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THE LAST ISSUE

This last issue of the ICCA Journal coincides with the end of the century, in which the computer-chess programmers have achieved their aim of *beating the human World Champion*. The researchers are now looking for the next challenge. For some, it is solving the game. Although this is considered to be practically impossible, persistent computer-chess researchers have already made the first step in this direction by digging up new knowledge from databases or by postulating and showing some empirical evidence that the game is a win for White.

For other researchers, the next century must show the applicability of the computer-chess techniques in other games. Since the ICCA will serve both groups, it was decided (see Vol. 22, No. 3) that after January 1, 2000 the ICCA Journal will continue under the name ICGA Journal, meaning the International Computer Games Association Journal. The official transformation of ICCA into ICGA will take place at the next Triennial Meeting in 2002. For the moment, readers will be a member of the ICCA and will receive the ICGA Journal.

The Editorial Board will be broadened and in the spirit of the IJCAI-97 Workshop (Nagoya, 1997), the CG'98 Conference (Tsukuba, 1998) and the ACG9 Conference (Paderborn, 1999) the pages will be open to research results from other games, such as Go, Shogi, Backgammon, Bridge, Poker, Sokoban, Scrabble and Crosswords. We stress that the ICGA Journal focuses on computer games and/or the use of computers in games. In this respect we are complementary to the Mathematical Games Section of Theoretical Computer Science, where the emphasis is laid on the mathematical and computational analysis of games.

The transformation of the ICCA Journal into the ICGA Journal will open the door to breakthroughs in a plethora of games, some of them still to be invented. Knowing the perseverance of many researchers the following question posed more than ten years ago at the Second Computer Olympiad will soon become more prominent: Which Games Will Survive? Will it be Go, Shogi or Chess? Or will it be a new popular game, for instance comparable with Rubik's Cube? To your Editor, such questions also will be a guideline for his publication policy, i.e., he will support contributions on how humans play games in comparison with computers, on cognitive research, on social aspects of game-playing programs, on philosophical issues, etc.

Together with this invitation for contributions, I would like to stress that the ICGA Journal will maintain the standards of the ICCA Journal as achieved over the years. It is a scientific Journal and as such recognised by the ISI (Institute for Scientific Information). The usual procedures with peer refereeing etc. will be continued. All in all, the ICGA Journal constitutes a new challenge for Editors and contributors alike.

Looking back into the century behind us, I would like to thank many persons with whom I have worked quite closely to give the Journal its present status and prestige. You all did a superb job and I am sure that the ICCA Journal was instrumental in achieving the goal of defeating Garry Kasparov. Next to the editorial staff, I would like to name two persons who did a fantastic job in bringing the Journal up to the level of being recognised world-wide as a leader in the field, by contributing themselves and by encouraging many other (young) researchers. They are the late Professor Bob Herschberg of the Delft University of Technology and Professor Jonathan Schaeffer of the University of Alberta. Thank you, gentlemen!

This last issue contains a somewhat paradoxical issue. Since 1997 the computer-chess community is proud that the DEEP BLUE researchers (Feng-hsiung Hsu, Murray Campbell, C.J. Tan, Joseph Hoane, Jerry Brody and Joel Benjamin) defeated Garry Kasparov. However, in this issue the same community admits, even in two contributions, that their findings did not provide sufficient support for the World Team in their contest with Garry Kasparov. The human World Champion has taken revenge for his 1997 defeat by beating the World Team (a combination of computers, computer-chess researchers, grandmasters including the FIDE World Champion Khalifman, etc.) convincingly in an exciting game. Quite a top performance! We offer Garry Kasparov our congratulations, and hope to report soon on his participation in a world-championship match with computers involved.

In the foreseeable future we look forward to three such matches, viz. the Advanced Chess World Championship, the Shuffle Chess World Championship and the "normal" World Chess Championship. In the past we have reported on Othello and Checkers matches in which the World Champion was involved. Now we envisage (1) reporting on analogous matches in many other games in our news section which will be maintained, and (2) putting on record the underlying scientific and technological breakthroughs in scientific contributions.

Finally, the very last issue of this last issue is money. We encourage all our members to renew their membership for themselves and to offer their game-playing partners a membership for 2000 to become familiar with many distinct computer games. Meanwhile we will strengthen our ties with the Mind Sports Olympiad, during which we will be organising the World PC-based Chess Championship (previously WMCC). For the next century we have diversities of games and contributions, but the same spirit: finding the ultimate truth in whatever game.

                                                                                    Jaap van den Herik