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# AI Practitioner

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry



## What Really Matters: Celebrating Wick van der Vaart

Co-publishers

**Instituut voor Interventiekunde and  
the David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry**



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# In memoriam



Wick van der Vaart  
1962 - 2017

Founder, Instituut voor Interventiekunde  
Editor-in-Chief, *AI Practitioner*, 2016 - 2017

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# What Really Matters

## Celebrating Wick van der Vaart

**Wick van der Vaart's first issue as publisher and Editor-in-Chief of *AI Practitioner* was February 2016. Although his tenure at the journal has not been long, his contributions will leave a legacy of thoughtful, engaged and engaging articles for those in all his varied communities to benefit from.**

When his wife, Nathalie, told Wick that he was to be the subject of this issue of *AI Practitioner*, his response was typical ... "Boring!", he said. My experience of Wick was that he was always looking outward, to the people around him: curious, open to new ideas and experiences, eager to see what they would bring. So, this issue is not about him. It is about Wick's positive spirit, his writing, and his contributions to his various communities. It is about the difference, with his seemingly boundless energy and clear moral compass, he made in the world. He was always looking for ways to collaborate, and to learn about the people he found himself with. Wick's response to any challenge, it seems, was to look at it clearly, evaluate the central issue to be dealt with most urgently, and then say, in one way or another, "Okay, let's make this work."

In the eighteen months he was Editor-in-Chief of *AI Practitioner*, he brought to the task the open, inquisitive nature and vigorous presence he brought to everything that engaged him. When the cancer struck, we were in the early days of bringing his great ideas into reality: one was making *AI Practitioner* a hub, a way for people to connect and to find out what is going on in the global AI community. To give them the opportunity to find ways to become involved. *AI Practitioner*, to which he gave so many resources, has been changed by him as much as the people he interacted with. It will continue to benefit from his energy and determination.

In the messages that have arrived, certain words and phrases recur: a vigorous presence, an appreciative spirit of joy, loving kindness. A playful and determined spirit who inspired both joy and productivity in others. As one student, Barbara van Kesteren, wrote, "Wick trained so many people, planted seeds everywhere,

to make the world a better place.” And a colleague, Jacqueline Stavros wrote, “Wick brought so much appreciative spirit of joy, loving kindness and fun to so many! The best hugs and warm heart live on in so many.”

### Valuing people’s differences

Wick valued the individuals he encountered, and searched for ways to be inclusive, to make best use of people’s differences to reach a result that was better than any one of them could produce. He was the glue that held disparate opinions, philosophies and personalities together to create a positive, appreciative team.

Gathered together in this issue are all of the articles he wrote or co-wrote (the latter was clearly his preferred option) for *AI Practitioner*. As well, there are articles that he wrote for other journals plus a book chapter and blogs, all originally written in Dutch of course, and translated for this issue. And there is a transcription of the final, moving, thoughtful film Wick made with Joep C. de Jong on 12 September 2017 while in hospital. There are also memories of Wick, written by colleagues and former students. And there is a translation of Nathalie’s speech at the memorial held for Wick held at the Institute for Interventionism on 19 October 2017.

### Articles written for *AI Practitioner*

The issue begins with the introductory article of the February 2016 issue of *AI Practitioner*, the first for which Wick was Editor-in-Chief. He started with a big topic: has Appreciative Inquiry lived up to its promises? How? What lies in the future? He also co-edited that issue with Robbert Masselink. Contributors included David L. Cooperrider and Lindsey N. Godwin, Joep C. de Jong, Gervase Bushe, and Ralph Stacey.



To read Wick’s interview with three athletes, go to page 22

In a thoughtful article that ranged from the early days of AI to thoughts and hopes for the future, Robbert Masselink and Wick interviewed René Bouwen, a professor at Leuven University in Belgium whose writing and philosophy has inspired them both. It is followed by an article which he co-wrote with Mark Lough, another colleague who worked with Wick and was a guest lecturer at the institute.

He wrote such a variety of articles for *AI Practitioner*: I never knew what to expect when he said that he would be sending me something in the near future. They were always on topic, always with a slight twist or a new angle. The next article, “The Human Side of Sport”, is on two subjects close to Wick’s heart: AI and positive motivation, and athletics. For the May 2016 issue of *AIP*, he interviewed three athletes to discuss coaching teams and themselves in positive ways.

Wick was also passionate about doing the best for his clients as a consultant and coach – or rather, helping them determine what is most important for them, and how they could bring that into being. That shows in the article he wrote with Mirko Opdam on coaching one department in Amsterdam’s government.

His introduction to the Spring 2017 issue, *Business, Schools and Communities as Agents of World Benefit*, was entitled “Towards a Flourishing World: Interacting with People as Agents of World Benefit”. For that issue, Wick interviewed the global head of sustainability for ING, a Dutch bank.

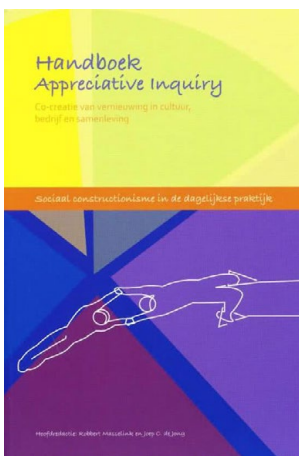


To read more about sustainability at ING, go to page 38

The section of articles written for the journal ends with one with the unlikely title, *Thank You, President Trump*. This year, 2017, marks the first *AI Practitioner* award, to be given annually to someone who finds a positive and constructive counter-narrative when the dominant discourse is destructive and negative.

### Other articles written by Wick

Wick contributed a chapter for the *Handboek Appreciative Inquiry*<sup>1</sup> in 2013 in which he explained his route to and philosophy of education. One of the editors of the book, Robbert Masselink, has translated Wick’s chapter so that it could be included in this issue.



To read Wick’s chapter on what makes educating worthwhile, go to page 44

“The Power of Narrating and Listening” follows, an article written for the *Tijdschrift Positieve Psychologie*, the Dutch *Magazine for Positive Psychology*, and translated for this issue by Matthijs Steeneveld.

His article “*Waarderende intervisie: Een procedure*” (“Appreciative Peer Review: A Procedure”) is published here in the original Dutch, followed by the English translation. Next is the short piece about the “*V5-model*” (Dutch)/“*C2R3 Model*” (English), about creating the atmosphere of trust that allows for effective collaboration.

Wick was also curious about the ways in which different disciplines and philosophies can work together to produce a result that is greater than the individual parts. In that vein, he wrote an article on *Cooperrider meets Belbin*, in which he discusses the application of AI questions to the classic team role profiles described by Belbin, and outlines a four-hour workshop working with a such a team. It appears here first in Dutch, followed by the English translation. The last article in this section is the transcription of the film *Joep C. de Jong* made with Wick in September 2017.

<sup>1</sup> Robbert Masselink and Joep C. de Jong, Eds. *Handboek appreciative inquiry*. Amsterdam: Gelling Publishing.



Nathalie's moving speech starts on page 105

## About Wick van der Vaart

Over the course of his working life, education became a passion. In “Making the World a Better Place”, Willem de Wijs, a lecturer and close colleague of Wick’s at Wick’s institute how it came about, and his connection with it.

Two articles follow, written by former students of the institute: “Embracing an Open Mind” by Suzanne Hoogland and Floor ten Holder, who were also guest editors for the August 2017 issue of *AI Practitioner*; and “An Extraordinary Person with Amsterdam Sense and Appreciative Eyes” by Barbara van Kesteren, one of the guest editors for the February 2017 issue of AIP.

Nathalie’s speech at Wick’s memorial closes the articles by and about Wick.

There are also the regular features: Voices from the Field, which although written before Hurricane Harvey, is about BakerRipley’s contribution to appreciative community building in Houston, Texas. Roopa Nandi has contributed the Feature Choice article, on the complicated subject of succession in family businesses. And Susan Gee and her colleagues have contributed an article on a project studying the usefulness of AI in preventing delirium in hospital patients.

When I started to work on this issue, Wick was alive and involved in its production. Now he is gone. *AI Practitioner* will be moving onto a new path in future, but as more than one person said, Wick travels with us into that future. His presence and spirit permeate the journal. I did not know him long enough, but I value and will always remember his enthusiasm and appreciative spirit. Like so many others, I have been changed by knowing Wick.

*Something new always emerges,  
something worth the effort of  
investigating!*

Wick van der Vaart

I would like to thank everyone who co-operated so efficiently and quickly when we decided very late on to change entirely the topic of this issue in order to honour Wick, his writing and his contributions to his communities. It was, for me, teamwork of the very highest order. It is that which Wick would celebrate about this issue: the way the subject brought people together to achieve an exceptional, and exceptionally positive, result.

**Shelagh Aitken**  
Issue editor, *AI Practitioner*  
November 2017

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*AI Practitioner* is now being brought to the world by academic co-partners the Instituut voor Interventiekunde in Amsterdam and the David L. Cooperrider Center in the Stiller School of Business at Champlain College, Vermont.



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The Instituut voor Interventiekunde (Institute for Interventionism) was founded in 2005 by Wick van der Vaart for two purposes:

- To train coaches, trainers, consultants and/or managers in the craft of appreciative interventionism. Students range in age from 24 to 65;
- As a network of practitioners who use an appreciative approach in working with individuals, groups and organisations.

The programs the Instituut voor Interventiekunde offers are both theoretical and practical. Our main programs are:

- A two year basic program in interventionism;
- International programs to become an AI practitioner, an AI master practitioner, and an AI meta practitioner.

## The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry

The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry is the global Center of Excellence in Appreciative Inquiry and strengths-based organizational management. Situated in the Robert P. Stiller School of Business at Champlain College, the Center:

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