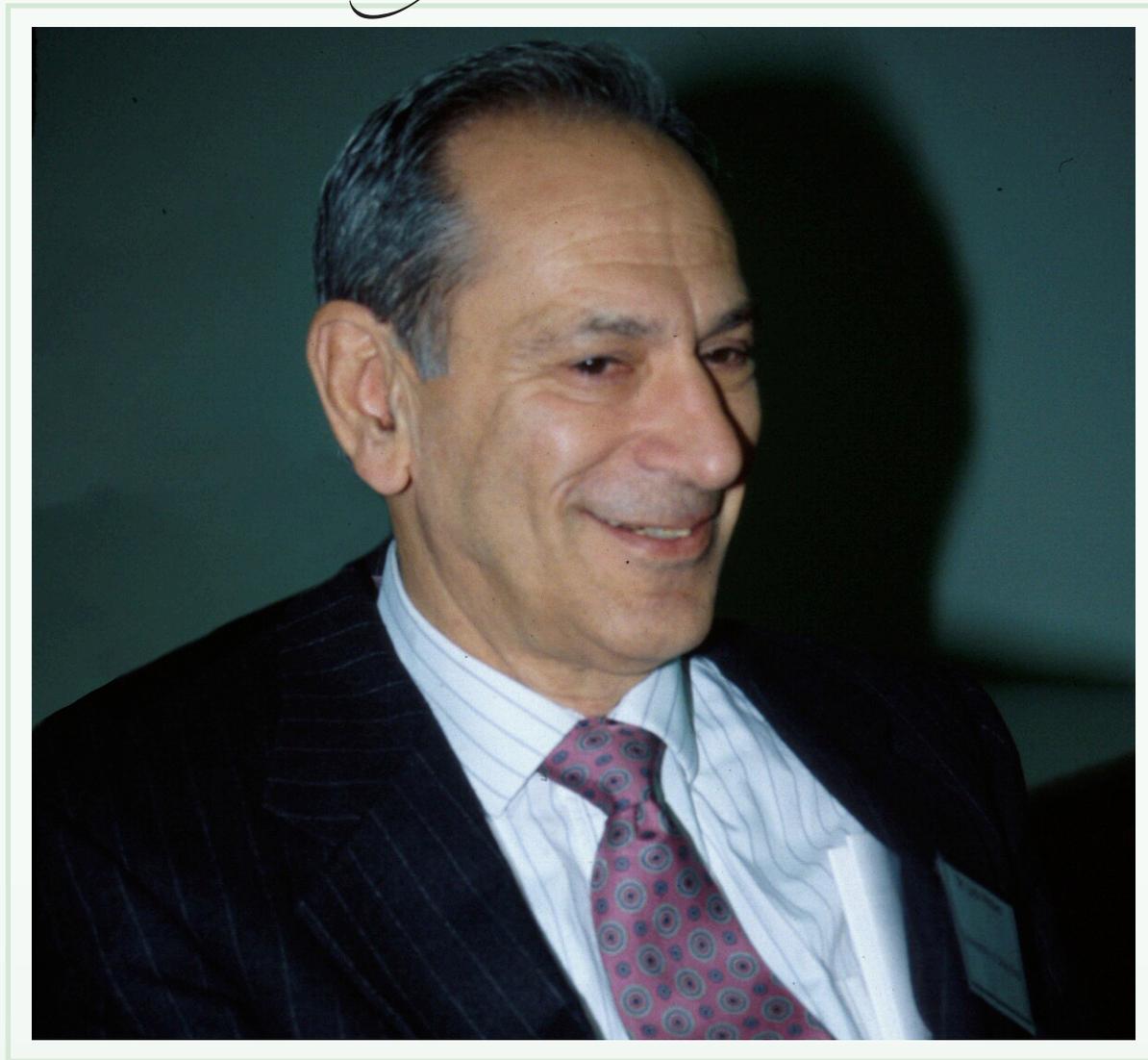




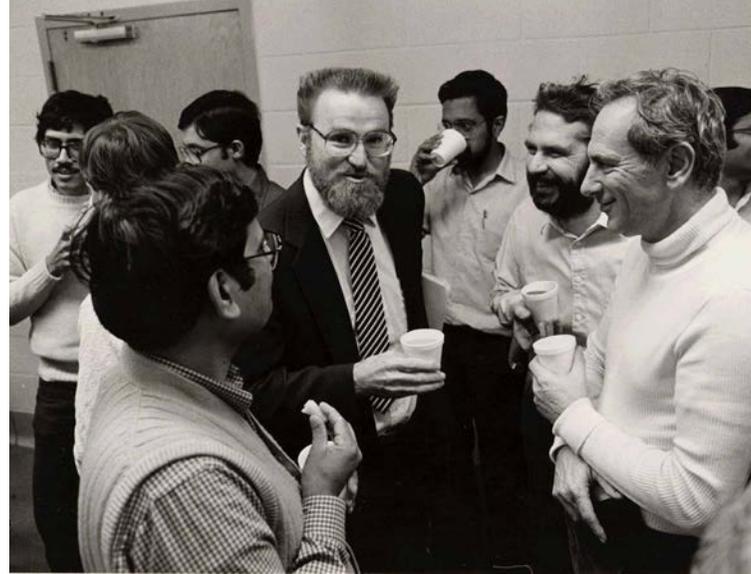
A Book of Remembrance



JACK MINKER | 1927-2021



DEPARTMENT OF
COMPUTER SCIENCE



To the Family of Jack Minker,

Jack was truly a remarkable human being—a vibrant, passionate and visionary leader who devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge. He had a profound and lasting impact on the many lives that he touched here at the University of Maryland.

He devoted his life to creating a better future for everyone, and he understood that in order to accomplish that, part of his responsibility as a leader was to boldly challenge the status quo. As the first chair of the Department of Computer Science, he was wholeheartedly committed to furthering the education and growth of those around him.

His efforts over his outstanding career set our department on a path toward continued excellence. He leaves a lasting legacy on the department and he will be terribly missed. On behalf of everyone, past and present, here in the Department of Computer Science, we offer our deepest condolences to all of Jack's many loved ones and friends. What follows on these pages are heartfelt tributes written by Jack's colleagues, students and friends. May his memory be for a blessing.

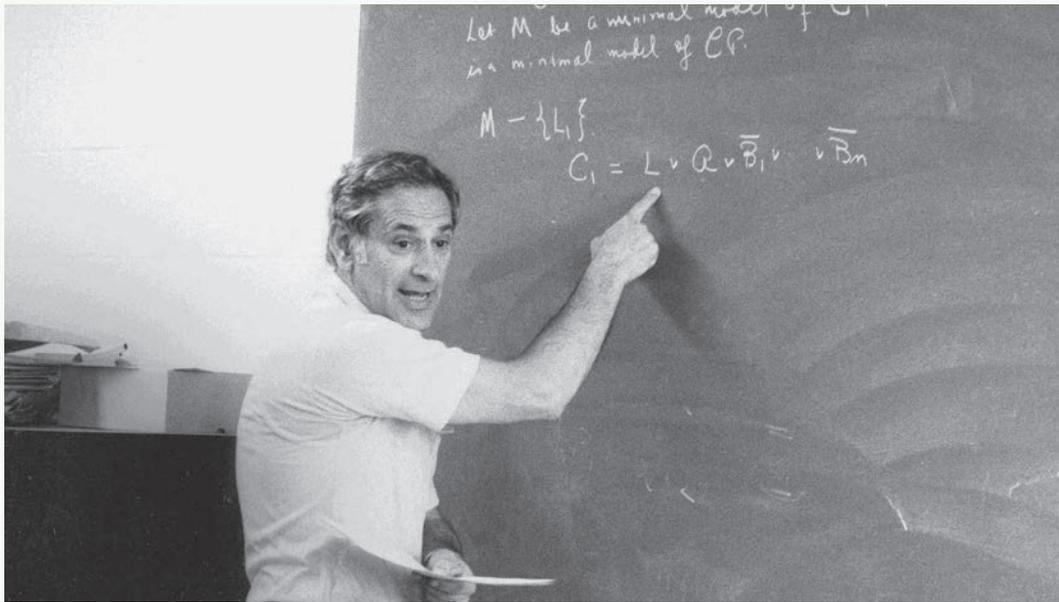
I am grateful to Mohammad Hajiaghayi, the Jack and Rita G. Minker Professor in Computer Science, for initiating and coordinating the collection of contributions for these pages, and to Richa Mathur, the Executive Coordinator of the Department of Computer Science, for her work on producing this book.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Matthias Zwicker.

Matthias Zwicker
Department Chair





I'm saddened by the passing of Dr. Jack Minker, professor emeritus and founding chair of the Department of Computer Science. A humble humanitarian and valued advisor to me on many issues, his incredible legacy includes leading UMD computer science to a top-ranked program in the country.

DARRYLL PINES (*President, University of Maryland*)

Jack had a vision 50 years ago that all of science, and in fact all of society, would benefit from computing, which led him to advocate strongly for the University of Maryland to launch a department of computer science. He witnessed his vision come to life here on campus—a vision that is still in full bloom today with thousands of people working on projects and ideas based in computing that are making our world better, safer and more productive.

AMITABH VARSHNEY (*Dean, CMNS, University of Maryland*)

It is deeply moving to listen to the accounts of how Jack inspired and led our department. I see that his spirit is very much alive in our community.

MATTHIAS ZWICKER (*Department Chair, University of Maryland*)

The news of Jack's passing has saddened me deeply. I first met Jack during one of my early visits to UMD more than a decade ago; then he greeted me with a warm welcome when I joined in 2018. As the founding chair of Computer Science (CS) at UMD, he exchanged emails and talked with me from time to time regarding challenges faced by the department—until July 2020 when I stepped down as chair. I have always been grateful to his advice and reassuring words—feeling and knowing that I was following my North Star, even when things were tough. Like many, I'm thankful for his vision and leadership in 1967 when the CS department at UMD started as the Computer Science Center, then the department officially launched in 1973 with Jack as the founding chair in 1974. In addition, he has dedicated his life to serving the University, the federal government, the scientific communities of AI and computing, and human rights for scientists.

On Sept. 21-22, 2018, we celebrated Jack's (belated) 90th birthday with many distinguished guests. It was moving to see so many people who traveled long distances and took their time to join us for this special occasion. A few days ago, a star fell, but Jack's shine and impact shall never be forgotten by all those whose lives have been touched by him.

MING C. LIN (*Former Department Chair, University of Maryland*)

It is hard to talk about Jack and his accomplishments without giving you a sense of the environment back then.

When I arrived from the University of Texas in the fall of 1970, there were about a dozen professors in the Computer Science Center (there was no department at the time and our educational program was run out of the Computer Science Center which had been created by Werner Rheinboldt and run by Bill Atchison).

I believe at the time I was the only assistant professor with a degree in computer science. Marv Zelkowitz came from Cornell the next semester to my great joy, followed by a cadre of young faculty the following year, including Ashok Agrawala.

The first courses I taught were in compiler construction and semantic models of programming languages (There were no textbooks at the time and we created notes out of whatever papers we could find).

For the current generation of faculty, it is amazing to understand what it was like back then. We taught two courses a semester and the only journal you could publish in was the Journal of the ACM.

My first committee work was to serve on the "Minker Committee." Its goal was to define the specific requirements for the newly created Ph.D. program. The discussions and debates went on and on. It seemed to me we met almost every day. Jack was the captain of the ship and a tough taskmaster.

Jack, Werner Rheinboldt and John Menard were my first mentors. Jack had high standards and expected us all to have the same. When reviewing candidates for a new position, Jack's canonical question was, "Is this applicant going to raise our standing as a department?" He always wanted the next generation of faculty to be better than the current generation.

When it came time to create an undergraduate major in computer science, Jack was the obvious choice for the Chair position. He created the department in 1975 from scratch, defining the requirements for the B.S. degree, with the help of the cadre of young professors with computer science degrees. He obtained our first department computer independent from the Computer Science Center, the VAX, and grew the department to about 25 faculty. He created the department newsletter and annual report. His five-year tenure was a model for future department chairs.

Even after his tenure as chair, he continued to be the conscience of the department, exhorting us to be the best that we could be. And even after his retirement, he was there to keep an eye on us.

VICTOR BASILI (*Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland*)



On Friday night I learned the very sad news of the loss of our beloved colleague Jack Minker. Jack was the founding chair of Computer Science and did an immense amount of work to bring CS at UMD to significant prominence in the '70s in the few years he was chair, including hiring most of the senior faculty in CS. While many of you have interacted with Jack in the department or on committees, or even worked with him and his Ph.D. students, my collaboration with Jack was primarily off campus on the tennis court.

In 1990, when I joined UMD, I had sort of gotten into tennis recently (mostly during my Ph.D. studies) and heard that there was a tennis group in CS run by Jack. I timidly approached Jack and asked if I could join the group. He asked “How well do you play?” I said, “Well, I hit the ball a bit with Dave Mount and survived that.” Jack tremendously respected Dave’s tennis, and so after a proper reference check he told me I was admitted to the group. Later he explained to me that this way he ensured that the level of the group always went up, and not down! Excellence was clearly important to Jack in every aspect of his life. Later I saw him reject several applicants to the tennis group and realized how fortunate I was (thank you Dave for that glowing reference letter to let me join the tennis group).

Playing as a postdoc and assistant professor on the court with Jack created a dilemma. If I played on Jack’s side, I was under tremendous pressure to not make any mistakes. I explained to Jack one day that my style of play is risky, I will “go for it” and might hit the ball out rather than just safely dropping it across the net. So I have good days and bad days. The bigger dilemma was when I played opposite Jack. I did not want to truly excel since he would still be voting on my tenure case! :-). In any case, it was always great playing with Jack and he was in tremendous shape in his 60s and 70s and played remarkably well. Jack also provided helpful tips to me on my serve and drastically reduced my double fault rate by one key sentence, “Toss the ball higher.” He observed that just by watching me play a few times. Such was his power of observation. Jack collected and reported scores and statistics at the end of each season, as he was truly a thorough and committed player. We lazy folks stopped doing that once he was no longer camp director. We still reported the scores, but did not report any data at the end of the year, which also saved some group members reminders of their losses.

I spoke to Jack once before becoming the department chair, and he told me that it would be a tremendously stressful job—I did not believe him—but the very first year of the job gave me a clear picture of the tensions between moving the department forward, and in bringing all the faculty together in that

mission, as everyone had different opinions and clearly very different priorities! Jack was truly a wise man.

He was truly one of a kind, and special. He was always striving for excellence. I am glad he played a full game until the age of 93. I hope to be able to follow in his footsteps and be lucky enough to hit 90. He will be missed. May his soul rest in peace.

SAMIR KHULLER (*Former Department Chair, University of Maryland*)

This is a huge loss for Computer Science at UMD—Jack contributed to the department and society in many ways. He led the charge to get the department’s very first computer using an NSF grant; this involved a big battle with the state which wanted to centralize computing. Jack was a leading researcher in AI for decades, and did foundational work on AI and databases. While I was UMIACS director and then later CS department chair, I got a lot of advice from Jack—a good deal of it unsolicited but delivered constructively and firmly. He was a great personal friend, joining my family on trips to Europe, Africa and the Galapagos. My introduction to AI was in Jack’s graduate class in 1971; all of the examples in the theorem proving segment involved examples from his family! They were always his highest priority.

I will surely miss him.

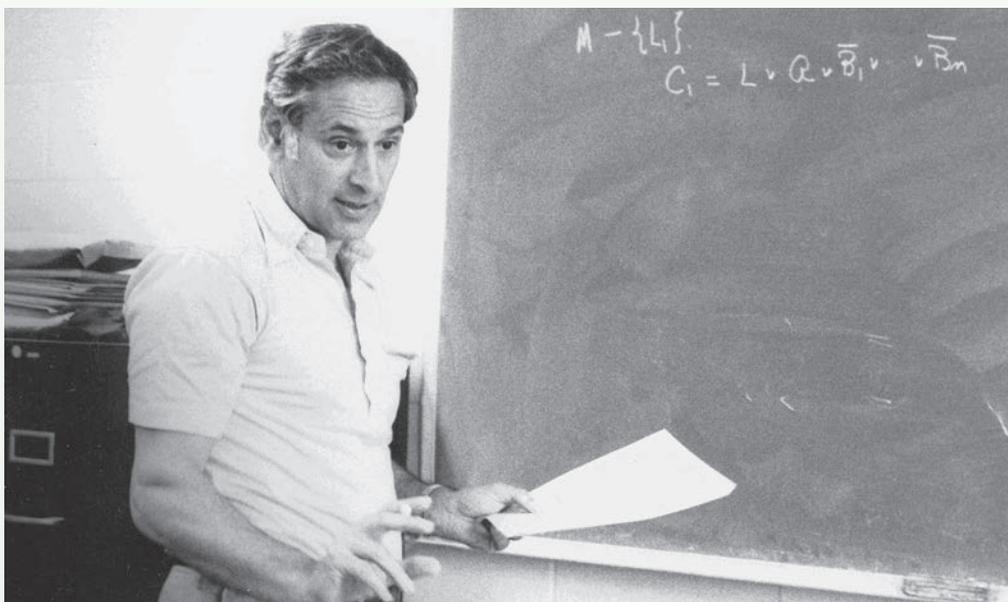
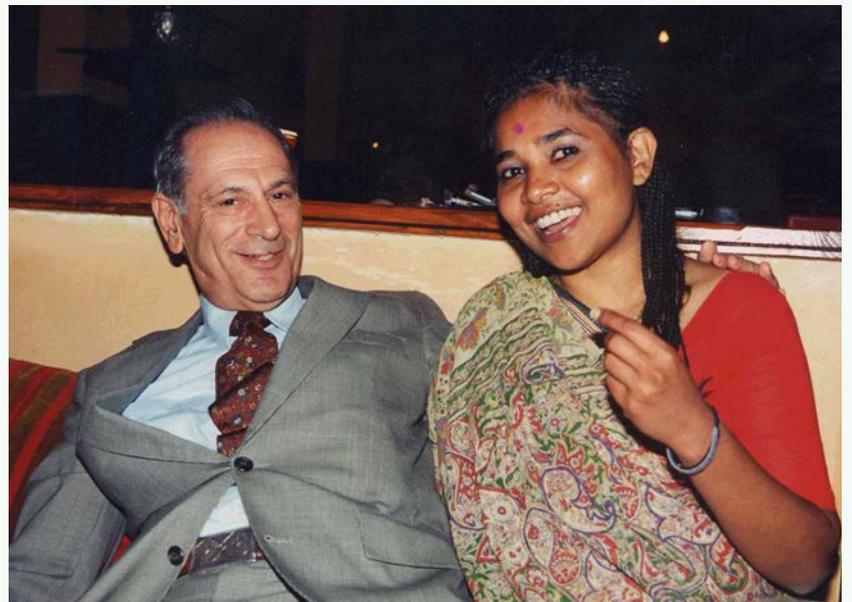
LARRY S. DAVIS (*Former Department Chair, University of Maryland*)

A deep loss. Like many others, I, too, was the recipient of a great deal of support—academic and otherwise—from Jack. I am reminded of Jack’s official retirement party years ago. Ray Reiter (University of Toronto) had been invited to speak, and one of his first sentences was “Jack, say it isn’t so!” I find myself wanting to shout the same sentiment now to the forces of nature—the world is not the same without him.

DONALD R. PERLIS (*Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland*)

Jack Minker always had the best interests of the UMD Computer Science department. His passing leaves a big void and he will be sorely and surely missed. I hope his contributions to the history of the CS department are chronicled and become available for all current and future faculty.

LAVEEN N. KANAL (*Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland*)





From my arrival at UMD in 1976, Jack was the respected, sometimes feared, chair of Computer Science who was devoted to research excellence in his own work and for everyone in the department. His exceptional support for young faculty in helping many of them to get NSF CAREER awards was memorable.

While early on he challenged me about my shift from database topics to psychological studies of users, he eventually became very supportive of my fresh direction. In the early days, I was always aware of using rigorous statistical methods to try my best to win his sympathy for my work.

An important chapter was his devotion to human rights, especially for computer scientists. This was an admirable effort that changed the lives of many of the people to whom he brought international attention. He did more than anyone else in the computing community to speak out for computer scientists who were oppressed in their countries, especially the Jewish computer scientists in the Soviet Union. When I went to Moscow in November 1977 on an NSF scientific and diplomatic mission, Jack coached me on what to do, gave me scientific papers for Alexander Lerner, and encouraged me to visit him in his home. I was frightened as I did this but when I came to Lerner's apartment and said that Jack Minker sent me, the door swung open with a warm greeting. It was a memorable visit to this Soviet hero of cybernetics. With Jack's model in my mind, I gave support to Semyon Berkovich, who I helped in his plans to come to the U.S. This worked out well and I was able to support him with a summer NSF project and help him get a job at George Washington University, which he held until he died two years ago.

Jack was supportive to many of our junior faculty and challenging to senior faculty. He was proud of his successful Ph.D. students, and devoted to advancing the department.

Jack will be greatly missed, but he remains an inspiration to me and many others. I remember him with a tear and a smile.

BEN A. SHNEIDERMAN (*Distinguished University Professor Emeritus,
University of Maryland*)

Thinking back, I always found Jack to be kind and thoughtful, with a ready smile. On his regular, and then less regular, visits to the department, he always had an encouraging word for me. He lived a long and fruitful life—an inspiration!

MICHAEL HICKS (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

I will miss Jack Minker, one of my two Computer Science mentors upon arrival at UMD in 1990. I had the pleasure of co-advising students with him and serving on many committees with him. So much of what I learned during my time at UMD, especially in those early years, was from him. He was a true leader, contributor, team player, traveler, and dedicated parent, grandparent, etc. Condolences to his family, and may many fond memories prevail at this sad time.

BONNIE J. DORR (*Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland*)

In our early days in the department, many of us remember Jack as being tough, setting high standards and challenging our every move to make the department better. With time, Jack became a close and sweet colleague, always with great advice and praise. Jack, have a nice journey to a dimension where intelligence does not have to be artificial! And peace and human rights for all will not require Jack Minkers. We'll surely miss you.

NICK ROUSSOPOULOS (*Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland*)

A mentor and friend and colleague. I put together this site for the Jack@90 celebration with captures from the department celebration and material from the PRISM Lab reunion that was held on the following day, with his students and collaborators. <http://users.umiacs.umd.edu/~louiqa/Jack@90/>

May his memory be for a blessing.

LOUIQA RASCHID (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

While others have noted Jack's seminal contributions to Computer Science at UMD and his research with some mention of human rights activities, I wanted to focus on the latter. Jack's record on human rights is in a league of its own. To appreciate that, please look up:

<https://www.cs.nmsu.edu/ALP/2011/09/jack-minker-to-receive-the-2011-heinz-r-pagels-human-rights-award/>

In fact, I personally know several colleagues who credited him for saving their lives through his relentless fight to get them out of the former Soviet Union.

UZI VISHKIN (*Professor, University of Maryland*)



Jack's passing is a real loss. Its timing during the pandemic is unfortunate as it tends to dim our memories. Thus, these tributes are appropriate and I am sure Jack is smiling somewhere. Jack is universally associated with the department, and he knew it. With his tenacity he got many things done that ensured its maturity to a great department. When something did not go the way he wanted, he let you know, but that was the end of it. He did not bear grudges.

His tenacity was best displayed on the tennis court. He always wanted to play a game and keep score. I had played in high school in the most competitive league in the country at that time. As I was not at the top of the ladder, I was more used to getting on the court and volleying back and forth. Jack would have none of it.

That was the end of our playing. Jack persevered in improving the tennis group culminating in the recruitment of Rodrigo Fontecilla, an accomplished tennis player, to join the department, not to mention Larry Dowdy who was good at all sports.

Jack was also a cheerleader for the department. He hired me and I remember the numerous phone conversations before the interview where he constantly advised me not to give a "Mickey Mouse" talk, although I had no clue what such a talk consisted of. It all turned out well. Jack took great pride in having hired me and never let me forget it. I greatly appreciated this confidence.

Jack was always welcoming to new arrivals. This was especially true in the case of my wife Leila. When he learned of our upcoming wedding, he and his wife Johanna, along with Larry Davis and his wife Joan, organized a wedding reception for us, which was very touching. Leila's office was on the third floor of the AV Williams building. Jack always paid her a visit on his coffee rounds on the days that he came to campus.

It's odd but I had "calling Jack" on my to-do list. The pandemic has caused us all to drift apart as has been the almost universal reluctance to use the phone or respond to email, which started out as a generational trait but has become universal. Jack always took ("made") the time to talk to you. He was an imposing figure—larger than life. We will all remember him in the many ways he touched our lives. He will be missed.

HANAN SAMET (*Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland*)

As the proud Minker Professor in the department, I am deeply saddened by the news. Indeed, he played the role of father and advisor to me on several important occasions in my life. I was in contact with him a few months ago and we planned to meet in person once the Covid situation became better. I am sure his memory survives much beyond our time. Also, my wife Arefeh and I would like to offer his family our deepest and most sincere condolences and may his soul rest in peace.

MOHAMMAD HAJIAGHAYI (*Jack and Rita G. Minker Professor, University of Maryland*)

I recall during my time as a student in the early 1990s, the lab for Dr. Minker's students was right next to the one I was in (the Hendler/Nau room) on the 3rd floor. As I came to know the history of the department, I recall feeling a bit intimidated by what I'd heard—but in a good way, held to a high standard, etc.—about the advisor next door. I didn't have many interactions with him that I recall. At that time, with so many students around, I really didn't have an idea if he knew me by name.

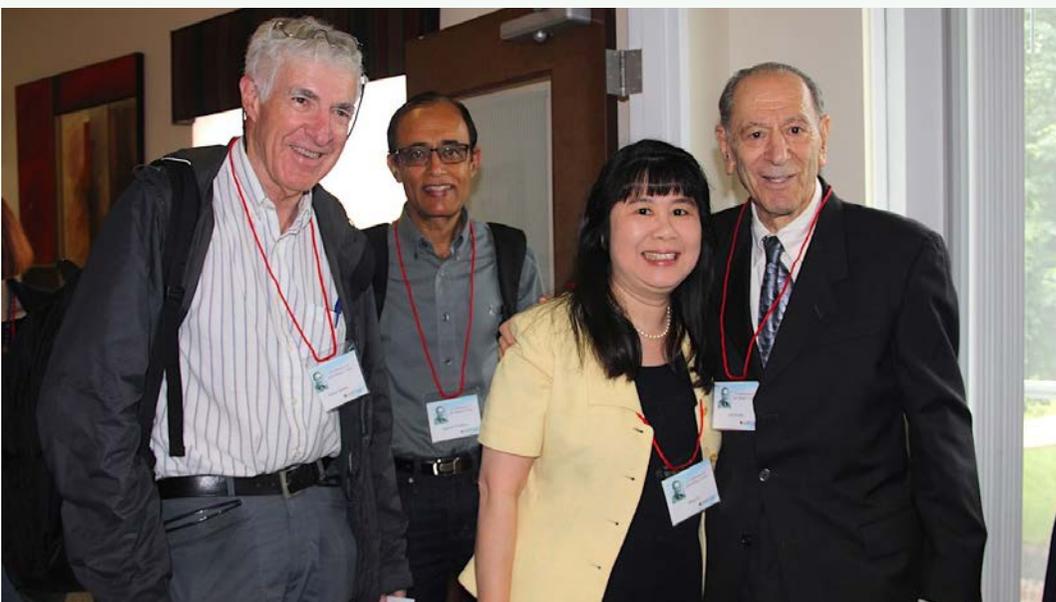
Some many years later (15+), when I was at Drexel, I had a chance to participate in the Franklin Institute Awards ceremony the year they gave the CS/CogSci medal to Judea Pearl. I attended Dr. Pearl's presentation and there was Jack Minker (he was Judea's guest). Not only did he remember me, but he had a big smile, asked what I was up to, etc. We interacted at the awards dinner and other activities that week. It was like having the rock star remember you from when you were a young musician.

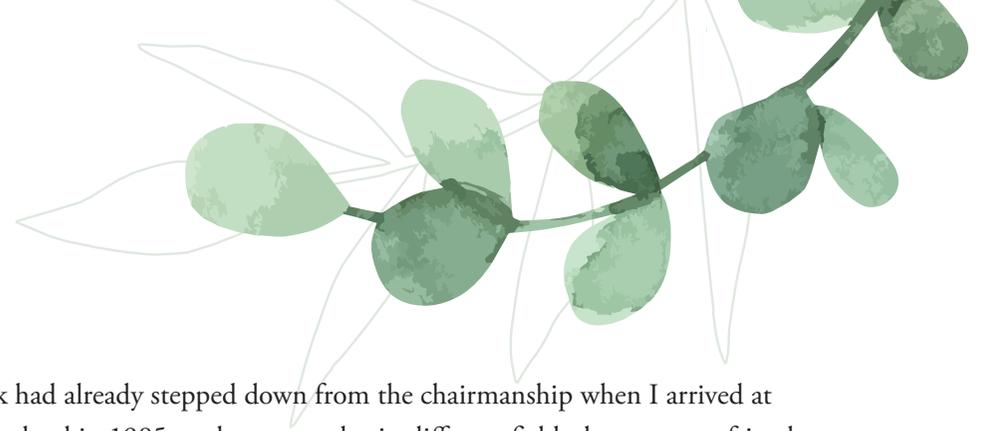
When I had the honor to come back here to UMD, having been back in the office at ISR for a month or two, the front office team at ISR told me "Dr. Minker has been looking for you." He'd apparently been coming by during his occasional days in the office to catch up. Eventually we connected for a long talk in the office and I felt genuine joy at the interaction. He gave some advice, etc. By that time, I'd learned about all of the key contributions he'd made to the campus, especially in hiring and recruiting at the highest campus levels. I'd been keeping him occasionally up to date on efforts at ISR and now ARLIS, and I hope with each step to help advance the reputation of the University of Maryland.

WILLIAM C. REGLI (*Professor, University of Maryland*)









I am truly saddened by Jack's loss. Jack was a great friend and colleague. Through his strong leadership and guidance, Jack did so much to make the Computer Science Department what it is today. I met him almost as soon as I arrived in Maryland. After a couple of polite questions about my research and teaching, he got to the *real point* of tennis.

I treasure the many hours we spent on the courts. Jack was driven by his passions, and tennis was among them. While Jack relished competition, I believe he just loved to play and enjoyed spending time outside the office with friends and colleagues.

I have so many Jack tennis stories. It's hard to pick one. Jack was always looking for a competitive advantage. After playing the first set, Jack would raise the question of how to pair up for the second set. Whenever his team lost, this was a prelude to join up with whoever was playing best that day. One time, Jack and Ron Lipsman (of Math) lost the first set. Jack, as usual, "innocently" asked, "How shall we pair up for the next set?" Knowing that he was about to be booted off the team, with exasperation, Ron threw his hands up and exclaimed, "How the hell should I know, Jack? You're the camp director!" Jack was so tickled, from that day on he signed his emails "The camp director."

Jack, you are truly unique, and we'll all miss you.

DAVID MOUNT (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

When I interviewed here in 1979 it was Jack's last year as department chair, so he was responsible for hiring me. After I joined the department, he was often a source of useful advice—especially on one or two occasions when, instead of saying what I had hoped to hear, he told me what I needed to hear.

Jack was instrumental in building this department and making it excellent. Even after he retired, he still had a strong commitment both to the department and the university. I experienced that firsthand when he asked me to be on a university committee that he chaired, which had a difficult problem to deal with.

It still is difficult for me to imagine our department without Jack. I'm very sad that he has left us

DANA NAU (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Jack had already stepped down from the chairmanship when I arrived at Maryland in 1985, and we were also in different fields, but we were friends and colleagues during my whole time here and I came to know him well. This was through being part of the tennis group, but also through the thoughtful way he handled all his responsibilities in the department, including being APT chair (in charge of promotions) in the department for many years. I also spoke to him many times over the years, about politics, family and by virtue of being neighbors in Bethesda. As the department was preparing for the move from AV Williams, I had the privilege of driving Jack to campus as he went through his papers and cleared his office. During these rides (for about two years), I learned about many things he had done both in the university, where he was always ready to step up and help with choosing administrators across campus, and in the profession. Among the latter things, he told me how he was heavily involved in the creation of CISE (the computing division) at the National Science Foundation, which required a clear vision that the discipline was distinct from mathematics, just one of many things he did for computer science.

As you well know, Jack was an excellent person and he will be sorely missed. My sincere condolences over your loss.

HOWARD ELMAN (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Jack has been a mentor not just for me throughout my stay at Maryland, but for many. He will be missed.

ASHOK AGRAWALA (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Some of my fondest memories as an assistant professor were playing tennis with Jack. Jack was highly competitive, which was a lot of fun to watch unless you were on his doubles team and there was pressure to win. What I remember most was his kindness and humanity. He always took time to ask how things were going for me, and gave me lots of advice—both in being a professor and in living life. I'm so saddened to hear of his passing, but so grateful that I got a chance to know him.

DONALD YEUNG (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Others have shared many of their longer and deeper memories. By the time I came, Jack had retired, but was an active emeritus professor. Creating a collegial institution requires people to make the effort to interact at various levels, and I will share some memories of how Jack did that.

He would walk around daily to get his coffee, and Jo's office was a few doors down in the AV Williams building (AVW). We had many brief conversations in AVW. Later we moved to the third floor, and our interactions were more sporadic; though he would periodically come to meet Larry and Yaser, and always stop in for a brief word.

Jack ran the UMD tennis group. He was extremely competitive, and kept detailed statistics. To join the group, you had to pass an audition—I failed the first time I tried, serving wildly into Ron Lipsman's (Math) back. I was able to join a couple of years later—after having worked on my game in the interim. Jack was then playing more intermittently, but was still insistent that Dave should update the scores, and then would come and talk about the games. He last played about four or five years ago.

His book and the chair that he established in the memory of Rita Minker, projects his passion.

RAMANI DURAI SWAMI (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Jack had a vision that the Computer Science department should not just be a place where we work, but that we are all, to some extent, a family. We should look after each other—not only to provide support to further our careers—but go the extra mile and support each other beyond this. I think this is one thing we can do to perpetuate his memory—to go beyond simply writing letters of recommendation for each other, but to treat each other (where appropriate) in a similar fashion to the way we treat members of our own family.

DANIEL J. ABADI (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

In addition to Jack's many admirable sides described by others, there is a personal memory that I will forever cherish. When I joined UMD, he was one of two faculty members to come personally to my office and welcome me. He was retired then, and there was indeed no compulsion to do something so warm. He was always generous in praising his colleagues and friends for their accomplishments and milestones, even when he was well into his eighties. I will miss him.

May his memory be a blessing.

ARAVIND SRINIVASAN (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

For those who might not know, Jack Minker played a role in a lot of foundational history. He was the first chair of the UMD Computer Science department; he was a founding fellow of both AAAI and the ACM. He was integral in efforts during the Cold War to get Jewish scientists out of oppressive countries, including Michael Brin and his family (who became a professor of Mathematics at UMD, and is the father of Sergey Brin, a UMD alum and co-founder of Google).

It's no exaggeration to say that computing as we know it—as virtually everybody knows it—has been influenced directly by Jack's research and his efforts to protect human rights.

Personally, when I decided to apply to UMD as faculty, he took the time to talk to me, to share a bit of history of other UMD alumni who went on to become faculty, and to lend me his support and advice. It was clear that he saw UMD CS as a home with a long history and an even longer future.

Thank you, Jack.

DAVE LEVIN (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Jack was truly a giant in the field of computer science, and he'll certainly be remembered for his knowledge, leadership and service to the university and to the scientific community at large.

MIHAI POP (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

I am deeply saddened to hear the news of Jack's passing. He was a prominent leader and a scholar, a relentless and passionate advocate for Computer Science and the campus, a strong believer in human rights, and a very special friend of mine. He will be dearly missed.

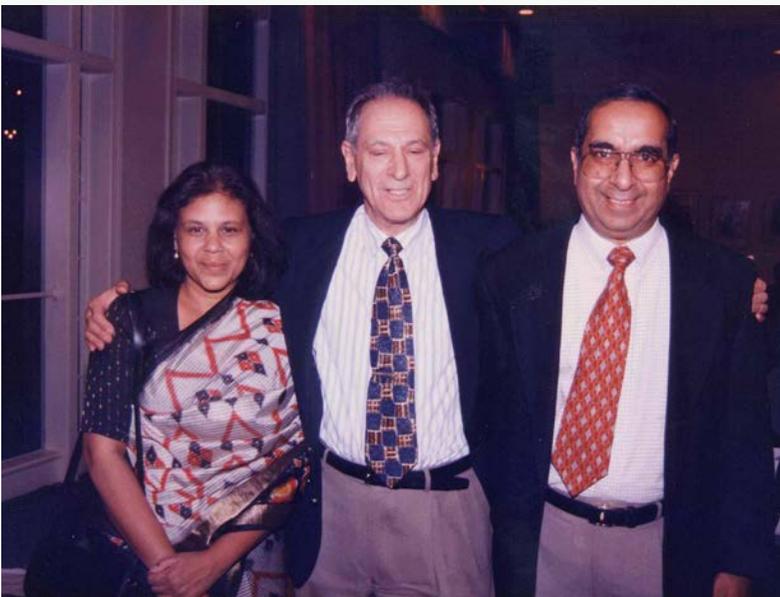
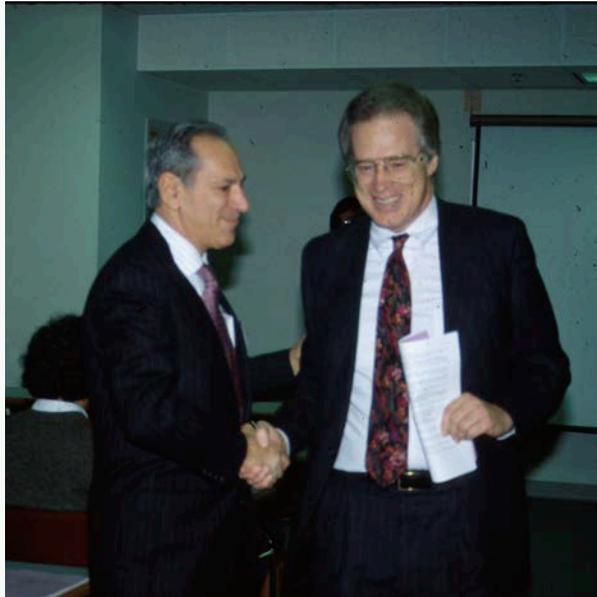
JOSEPH F. JAJA (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

Jack sent the nicest email to me and Elaine when we were starting at Maryland (although I had never met Jack in person). I remember being very encouraged by his message. May his soul rest in peace.

CHARALAMPOS PAPAMANTHOU (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

I have known Dr. Minker since I started here as a student worker, many, many years ago. He was always so kind to me, and always made me smile. He will be missed.

JODIE M. GRAY (*Staff, University of Maryland*)





For some reason I was thinking of Jack on Thursday evening this week—how very odd, but how good an example of how present he was in our lives. In addition to our many discussions around the UMIACS coffee pot, my strongest connection to Jack arose when SIGIR was building a digital library of materials on the development of the field. As it happened, the very first ACM symposium on information retrieval was held here at College Park, and Jack went to the trouble to find and share the proceedings with me. SIGIR itself didn't actually start holding annual conferences until seven years later, and the numbering scheme that evolved for the annual SIGIR conferences omitted that 1971 symposium. But today the proceedings of that symposium are in the ACM digital library, showing it as the first along with the SIGIR conferences that later followed, and listing (as you might guess) Jack Minker as General Chair. So not only did Jack have a tremendous impact on our university, on AI, and on our society—as one of his many contributions he helped to start my field as well. I'll miss him.

DOUG OARD (*Professor, University of Maryland*)

As an alumnus, I have known Jack since my CMSC620 Intro AI class (in 1984), when I managed to get into his oversubscribed Intro AI class by successfully answering an AI trivia question about the only CS researcher to get a Nobel. I have fond memories of that class, and have been lucky to keep in touch with him over the years. If Maryland CS is the accomplished but shy and retiring younger sibling, Jack Minker has been a Broadway Danny Rose-like impresario tirelessly boosting its confidence, and creating a sense of community. In my time, his PRISM group lab used to be the center of communal activity in the grad student life—and we were all honorary members, even if we didn't work directly with him. Intellectually, along with Azriel and Laveen, Jack ensured that MD got all sides of the perpetual AI debate, holding up the “logic-based AI” side. Above all, he was an approachable gentleman and a gem of a human. I still remember being touched by his concerned inquiry about the status of things in India and my family, in the aftermath of the assassination of the then prime minister back in October '84. He will be missed.

SUBBARAO KAMBHAMPATI (*Professor, Arizona State University*)

He was a giant. Sympathies to all who were his academic children.

BARBARA J. GROSZ (*Professor, Harvard University*)

He was a great man, and accomplished so many wonderful things in his life. I was honored to be part of his 90th birthday celebration. May his memory be a blessing.

WENDY REVEL (*Member of the Board of Directors, AJIRI*)

I am extremely saddened to hear this. Jack was very kind and supportive of me throughout the time I was in Maryland. Every time I made some little achievement, he always noticed it and sent me the kindest words of encouragement. Jack was also very supportive of diversity and women in computer science. He will be missed by many.

ELAINE (RUNTING) SHI (*Associate Professor, Cornell University*)

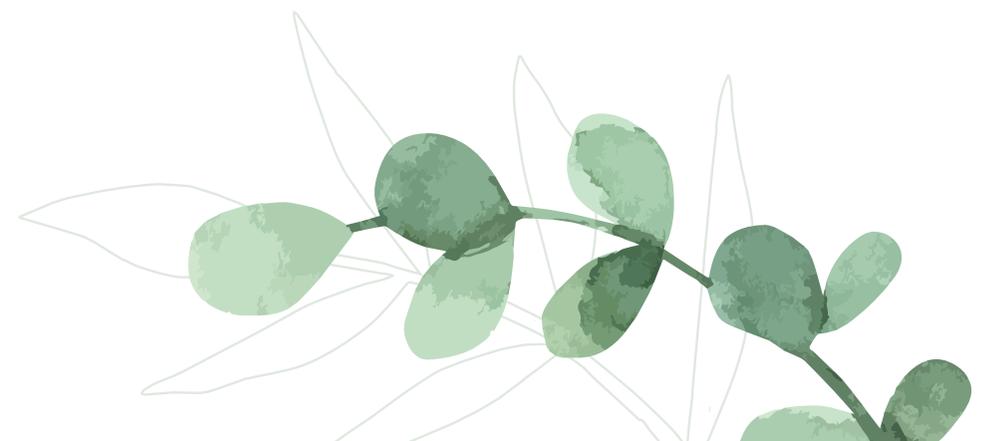
He was a Jack of few trades, the ones that mattered the most: always doing the right thing, genuinely caring about his family, friends, students and colleagues, treating everyone with exceptional respect, passion about computer science and AI, human rights and leadership. He distinguished himself in each one of them.

SIMON KASIF (*Professor, Boston University*)

Jack hired me at Maryland. Even before that, he helped create the position into which I was hired, somehow convincing two deans that it would be good to have a cross-college hire in logic and AI. I will never forget his warmth and kindness, his advocacy for me and my research, and how much fun it was working with the stellar group of students he had assembled. Jack's encouragement of my work continued even as it veered away from areas central to his own research. When I wrote my first book on default logic in philosophy, the main characters in the examples were “Jack and Jo.” This fact amused him enormously—he kept asking when Jack and Jo would make a reappearance!

Jack was widely respected and loved around the world, for his work and for his character. Even recently, at any conference I attended anywhere in the world, the most frequent request I received was always the same: “Please give my best to Jack Minker!” Over the years, Jack transitioned from a colleague to a close personal friend, to me and to my whole family. I will miss him on so many levels—but above all, I feel lucky to have known him.

JOHN HORTY (*Professor, University of Maryland*)





After a month or so of my arrival at Maryland, I made an appointment to meet with him and introduce myself. I remember coming to his office in the Computing and Space Sciences Building and knocking at the door (the building doesn't exist anymore). He invited me to enter and sit. Almost immediately his office phone rang. I don't recall exactly the details, but it was a call from the State Department regarding a call he wanted to make to someone in the former Soviet Union. In 1985, you were not able to just pick up your phone and call someone in Russia. You needed to schedule the calls through the State department, well, at least the kinds of calls Jack wanted to make. This was my first contact with Jack and my first encounter with his work on human rights. Over the years, I realized Jack tried not to discuss his work on scientific freedom and human rights with us (his students). I'm still not sure why. He was in a position of power, and, I guess, he didn't want us to feel obligated to support his views in the matter. It takes courage to actively defend principles like human rights. But I want to say that there is something else essential to the work Jack has done in this regard, and this is his persistence and patience to do the time consuming and often menial tasks to get results—like going through the trouble of these calls, or writing reports, or letters to congressmen. This event was then an unusual glimpse into this part of Jack's life.

Jack's technical work, as with his work in scientific freedom and human rights, is the result of a lot of persistence and patience. In this world, obsessed with social media and instant gratification, where people offer and find solutions to their problems in tweets and Facebook postings, Jack's career reminds us that having a lasting impact, and in particular, impact for building a better world, requires smart, hard and persistent work.

Thank you, Jack, for being you, and for being with us all this time.

JORGE LOBO (*Research Professor at Universitat Pompeu Fabra*)

This is very sad news. Can't imagine Dr. Minker passing away. He was more than an advisor to me. A mentor, a father figure who was always thinking benevolently about his students as his children. Looking back at all the good memories we had with him and our group. Those were indeed some of the best days that we all had.

I will miss him very much. But as all good things have to come to an end, a legend has passed. Hope his memories and advice help us in this bereavement.

ARCOT RAJASEKAR (*Professor, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*)

Jack was a wonderful human being as well as an outstanding scientist and scholar. He was already retired when I joined the department, but he took me to lunch when I was interviewing, in 2005, and made me feel really welcomed. He also told me about his human rights work, which he said was the most important work he'd ever done, and when I learned more about it, my respect for him (which was already very high) only grew. He invited me to join his tennis group, and it was always a delight to play with him, as I could see how much he loved the game. He was unfailingly thoughtful and respectful of everyone, from the newest students to the most senior faculty. He was a true mensch, in the best sense of that word.

STEVEN SALZBERG (*Professor, Johns Hopkins University*)

I had the great fortune and honor of having Dr. Minker as my Ph.D. advisor. He was an outstanding scientist, mentor and human being. Dr. Minker was a visionary who early on recognized the importance of computer science and was instrumental in creating the Department of Computer Science at UMD. As the founding chair, he planted the seeds for what became a top-notch, internationally recognized department. Dr. Minker was a brilliant scientist who contributed seminal research work to logic programming, deductive databases and artificial intelligence, as well as extensive professional leadership in these fields as a journal editor and conference organizer. He had unique wisdom and people skills to bring together people from different backgrounds and disciplines to work together on exciting and impactful initiatives. He had a warm, kind and caring personality. He had a great sense of humor too. As Ph.D. advisor, Dr. Minker was an inspiring role model and a patient and wise mentor. I learned from him much more than the ropes of being a scientist, a researcher and a professor; I learned from him the importance of working on meaningful problems and impactful solutions. I learned from him how to treat everyone with respect and the importance of valuing everyone's contributions and points of view. Dr. Minker has been more than an academic father to the large number of students in his research group. He has been a surrogate father who was there for us and our families at all times. He was a true family person and instilled in us the importance of forming a strong academic family; that view has kept us, his students across multiple generations, together over the years. Dr. Minker will stay forever in my heart and thoughts as a guiding star. Rest in peace, Dr. Minker. We love you and will miss you dearly.

CAROLINA RUIZ (*Professor, Worcester Polytechnic Institute*)

Jack was a visionary. His seminal work on the semantics of disjunctive databases and Generalized Closed World Assumption stimulated extensive research in the area, throughout the 1980s and still continues. The workshop on Foundations of Deductive Databases and Logic Programming he organized in August 1986 gathered some of the best researchers in the field, provided an important trigger for combining research in the two areas, and led to a flood of new research work. Several of the papers published in the proceedings of this workshop remain among the most quoted.

Jack always had the courage to pursue new, not necessarily well-established topics, because he understood what was so well expressed by Nicola Tesla: *“The scientific man does not aim at an immediate result. He does not expect that his advanced ideas will be readily taken up. His work is like that of the planter—for the future. His duty is to lay the foundation for those who are to come, and point the way.”*

It has happened time and time again in the history of science that at a certain time and place there emerges a strong group of scientists who end up making significant contributions to their research area. Oftentimes, a charismatic leader is the group’s main catalyst. He works like a gravity force and attracts those who may not even be fully aware of their talents or abilities.

As stated by John Maxwell, *“People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision.”*

Most importantly though, Jack was a wonderful, warm and caring person. Thus when I think about him, invariably the following words from Albert Einstein come to mind: *“Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong: it is character.”*

Jack’s intellect was certainly among the best I’ve known. But the point that Einstein was trying to make was that for scientific success, character may be of even greater importance. Jack’s great legacy undoubtedly stems from his amazing character traits.

TEODOR PRZYMUSINSKI (Professor, University of California at Riverside)

Jack Minker taught me how to think critically and ask, “What is important? What is innovative in my approach to a given problem? Is the problem itself innovative?” He also taught me that sometimes pure curiosity is important in itself. Jack gave me the time and space needed to accomplish a Ph.D. in his lab at Maryland. He had unflagging patience and unwavering standards. He set the bar high then, and was always available for advice and encouragement ever since.

TERRY GAASTERLAND (Professor, University of California, San Diego)

Jack was the first colleague to seek me out after my arrival in Maryland, and the warmth with which he greeted me remains a wonderful memory. He built a great department, while earning the trust, friendship and respect of all who knew him.

STEVE HALPERIN (Former Dean, CMNS, University of Maryland)

I can’t remember when I met Jack Minker for the first time, but it was definitely after coming across some of his works on disjunctive logic programming. In the early 1990s, when as a young postdoc I was looking for interesting research problems to work on, Jack’s book “Foundations of Disjunctive Logic Programming” co-authored by Jorge Lobo and Arcot Rajasekar struck my interest, and it inspired me and others in Vienna to pursue beyond theoretical investigations also implementations of prototypes and systems; this was one of the roots of the dlvs system, a state of the art disjunctive logic programming system over many years, for whose development Nicola Leone, Wolfgang Faber, Gerald Pfeifer, myself and many others joined efforts. Meeting Jack at conferences and workshops was an exciting experience, and I always enjoyed the scientific discussions and other conversations with Jack very much. His comments and the insights he shared were most valuable to me, and he was pointing out important research questions that directly influenced my research agenda.

Jack was an accomplished scientist. He not only made many fundamental and influential research contributions by himself, but he was also very much concerned with compiling knowledge for broad dissemination. He has in particular been driving three publication projects that resulted in epochal collections on logic in databases and AI: “Logic and DataBases,” co-edited with Herve Gallaire in 1978, “Foundations of Deductive Databases and Logic Programming,” in 1988, and “Logic-Based ArtificialIntelligence,” in 2000. The latter was a result of a workshop on this topic in Washington, D.C., and I felt deeply honored when Jack invited me to attend this meeting. All three collections contain articles and chapters that are among the most influential writings in the field.

Moreover, I experienced Jack as a great philanthropist, who was very supportive to young colleagues and students. I have been especially admiring of his commitment to fostering scientific freedom and human rights. The reminiscences on this topic, collected in his book published in 2012, are a legacy and mandate for the younger generations. They witness Jack’s tireless efforts and that a great many scientists and their families owe a lot to him.

It is hard to accept that Jack is no longer with us. We will miss him dearly, as a scientist, as a colleague, as a mentor and above all as a wonderful person—Jack was a real mensch.

THOMAS EITER (Professor, Technische Universitaet Wien)

I am very sorry to hear about Jack's demise. He will be missed greatly. He was a remarkably good and kind man who played a very special role in my life and the life of my family. All of us will remember him as long as we live. We are deeply grateful to him for his work for the Soviet refugees, which allowed many people (including us) to leave the Soviet Union instead of going to the jail there and a warm welcome to the United States, constant support and encouragement which lasted for forty years, and also for teaching us what it means to be an American. Of course, I'd also remember him as one of the founders of the fields of logical AI, deductive databases and logic programming with many ideas and questions which become central to my own scientific life and to the lives of many of my students and friends.

We are very grateful to have Jack in our life. May his memory be for a blessing.

MICHAEL GELFOND (*Professor Emeritus, Texas Tech University*)

I am very sorry to hear about Jack. I have many good memories of my time with him as my thesis advisor. I worked for Jack as a research assistant and was one of his first Ph.D. students in the early 1970s in the old Computer Science building. He was always very friendly and had a great sense of humor. I remember many meetings we had at his house to discuss my research. He will be missed greatly by all of us. Thanks to Louiqa who helped organize a PRISM Lab reunion that I was able to attend in 2018.

JIM McSKIMIN

I feel very sad to hear this news. As a graduate student who just joined UMD in Sept. 2018, I had a chance to meet him in our CS building. One day, I was just walking in the building and then he saw me and suddenly came to say "Hi" and some nice and encouraging words. I was super surprised at that moment. I did not know who he was until I saw a picture of him several months later. So I am sure that he must have been a very awesome professor.

YUE JIANG (*CS, Ph.D. Student, University of Maryland*)

I perfectly remember the moment when I first became aware of Jack Minker and his work. It happened in the fall of 1982, when I was a PostDoc at the Politecnico University in Milan, Italy, where I also worked for Applied Research Group (ARG), a software house jointly founded by some professors of the Politecnico. At ARG, on a bookshelf in a cabinet, I discovered the book "Logic and Databases" edited by Gallaire and Minker (1978), which immediately attracted my attention and soon became a major revelation to me. I was trained in logic, fluent in Prolog, and captivated by relational database theory. This book combined it all and presented a unified view of these topics. Fascinating research perspectives opened up. I have read many other papers and books by Jack, and his work has been a crucial influence on my research. The volumes 1 and 2 of "Advances in Databases" co-edited by Minker, and his scholarly written paper "Logic and databases: A deductive approach" gave me major inspirations. Similarly, his great work on indefinite databases and the closed world assumption (1982), and his book "Foundations of Disjunctive Logic Programming" with Jorge Lobo and Arcot Rajasekar influenced work on the complexity of various forms of closed-world reasoning by Thomas Eiter, myself, and others. I owe a lot scientifically to Jack.

After having read his first book in 1982, it took about five years until I first met Jack in person at PODS 1987. We later met many times at conferences, workshops, and other occasions and had many interesting conversations. Jack was a wonderful senior colleague, full of enthusiasm, and an intellectual always keen to discuss new ideas. I remember him as modest and mild-mannered, and as a great altruist, generously helping and supporting students and younger scientists in all possible ways. Many of us will miss Jack, not only as a scientific model, but also as one of humaneness.

GEORG GOTTLÖB (*Professor, University of Oxford*)



Photos courtesy of Professor Ben Shneiderman

APPENDIX

In addition to being the first appointed chair of the Department of Computer Science, Jack is also considered one of the founders of “Deductive Databases and Disjunctive Logic Programming.” He has an incredibly long history of scholarly accomplishments and humanitarian efforts, including being an advocate for more than 300 computer scientists released from 13 countries and being an outstanding “Camp Director” on the tennis court.

Below is a short list of a few key leadership roles Jack took on and a few selected major recognitions of his work:

1968 – 1970

ACM National Program Chair

1971

Program Chair of the First Jerusalem Conference

1973 – 1998

Vice Chair of the Committee of Concerned Scientists (CCS)

1980 – 1989

Vice Chair of Committee on Scientific Freedom & Human Rights (CSFHR)

1989

Elected Fellow of the AAAS

1991

Elected Fellow of the IEEE

1993

Founding Fellow of the ACM

1995

Festschrift written in Jack’s honor in the Annals of Mathematics

1996

UMD Presidential Medal for his extraordinary contributions to the campus life

2005

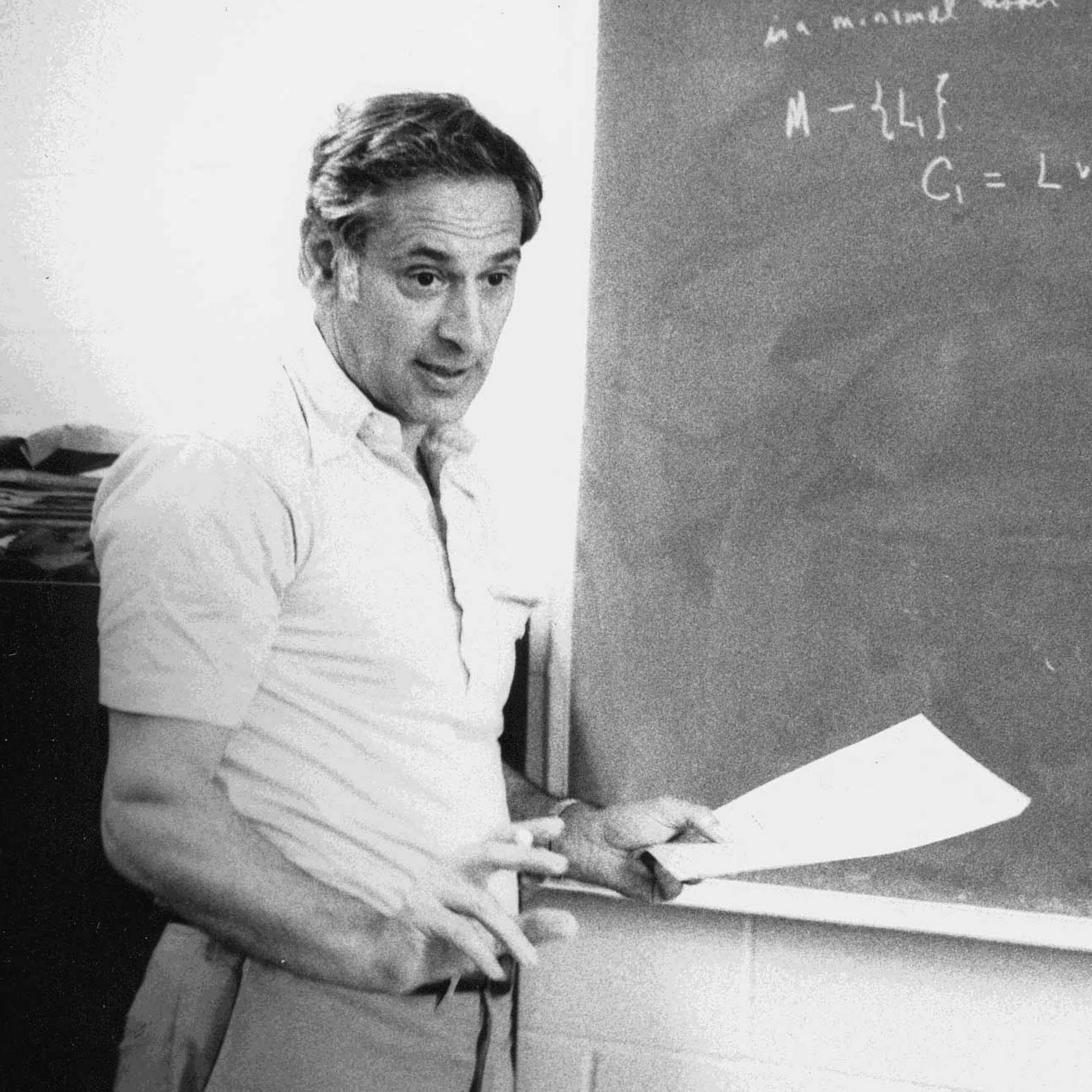
Allen Newell Award

2007

Festschrift written in Jack’s honor in the Annals of Artificial Intelligence

2011

Heinz R. Pagels Award from the Human Rights Committee of the New York Academy of Sciences



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