

Marvin Minsky, pioneer of artificial intelligence, dies

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In this July 14, 1987, file photo, Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Marvin Minsky, speaks to the audience during a panel discussion whose topic was, "Artificial Intelligence: Society's Atlas or Achilles," at the Paramount Theater in Seattle. A pioneer in the field of artificial intelligence at MIT who saw parallels in the functioning of the human brain and computers has died. The university said Minsky died Sunday, Jan. 24, 2016, at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston of a cerebral hemorrhage. Minsky was 88. (AP Photo/Robert Kaiser, File)

Marvin Minsky, a pioneer in the field of artificial intelligence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who saw parallels in the functioning of the human brain and computers, died Sunday at age 88.

The university said Minsky died Sunday at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. The cause of death was a cerebral hemorrhage.

Minsky viewed the brain as a machine whose functioning can be studied and replicated in a computer, and he considered how machines might be endowed with common sense.

Daniela Rus, director of MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, said Minsky "helped create the vision of artificial intelligence as we know it today."

Minsky joined MIT's faculty in 1958, after earning degrees from Harvard and Princeton universities. It was at Princeton that Minsky met colleague John McCarthy, and in 1959 the pair founded the M.I.T. Artificial Intelligence Project, now known as MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. McCarthy is credited with coining the term "artificial intelligence."

The New York Times reports the lab brought about the notion that digital information should be shared freely and was part of the original ARPAnet, the precursor to the Internet.

Minsky's other accomplishments include inventing and building the first ultrahigh-resolution confocal microscope, an instrument used in the biological sciences. In 1969, he was awarded the prestigious Turing Award, computer science's highest prize.

Minsky's books include "The Society of Mind" and "The Emotion Machine." He also advised iconic director Stanley Kubrick on his 1968

science-fiction classic "2001: A Space Odyssey." Kubrick visited Minsky seeking to know whether he believed it was plausible that computers would be speaking by 2001, according to the New York Times.

Born in New York City, Minsky served in the Navy during World War II before studying mathematics at Harvard and Princeton.

Minsky is survived by his wife, Gloria Rudisch, a pediatrician; their three children; a sister and four grandchildren.

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