

Presidential Editorial

The ICGA's renaissance

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The ICGA is going through a renaissance. Last year was our 40th anniversary year and we held several meetings and discussions with a view to revamping the association in various ways. We examined our strengths and weaknesses, and we took advice on various fronts as to how we could offer more to our members and how we could better fulfil the original goals of those of us who founded the International Computer Chess Association, as it was known back in 1977.

Much of the impetus for this self-reassessment came because our Editor-in-Chief, Jaap van den Herik, decided to retire from that role. For those of you who have not had the privilege of meeting Jaap in person and discovering the phenomenal amount of work that he does, and what he achieves, I should explain that Jaap's contribution to the computer games field and to his role in the ICGA (and before it the ICCA), are almost beyond belief. He has boundless energy and enthusiasm for everything to which he turns his attention, and he more than anyone else has been responsible for growing our activities and related publications. In formally thanking Jaap for everything he has done for the ICGA over a period of some 40 years, we also pay a great tribute to Joke Hellemons, who has provided the assistance without which Jaap would not have been able to do the work of at least three normal professors. The ICGA is greatly in your debts.

Amongst the tasks which Jaap and Joke had to deal for many years, was the production and mailing of the Journal. Without Jaap at the helm we needed an alternative team that would not only attract authors to provide articles for the Journal, and edit contributions into publishable forms, but also to deal with the printing of the Journal and its mailing to ICGA members and subscribing organizations such as libraries. And many other tasks besides. So when Jaap decided that the time had come for him to devote more of his time to some of the many other roles he fulfils in his professional life, he took it upon himself to find a "team" of replacements. The result is our new editorial team, in collaboration with the academic journal publisher IOS Press, based in Amsterdam. This new team is in the process of catching up with the number of issues of the journal, a goal which we expect to be completed during the current year.

At the same time as this complete reorganization of all things related to the ICGA Journal, we are making some other improvements. The membership fee, which includes a subscription to the ICGA Journal, has been reduced. As from January 2018 the membership fee is only 20 Euro, which gives members a PDF version of the Journal sent by e-mail as well as free online access to the archives of the journal through the publisher. Those who would prefer a printed copy of the Journal may receive

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one at an additional cost, but in this online age we believe that the vast majority of members will be happiest with the lower membership fee.

Another dramatic change is that we are currently in the process of creating a much bigger and better web site for the ICGA. The Chess (and some other games) Wiki which has been lovingly and carefully developed and maintained over the years by Gerd Isenberg, will shortly be migrating to the new ICGA web site. We are adding a "links section" to our site, so that anyone interested in Computer Bridge, Computer Go, Computer Backgammon, etc., etc., will find links and a summary description for all such sites of which we are aware. A useful feature which will be added to the Wiki is the provision of open source programs which can be employed by games programming enthusiasts as a starting point for their own programs. There will be much more of benefit and interest to our members on the new site, which we expect to be launched well in advance of this year's ICGA events.

As for the ICGA events themselves, this year we are returning to a format from a previous year, 2005, when the World Computer Chess Championships were held in Reykjavik but the games conference and Computer Olympiad were in Taipei. This year the Computer Olympiad is again being held in Taiwan (July 7th–13th) alongside the 10th International Conference on Computer and Games (July 9th–11th). The 24th World Computer Chess Championship will take place in Stockholm, from July 13th–19th, the city where the very first WCCC was held in 1974. I have fond memories of that 1974 event, including the closing dinner at the Birger Jarl Hotel where we all listened to a live broadcast of President Nixon's resignation speech.

One of the attractions for the ICGA in holding our Chess event in Stockholm this year is that we will be alongside the combined conferences of IJCAI and ECAI. The IJCAI conference (International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence) has been running since 1969, and is one of the world's foremost regular A.I. events. This year is their 27th conference. The European Conference on Artificial Intelligence is the 23rd such event. The ICGA hopes that by running alongside these two great AI conferences we will be stimulating an increase in interest in computer games from these AI communities.

So the coming months will be exciting times for the ICGA. If any of you have more ideas for enhancing our activities and our profile, please contact me.

Thank you!

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