

NEW JERSEY LAWYER, Monday, November 6, 1995

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## Wisdom of Solomon: the 'fuzzy logic' version

By Rocco Cammarere

If you are into zany, read on.

This is about Solomon, who is said to be capable of replacing nearly an entire court system and even reducing lawyers, alas, to robot-like functions.

Beware of Solomon.

Solomon, his owners claim, knows law books inside and out, can in no time determine whether someone is guilty or not, and can reach such conclusions without the aid of judges or juries. He even can make lawyers tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth — so help them.

Information about Solomon was distributed to newspapers and others in the media last week.

If you still are wondering, Solomon is reported to be a newly developed computer program that could turn the legal system upside down — and then some. Its developers are so excited, they launched a media blitz about their Orwellian baby.

One small problem, though. Make that one BIG problem. Is Solomon for real?

Call the Solomon folks and all you get is one of those ancient innovations — a telephone answering machine with a very prim and proper recorded British accent. The United Kingdom, however, never calls back.

Anyway, the lawyers and computer gurus in New York, who are said to have given birth to Solomon, claim in their news release that the program is the "ultimate practical application of artificial intelligence." Get it?

'Fuzzy logic'

Anyway, the system, run by supercomputers, reportedly analyzes information fed into it by lawyers, has the voice recognition software to participate in depositions, and has the mechanical brains — the developers call it "fuzzy logic" — to weigh the truthfulness of the information by analyzing stress in a person's voice. Just as a safeguard, though, lawyers, witnesses and the parties in a case all are given lie-detector tests and injected with truth serum to make sure Solomon does not succumb to a human failing and get snow-jobbed with false information.

"Imagine human wisdom partnered with the machine neutrality and you begin to understand Solomon," said Joseph Bonuso, a self-proclaimed founding director of the Solomon Project.

And if all this evokes images of a 25th Century Star-Trek type computer that operates everything in sight and doesn't need AAA batteries, that's just the tip, if you will, of the computer chip.

"Judge and jury both, it is uniquely capable of accessing the entire corpus

of legal literature and fairly applying legal constructs and principles of equity and fairness to the factual information it is fed. This process effectively eliminates the need for juries as well as for most judicial duties," Bonuso said in the news release.

"We believe that Solomon represents the best interests of the American people and of the legal system. Solomon saves time and money and puts an end to the mockery of justice that has so horrified the American public. Once it is integrated into the legal system, Solomon will single-handedly re-establish the public's failed confidence in the judicial process."

Oh well, if you don't usually believe everything you read, you might not want to change now.



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November 9, 1995

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Letter to the Editor:

Rocco Cammarere's article "Wisdom of Solomon: the 'fuzzy logic' version" (Nov. 6) does your readers a disservice.

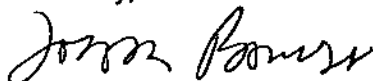
Innovation is always met with opposition, and Mr. Cammarere's sardonic analysis of our groundbreaking project is no exception. Technology threatens not only morality but the status quo (i.e., both received opinions and job security), and rather than considering how our system might bring positive change to the judicial process, your reporter flippantly dismissed it. This is an affront to the more than 150 people—professors, students, attorneys, judges, scientists—who have labored on the creation and development of The Solomon Project.

Not only doesn't Mr. Cammarere have the remotest idea of what we're really about, he doesn't grasp the underlying science. Solomon is indeed a fuzzy logic application. While fuzzy logic may not be the stuff of a legal education it is an important branch of computer science. The principal problem with fuzzy logic has always been its name. In this it is not alone. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance summons up pictures of mushroom clouds while Resonance Imaging sounds benign. It wasn't until the former name was dropped and the latter substituted that the field blossomed. Mr. Cammarere might want to work with us on the problem of properly naming this important field.

Fuzzy logic weighs the relative importance of multiple factors. A witness may have strengths and weaknesses — he saw events clearly, in good light, and is able to describe things crisply; but he wears strong glasses and is known to have lied occasionally to friends and family. The usual problem is how to assess the relative merit of each factor. That is why fuzzy logic is such a good match with legal decision-making. What is "fuzzy" is the decision of which factors are more important, not the quality of the thinking. Fuzzy logic systems have been substituted for human judgment by American Express in deciding who merits a card and by banks trying to judge which of their customers are likely to go bankrupt. They are behind the program that manages mutual funds. So far almost all applications have been by private concerns seeking increased profits. We feel that social concerns are more important.

The Solomon Project will be unveiled at a 15-city tour in the spring. The naysayers like Mr. Cammarere notwithstanding, the public will be the ultimate jury in deciding the value of artificial intelligence and its application to the judicial system.

Sincerely,



Joseph Bonuso, Ph.D.