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Refereed Article

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Return of the Imitation Game

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Abstract: *Predictions made by Alan Turing concern the feasibility of plausible machine play both of a weak (Turing 1950) and of a strong (see Copeland 1999) form of his "imitation game". His conjectured date of success with the weak form was the start of the present century, and with the strong form around the year 2050-plus. His long-forgotten "child machine" prescription for attaining these goals is re-examined in the light of a newly arisen commercial demand for conversational agents.*

Claude Sammut and I recently developed and installed a new version of such an agent under contract to Sydney's Powerhouse Museum. It instructs, and entertains with small talk, visitors to the museum's permanent "Cyberworld" exhibition. Examples are given from tests on the museum scripts of instructive conversation with and without the small-talk option. Inclusion of the latter is found to be critical to maintaining sufficient interest and rapport in the user for effective factual communication.

Publication and review history

This work was first presented at the Machine Intelligence 18 Workshop, held on September 19-21, 2001 at the University of York, UK. Attendance at this workshop was based on invitations. Speakers at the workshop were invited to submit their articles for consideration in the forthcoming workshop volume. The subsequent publication and review history for the present article was as follows.

1. First versions *published* by Linköping University Electronic Press on in August - October, 2001 and permanently available at
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5. Revised version appears in Electronic Transactions on Artificial Intellligence, Volume 5 (2001), section B, pages 203–221. The section and the annual volume are made permanently available at
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6. Paper editions of the ETAI issue and the ETAI volume containing this artice *republished* by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

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Article maintenance

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