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<u>**Pushing mobile robot technology**</u>

AAAI's Mobile Robot Competition & Exhibition 2003

Menlo Park, Calif –August 8, 2003. For twelve years, the American Association for Artificial Intelligence has sponsored the Mobile Robot Competition (www.palantir.swarthmore.edu/ijcai03/). Each year, the tasks are more difficult, and the capabilities of the competing robots more sophisticated. Teams from a number of the leading robotics research labs around the world enter the competition. Cash and products are awarded winning teams.

During the robot exhibition, a number of groundbreaking new designs have been demonstrated through the years, such as a stair-climbing wheelchair robot with human passenger aboard, and this past year a self-reconfiguring robot that could automatically change its shape to navigate in different modes.

This year there are three competitive events:

- <u>Robot Rescue</u> – This event, first introduced to the competition three years ago, is designed to give entrants an opportunity to work in search and rescue operations – a domain that proved of critical importance shortly after the tragedy of 9-11 when teams that competed at that year's event swiftly transported their robots to Ground Zero of the World Trade Center and offered assistance to the search efforts. (See the September 10, 2002 archived news release, "In the Aftermath of September 11: What Roboticists Learned from the Search and Rescue Efforts" at www.aaai.org/Pressroom/pressroom.html.) This year, robots must enter a fallen structure, find human victims and direct human rescuers to the victim. The event is

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being developed in close coordination with experienced rescue professionals, and will use the highly challenging U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology Standard Test Course for Urban Search and Rescue.

- Robot Challenge -- The challenge is for each competing robot to attend the National Conference on Artificial Intelligence, interact with the other attendees, and give a (brief) technical talk on itself in an assigned room. Subtasks include starting at the front door of the conference center, navigating to the registration desk, register and get a room number and time for its talk, interact with other conference attendees, get to the conference room on time, taking an elevator if necessary, make a 2-minute presentation about itself and answer questions. This event pushes the state-of-the-art in mobile robotics in a number of directions and stimulates research roboticists to new heights of achievement each year.
- Robot Host – While this event has been a part of the competition for a number of years, this year the robots will not serve food to conference attendees, but instead navigate the exhibition area, interact with guests, and offer information or service as a guide to the exhibits. The focus will be on navigation in typical human environments, human-robot interaction, and robustness to situations the robot encounters.

Prizes

Prizes for the robot competition events have been generously provided by iRobot (www.irobot.com/home/default.asp), ActivMedia (www.mobilerobots.com/), and Ben Wegbreit. The first place prize for the Robot Rescue and Robot Host events will be a Roomba vacuum robot and a $1000 certificate towards the purchase of robots or robot accessories from Activmedia . The second place prize in both events will be a Roomba vacuum robot. In addition, there will be a prize--a $1000 ActivMedia certificate--for the the robot team demonstrating the greatest degree of effective autonomy on the Urban Search & Rescue course, as determined by the judges during the competition. The Ben Wegbreit Award for Integrating AI Technologies will be awarded to the team demonstrating the best integration and effective use of artificial intelligence techniques situated on a robot. Robots in all events and the exhibition will be considered for this award.

The Mobile Robot Competition, sponsored by the American Association for Artificial Intelligence, will be co-located with the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI-03) in Acacpulco, Mexico August 9-15, 2003.

<u>Background</u>

IJCAI-03 is sponsored by the International Joint Conferences on Artificial Intelligence, the Mexican Society for Artificial Intelligence, and the American Association for Artificial Intelligence (AAAI).

Founded in 1979, the American Association for Artificial Intelligence (www.aaai.org) is a nonprofit scientific membership society devoted to advancing the science and practice of AI. Its mission is to: (1) advance the scientific understanding of the mechanisms underlying intelligent thought and behavior, (2) facilitate their embodiment in machines, (3) serve as an information resource for research planners and the general public concerning trends in AI, and (4) offer training for the current and coming generations of AI researchers and practitioners. The organization sponsors a bi-annual National AI conference, the Innovative Applications of AI conference, the Mobile Robot Competition and Exhibition, and numerous symposia and workshops.

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