

Book Reviews

Models of a Man: Essays in Memory of Herbert A. Simon by Mie Augier and James G. March, MIT Press, 553 pp., \$45.00, ISBN 0-262-01208-1
doi:10.1017/S0269888907228012

This is a book that, as the saying goes ‘does exactly what it says on the tin’. It is a book of essays — well, forty-one essays and one poem — written as a eulogy, a remembrance, and a reminder of the life and work of Herbert Simon. It is a fascinating and varied collection.

In the Preface, the editors explain that they asked contributors to identify the paper or book of Simon’s that most influenced them, and they structure the book around this facet of the essays, grouping essays that refer to the same or similar work together in the same part of the book. Those contributors who stuck closely to this requirement generated the kind of essays that one might expect to find in a festschrift, and there is nothing wrong with that. Simon was, of course, someone who made deep contributions to a much wider range of disciplines than most of us even get to study to any significant depth. As a result, the authors of the essays in *Models of a Man* are some of the most respected figures in that same wide range of disciplines, and they are models of their type — clear, concise and illuminating. However, it is the contributors who did not follow the instructions who give us, in my view, something that is much more valuable.

What they give us, these contributors who were unable, or unwilling, to follow this standardized approach, are the best models of the man. These are the essays by Simon’s close colleagues and friends (and there is even an essay by his eldest daughter), essays that not only celebrate his academic achievements, but also show how these fitted into his life. Here, amongst the reminiscences of ex-students and friends, one can get a glimpse of the life of a great scholar, a very engaging human being and a man who will be greatly missed by a large number of people. Putting the pieces together, one can build up a very inspiring view, a view of a man who, not only made great contributions to his chosen fields, but also found the time to spend with his family, on good conversation, and in discussion with his students. This composite picture, it seems to me, is not just a model of Herbert Simon, but a model of what it means to be a scholar, and it is as a model for those of us who also seek to be counted as scholars that he may be missed the most.

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Principles of Robot Motion: Theory, Algorithms and Implementations by Howie Choset, Kevin M. Lynch, Seth Hutchinson, George Kantor, Wolfram Burgard, Lydia E. Kavraki and Sebastian Thrun, 603 pp., \$60.00, ISBN 0-262-03327-5
doi:10.1017/S0269888907218016

The field of robotics is burgeoning. Indeed, it sometimes seems that there are robots wherever one looks — Lego robots being used to teach science in school classrooms, robot vacuum cleaners being used to keep homes clean, and search and rescue robots being used to survey hurricane-damaged buildings are just the most obvious examples. As one might expect, this growth is reflected in the research literature, which is now vast, and in the technical achievements, which are truly impressive — for example, the ability to navigate autonomously for more than a