**ITSoc President’s Report**

***Andrea Goldsmith***

**ITW BoG Meeting**

**Oct. 13, 2009**

**Taormina, Italy**

**Agenda Summary:** This meeting has a much less packed agenda than at ISIT, and hence will allow time for in-depth discussion of a few key issues related to the Transactions and our workshops. Specifically, we will discuss the process by which we select and approve AE candidates, and the purpose of IT workshops, workshop accessibility for local attendees, and guidelines on payments to speakers. I will also discuss BoG member involvement in committees and generating best practices documents for committee chairs.

In addition, we will vote on proposed changes to our Bylaws and Constitution. The most significant change here is in Article VII describing the procedure for selecting the Society Paper Award. These changes reflect the discussion on this topic at the ISIT BoG meeting and follow-up discussions among the officers. We will also vote on four new AE candidates for the Transactions, the budget for the ITW workshop in Cairo, an ITW proposal to take place in Brazil next year, and technical co-sponsorship of four conferences.

Finally, we will hear about activities in several other committees, including a joint website/newsletter initiative within the Online Committee, the launching of our Distinguished Lecture Program by the Membership and Chapters Committee, the extremely successful North American Winter School held last August at Northwestern University, and recent activity in the Outreach and Fellows Committees.

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. Since the IEEE has suspended the 50% spending rule, we cannot spend money out of our reserves but only out of our annual surplus. Thus, we encourage BoG members to propose initiatives in the next month or two that would be a valuable use of this surplus money.

We will be talking with the IEEE analysts within the next week to find out the annual outlook for IEEE finances, in particular with respect to the 1.2 million dollar loss to our reserves reported in March. I will also find out more about this at the November IEEE TAB meeting. Recall that 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. We will hear about some ideas for increasing revenue via our website in the Online Committee report. Other ideas to increase revenue are most welcome.

The Transactions continue to be highly regarded and of excellent quality. Moreover, several important steps have been made to address some of the factors in our long sub-to-pub time, including a significant increase in the number of AEs (from 26 to 46 over the last two years), a migration plan from Pareja to Manuscript Central, and a comprehensive document on Best Practices for AEs. More details on these developments will be given in the Publications Committee report. Sadly, though, despite the focus and effort on reducing our average sub-to-pub time this year by me and Ezio, it has actually increased since January, from an average of 97.2 weeks to 99 weeks. Based on the discussion around the AE Best Practices Document, it would appear that changing the culture among AEs, reviewers, and authors is the only way to make significant progress on bringing our publication delays at least into the same ballpark as that of all other IEEE journals. The Nominations and Appointments Committee together with the officers are in the initial stages of the search for our next EiC to replace the irreplaceable Ezio, whose term ends at ISIT next year. One of the top criterion in this search is to find someone who can bring about this important cultural change without hurting the quality of our Transactions.

**Society Governance and the Role of Committees:** As discussed at ISIT, we would like to get BoG members more involved in the different society committees. I have solicited BoG member interest in committees and will use this information next year within the Nominations and Appointments Committee for committee staffing, and also convey this information to the committee chairs that form their own committees. There is one society committee that is staffed automatically: the Publications committee consists of the Transactions EiC, AEs, Publication Editors, and the President and 1st VP as ex-officio members. A few BoG members expressed interest in serving on this committee. So I would like to pose this question to the BoG: should we open up the Publications Committee to BoG members that wish to serve on it?

Another initiative I have undertaken is to work with the current Committee Chairs to generate Best Practices Documents for each committee. This will make it easier for new Committee Chairs to benefit from past experience and will provide more transparency to the society about how our committees operate.

**Symposium/Workshop Nature, Venue and Cost:** The conference committee has been discussing policy guidelines on 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? Should the cost be lower for local participants in disadvantaged locations, since part of the goal of holding workshops in these places is to stimulate new members. These issues have been articulated in an excellent document by our Conference Committee Chair Bruce Hajek, and will be discussed as part of the Conference Committee report.

**Awards:** Most society awards were 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 was announced earlier. There was some controversy within Comsoc about the procedure for selecting the joint paper awardee, despite their agreement last year to condense the two-tiered process (whereby each society’s Awards Committee selected one or two papers and then subcommittees from each society selected the winner) into a one-tier process where all nominations from both societies are considered together. The controversy arose because Comsoc only put forth one paper for consideration (i.e. they selected one from their nominations) whereas our society put forth six. It would probably be valuable for the Awards Committee Chair to contact the Comsoc counterpart early in the year to ensure alignment on the process.

I am also delighted to announce that the proposal to reactivate the IEEE W.R.G. Baker Award has been endorsed by the required groups within the IEEE TAB and the Awards Board, and will be submitted to the IEEE Board of Directors for final approval at its November 2009 meeting. This prize will recognize the authors of an outstanding paper reporting original work published in any IEEE transactions, journal, or letters periodical publication during a three to five year window prior to nomination, on the fundamentals of electrical engineering, computing, and related arts and sciences as represented by IEEE. This process was an arduous one and benefitted greatly from our efforts and those of the President of the Signal Processing Society Jose Moura: we went from a “near-dead” proposal two years ago to one co-sponsored technically and/or financially by 15 societies.

Finally, the society has put forth a nomination for the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Communications and Information Technology. The winner of this award will be announced early next year. The sponsors of this award would like to see more nominations, and all BoG members should encourage their institutions to put forth deserving nominations.

**Officers and BoG Members for 2010:** The officer slate for 2010 is as follows:

President: Frank Kschichang

1st Vice President: Giuseppe Caire

2nd Vice President: Muriel Medard

Junior Past President: Andrea Goldsmith

Senior Past President: G. David Forney.

Secretary: Aria Nostratinia

Treasurer: Nihar Jindal

I would like to congratulate Frank, Giuseppe, and Muriel on their election. I would also like to express much appreciation on behalf of the society to our current Treasurer Anant Sahai who will serve through the end of the calendar year, and will assist Nihar with the transition.

The election of BoG members for 2010 concluded on Oct. 12, and results will be made known by Oct. 19. We used web-based voting for the first time in this election, and feedback on this process would be much appreciated.

**BoG meetings for 2010:** The tentative schedule for BoG meetings next year is as follows:

First BoG Meeting: Sunday January 31st at ITA (San Diego, CA)

Annual BoG Meeting: Sunday June 13th at ISIT (Austin, TX)

Third BoG Meeting: Tentatively Tuesday Sept. 30 at Allerton (Monticello, IL).

**Adieu:** This is my last BoG meeting as president. It has been a pleasure and an honor to lead this great society over the past year. I have especially enjoyed working with the BoG and Committee Chairs on the many new and ongoing initiatives, which have greatly benefitted our members. Your vision, thoughtfulness, and dedication are the reason for their success. I am also deeply grateful to my fellow elected officers Bixio Rimoldi, Dave Forney, Frank Kschischang, and Giuseppe Caire. They have been extremely dedicated, thoughtful, energetic, and wise about all issues facing the society. They have made my job much easier as well as a lot more fun. The Information Theory Society is truly unique within the IEEE, with an open and welcoming culture, few barriers to try new things, and an extremely vibrant and proactive membership. While I have not accomplished all I had set out to do, I believe I have set a few important wheels in motion, and I hope that in general I have left the society better off than when I started. I look forward to working with Frank, Giuseppe, and Muriel in my new role as Junior Past President next year. I’m sure that our society will prosper and thrive under their great leadership.