

In Memoriam: Ashley Morris (1963-2008)



Ashley Morris unexpectedly passed away in Florida on Wednesday, April 2, 2008. With him, the soft computing and database communities lost a young, excellent and passionate scientist. His death shocked all his friends in the fuzzy databases community. For many of his colleagues, and for us in particular, he was much more than a creative researcher. He was a friend, a careful listener and advisor, but above all, simply a very nice guy.

Ashley Morris completed his doctoral study (Morris, 1999) under supervision of Professor Fred Petry at Tulane University in New Orleans. He also held M.Sc. and B.Sc. degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi. Ashley Morris started his professional career as full-time consultant at AT&T, Oracle, and Digital Equipment Corporation, among others. After finishing his PhD, he started his academic career with about two years on the faculty of Computer Science at the University of Idaho, after which he joined the CTI faculty of DePaul in Chicago in September 2000 for a tenured associate professor position. He was a member of the professional associations ACM, IEEE, and UPE.

His research focused on databases, GIS, fuzzy logic, artificial intelligence, visualization, and the merging of all of these fields to create more intuitive software and more informed decision making. Ashley contributed to this broadly meant research area with his PhD thesis (Morris, 1999) and several papers (see, e.g., Morris and Jankowski, 2000, 2001, 2005, and Vert, Morris and Heaton, 2006). He also served as co-editor of a special issue of *Control and Cybernetics* devoted to novel approaches in GIS. This special issue was published in 2006, volume 35.

Ashley Morris undertook the initiative to set up an Open Geospatial Consortium, which, among others, has as objective to define the specifications for a web-based object-oriented GIS with a fuzzy querying. Together with Svitlana

Kokhan of the National Agricultural University of Ukraine, he organized an Advanced Research Workshop entitled “Fuzzy GIS for Detection and Prediction of Contamination and Degradation of Water and Agricultural Resources,” which was held in Kiev in June 2005.

Beside being a passionate researcher, Ashley was also a passionate and proud resident of New Orleans. He fought for the restoration of the city after it was hit and destroyed by the hurricane Katrina. Among his latest research ambitions, was his endeavour to use his expertise in fuzzy geographic decision support systems to better protect people by developing better hurricane prediction systems. Unfortunately, his sudden death prevented him to complete this job.

Ashley will be deeply missed for a long time. His sudden death while he was in the most creative period of his life came as a shock, for his wife and children, for us, for all his friends and colleagues. We will remember him and the intention of this special issue of Control and Cybernetics is to express our gratitude towards him for his friendship and professionalism.

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