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HISTORICAL NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The 1985 Los Angeles IJCAI conference had just been held when I arrived at the Los Altos offices of William Kaufmann, Inc. as the first employee at fledgling Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, founded by Bill Kaufmann, Nils Nilsson, and Mike Morgan. It was shortly my responsibility to market the proceedings, our first new title, and (a more difficult task!) find storage space for the oversized boards onto which IJCAI contributors had pasted their typewritten text and mostly hand-drawn equations and figures. Those big pages had been reduced to $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ on our stat camera to “improve the resolution,” as a later paradigm would put it. In 1987 I managed production of that year’s IJCAI proceedings, as I have every cycle since, and attended the conference in Milan. I sweated out the delivery of the proceedings volumes by truck from The Netherlands only to see them nearly destroyed in the flooded basement of the Milanofiore conference center during unexpected torrential rains. Mike Morgan, his trousers rolled up, heaving cartons of the books to higher ground, was quite a sight.

Around 1987, my husband Lee organized Morgan Kaufmann’s first internet and email connectivity through SRI in Menlo Park—a mode of communication that gradually supplanted transoceanic phone calls, which in the early years had me in my office at unusual hours to talk with IJCAI organizers and printers around the world. Since 1987, Lee has also been involved, one way or another, in every IJCAI proceedings. At this time as well, a rebellion of sorts was effected by authors using “new” text formatting tools, troff and TEX, against the oversized pasteup-board process. For several more cycles, we still express-shipped author packets containing these boards, and later $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ -inch versions, around the world to the contributors (boards were available on request as late as 1995). In 1987, I began to co-author, initially with Peter Patel-Schneider, the IJCAI *Instructions to Authors*, which by now—as some of you have whimsically calculated—gives me, a literature major from Oberlin College and the University of Edinburgh, an Erdős number of 5 (Paul Erdős > Nathan Linial > Ronald Rivest > Jon Doyle > Thomas Dean > Jennifer Ballentine).

I had left Morgan Kaufmann by 1989 to join with Lee in founding the company that became Professional Book Center, but we were hired to manage the IJCAI production from our home office in Mountain View, California. That year and in 1991, on days leading up to the deadline, express vans from Federal Express, the Royal Mail, and now-defunct carriers like Purolator delivered hundreds of papers, and more than one contributor turned up in person, often to be invited in for a cup of tea (or something). From 1991 on, we increasingly received laser-printed pages, with a few papers provided as slick Linotronic repro. By the 1993 cycle, Professional Book Center had moved to Colorado, more-or-less putting an end to the tea (or something) ritual. Once or twice a contributor ventured down from Boulder.

A unique feature—and challenge—of this conference has been its worldwide constituency. Page fees came in the form of checks, money orders, electronic transfers, and sometimes drafts on banks so institutionally remote that a third of the value was consumed by collection charges. After the 1990s, we offered VISA and MasterCard acceptance for the fees; today nearly all charges are paid by credit card.

From 1993, we began to receive a few electronic files on a variety of disks, and occasionally even a reel of mag tape, which our friends at the University of Denver were kind enough to read for us. In 1997, we formally offered an electronic delivery option using anonymous FTP, which worked well until 1999 when gamers caught on and began to park unwanted files on the server. Password-protected FTP then became the standard in 2001, as it still is. At first we received many file formats: PostScript, Acrobat, native TEX files, MS Word, and even Word Perfect. The 2003 cycle was the first in which all the papers were delivered as electronic files; in 2005 for the first time, all files received were PDF files. For most of the history of the conference, the pages of the “camera-ready” proceedings pages were pasted-up, with “running feet” containing the folios (page numbers) and section titles added by a host of freelancers over the years. By 2001, reliable Acrobat tools for adding text electronically became available. Once we were certain they would not, as had been the case with early tools, change your + signs to – signs or worse, we adopted them. In the 1993 and 1995 cycles, we produced videocassettes in VHS and PAL format for the IJCAI video track. Since 2001, we’ve produced a CD version of the proceedings, and this year an online version is also planned for the first time.

Having worked with your proceedings through all the years that Morgan Kaufmann and Elsevier published it, we have gotten to know quite a few of you personally, and many hundreds of you by name and reputation. This year our company, Professional Book Center, will become the publisher of record for the proceedings. With the 20th IJCAI coming in 2007, we want to congratulate you, and say thanks to the AI community for 20 years of your trust. It has been a pleasure and an honor for both of us and our many freelance associates.

Jennifer and Lee Ballentine, Professional Book Center