Column

"*Always Interesting*"
AI in the news

Man vs. Machine—A new era in computer chess. Garry Kasparov. *Opinion Journal,* from the *The Wall Street Journal* Editorial Page. February 16, 2003 (www.opinionjournal.com). "Years before the first computer was actually built, the famous British mathematician Alan Turing envisaged it playing chess and beating the human world champion. When the very first computers were delivered to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in the 1950s the scientists there immediately started to program it to play chess. The quest had begun. For 50 years one of the recurring motifs of the science of artificial intelligence was a chess computer beating the world champion. It was almost an obsession in the community, with scores of teams in dozens of universities dedicating their academic careers to achieve this goal."

Who should explore space, man or machine? Richard Stenger. *CNN.* February 19, 2003 (www.cnn.com). "The loss of seven space shuttle astronauts this month again brought home the serious risk that humans face into the hostile environs beyond our sheltered planet, reviving the question of whether exploring the heavens should be left to unmanned missions. Although less glamorous, such missions pose no risks to humans. And already robots have an impressive list of accomplishments compared to the their flesh and blood counterparts."

This eclectic keepsake provides a sampling of what can be found (with links to the full articles) on the AI Topics web site. Please keep in mind that (1) the mere mention of anything here does not imply any endorsement whatsoever; (2) the excerpt might not reflect the overall tenor of the article; (3) although the articles were initially available online and without charge, few things that good last forever; and (4) the AI in the News collection—updated, hyperlinked, and archived—can be found by going to www.aaai.org/aitopics/html/current.html.

—Jon Glick, Webmaster, AI Topics

Are you lonesome tonight? With Wakamaru the robot you need never be again. Commentary by Catherine Pepinster. *The Independent.* February 9, 2003 (argument.independent.co.uk). "Last week Mitsubishi said that it has produced a robot that will act as a security guard for the elderly. Three-feet-high Wakamaru will patrol a pensioner's home for 24 hours a day, and alert families and social services should its owner, say, have a fall, or fail to get out of the bath. Wakamaru will trundle about using cameras in its 'eyebrows' to check all is well, and will send images to picture-displaying mobile phones. It can alert security firms if there is an intruder in the house. ... Wakamaru is to be nurse and companion as well, reminding forgetful people to take their medicine, to eat and take a nap. And, as the first robot to hold a simple conversation, based on 10,000 words, Mitsubishi claims Wakamaru will banish loneliness."

The Cyborg Evolution. David Stonehouse. *The Sydney Morning Herald.* March 22, 2003 (www.smh.com.au). "[Kevin Warwick] believes this cyborg evolution is inevitable and vital to our very survival as a species. 'If we don't, the alternative is to have intelligent machines running everything. ... Warwick, a cybernetics professor at the University of Reading in England, is involved in ambitious and dangerous experiments in the quest to meld man and machine. In March 2002, an electrode was implanted in his wrist in order to read the electrical signals pulsing through his nerves and report the information to a computer, thus providing a link between the machine and his nervous system. ... While Warwick worries that machines may conquer man if we don't become part machine, he is not concerned that computers will end up taking over if we do team up with them. 'The new system that we move to is essentially an intelligent machine network that has human nodes connected to it. I see it as if you are not connected to the network—if you are not a cyborg —you're not part of it at all.'"