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We show how Item Response Theory (IRT) can be used to define a new type of rating system, one that is especially suitable for programming competitions (and other types of competitions where difficulty of competitions varies between rounds). We show some useful theoretical properties of this rating system, including the ability to argue about hardness of past competition tasks, and about the precision of contestants' skill estimates. We also define an objective method of comparing different rating systems. In the final section of the paper we apply our methods on real competition data.

A scientific conference dedicated to the teaching of Informatics and to the organization of national and international contests in this subject will begin today at 10.00 in Park-Hotel „Sankt Peterburg“. This forum, accompanying Olympiads for school students, is the third in succession. The „seniors“ of the Olympiad in Plovdiv will comment on success stories and issues, while the „juniors“ will be solving tasks within the first competition day.

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Since launching the Syrian Olympiad in Informatics (SOI) five years ago, encouraging children to participate in the contest has been a challenging task, a common problem in many places around the world. Students, and many educators as well, see programming as a tough subject to learn. In addition, the style of IOI tasks is generally considered unattractive.

We started overcoming those obstacles through using Scratch, a graphical programming language developed at the MIT Media Lab. Scratch allows kids to start learning programming concentrating on the concepts rather than the syntax, while providing them with the ability to construct diverse projects that are attractive and meaningful to them. Scratch also allows examining children's programming skills against interesting tasks, and gives them the opportunity to move more smoothly into learning a traditional language like C++ and other computer science topics.



Whether a young talent will be discovered and how s/he will develop, largely depends on the teacher

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The need for more attractive tasks in teaching algorithms and in informatics competitions attracts many authors to reactive tasks as a powerful tool that created in student a desire for coping with hard tasks. In comparison with batch tasks, reactive tasks and especially the programming of games are very challenging, very comprehensive and fit perfectly with the story. In this paper an attempt to point out some attributes and priorities of reactive tasks in general, and game tasks in particular, versus batch ones is made.

All of the other gold medal winning countries, except Korea, had participated in the competition from its beginnings in Bulgaria in 1989.

Thirteen countries competed in the first IOI. The second IOI was held Byellorussia, in 1990, with 24 countries, and the third IOI was held in Greece in 1991 with 25 countries.

This year the size doubled

to 50 participating countries and 5 observing countries.

A buffet-lunch on the terrace followed the awards, and all the students received a collection of goodies in an attractive black IBM duffel bag to go along with their certificates of participation. Throughout the ceremonies pictures were taken by the German press, TV stations, and many proud team leaders. An air balloon was

resting on the back lawn ready to take the winners airborne. Unfortunately, wind conditions were not safe enough to risk a flight, but the afternoon was a marvelous finale to ten wonderful days at IOI'92. This will be a tough Olympiad to follow. IOI'93 is scheduled for Argentina in October of 1993.

Don T. Piele,
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