

## **ITSoc President's Report**

*Andrea Goldsmith*

### **ISIT BoG Meeting**

**June 28, 2009**

**Seoul, Korea**

**Agenda Summary:** The IT Society Annual BoG meeting is the most heavily attended of the year and hence packed with activity. At this meeting we will vote on appointed officers for Secretary and Treasurer, select slates of candidates for the 2010 BoG and officers, vote on the Society paper award, vote on proposals for upcoming conferences, workshops, and student schools, and hear reports from all society committees. In addition, we will vote on making the Conference Committee Chair a voting member of the BoG. Based on the lively email discussion sparked by this upcoming vote, I have allocated some time under "New Business" to discuss society governance, in particular the composition of the BoG, the role of committees, and how to get BoG members more involved.

The remainder of this report will summarize the state of the society and discuss recent initiatives and progress on issues related to society governance.

**State of the Society:** The current state of our society is excellent. Our finances are in good shape and we should end the year with a surplus on the order of 100K, which can be spent this year on new initiatives. The recovery of the financial markets should improve the outlook for IEEE finances and thus some recovery of the 1.2 million dollar loss to our reserves reported back in March. However, over the next few years we will experience a significant decline of Xplore income due to a change in the IEEE formula, which we must compensate for with increased income or reduced spending. The Transactions continue to be highly regarded and of excellent quality. Moreover, significant progress is being made to reduce its sub-to-pub time, including adding more AEs and moving paper processing to Manuscript Central. An interdisciplinary workshop on Networking and Information Theory was recently held in Volos, Greece. It was well-attended with excellent presentations of very high quality. Our membership numbers this year are similar to last year, and indicate a significant increase in student members. New initiatives within the society include a Distinguished Lecture program, which currently has an open call for nominations, and a mentoring program sponsored by the Outreach Committee. Both the Outreach and Student Committees host widely-attended and compelling events at ISIT, Allerton, and other conferences and workshops. The sharp rise in student membership can be attributed in part to the value of membership added by the Student Committee. Our chapters are vibrant and growing, with new chapters in New Zealand and Chengdu, China recently approved.

**Officer and BoG Candidates for 2010:** The society is governed by its BoG, consisting of 18 elected members, 5 elected and 2 appointed officers, and the Publications Committee Chair. Our current Secretary João Barros' term ends after ISIT and I would like to express appreciation on behalf of the society for his outstanding service. Our current Treasurer Anant Sahai will continue to serve through the end of the calendar year, and will assist the new Treasurer with the transition. I would like to express our appreciation to Anant on behalf of the society for his outstanding service, especially in this tumultuous economic period. The new Secretary and Treasurer are appointed officers and require BoG approval. The following candidates have been selected by the officers for approval by the BoG:

**BoG Vote:** Approval of Aria Nosratinia as Society Secretary

**BoG Vote:** Approval of Nihar Jindal as Society Treasurer

In addition, at the annual meeting the BoG approves the slate of BoG candidates for the following year put forth by the Nomination and Appointments Committee and solicits additional nominations for BoG candidates.

**BoG Vote:** Approval of BoG candidate slate from N/A Committee

**Nominations:** Additional BoG Nominations

Finally, at the annual meeting the BoG nominates a slate of candidates for President, 1<sup>st</sup> VP, and 2<sup>nd</sup> VP for the following year

**Nominations:** President, 1<sup>st</sup> VP, and 2<sup>nd</sup> VP

**Society Governance and the Role of Committees:** As discussed at the CISS BoG meeting, our society governance has changed over time. In the past, most decisions and oversight was conducted by the BoG, so that the society hierarchy was relatively flat. Exceptions were the Shannon, Wyner, Awards, Membership/Chapters and Publications Committees, which operated relatively independently, included officers as ex-officio members, and in some cases required BoG votes to approve decisions. Recently some of decisions and oversight previously handled by the BoG have shifted to committees, in particular with respect to conferences. In addition, the Student, Outreach, and Online Committees are relatively new. Given the increased responsibility and activity within society committees, at CISS a mechanism for officer oversight of committee operations was put in place by voting to make officers ex-officio members of all committees. Specifically, the President and 1st VP joined the Conference Committee (the Treasurer was already an ex-officio member) and the Online Committee, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP joined the Student and Outreach Committees.

While all committees serve important functions within the society, the Publications and Conference Committees have oversight for our most visible activities and those with the most significant financial impact. The Publications Committee Chair is already an ex-officio member of the BoG and, given the commensurate level of responsibility and impact, the officers felt that the Conference Committee Chair should become a voting BoG member as well. A discussion of this proposal was initiated at the CISS BoG meeting and continued via email prior to this annual meeting. Those in favor of the proposal cited the impact of the Conference Committee on the society and its finances, as well as the responsibility and trust placed in the Conference Committee Chair. The main argument against the proposal was concern about the dilution of the vote of the 18 elected members of the BoG. Additional suggestions related to this proposal included changing the composition of the BoG, requiring the Conference Committee Chair to be an elected BoG member, or having the Conference Committee Chair vote only on BoG issues related to conferences. Since these items are all related to broader society governance issues, they will be discussed under the “New Business” agenda item specifically devoted to that topic.

**BoG Vote:** Make the Conference Committee Chair an ex-officio member of the BoG

The email discussion around this BoG vote raised larger questions about the composition of the BoG and the committee structure, which are dictated by our Constitution and Bylaws. Is the composition of the BoG and committee structure working well for the society? Is there room for improvement? How might BoG members get more involved in society governance, either via participation on committees or in other ways? These questions will be put forward for discussion during the “New Business” agenda item.

**Society Finances:** Our finances this year are in good shape despite market turmoil last year, with an estimated \$114K budget surplus including a \$50K conference/workshop surplus which looks on track to be received. Although Xplore revenue is somewhat unpredictable, based on this estimated surplus we should be able to spend an additional \$60-100K on new initiatives this year and/or add more money to our reserves. In 2008 the IEEE investments lost 1.2M dollars of our reserves, which reduced it to 1.8M dollars. This is not too dire, since the reserve peak in 2007 of almost 3M dollars was unprecedented, and our reserves before 2006 were well below their current value. The IEEE restricts reserves spending when

their own reserves falls below a given target, as it did last year, so our only flexibility in spending this year is based on our targeted budget surplus. The recovery of the financial markets should result in increased reserves for our society and the IEEE overall, which hopefully will provide us with more reserve money as well as flexibility in spending it. However, there are some budget uncertainties looming on the horizon, including reduced Xplore income due to a new IEEE formula for conference paper downloads, as well as potential Transactions subscription reductions from University libraries due to budget concerns. Given these uncertainties, we should continue our tradition of conservative funding for new initiatives coupled with ongoing monitoring of budgets, spending and reserve levels.

**Transactions and Reducing Transactions Sub-to-Pub Time:** This issue is, in my opinion, one of the most serious problems in our society and I have made reducing this delay while not compromising Transactions quality a top priority for my presidency. Significant progress has been made on this issue, with the number of AEs substantially increased to reduce overall load and a transition in place to move paper processing from Pareja to Manuscript Central. The Publications Committee report will provide more details.

**Symposium/Workshop Nature, Venue and Cost:** Another BoG discussion item that arose with respect to a Workshop approval vote is the nature, venue, and cost of our conferences and workshops. Should we proactively solicit targeted and/or interdisciplinary workshop proposals or should our workshops generally remain broad, as most are now. Should we try to create more of a workshop vs. conference environment? Should the locales and sites of our symposium and workshops be chosen to maximize appeal or to minimize cost, or should we alternate between these criteria? These issues will be discussed as part of the Conference Committee report.

**Awards:** Most society awards are announced at ISIT, including the Shannon Award, Wyner Service Award, IT Society Paper Award, ISIT Student Paper Award, and the Chapter of the Year Award. The Joint ITSoc/Comsoc Paper Award is announced earlier so that Comsoc can present the award at the ICC conference if the authors wish. This year we solicited outside nominations for the Shannon Award for the first time, with six nominations received including several names that have not been considered before. The committee also generated nominations internally as in the past. More proactive solicitation of nominations for both the IT Society and Joint ITSoc/Comsoc paper awards was successful, with the number of nominated papers for the joint paper award significantly more than in the past. Our society has continued to champion reinstatement of the Baker Prize. This reinstatement recently passed the significant hurdle of obtaining approval from the IEEE TAB Awards and Recognition Committee (TABARC). The Awards Board usually follows their recommendation, which means the Baker Prize may be reinstated as soon as next year. The society has also put forth a nomination for the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Communications and Information Technology. Our nominee last year, Jacob Ziv, was the winner of this award.

**Next BoG meeting:** The last 2009 BoG meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 11, 2-6pm in Taormina, Sicily. If easier for BoG members to attend, it could be held later in the week, e.g. Tuesday Oct 13 5:30-9:30pm. A straw poll will be taken to determine the preferred time for this meeting.