Belated comment to: 'What is Informatics?' (2007)

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When I wrote my above-mentioned letter to the editor of *SACJ* several years ago in 2007 (Gruner, 2007), I had not been aware of the fact that the Austrian computer pioneer Heinz Zemanek (1920–2014) had published an article of the same title already (in the year *1972*) in the *Management Informatics* journal (Zemanek, 1972). In that publication, Zemanek had characterised informatics as a new type of engineering discipline—i.e., the informatician emerges as a new type of engineer for abstract objects, instead of material devices (Zemanek, 1972) . His notion of 'abstract object' Zemanek had defined already four years earlier in the journal *Elektronische Rechenanlagen* (Zemanek, 1968): abstract objects can generally represent both the structure of linguistic expressions as well as the various sub-states of finite automata (Zemanek, 1968, p. 209). Zemanek re-confirmed his point of view in the *Nachrichtentechnische Zeitschrift*, in which he stated with regard to the goals and purposes of informatics: *"man braucht dazu Ingenieure neuer Art: sie hantieren mit abstrakten Objekten, wie sie bisher nur in der Mathematik vorkamen"*[1] (Zemanek, 1973).

Though further definitions of 'informatics' have been numerous since then, Zemanek's early definition continues to possess—i.m.h.o.—a true core, and is also by-and-large compatible with the opinion which I had expressed in (Gruner, 2007) about this topic.

References

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[1]"One needs for this purpose engineers of a new kind: they work with abstract objects which had hitherto only occurred in mathematics."