A Word from the Chair of SIGEVO

Welcome to the Proceedings of GECCO-2007, the ninth GECCO, and in turn a "recombination" of the Sixteenth International Conference on Genetic Algorithms (ICGA) and the Twelfth Genetic Programming Conference (GP)! If you are reading this at GECCO-2007, we hope you are enjoying the history and spectacle of London, and having the type of productive and memorable experience that we all expect at GECCO. General Chair Hod Lipson, Local Arrangements/Publicity Chair Peter Bentley, and an outstanding team of chairs of the various activities and tracks have put together a marvelous conference. The first-ever GECCO-sponsored public debate, featuring Richard Dawkins, Lewis Wolpert and Steve Jones, on Complexity and Evolution, held at the historic Central Hall of the Natural History Museum, promises to attract major public attention to our conference and field. Special thanks to Peter and the others who have worked so hard to put this together!

If you were not able to attend GECCO-2007 in person, we trust that you will find the articles contained in these Proceedings to be of lasting value. Now that the Proceedings are in the ACM Digital Library and indexed by ISI, they are globally accessible and readily found, which benefits both readers and authors. The highly decentralized review process used for reviewing papers for GECCO has once again produced an outstanding result – 46% of a record-breaking number of submissions were accepted as full papers, and an additional 36% were accepted for presentation as posters and 1-page abstracts in these proceedings. These papers span the dynamic field of evolutionary computation, and the review process assures that each category of papers is reviewed by experts in that subspecialty. The Program Committee, under the skilled leadership of Dirk Thierens, included fourteen separate review tracks, including some new ones, with similar percentages of submissions being accepted in each track. This policy helps to assure that new areas are not drowned out by the large number of submissions on more familiar topics, and have a chance to take root and grow.

ACM SIGEVO!

The members of ACM SIGEVO, sponsor of GECCO, have already seen major benefits of becoming a part of ACM. Key among new benefits is the outstanding newsletter, SIGEVOlutions, produced by editor Pier Luca Lanzi and an excellent editorial board, which has already produced its first four quarterly issues (read them at www.sigevolution.org). If you are accessing these proceedings and are not a member of SIGEVO, please consider joining (for the low price of $25/year for non-students, and $10/year for student members). In addition to SIGEVOlutions, members receive a major discount for GECCO registration ($75 for SIGEVO or ACM members). Incidentally, all SIGEVO members are invited to submit announcements and brief articles of interest to Pier Luca at lanzi@elet.polimi.it.

Hod Lipson did a great job at the helm as General Chair of GECCO-2007, and Peter Bentley did excellent service as Local Arrangements Chair for the first non-hotel-based GECCO (so lots of local arrangements to do). Special thanks are due to Pat Cattolico (Tiger Mountain Scientific, Inc.) for outstanding work handling the logistics for GECCO, as the "back room" person making the "front room" people look good! Dirk Thierens, Program Chair and Editor-in-Chief of the Proceedings, did an excellent job lining up track chairs, organizing the review process, and editing the proceedings. We are delighted with the submissions to GECCO, and expect to have, once again, the best conference in the field! The GECCO Business Committee (John Koza and Dave Goldberg) has advised Hod and has helped with the liaison to the ACM SIG Support Staff in New York to produce this year's proceedings, negotiate contracts, and help with planning for GECCO-2008. The Business Committee for GECCO-2008 has already been elected (John Koza and Wolfgang Banzhaf), and, with the approval of SIGEVO's Executive Committee, has appointed Conor Ryan as General Chair. He hopes to announce the location of GECCO-2008 during GECCO-2007.

FOGA

The Ninth FOGA Workshop was held in Mexico City, January 7-11, 2007, under sponsorship of SIGEVO. Chris Stephens did a great job organizing the workshop. Many of the leading figures in genetic and evolutionary computation theory presented and discussed their work. Planning for the Tenth FOGA Workshop (2009) is now starting. Watch SIGEVOlutions for announcements as planning progresses.

Involvement in SIGEVO

In June, 2006, SIGEVO was "promoted" from its provisional status to being a regular SIG. Our bylaws are on the SIGEVO web pages, as is a list of the Executive Committee—but wait—by the time you read this, we will have had the election to fill nine vacancies on the Executive Committee, which will now be an 18-member body. At its meeting at GECCO-2007, the EC will choose new officers for two-year terms, taking office immediately. In the future, six EC members will be elected each odd-numbered year. I'd like to thank the officers who have served with me since SIGEVO's founding: John Koza (Vice Chair), Erick Cantu-Paz (Secretary), and especially Wolfgang Banzhaf (Treasurer), who has had to master the ACM budgeting process, helping all of the GECCO organizers with their budgets. By the time you read this, I hope we will have finalized a new SIGEVO logo (thanks, Lee Spector, for working on this!). Incidentally, most of the activities of our predecessor organization, ISGEC, are being carried forward, including our Council of Authors (so if you are author or editor of a new book in the field, let us know, and we'll get you and your book listed on our SIGEVO web pages). ISGEC's Council of Fellows will undergo a change of name (currently being decided) to assume a place in SIGEVO, although those already elected will always be ISGEC Fellows, of course.

If you are interested in devoting some time and energy to GECCO or SIGEVO, please let us know (the new chair's email will be on the SIGEVO web pages – www.acm.org/sigevo). We have many more ideas than we have people to implement them, and we're still open to more ideas. The next few years will be important ones for SIGEVO, and all of the organizers welcome involvement from others interested in the field!

It has been a pleasure chairing SIGEVO, and ISGEC before it, working with an outstanding group of leaders in genetic and evolutionary computation. They have worked selflessly, always putting the good of the field first, for which I thank them all! I look forward to continuing involvement in SIGEVO.

Erik Goodman
SIGEVO Chair