Editorial

The International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI) is one of the most prominent computer science competitions in the world. It was initiated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and endorsement by the International Federation on Information Processing (IFIP). The IOI is a truly international event, having been held on five continents and drawing delegations from six. It has been held every year since its foundation in 1989: Bulgaria, Belarus, Greece (twice), Germany, Argentina, Sweden, The Netherlands, Hungary, South Africa, Portugal, Turkey, China, Finland, Korea, USA, Poland, Mexico and this year in Croatia. It is thanks to the hard work of these host countries in organizing and funding the olympiad that the IOI continues to flourish.

The competition sets tasks that are of an algorithmic nature, however the contestants have to show basic skills including problem analysis, design (and knowledge) of algorithms and data structures, in addition to the programming and testing their solutions. The winners of the IOI belong, no doubt, to the best young computer scientists of the world.

The IOI regulations define its General Assembly, the body that is made up from members of each of the participating delegations, as "a temporary, short-term committee during IOI". This has often been characteristic of the informatics olympiads community as a whole. We come together during the year for a variety of regional and world-wide events, before returning to our respective countries to run our national contests in our own individual vacuums. Yes, we communicate during these national and international events, but too frequently these are conversations between small groups, if not individuals, and often such conversations are piecemeal and quickly forgotten.

Many of the issues at the national level differ from country to country. We have different educational systems and the availability and take-up of information technology varies, but even here there are as many similarities as differences. We also face many of the same problems: How do we pick our students? How do we train them? What is suitable material? etc ... How about those outside of our community? There are currently around 200 countries in the world and about 80 participating at the IOI. How many of those other countries have national contests, or want to have national contests, and how can we as a community help them?

As a community, we have a great deal of accumulated experience gained by running our respective contests. The IOI presents an ideal forum for discussing these experiences and associated issues. It brings together this experience and knowledge from across the globe and offers a regular, annual forum. There is also the opportunity for sharing the experiences of our community with the local educators in host countries. During some previous IOIs, attempts have been made to bring delegation leaders and other educators together, e.g. workshops in South Africa (1997) and Finland (2001).

In Mexico (2006), the Chilean delegation leader Alexander Tobanov made a challenge to start organizing half-day conferences during IOIs. During this year's pre-IOI meeting in March, the International Committee agreed that it was time to start holding conferences in order to study our experiences and to develop future plans. The *Olympiads in Informatics* conference, to be held jointly with and supported by the IOI, was approved and the editorial board chosen.

The first *Olympiads in Informatics* conference puts attention on organizing olympiads at the national level. The 17 papers selected for this inaugural conference discuss the running of and issues facing several national olympiads. Some explore recent ideas and changes, and how experiments with them have worked at the national level. Ideas which, in several cases, have been tried simultaneously in other countries.

It is intended that this conference will have main topics each year. We have a lot of questions to be dealt with: tasks developments, automatic testing systems, teaching programming methods, software for training, curriculum, relations between other contests, etc... There are many such issues and we will set out, if not to lay down answers then to lay down the questions and record how the community is approaching them. We hope that that this will be a benefit, not just to the IOI community, but to the wider community of educators in our field.

Thanks are due to everyone who has contributed to this conference. In particular, we would like to thank Ivo Separovic and the Croatian organisation of this year's IOI for giving us the opportunity to host the conference. Without their generous assistance it would not have been possible to hold this event.

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