Preface

*Configuration* is the task of selecting and arranging parts to provide a desired function without violating part-specific constraints. Configuration problems arise in design, manufacturing, sales, installation and maintenance. The parts need not be physical, for example, one could configure an insurance policy or an investment strategy.

Configuration problems have a long history in AI going back at least to the pioneering R1/XCON expert system for configuring computer systems. Recently the area has been revitalized by:

- Renewed industrial interest: Edward Feigenbaum highlighted configuration in his "Tiger in a Cage" talk at the AAAI-93 conference.

- The rise of constraint satisfaction technology: Constraint programming languages are bringing this technology into the real world. Configuration is a natural constraint satisfaction problem.

- The success of the world wide web and other networked information services: These generate an increasing demand for automated configuration. Companies are seeing their offers/sales ratio increase dramatically to the point where manual configuration is no longer feasible.

At present, academic attention in AI to this topic is lagging behind the industrial level of interest. We hope that this symposium will help to redress that balance. The papers in these working notes present a healthy mixture of authors from academia and industry, and present many interesting ideas. From this, we can expect lively and fruitful discussions at the symposium, which we hope can be the starting point of a long-lasting development towards more powerful and widely-used configuration tools.

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