Foreword

OLYMPIADS IN INFORMATICS is a refereed scholarly journal that provides an international forum for presenting research and development in the specific area of teaching and learning informatics through competition. The journal is focused on the research and practice of professionals who are working in this field. OLYMPIADS IN INFORMATICS is published annually (in summer). Only original high quality research papers are accepted. All submitted papers are peer reviewed.

The journal is substantially connected with the conference organized during International Olympiads in Informatics (IOI). Papers are requested to be presented during the conference. The main goals of the conference (and journal) are:

– to improve the quality of olympiads,
– to improve the skills of contestants and educators, and
– to discuss developing tasks and topics for olympiads.

The first OLYMPIADS IN INFORMATICS conference was organized in Zagreb (2007) and put attention on organizing olympiads at the national level. The papers in this volume are being presented during the IOI in Cairo (2008).

The national olympiads do not exist in isolation, and the papers in the inaugural conference showed how similar problems arise in different environments, and illustrated some of the solutions that both identify and distinguish the community. This volume concentrates on training and task types, and many of the ideas and experiences are drawn from the national olympiads. There are common trends here and, we hope, useful discussions for both the national and international level.

Tasks are perennial issue for contests, their most visible aspect and, for many contestants, the primary reason for participation. We strive for quality, variety and suitability. We endeavour to make tasks interesting, understandable and accessible. They are used to test contestants and to train them, and perhaps even to capture the imagination of those outside the contest, be they family, sponsors or the media.

If tasks seem the main purpose of an Olympiad to the contestants often, from an educator's perspective, there is equal interest in training the contestants. This is not only a question of how we choose the best, or enable the to show their true ability. We seek to enthuse them with a passion for the subject. Some of the best students in the world participate in our olympiads, nationally and internationally; their interest in the subject is win for everyone.

That the national olympiads exist in a wider community is also true of the international olympiads. We are delighted, for this second conference, to have an invited paper by Prof. M. Revilla discussing an international topic outside of the IOI. This is intended to be the start of a trend, both for invited papers and for a widening of the contributors and audience for the conference.

Thanks are due to everyone who has contributed to the IOI conference. In particularly, we would like to thank the organizers of this year's IOI in Egypt – the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Education, and the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport. Many thanks to Prof. Dr. Ekram F. Abdel Gawad, Prof. Dr. Mohamed Aly Youssef, Dr. Salah A. Elewa – without their assistance it would not have been possible to hold this event.

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