

Richard Paul, Computer & Information Science

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Richard P. Paul, an emeritus professor of computer & information science in the School of Engineering & Applied Science, died on February 12. He was 87.

A native of Australia, Dr. Paul came to Penn in 1984 after a stint in industry, which he found constricted his work. He joined Penn as a professor of computer & information science, with a secondary appointment in mechanical engineering & applied mechanics. A robotics pioneer, Dr. Paul worked at Penn on developing “Ivy League Robotics,” intelligent machines that can sense, adjust to, and manipulate their environment. Penn’s cognitive science and artificial intelligence programs were at the forefront of technological advances in robotics in the 1980s. “Just throwing people out of a job without any concern is obviously a very bad thing to do,” Dr. Paul said, “but if a society considers where automation is going to be needed, [automation] can be very useful—not just in where it’s going to make the most economic profit.”

From 1988 to 1994, Dr. Paul also served as associate dean of the School of Engineering & Applied Science. He retired from Penn and took emeritus status in 1999, but continued to teach for three more years.