

**Meetings Policy Questions for the IT Society
(Discussion document for BoG meeting October 13, 2009)**

Three policy questions regarding meetings of the IT Society have come up in the past six months, and have been discussed by email by the conference committee and board. This document represents a rough consensus on these three questions, but perhaps a discussion on these at the BoG meeting is in order. The policy gets incorporated into the IT Society guidelines for meeting organizers posted at <http://www.itsoc.org/conferences/organizers>. The conference committee, and indeed the entire board, is responsible for promoting the wishes of the Society for its meetings in discussions with meeting organizers and potential meeting organizers.

1. On the purpose and accessibility of IT Workshops

The Conference Committee and the Board of Governors of the IEEE Information Theory Society would like to challenge members of the Society to be more creative in organizing workshops which complement, rather than mimic, ISITs. The workshops should be significantly different in format and purpose than ISITs. In particular, there are substantial opportunities to:

(a) Run workshops with focused cutting-edge technical agendas, in a variety of sizes and creative formats. Workshops can be run jointly with other technical organizations, with half the program committee coming from each organization, to form an agenda at the intersection. Workshops can have panel discussions. They can include working portions which seek to foster new collaborations. Workshops can be as short as one or two days long. Workshops do not need to have contributed papers and twenty minute talks with papers reviewed by TPCs very similar to ISITs. A workshop can be highly productive with as few as twenty to forty participants.

For example, the 1993 IT Workshop on coding, system theory and symbolic dynamics, introduced three communities to each other. Each participant had a color-coded badge indicating which "languages" s/he spoke, and the organizers produced a "multilingual dictionary." At the insistence of the mathematicians, costs were held very low.

(b) Make workshops more accessible. Due to their large size, ISITs are mostly held at hotels and a certain level of expense is unavoidable. Due to their small size, workshops can be organized on university campuses or other venues which can be significantly more affordable than ISITs. Creative or no-frills venues in locations near major transportation nodes can lead to meetings roughly half as expensive as an ISIT or high-end workshop, for each participant. In addition, participants often appreciate seeing and using actual teaching and research facilities in other countries, rather than getting a generic hotel experience.

2. On payments to plenary or keynote speakers at IT Society meetings

When an IT Society workshop or symposium invites someone to deliver a plenary or keynote talk, there is the question of whether the conference should offer financial compensation. This could include a registration fee waiver, reimbursement of travel expenses, or an honorarium. The IEEE policy is against paying speakers anything, except in cases that they give a short course or some other sort of lecture for which attendees pay a fee. Specifically, the conference organization manual, Section 9.3.3, has the following statement in bold font: **IEEE Policy prohibits payments of honoraria for the presentation of a paper at a conference, except for a lecture or other educational activity for which a tuition fee is charged.** The IT Society policy on this point is the following:

1. The IT Society prefers that speakers from within the usual sphere of IT Society meetings receive no financial compensation by ITWs, and no more than token financial compensation (such as a registration fee waiver, or a small amount towards travel expenses) by ISITs.
2. The IT Society prefers that conference organizers be very conservative in general in financially supporting speakers, even from outside of the IT community, and in particular organizers should be mindful of the impact on the registration fees.
3. The above are guidelines only. It is ultimately up to the organizers of a meeting how they want to proceed in this matter, as long as the payments are explicitly reflected in the budget and the budget is acceptable to the BOG.

3. On accessibility of IT Society Meetings to local scientists¹

Some meetings of the IT Society are held in countries with extremely severe financial constraints. For example, there are several countries, which have promising developments in science, for which the median household income is only five to thirty percent the median household income of countries in which most IEEE members live. (See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(PPP\)_per_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita).) From time to time a meeting sponsored by the IT Society may be held in one of those low income countries, and the individuals in the host country would find it a great burden to pay the regular registration fee. The IT Society would like to see the meetings be accessible to local scientists, while still maintaining the target meeting profit, without making the registration fee excessively high for full paying participants.

- (a) The IT Society encourages conference organizers to secure a grant from industry or government to cover registration fees for deserving scientists in the host country.
- (b) In cases of meetings held in countries for which the median income of local scientists is a small fraction of the median income of all IEEE members, the IT Society is in favor of allowing conference organizers to provide substantially reduced registration rates for the scientists in the host country, on a need basis. The Society prefers reduced registration rates, rather than outright waivers, unless there is an outside grant for registration support.
- (c) To make reduced registration fees more palatable to full paying attendees, the Conference organizers are encouraged to consider finding opportunities for the scientists receiving the reduced registration fees to support the conference in other ways. Also, in some cases, it may make sense for the reduced fees to entail reduced meal functions.
- (d) This policy is to be invoked sparingly, and only for locations with exceptional income disparities. The decision regarding whether a particular meeting qualifies for this income disparity policy should be made at the time the meeting is first approved by the BOG.

¹ The IEEE policies relevant to this issue are copied in the Appendix.

Appendix

IEEE Policies and Procedures **10.1.15 Registration Fee Requirements**
(Source: <http://www.ieee.org/web/aboutus/whatis/policies/p10-1.11.12.13.14.15.xml#10.1.15>)

IEEE solely sponsored and co-sponsored conferences, must have a member/nonmember individual registration fee differential, whether paid in advance or at the door. The amount of the differential shall be at least 20% above the IEEE member fee, the exact amount being set by each Conference Committee. Conferences may establish a registration fee lower than the IEEE member fee for sponsoring organizational unit members.

Conferences where IEEE is the sole sponsor must have a reduced fee, waiver of fees, or fee differential for Student members and Life Members. Reduced fees, waiver of fees, or fee differential for unemployed IEEE members, retired members, and for special registrants (e.g., guests, speakers, and exhibitors) are permitted at the discretion of the Conference Committee. The individual registration fee for Life Members must be no more than that for Students.

At the discretion of the Conference Committee, the IEEE member registration rates may apply to members of non-IEEE co-sponsoring, cooperating organizations, or sister societies.

IEEE Conferences and Organization Manual 9.1.4.2

(Source: http://www.ieee.org/web/conferences/mom/sectoct_9.html)

9.1.4.2 Students, Retired, Life Members [IEEE Policy & Procedures \(10.1.15\)](#) permits reduced conference registration fees for students, unemployed IEEE members, retired and Life members and special VIP guests, at the discretion of the Conference Committee and sponsoring entity. Unless otherwise stipulated, the registration fee for retired and Life members should be no more than the registration fee for students. These reduced registration fees may exclude meal functions, Conference Proceedings and other side activities.