

Preface

The final issue of this volume of the International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education features a summary of work by some of the leading researchers in the field. This completes an excellent year for the Journal which has published some exciting research and also seen some very high quality submissions which should appear in 2009.

Val Shute and her colleagues at ETS have been working on assessment issues for some time. The goal of providing adaptable assessment which is acceptable to organisations that require strong statistical proof is an important one. What has been done in the paper published here – “You Can’t Fatten A Hog by Weighing It – Or Can You? Evaluating an Assessment for Learning System Called ACED” – is demonstrate that it is possible to provide adaptive testing with elaborated feedback and not unduly perturb the validity of assessment to any great extent. This is surely a significant result – not only for the AI in Education community but for policy makers and testing organisations throughout the world.

In “Be Brief, And They Shall Learn: Generating Concise Language Feedback for a Computer Tutor”, Barbara Di Eugenio and her colleagues seek to show that feedback that explains issues at higher levels of abstraction is more effective than “more detailed but more repetitive feedback” and that “functional aggregation” has a positive effect. The finding that more effective feedback includes instructions about what must be done next is not entirely new: there has been significant work in this area amongst those who carry out research on feedback giving – and many in the education world support some level of direction. For example, David Wood at Nottingham University developed his approach to tutoring (“contingent tutoring” – see his paper in IJAIED in 2001) which provides different degrees of detail in the feedback given.

The work carried out in Brazil on an “eHealth” system called AMPLIA covers a huge range of topics of interest to the AI in Education community. The paper, “AMPLIA: A Probabilistic Learning Environment”, includes work on negotiation, Bayesian nets, student models, models of pedagogy and collaborative learning. The system is aimed at helping medical students learn how to make diagnoses, and it has been evaluated in a number of ways. For a long time, Rosa Vicari and her colleagues have carried out significant work– so it is my pleasure to see this interesting work reported in the Journal. I believe that much good work has been done in Brazil; it would be good to see more submissions from there.

Please note, once again, that the date for submission of papers to AIED 2009 is 15th January 2009. The conference is to be held in Brighton, UK with Art Graesser as Conference Chair, Vania Dimitrova and Riichiro Mizoguchi as Programme Chairs and Benedict du Boulay as Local Arrangements Chair.

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