Editorial: Many quests

Mark Winands

Department of Advanced Computing Sciences, Maastricht University, The Netherlands
E-mail: m.winands@maastrichtuniversity.nl

In Computer Games research, we have seen a couple of quests over the years. The most famous one was the question whether a chess engine could defeat the human world-champion. This quest really started when in 1956 the first computer chess games were played against the MANIAC I computer at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico. One of the challenges was that the full 8×8 board was too large for computers in those days. Therefore, a minichess variant, so-called "Los Alamos Chess", was used instead. This variant is played on a 6×6 board, without bishops and with only six pawns on each side. In this issue, Roger Sayle reports that one of the openings played in 1956, game 2 (after P-K3), is solved. The outcome is that Black wins in 21 moves. The quest of solving Los Alamos Chess is not finished yet, but it appears that we are closer to the goal.

However, one could also argue that the quest of defeating the human world-champion started in 1974, when the first World Computer Chess Championship (WCCC) was held. This event and its successors encouraged competitors to generate new ideas, culminating in the victory of DEEP BLUE against Garry Kasparov in 1997. Since then the WCCC competition continued with the quest whether superhuman performance could be achieved. Also, this quest has come to an end as modern chess engines are undoubtedly unbeatable by humans. Therefore, after 50 years, the ICGA is planning to hold the final World Computer Chess Championships in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, October 19–24, 2024. In this issue, our president Jonathan Schaeffer reflects in his contribution *2024 World Computer Chess Championships: The End of an Era 1974–2024* on the past events, and announces the upcoming WCCC event. However, the final quest of solving chess will still take some time, and it is the intention of the ICGA to be alive and kicking when that happens!

This issue contains also a conference report on the 18th Advances in Computer Games (ACG 2023), which took place during 28–30 November 2023. Next, you can find the ICGA treasury report, and a call for papers for a special issue on advances in Computer Chinese Chess.

As a final remark, our publisher IOS Press has been acquired by Sage Publications. This acquisition will not affect the working relationship between us and IOS Press. The ICGA Journal will take full advantage of the infrastructure that Sage has to offer, and as of May 2024 ScholarOne will be used as the system to submit contributions to our journal.

Mark Winands