

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting
January 31, 2010 La Jolla, CA

Aria Nosratinia

Attendees:

Daniel Costello, David Forney, Rolf Johannesson, Frank Kschischang, Aria Nosratinia, Abbas El Gamal, Martin Bossert, Muriel Médard, Kenneth Zeger, Michelle Effros, Li Peng, Gerhard Kramer, Nihar Jindal, Alexander Barg, Andrea Goldsmith, Hans-Andrea Loeliger, Paul Siegel, Bruce Hajek, Syed Jafar, Giuseppe Caire, Christina Fragouli, Emina Soljanin, Elza Erkip, Alexander Vardy, Anand Sarwate.

The meeting was called to order at 13:30 hours by the Society President Frank Kschischang, who greeted the members of the board.

1. The agenda was approved by consent, including the minutes of the previous BoG meeting in Taormina.
2. The President presented his report, with the following outline: The society is in good shape. Our system with its shift-register of officers works well and gives us institutional memory. The financial health of the society is good and improving. Our journal is strong. Conferences and workshops are strong. We lead IEEE in services provided for our student members. The online committee has done a fabulous job, and our web page is arguably superior to that of any other Society in the IEEE, although it is not utilized to the fullest extent. In the President's column (in the Society Newsletter), I mention that our society is unique in its collegiality. A total of 88 volunteers either serve as associate editors or on committees. The President thanked all these volunteers.

What should we focus on this year? Our Transactions, although technically strong, is not without problems. At the last TAB meeting, a prominent person from the Signal Processing Society commented that he had negative experiences in submitting papers to our Transactions, and as a result discourages his students from submitting to our Transactions. That is a serious comment that we should try to address. The sub-to-pub time increased last year, despite all our efforts, from 92 weeks to 99 weeks. Without a major cultural shift in our Society, this cannot be fixed, and we may lose excellent papers as a result. Andrea Goldsmith started an initiative during her presidency to address the sub-to-pub time, and the current President will continue to work on this issue. Our planned transition to ScholarOne is one step in the right direction. This is only an administrative change, however, and may not by itself be enough to solve the problem. We will try to focus the attention of the Society on this issue and address it in creative ways.

The other issue to focus in the coming year is to increase the usefulness of our online web pages.

The current President thanked the previous President, Andrea Goldsmith, for her services to the Society.

3. The Treasurer's report was presented by the IT Treasurer, Nihar Jindal. The finances of the society are improving. The major updates since the last BoG meeting are: investment returns \$538K, net 2009 operating surplus \$100K, reserves at end of 2009 \$2.3M. The Society reserves-to-expenses ratio is 1.3, well above the IEEE minimum of 0.5. The IEEE has reinstated the

option of allowing Societies to spend up to 50% of their previous year's surplus, which increases our flexibility.

Print subscriptions are trending downwards. Our two sources of print subscriptions are: institutions that subscribe only to print at the non-member rate of \$1,075, yielding \$200K/year, and institutions that subscribe to a package including print with IEEEExplore. Many of the latter institutions are cutting print subscriptions.

Another concern is conference publication revenue. Changes in the IEEE formula for revenue-sharing will begin to be implemented in 2010, and we expect to lose \$120K per year.

Possible new revenue sources for the Society include elimination of the subsidy for members who receive print copies of the Transactions. The annual cost is \$100, but members are charged only \$45. A formal proposal for eliminating this subsidy will be presented at the next BoG meeting. A possible source of revenue is to introduce tutorial papers and magazine-like articles in the Transactions, but the financial model would need to be investigated. Finally, another potential source of greater revenue is conferences.

In summary: after large losses in 2008, investment gains in 2009 have improved our reserves, but long-term concerns still exist, especially for publication revenue.

4. The Second Vice President, Muriel Médard, presented the report of the Membership and Chapters Committee (MCC). Current members of the committee are Sae-Young Chung, Max Costa, Michelle Effros, Uri Erez, Stephen Hanly, Gerhard Kramer, Amin Shokrollahi, Rüdiger Urbanke, Han Vinck, Raymond Yeung, Lizhong Zheng, as well as Emina Soljanin.

The formation of the IEEE Tainan Section Information Theory Society Chapter was announced.

The IT Society sponsors the Padovani Lecture in the Summer School, and also a separate Distinguished Lecturer program, which is just getting under way. The first Padovani Lecturer was Abbas El Gamal. The next Padovani Lecturer will be Jack Wolf. The donation by Robert Padovani of \$10K will eventually run out; if we think this is a worthwhile endeavor, then we might want to raise funds for it for the long run. The formal description of the Padovani Lecture was presented to the BoG (available in the MCC report).

The current set of Distinguished Lecturers consists of Amin Shokrollahi, Alon Orlitsky, Sergio Verdú, Michael Gastpar, and Andrea Goldsmith. Five more will be chosen each year. Each Distinguished Lecturer will serve for two years, so that in steady state there will always be 10 lecturers.

Chapters desiring to invite a Distinguished Lecturer must submit a proposal indicating the benefit to the chapter. The proposals will be evaluated by the MCC, and if approved will be forwarded to the Distinguished Lecturer. The value of the program will be assessed via feedback from both the chapters and the Distinguished Lecturer. The chapters will be asked to post the slides on the Society web site, and if possible, the video of the lecture as well.

Regarding membership development: in the last few years, a half-year free membership has been offered with ISIT registration. 283 registrants in 2008 and 169 in 2009 have taken advantage of this initiative. The implementation of this initiative has not always been easy. An alternative approach would be to offer a different price for IEEE members who are IT members than for IEEE members who are not Society members. There were comments indicating that this is already a policy of the Society, but it has not been widely implemented. It was suggested that perhaps we could do both, because the two initiatives serve different purposes:

one of them is a recruitment tool, and the other is a member benefit. It was suggested that we could set the price differential at exactly the value of the half-year membership. Another option would be to make the Tuesday luncheon free for IT members but not for general IEEE members, but it was concluded that may be too complicated to administer. IEEE is considering the possibility of giving one free Society membership with IEEE membership; we need to track this proposal. The President moved that we continue the first approach and start the second one, and evaluate the results of both. The motion carried unanimously.

5. The Outreach Committee report was presented by Muriel Médard for Todd Coleman. Last year the society had a robust outreach program. The mentor/mentee program was expanded, with a breakfast at ISIT. Another initiative is Women in the Information Theory Society (WithITS). Todd Coleman has agreed to lead the administration of the mentorship program, and Christina Fragouli to lead the WithITS. Growth directions for these initiatives were discussed. Andrea Goldsmith asked if we want to make this a standing committee. David Forney mentioned that the Bylaws will come up for discussion in the Allerton meeting and that would be a good time to discuss whether this should become a standing committee. The BoG thanked Muriel Médard for her efforts on the Outreach Committee.
6. The Nomination and Appointments Committee (NAC) report was presented by the Senior Past President, David Forney. The majority of the committee's work is done in January, and David Forney praised the hard work of the committee members. There are a mix of ways of staffing our committees. Four committees must be staffed in January: the Fellows, Shannon, Wyner and Awards Committees. It is desirable that every BoG member has a committee assignment or other substantial task to do. The Past President, Andrea Goldsmith, took a survey of BoG members, and many BoG members have been assigned to committees on this basis. It was recommended that this process continue.

The NAC has received requests for the members of the Fellow Committee to be announced sooner, because the deadline for Fellow nominations and recommendations is March 1, and Fellows Committee members cannot act as nominators or references. The Fellows Committee for 2010 will be: Michelle Effros, Michael Honig, Hideki Imai, Rolf Johannesson, Marcelo Weinberger, and Frans Willems (chair).

The Shannon Award Committee consists of: Frank Kschischang (chair), Giuseppe Caire (1VP), Muriel Médard (2VP), Imre Csiszàr (continuing), Abbas El Gamal (new), Robert Gallager (new), and Robert Gray (continuing). The Bylaws say that this committee must include the President, 1VP and 2VP *ex-officio*, one past Editor-in-Chief, and three previous winners of the Shannon Award.

The Wyner Award Committee consists of: Frank Kschischang (chair), Giuseppe Caire (1VP) Andrea Goldsmith (JPP), Dick Blahut (new), and Jack Wolf (new). The NAC recommended that the Bylaws be changed to require only two officers (President and Junior Past President) and two past Wyner Award winners.

The Awards Committee will consist of: Giuseppe Caire (chair), Muriel Médard (2VP), Alexander Barg (new), Max Costa (new), Elza Erkip (new), Hans-Andrea Loeliger (new), Ueli Maurer (continuing), Li Ping (new), Hirosuke Yamamoto (new), En-hui Yang (continuing), and Ram Zamir (continuing). The NAC recommended that the Bylaws be changed to require two BoG members (in addition to the two officers) on the Awards Committee.

The BoG unanimously approved all of the NAC recommendations.

7. The Fellows Committee report was presented by Daniel Costello. Last year 14 nominations were received, and 7 people were ultimately elected to the rank of Fellow. This success ratio was higher than the historical norm of around 40%. This year, the IEEE has instituted an all-electronic nomination format. There is an option for any Fellow to be asked to provide a comment or evaluation for a candidate.
8. The Online Committee report was presented by Anand Sarwate for Nick Laneman. The web site is working well. The next objective is to increase the content and utilize the web site to its full potential. Work is in progress to put compressed videos of the ISIT Shannon Lectures and plenary lectures on the web site. Another goal is to integrate the conference web sites with the society web site. Suggestions were made to incorporate ISIT tutorials into the web page, and also better to integrate the material that is published in our Newsletter and highlight it on our web page. Another suggestion was to link out-of-print or hard-to-find information theory texts to the web site. The BoG thanked the Online Committee for a great job done during the last year.
9. The Student Committee report was presented by Gerhard Kramer. He gave an update on the Third Summer School on Information Theory, August 5-8, 2010. Applications are due April 15, registrations June 1. The Summer School will have a new format, with six two-hour lectures during the first three days. The school Has been registered with IEEE as a conference, with ITSoc as the sponsor. Already \$10K has been approved from the Society to be provided to the Summer School in 2010. The dorm contract has been submitted to the IEEE for review. Five potential instructors have been contacted. Jack Wolf will be the Padovani Lecturer. There will be efforts to encourage participation from local residents and from Mexico. With regard to fundraising: \$58K was raised last year, including \$10K from ITSoc, \$10K from NSF, and the remaining from other sources. The committee requests that the society provide an additional \$10K this year to reach the same level as last year (\$20K). This request was approved by the BoG unanimously.
10. The Publications Committee report was represented by Frank Kschischang for the Editor-in-Chief, Ezio Biglieri. There was no report. A motion was made to appoint James Massey to replace John Anderson as the Book Review Editor.

There was a report by Alex Grant on migration to ScholarOne. The ScholarOne web site has gone active and is being tested by Alex Grant, Adriaan van Wijngaarden, Ezio Biglieri and Helmut Bölcskei. Helmut Bölcskei is the designate for the next Editor-in-Chief, to be formally approved at the BoG Annual Meeting. It is expected that ScholarOne will streamline the work of the Associate Editors. In the officers' meeting, held a day earlier, the possibility of hiring a staff person was raised, but this will be up to the incoming Editor-in-Chief. Helmut Bölcskei is in the process of putting together a manifesto with regard to the outstanding issues that need to be addressed with our Transactions.
11. The Conference Committee report was presented by the chair, Bruce Hajek. For ISIT Seoul, a surplus of about \$64K is expected. For ISIT 2010 (Austin) everything seems to be on track. For ISIT 2011 (St Petersburg), the date will be the first week of August 2011. The web site is up ,and the final budget is in preparation. It was mentioned that at the same time as ISIT 2010, the SIAM discrete math biannual meeting will be taking place in Austin, and it was suggested to explore an agreement with SIAM for mutual admission of the attendees of the two conferences.

ISIT 2012 Cambridge/MIT is on track. An update will be given at the next BoG meeting.

ISIT 2013, to be held in Turkey, has been preliminarily approved. The loan requested by ISIT 2013 is 125,000 euros. Questions were asked about the schedule of the loan. A motion for the location of ISIT 2013 (Turkey) and for granting the loan for ISIT 2013 were approved by the BoG.

Interest has been expressed for ISIT 2014 in the San Francisco Bay area and Hawaii. For 2015, interest has been expressed for China or Hong Kong by Raymond Yeung and Pingzhi Fan.

ITW Volos 2009 anticipates a \$2.5K surplus. The Conference Committee is awaiting the final report from the Taormina and Cairo ITWs. In Cairo there were 207 participants. ITW Cairo had approximately \$10K surplus, and Hesham El Gamal has suggested to use it for a winter school of information theory in Cairo. However, the BoG encouraged ITW Cairo to close the books and do the winter school proposal separately.

For ITW 2010 Dublin, the hotel contract has been finalized. A motion was made to approve the budget for ITW Dublin, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Max Costa made a presentation for the proposed ITW at Paraty, Brazil. The topics include coding, cryptography, compressed sensing, and related areas. The local attractions as well as the budget were presented. A BoG member made a comparison with the ITW 2006 in Punta del Este, which was also remote and very successful, but in contrast it was much cheaper. It was mentioned that Punta del Este is much more accessible than Paraty, and there was concern about the accessibility of the location. After extensive discussions, a motion for the workshop and its budget were approved by majority vote of BoG.

A proposal was made for technical co-sponsorship of Allerton 2010 (jointly with the IEEE Control Society). This proposal was approved by the BoG. A proposal was made for technical co-sponsorship of SIBIRCON 2010. A discussion ensued about the quality of the conference, its acceptance rates, and the relationship of the conference to the core area of ITSoc. The motion for technical sponsorship of SIBIRCON 2010 did not pass.

The Conference Committee presented recommendations regarding the purpose and accessibility of workshops. In particular, workshop proposers and organizers are encouraged to put together workshops that complement, not mimic, the ISITs. It was mentioned that the Society does not have enough workshops in no-frills, accessible venues that are inexpensive enough that allow for good student participation. David Forney commented that in the past, it was a tradition that there were two types of workshops per year: one of them of the outreach type, and one of them more accessible. In the recent past, however, most of the workshops have been of the exotic type. Various issues related to organizing workshops were extensively discussed.

12. Muriel Médard commented on behalf of herself and Dick Blahut that we need to do more to make IT and its contribution to daily life more visible to the general population, as well as to key decision makers. It was suggested that from some angles our society is perceived as unfriendly and unapproachable. On the other hand, many of our initiatives, including the Summer School, are designed to bring people into our area.
13. David Forney suggested to put in place a liaison to the Signal Processing Society. The President undertook to consider this suggestion and, after discussion with the officers, to recommend a person for an SPS liaison.

14. Muriel Médard mentioned the Green Touch initiative (greentouch.org), which could be of interest to our general membership.
15. The meeting was adjourned at 16:45 hours.