

2004 Tutorial Description

Computing: Limitations and Promising Developments

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With the many successful applications of computers to solve a wide range of problems, it is natural to wonder what lies ahead for this technology. This tutorial will consider two promising areas of current research in computer science: artificial intelligence (especially expert systems and neural networks) and multi-processor computing (including parallel algorithms, distributed systems, and the World Wide Web). Each of these research areas provides perspectives on problem-solving, and this tutorial will explore each of these perspectives in some detail. Parallel algorithms involve problem-solving approaches which take advantage of multiple processors; artificial intelligence studies both how the human mind might function and approaches for solving problems often associated with intelligent decision making; and distributed computing utilizes networks of machines for the storage and processing of data. For each of these topics, discussion will cover basic concepts, sample applications, and directions of current research. In addition, the tutorial will identify factors that limit how computers may be used. Results from the theory of computation show that some problems are inherently not solvable, while practical considerations restrict the nature of the solutions that may be found for other problems.