

IFIP Survey: IT & Sports



On 3 June 2002 we wrote to the IFIP community to query whether it is it time for IFIP to find a niche in the sports domain.

Now we would like to thank all participants for taking part in this initiative and responding to the survey. The received contributions certainly present a valuable input to the work of IFIP's Technical Assembly and the Committee for Cooperation with Industry.

The considerations "For" and "Against" IFIP's systematic involvement in IT & Sports were split.

Against

It appears that the main argument for those "Against" is that sport is just one of the areas of possible ICT applications, that IT is just a tool here and that there are already many specialized organizations in the field.

For

Those "for" stressed that IT plays a major role in sports, from planning and preparation to logistics and performance measurement, and expressed the opinion that IFIP's involvement in the field would help further promote IFIP, especially among young people. The sports arena has a huge market and IFIP could gain significant visibility through this effort, e.g. if all sports fans see the IFIP name as being associated with sports IT and this could help recruit additional IFIP volunteers. Some expressed the opinion that Sports could be extended to "entertainment in general".

As reasons for getting involved some stressed the significant economics impact of all kind of games - in particular for the younger "Nintendo" generation. Another reason that was given is the tendency to reduce working hours which would lead to compensating activities in order to keep the population busy. Finally, with an aging society (due to health care improvements) convenient methods and strategies for keeping the population in a healthy state are in demand. Thus, there are also a lot of medical aspects in the topic - combined with IT aspects, of course.

Organization

Several felt that the start-up activity could be organized in a WG [TC 3 and TC 9 were mentioned]. Others felt that a Specialist group with an attractive title would be a good way to move ahead. Some felt that a new unit within IFIP could be considered to operate like a high tech start-up.

It is clear that the idea should be further investigated since IT & Sports would involve areas currently covered by several IFIP TCs.

Scope of activities

- Sports management and ICT, IT-based sports games and education
- Models and software for scoring, ranking, statistics, strategy, prediction of results and their (graphical) representation.
- Models and SW development to support the analysis of movements in tennis and image interpretation
- Systems supporting the organization of mega-events
- Worldwide drug monitoring system related to Sports

- Distributed Games
- Planning of Leisure Activities
- Health improvement of an aging society by IT methods (e.g. robot assistance,...)
- Modeling of games

One participant suggested that IFIP's relationship with actual implementers of sports IT sites could be similar to the relationship between IBM Research and IBM Global Services and its customers. IFIP could first approach and understand the sports IT problems as viewed by large international sports organizations such as FIFA, write vision-strategy statements/white papers, trying to establish itself as a technical leader, and see if it could get engaged with these large international sports organizations. As initial ideas: see if we could develop some interesting science out of it, e.g. extreme resiliency and on-demand capacity allocation policies, to react to sudden increases in demand on a Web site. [There is an effort called "Autonomic Computing" at IBM along these lines.] Another interesting application is data mining on the vast amount of historical sports data.

Membership

Two individuals offered to consider providing leadership to champion such an activity if endorsed by IFIP and another 4 offered to assist as members. One person offered to provide links to industry if TA decides to give the green light.

Final comment

IFIP has a Committee for Cooperation with Industry (CCI) and a Task Force on Entertainment Computing, established in 2000, whose first conference was organized in May 2002 ref. <http://www.ifip.or.at/mail/msg00115.html>. Obviously, CCI and the TF on entertainment computing are an expression of IFIP's General Assembly to link and interact more closely with Industry. One way to consider Sports issues and IT could be to extend their scope of activities. No matter how we look at it, IT in sports is a successful expanding business and it should be envisaged that it will attract more and more investments in future in terms of health care, leisure, performance monitoring and media coverage. In some of these areas IFIP is already involved but these activities are not yet linked thematically and organizationally.

It is agreed with the TA Chair that the opinions expressed in the survey would be further examined at a forthcoming meeting of IFIP's Technical Assembly.

The Delivery Co.

18 June 2002, Laxenburg