigated. The collection also shows a growing interest in the fields of distributed artificial intelligence, perception, vision and robotics. The scientific papers on machine learning and natural language reflect a strong interest on these subjects, also confirmed by the large variety of approaches addressed by the various research groups. Finally, the Demo session reports on the work done on several prototype system, covering various important and interesting application domains.

In addition to the contributed papers collected in this book, the program of AI*IA 97 includes invited talks and tutorials covering advanced topics. The invited speakers are Georg Gottlob from the Technical University of Vienna (Austria), and Nicola Muscettola from the NASA AMES Research Center (USA), giving talks on "Complexity in artificial intelligence and knowledge representation," and "Automatic on-board planning for autonomous spacecraft," respectively.

Moreover, two workshops are scheduled with the purpose of illustrating significant applications in the field of artificial intelligence. The first one deals with the use of artificial intelligence in financial institutions, while the second one is devoted to an analysis of artificial intelligence techniques for improving the quality of public services for citizens. These workshops have mainly been conceived for potential users of artificial intelligence technologies so as to stimulate active interactions with them, and useful feedback to theoretical investigations.

Many people contributed in different ways to the success of the congress. First of all, the members of the program committee who efficiently handled the reviewing of the 88 submitted papers. They provided three reviews for each manuscript, by relying on the support of valuable additional reviewers. The members of the organizing committee, namely, Amedeo Cesta, Daniela D'Aloisi, Carlo Ficini, and Marco Schaerf, worked hardly for supporting all typical problems related to local arrangements. I thank them all very much for their support. In particular, I would like to thank Marco Schaerf, who chaired the organizing committee, and shared with me all the problems related to the arrangement of the various events. Without him, the congress would not have taken place.

I wish to thank Giovanni Soda, who chaired the past edition of the congress, and provided me with constant help in several aspects of the organization. Also, I am very grateful to Marco Cadoli and Andrea Schaerf, who were not formally

involved in the organization, but provided valuable support especially in the organization of the tutorials and in the preparation of the proceedings.

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This book is dedicated to Domenico Catarci, who died a few days before the program committee meeting of the congress. Domenico Catarci was the father of my wife, and, above all, was one of the persons that I loved most in my life.

Rome, July 1997

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