

Links for chess history

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Thesis – New International Groups

In these years, we have entered a kind of bridge leading to the following century, or rather millennium. It seems to me that we are ready to a new convergence between traditionally distinguished – if not contrasting – groups. These may be various, such as, respectively, professionals and amateurs, men of science and men of letters, people working on manuscripts and people on computers (as I visit a library, it occurs to me more and more often to meet with readers transcribing old texts into their own personal computers), and so on.

Within this general background, the history of chess is not absent. The efforts of a few people (and especially of Egbert Meissenburg) have recently lead to the constitution of groups and associations specifically formed by chess historians, such as the *Initiativgruppe Königstein* and the more recent *Förderkreis*.

Among the experts listed in Egbert Meissenburg, *Die Schach-Geschichtsforschung zum Ausgange des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Seevetal 1996, there are academicians, professional scholars; in principle, the leading people in the world to be interested in chess history. However, it must be recalled that the character of this participation is rather free. On the one hand, anyone interested in the subject may enter, even if some original contribution to the field is welcome. On the other hand, it happens that well known scholars, interested in the field, do not take part in the mentioned associations.

It may be noted that the majority of the experts mentioned come from Europe, and especially from Germany – this may be in agreement with the traditional provenance of chess historians in the past.

Antithesis – New International Links

There is now established a different kind of even more spontaneous and free associations. Chess fans are well represented among computer and internet people; only an extremely small fraction of them is especially interested in chess history, but some do exist.

The problem is how to build and increase our knowledge on a suitable basis. In the literature, there are many elementary handbooks of chess teaching the foundations and rather few at an advanced level. In the internet, it seems difficult to distinguish these “levels”, since everybody has access to everything, as far as I know.

As for provenance, it may be noted that the majority of sites is located in the USA. This can be felt even for the treatment of chess history in the internet. In the past, several collectors have enriched the archival funds on chess in the USA, to begin with the huge White collection in Cleveland Public Library, and so on. The chess historical tradition of the USA is nevertheless not so exceptional. There are also – it seems to me – some enthusiast people who suppose that chess history has still to be written, and who thus begins just now to do it.

The main question for the internet groups is that spontaneous associations of this kind are always subjected to start again from the very beginning: a young student approaching the field may ask today exactly the same questions as were asked many years ago. Therefore, they commonly use a FAQ list (namely, of Frequently Asked Questions), precisely to avoid that exchange of information consists in repeating the ABC to infinity.

The means offered by the internet are extraordinary. In principle, it would be possible to have links devoted to specific chapters or aspects of our topic with everybody contributing to everything – with possibly a few editors in charge of accepting modifications and additions. As for similar cases, the problem will be of who is entitled to judge whom; here an official establishment is even harder than usual to build, and to let it work efficiently.

Synthesis – Links Among Historians

It is not clear whether and how the two mentioned sectors can be linked. There is however a strong requirement, that chess historians –

as any association of researchers – should better be linked. By means of the internet, it will be possible to have texts exchanged and amended in a much more rapid and complete way than for previous times. If I am a chess historian who could not attend the Pondicherry meeting, there should be some way for receiving the corresponding news before four months.

In the mentioned list, as compiled by Meissenburg in 1996, we can see that some people is already linked. I can now update somewhat this list, in the hope that these links will be used in the near future with greater profit.

As a first example we may assume that of Mario Velucchi. He has a comprehensive site in the internet – <http://www.cli.di.unipi.it/~velucchi/personal.html> – devoted mainly to chess problems and mathematical aspects. His email address is: <velucchi@cli.di.unipi.it>.

C. Panduranga Bhatta should have a link at : <bioinpu@iitm.ernein>, but this is not (or at least no more) an internet link – and cannot be reached by ordinary email.

Mehl has a link at his University, <mehl@ushs.u-strasbg.fr>, even though he did not answer until now to my message of several months ago. Of course, having a link available is not enough for assuring an exchange of correspondence – as always, good will comes first.

A difficult point is to keep these addresses updated, even when they are, or were, right. Thus I sent a message to Raymond Kuzanek the very day when his reported address was changing! At present his address should be as follows: <RaymondKuzanek@worldnet.att.net>

I can use an old link at Florence University, which has been now addressed to my name, Franco Pratesi: <metal@ing.unifi.it>.

Again for Italy, may I add (even though his name is not yet included in Meissenburg's lists) the email address of Mario Leoncini: <leoncinim@mailsrv.unisi.it>. He is now performing an exacting work on an internet encyclopaedia with chess biographies and so on.

Finally, I have to add: Thierry Depaulis at: <Depaulis@club-internet.fr>. He may be a newcomer among chess historians, but must nevertheless be considered a great expert on various games of skill.

I am certain that this list will soon grow – best wishes for the new facilities of the coming century, or rather millennium.