

## IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Baltimore, MD, September 23, 2008

Muriel Médard and João Barros

**Attendees:** Alexander Barg, Giuseppe Caire, Daniel J. Costello Jr., Michelle Effros, Abbas El Gamal, Dave Forney, Andrea Goldsmith, Alex Grant, Bruce Hajek, Tracey Ho, Frank Kschischang, J. Nicholas Laneman, Muriel Médard, Prakash Narayan, Anant Sahai, Emina Soljanin

The meeting was called to order at 18:30 by Society President Andrea Goldsmith, who greeted the members of the Board and their guests.

1. By consent, the Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting (Champaign, IL, September 23, 2008).
2. The agenda was approved by consent.
3. The President gave her report. The Society is in good financial health and the membership decline has been successfully reversed. The Transactions are viewed as highly prestigious and the student committee work is considered to be exemplary. However, there are still a number of areas that require improvement, for example submission to publication time (sub-to-pub), the web site, and the perception that the Society is somewhat of an old-boys network.

Bruce Hajek asked why some of the work is done in committees rather than in the Board. The President replied that in some cases this is more efficient. Dave Forney pointed out that some of the Board members are not very involved and that all should be engaged in some area. It was further suggested that conference and committee chairs should be made voting members of the Board, as in the case of the Editor in Chief.

A motion was presented for the President and the First Vice-President to become members of the Conference Committee. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

4. The Treasurer presented his report. After a market loss of 1.2M USD IEEE used some of the available funds to pay for pensions. The Society has no say on how IEEE invests the Society's funds. IEEE IEEE would like to conferences to provide a 20% surplus. Dave Forney asked about the plans of IEEE. The Treasurer replied that there are plans to freeze new hirings and cut on travel costs.
5. The report of the Editor in Chief was given by Andrea Goldsmith. The Board approved the Associate Editor (AE) appointments of Marco Lops, Roy Yates, Aris Moustakis, Uri Erez, Erchin Serpedin, and Mario Blaum. As far as the status of the Transactions is concerned, about 100 journal papers are submitted per year, with sub-to-pub mean of 97 weeks (the median is 74 weeks). This average is almost double that of other societies. Three AEs have a work load of over three papers per month, which is much

higher than other journals. It was proposed that real metrics should be used to decrease sub-to-pub and change the expectation of long delays within the Society.

The following metrics were proposed:

- Assign to AE: 1-2 days
- Assign reviewers < 1 month
- Write reviews: 6 months
- Make preliminary decision < 1 month
- Revise text < 3 months
- Final decision < 1 month
- Submit final text < 1
- Send to pubs editor < 1 month
- Send to production every month
- Production: 3 months

The Board discussed the enforceability of limits on reviewers and on authors. It was considered that the judgement of the AE is crucial.

The following measures were proposed to decrease the sub-to-pub time:

- Increase number of AEs
- Increase frequency of prompting letters of EiC
- Generate effective how-to document for training editors
- Promote efforts in key publications reminding members of shared responsibility (IT newsletter, March 2009)
- Decrease average number of review-revise iterations
- Set stringent deadlines: for reviews, for preliminary paper decisions, and for submission of revised version.

The Board compared updating Pareja with moving to Manuscript Central (MC), which is used by thousands of journals. The Publications committee was polled on this issue and the responses were mixed. An ad hoc committee was established to consider Pareja.

The cost of switching to MC would be 26k USD for the generation of the new site in 2009, 18k USD for the established site in 2010 and again 18k USD in 2011. The cost of upgrading pareja would be 40k USD over 6-9 months.

Alex Grant reported that Editor-in-Chief Ezio Biglieri asked him to analyze the issue with A. Nosratinia, F. Tarricco and A. van Wijngaarden. It was observed that a cumbersome system increases the load and thus increases delay and fosters a culture of delay. The focus should be on reducing sub-to-pub time. The AEs were consulted to identify the necessary requirements in terms of functionalities, leaving out the more controversial features. MC clearly offers more possibilities than pareja. The AEs

mentioned the lack of familiarity with MC and current comfort with Pareja. On the other hand, with Pareja they mentioned specific broken features, missing features, and an archaic implementation, MC is operated by a large company (Thompson Reuters) with significant resources, training, support, implementation, and ongoing development (currently v4.1.2), accomodating 280 societies and publishers, over 2800 books and journals, 100k monthly submission and 12 million users.

In contrast Pareja has single developer with limited capacity for support, offering incremental development for one society, one journal, 80 submissions per month, about 1000 users. The ad hoc committee showed concern over the ability to deliver and actual costs. Their recommendation was to migrate to MC with due diligence required, taking into consideration details for migration, future features, and IEEE plans.

During the discussion, the Board expressed the will to recognize the service that Kevin Quirk has done on Pareja, originally as a volunteer, and addressed questions about the cost evolution of MC, possible alternatives to MC (MC is the dominating system), and cultural sensitivities.

The Board supports the transition to MC.

6. Giuseppe Caire presented the Membership and Chapters report. The committee members are Giuseppe Caire (2nd VP), Frank Kschischang, Gerhard Kramer, Ruediger Urbanke, Han Vink, Sae-Yung Chung, Uri Erez, and Stephen Hanly.

The goals are to revamp the involvement of the chapters into the society, launch a distinguished lecturer program, act as an interconnection between local chapters and distinguished lecturers, act as a contact point for organizing information theory schools (different IT schools and also requests for support from different schools for IT society backing, 10 K), define and finalize the Padovani lecture (endowed by the gift of Roberto Padovani to the IT Society, who donated money from his IEEE prize), lead a broad discussion and brainstorming on how to revitalize the Chapters, promote outreach initiatives for countries with low presence of IT and foster new IT membership.

It was proposed that the Padovani lecture becomes part of one of the IT schools.

There are plans to launch a Distinguished lecturers program (DLPs). The plan is for DLs to be appointed for a period of 2 years. In order to start the process, the first batch of 5-6 DLs was appointed in 2009. At the beginning of 2010 5-6 new DLs will be appointed after a call for nominations. From Jan 2010, the program shall be in steady state, where each year there is a one-half turn-over. The committee will select the nominees, noting that this is not an award and does require a certain level of commitment, availability and willingness to prepare lectures.

Only 10 out of 200 meetings organized by the chapters in 2007-2008 have been marked at distinguished lecturer events.

Bylaws have been changed at the last Board meeting, so that it is no longer the case that all Board members for the last 20 years are distinguished speakers

The format for the Padovani lecture is currently being defined in collaboration with the IT Summer Schools.

It was recommended that Roberto Padovani is recognized and invited to the first lecture.

IT schools are in full operation. There is a pre-proposal for a South African winter school (possibly in 2010).

As a new membership and outreach initiative, a database from all chapters is being updated. The online committee contacted chapters that are working as beta-testers for the new web site, where every chapter will soon have a page and will be able to post activities.

The Board discussed whether the society should continue to give away memberships for half a year. It was found interesting to see whether the new members are renewing their membership. Frank Kschischang pointed out that there was positive response, with new members thanking the Society for this initiative.

There was a motion by Frank Kschischang to renew the initiative to give, at the next ISIT, half-year memberships to IT for IEEE members who are not part of the IT Society. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

There were 8 nominations for the IT Paper Award, 2 carried over from last year. The process should be completed by May 15.

The Joint ComSoc / IT Society paper award received 6 nominations among the IT Society, and 1 among ComSoc, with expected completion by March 31. The window for eligibility is 3 years.

The Browder J. Thompson award (mentioned in our bylaws) was discontinued after 1997, followed by the Leon Kirchmayer award, which was last given in 2002.

There have been efforts to revive the Baker Prize Paper Award. Dave Forney reported on the steps taken by Andrea Goldsmith and Jose Moura. Discussion at the TAB meeting ended with a positive direction. The Signal Processing Society is in the process of addressing concerns of the TAB. Funding will be put front. Andrea Goldsmith commented that this is a prize for fundamental work across all societies. The Societies that were asked to sponsor it are on the more theoretical side.

The BBVA Foundations Frontiers of Knowledge Awards (2009 recipient was Jacob Ziv) has the nomination deadline of June 30. The nominations must come from an institution. Andrea Goldsmith is chairing the awards committee. The cash prize is second only to the Nobel prize in importance, and is in fact the only cash prize for engineers. It is geared towards communications and information technology.

7. Dave Forney presented the report of the Bylaws committee. The Society does not have a bylaw that mentions the joint ComSoc / IT Society paper award, now that a codified approach has been adopted. Dave Forney presented a motion to create such a bylaw. Michelle Effros presented a friendly amendment to ensure that there is a single set of bylaws that does not require considering the Comsoc bylaws as well. The Board approved the amended motion unanimously.
8. The Board approved the appointment of Bruce Hajek to replace Alex Grant as Conference Committee Chair at the end of his term.

Ralf Koetter was a member of the nominations and awards committee. There is currently a need to elect a new member. The Board approved a slate with Alex Grant and Jim Massey (vote to be done by e-mail).

9. Bruce Hajek presented the Conference Committee Report. There were 965 paper submissions for ISIT 2009. It has been difficult to obtain backing from companies. Abbas El Gamal pointed out that some companies are still healthy. Since registration is in US dollars, the attendance may be curtailed because the rate of exchange has gone from 950 Kwon per USD in 2008 to 1550Kwon per USD today. One proposal to fix the price for local registrants was to post the registration fee of 945,000 KWon. There will be a benefit to the conference because the registration is in dollars and therefore the price of local goods, in Won, will be more advantageous. Another proposal, by Dave Forney, was to allow flexibility to the organizers, for local registrants, that feedback was recommended to go to the Board, but there is need to verify the IT Society policy, which may not allow for this kind of step. It was suggested that discounts could be considered for local volunteers.

The Board considers the Dublin ITW for September 2010 in principle as promising, the committee will work with the organizers to bring forward a formal proposal.

10. Nick Laneman presented the Online Committee Report, including an update on new Website and a proposal to have a standing online committee.

The new Website, launched at ITA, uses a content management system, has many customizations, is based on open source (PLONE) and offers many extension modules with dozens of developers. It was the outcome of a 70 K investment of the Society. The usage statistics have been tracked through Google analytics. The first month recorded 7500 visits, with 250 visits/day, 5 pages/visit, 4min/visit, from 115 countries. These hits are not from crawlers and other search engines.

It is possible to add new features. Possibilities include Terms and conditions (2,250 USD), Embedded Conference Website (2,375 USD), Lecture Content Type (3,000 USD), LaTeX Discussion (1,750 USD), and Group/Vote Enhancement (9,250 USD).

The standing online committee would be composed by Associate Online Editors, who would focus on specific areas of the online effort. This would serve as training grounds for online editorship. The operating budget would be 10-15k USD per year.

Thanks are due to the 17 members of the ad hoc committee, particularly Matthieu Bloch, Jean-Francois Chamberland and Anand Sarwate, as well as the officers and the Board.

The Board recognized the contributions of Nick Laneman.

A vote was called to set up a standing online committee. The measure passed.

The School of Information Theory wishes to start accepting applications and they need the latest release to do so. Members are requested to send e-mails regarding potential bugs or issues encountered to Nick Laneman.

11. The outgoing newsletter editor, Daniela Tuninetti, highlighted the increasing number of pages for the newsletter and the feedback received from the community, which included formalizing the process of sending out events and becoming more timely.

There has been consideration of creating an online effort, which will be discussed later. The incoming newsletter editor, Tracey Ho, recounted the current features, with the columns and technical articles. There is a new policy on short letters to the editor, which can be published in the newsletter. The editor may solicit a response to a letter from others as appropriate.

Editorial board. Currently, the structure of the newsletter requires little editorial oversight. If we wish to expand the scope of our newsletter, such as regular or occasional features (opinion pieces and perspectives, tutorials, technical surveys, book reports), we may need some editorial board. In particular, technology transfer could be considered. There is need for coordination with the online committee.

The New website makes it feasible to allow IT Society members to upload content directly. Online and Newsletter Editor would like to propose a joint solicitation and submission process for brief news items, announcements and events. The editors shall continue to accept e-mail submissions, but will inform members of the avenue for online submissions. The Newsletter and Online Editors will continue to explore avenues to work together.

A motion of appreciation for Daniela Tuninetti was passed by the Board.

12. Daniel Costello presented the report of the Fellows Committee. Nominations have been down a bit over the last couple of years. The Outreach and Nominations committee will examine the list of our members and determine good candidates for nomination. The committee has been expanded from 5 to 6 members, with 3-year appointment. Some members do not become senior members some times even when they are eligible. The nominating committee has pointed out that the list is huge and that the outreach committee may be best suited to go through the list at least to look at underrepresented demographics.
13. Andrea Goldsmith presented the report of the Student Committee prepared by Aylin Yener. At ISIT 2008 Toronto more than 130 students attended the research discussion, which was a great increase over previous years. At Allerton there was a joint panel on mentoring with the Outreach committee. Upcoming events include an ISIT round table, a panel and an event at Asilomar.

The committee is reaching out to new volunteers, by identifying student leaders and encouraging students to volunteer. Candidates should contact Aylin Yener.

Attendance at events is increasing, but are still under budget. The 2009 IT School of North America will take place in Chicago, August 10-13. There will be no registration fee, lodging available in the dorms, and students apply to the school. Lectures will be given at Northwestern classrooms. Fundraising included 10k USD from ITSoc, 5K USD from NYWU, and the committee is currently trying other avenues. Bob Gallager will give a keynote speech, other lecturers include Dan Costello, Bruce Hajek, and Abbas El Gamal (nominated for Padovani lecturer).

There was a motion to assign another 10k USD of funding for the school of IT. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

14. Muriel Médard presented the report of the outreach committee. The main current activities include ISIT and Allerton events, outreach to women members, and active plans for recognition of under-represented groups. Additionally, a mentor network has recently been established.

The event for ISIT 2009 will look towards experience of women in industry.

Efforts are underway to identify and nominate members of the IT society from under represented groups who are overdue for nomination to the Fellow status.

The mentor network is restricted to IT society members. Email contact a few times a year and feedback on issues of interest (e.g., CAREER proposals) is the expected level of participation. Currently 12 mentor / mentee pairs have been made and materials on mentoring have been made available on the web. The efforts is being made as a service to the community and may also encourage new members to join. Board members are encouraged to participate in this program

15. The President announced that the next Board meeting will be held on June 28 in Seoul, South Korea, in conjunction with ISIT.
16. The meeting was adjourned.