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TO: Thomas Maeder – COMPUTER MATTERS Committee Spokesman
     Marjan Kovacevic - WFCC President

PROPOSAL FOR INVESTING IN SW TOOLS SUPPORTING WFCC COMPETITIONS

Dear Thomas and Marjan,

During the past few years I have been exposed, at various titles, to a number of WFCC activities / competitions, notably as:
- Director for FIDE Album 2016-18, Section A
- Judge in WCCI 2019-21, Section A
- Judge in FIDE Album 2019-21, Section A
- WCCI Spokesman for WCCI 2022-24 (working side by side with Shankar Ram, Director)
- Judge in FIDE World Cup, Section A

In such roles, I have undertaken and witnessed a number of tasks that were very time consuming, effort intensive, largely manual, tedious and error prone. Just to mention a few (list not exhaustive!):
- FIDE Album – Section Director:
  o Create and search for duplicated entries of joint compositions before sending excel spreadsheets to judges
  o Consolidate individual spreadsheets by judges and search for, e.g., large discrepancies in scores
  o Prepare summaries for judges to review such discrepancies
  o Timely share among judges information on possible anticipations
  o Etc..
- WCCI Spokesman & Director:
  o Some of the same tasks as per FIDE Album
  o Eliminate highest / lowest scores
  o Eliminate lowest 2 entries
  o Preparing a graphical standardized layout for the summary tables
  o Communicate with FIDE Album as WCCI entries with 8+ points and check correctness
- FIDE World Cup & Judge:
  o Properly and seriously anonymize entries for judges
  o Assemble the awards in some standardized way

Most of the above activities can be automated and standardized.

According to my experience so far, some efforts have been made already, e.g. (again, list not exhaustive):
- Excel templates for FIDE Album scoresheet, with some macro embedded
- Excel templates for WCCI scoresheet, also with some macro embedded
- Some automation (eg developed by Shankar to help in the last WCCI cycle)
- Etc.

But:
- Most of these efforts are "individual" efforts, maybe done by some more IT-literate past or present Director, but still largely hand-made solutions, hardly usable by anybody else than those that has written them.
- Degree of automation is still very partial, far from what current technology can enable.

As a result, Directors (in WCCI, FIDE WC, FIDE Album) have still to perform many time consuming and tedious activities, to intervene manually in a number of places (potential errors!), to check and double-check many times intermediate and final results, etc. All that takes time from more rewarding and value adding activities connected to their duties.

I would like to suggest that the Computer Matters Committee look more into the subject, identify some priorities (time & costs required vs. potential benefits and return on the investments), identify someone willing to take responsibility to undertake the task, and start launching a first project.

Thank you for your attention
Best Regards
Marco Guida

Addendum by Shankar Ram:

1. Some kind of solution like STM developed by Miodrag Mladenovic.
2. The various WFCC composing tourneys (WCCI, WCCT, Album, World Cup, YCCC) have different procedures and processes.
3. A single all-in-one solution may be too difficult.
4. Instead as a short term option, I can suggest shared Google sheet templates for each type of WFCC tourney.
5. These sheets should have some automation embedded into them - formulas, macros and code.
6. The directors should be able to simply enter the raw data and the embedded automation should do all the different things Marco has listed.
7. (Marco's remarks) They need to be developed by a professional, with controls and guided editing and a proper user manual and long-term support and maintenance commitment. Otherwise risks of errors and misuse by anyone that has not developed it is too high. In other words, the backend can be Excel, the automation can be via macros, but the front-end for the user must be something more solid than just entering data straight in the cells!
8. Like in the STM, some master files with composer names, photo, date of birth, country, and titles could be linked so that these don't have to be entered manually
9. And like in STM, the master file should be updatable for adding new composers

10. Anonymising of entries can also be automated. A google sheets template has to be made. The director copies the FEN to generate the diagram. A serial number is assigned which is copied with composer name into a separate file. He copy pastes other details. He removes and/or edits the "self praising" comments which may identify a particular composer. The final document is generated to share with the judge.
11. For the WCCI, I developed my own Google sheet templates by trial and error to reverse engineer Dmitri Turevsky's coded solutions for the previous WCCI cycles. He shared his code but warned that he himself couldn't remember all the details! I took a look and felt it was beyond my skills to use it.
12. But I am not competent enough to develop standardised templates suggested above. Some of our members who actually do coding could possibly do it, subject to the requirements mentioned by Marco in #7.