

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting
June 13, 2010 Austin, TX

Aria Nosratinia

Attendees:

Costas Georghiades, Nihar Jindal, Giuseppe Caire, Alexander Barg, Prakash Narayan, Bruce Hajek, Helmut Bölcskei, Michelle Effros, David Forney, Li Peng, Narayan Santhanam, Aylin Yener, Muriel Médard, Ezio Biglieri, Christina Fragouli, Frank Kschischang, Sergio Verdú, Emina Soljanin, Paul Siegel, Martin Bossert, Rolf Johannesson, Gerhard Kramer, Daniel Costello, Hans-Andrea Loeliger, Antony Ephremides, Alon Orlitsky, Vladimir Blinovsky, Maxim Chuyashkin, Todd Coleman, Aria Nosratinia, Andrea Goldsmith (by phone).

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 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 La Jolla.
2. Vince Poor made a brief presentation, seeking the support of the society for a book on non Gaussian statistical communication theory. David Middleton, who passed away last year, finished 10 chapters. IEEE intends to publish it, Leon Cohen is the editor, and Vince Poor will write a foreword. The IEEE press is asking if the IT society is willing to sponsor this project. Little commitment is required from the society, primarily advertising to the IT society membership at fairly low cost. In return, ITsoc members can purchase the book at reduced rate, or society can get a fraction of the royalties. The motion to support this book was approved.
3. The society president Frank Kschischang presented his report, outlining that the society is in good shape, both financially as well as in terms of activities. This is reflected in the agenda today. He mentioned that a book in German has been written about Claude Shannon and his life and activities.

Martin Bossert added that this book is the enlarged version of the dissertation of a historian from the University of Munich who was able to get input from Shannon's daughter for the writing of the book. Many documents related to the work of Shannon were confidential up to a few years ago but only recently opened by the US government, and are reproduced in the book. However the book is a historical account, not a technical one. Jim Massey has made very positive remarks about the book. The author is apparently working on an English translation.

4. The Treasurer's report was presented by the IT Treasurer, Nihar Jindal. The finances of the society are improving. Operating surplus has been \$491k and investment returns \$764k. Reserves at end of 2009 are approximately \$3M. Reserve to expense ratio was approximately 1.7, well above the IEEE minimum of 0.5. The budget for 2010 and 2011 was presented. ITsoc has been running a consistent operating surplus, but the trends on many important items are out of the control of the society, e.g. IEEEExplore, and fluctuate quite a bit. In the last meeting, there were some concerns about declining print revenues, but the treasurer does not believe this to be very worrisome. The worries about losing the subscriptions of non-member entities is relieved in part by IEEE offering electronic subscription for them.

The long term outlook is not bad, as there are significant degrees of freedom in controlling costs in the face of potentially declining revenues. In particular transactions editing costs and member print subscription fees, which are currently heavily subsidized, can be adjusted as needed.

5. The report of Nominations and Appointments Committee was presented by David Forney. The following slate of candidates for the BoG were put forward, all of whom agreed to serve if elected: Erdal Arikan, Alexander Barg, Joao Barros, Michelle Effros, Elza Erkip, J. Nicholas Laneman, Amin Shokrollahi, David Tse, Alexander Vardy, Emanuele Viterbo, En-Hui Yang, Aylin Yener. In addition an opportunity was given for further nominations by the BoG members, and Mahesh Varanasi was nominated. It was mentioned that it is better if the candidates try to go through the Nominations and Appointment Committee, even though direct nomination is allowed by the bylaws. It was also mentioned that the bylaws as they stand may be a product of the time when nominations were done in a much less formal way, while now we have a 5-person Nominations and Appointment Committee, and perhaps the changing of this bylaw should be considered. David Forney moved for the BoG to approve the slate of candidates, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The annual meeting is the only time the EiC can be elected. The search was started last year. Helmut Bölcskei was considered and he has agreed to serve if appointed. His appointment was approved unanimously by the BoG.

6. The election for next year's officers was taken under consideration. Giuseppe Caire was nominated as a candidate for president. For 1st vice president Muriel Médard was nominated as a candidate. Alex Grant and Gerhard Kramer were nominated as candidates for 2nd vice president. All candidates were approved unanimously.
7. Ubli Mitra was nominated for liaison to the Signal Processing society. Frank Kschischang moved to approve this appointment, and the motion passed unanimously.
8. The Publications Committee report was presented by Ezio Biglieri. The EiC handover is scheduled for July. The submission system handover is scheduled for Fall 2010. The senior IEEE editor handover was in Spring 2010. We have 44 associate editors, up from 26 in June 2007. We need to appoint new associate editors. Appointments were delayed until S1M is in place. To be approved by BoG: Yossi Steinberg (at large), Tomohiko Uyematsu and Wei Yu (Shannon Theory) and Tsachy Weissman (Shannon Theory and Source Coding). The motions for the appointment of each of the editors was carried.

The projected page count is greater than 6100. A number of special issues are published or in the making, including "information theory in molecular biology and neuroscience in Feb. 2010.

The ad-hoc committee appointed to organize the transition to ScholarOne are Alex Grant and Adriaan van Wijngaarden. The handover is scheduled for fall 2010. For a while, pareja and ScholarOne will coexist. 113 out of 149 IEEE journals use ScholarOne (S1M). This system also generates data that is useful for the management of the journal. This is used in part for the 5-year review. Our review will be upcoming in the next year. Currently the articles are stored by S1M, but this will soon move to IEEE. S1M uses software for automatic detection of plagiarism. Submissions from authors in prohibited list are automatically identified.

A "Best editorial practices" document has been issued, with the goal of reducing the sub-to-pub time and making the review process more homogeneous across editors. A version of it

was published in the IT Newsletter.

Our average sub-to-pub time in July 2010 was 83 weeks, with a median of 78 weeks. This is an improvement compared to the last year.

The issue of open-access publication has been looked at by IEEE. The idea is instead of paying to read, one must pay to publish. The cost is currently between \$800 to \$3000. Two IEEE publications have gone to a hybrid model, but it is unclear that the open access or hybrid model is sustainable. Several members of the BoG were of the opinion that paying for publication has serious problems, in particular, it will put a filter on publication based on wealth or funding situation.

The IT Society Newsletter is to be made available via Xplore. The issue will appear as a single file and search function will not be available. Rollout is scheduled for 2011.

IEEE wants to abandon paper-based formatting and numbering in favor of single-article publication. This means that the sequential page numbers, volumes, etc. will be eliminated.

The new author gateway is scheduled to be operational in October. This will enable the authors to observe the status of their article through the publication process.

9. The report of the Awards Committee was presented by the committee chair Giuseppe Caire. The committee was responsible for Comsoc/ITSoc paper award, the IT best paper award, and the ISIT best student paper award. The 2010 Comsoc/ITSoc paper award goes to: "Coding for errors and erasures in random network coding," by R. Koetter and F. Kschischang. The 2010 IT society paper award goes to: "Channel polarization: a method for constructing capacity-achieving codes for symmetric binary-input memoryless channels" by E. Arıkan. The report and the recommendation of the report were supported by the vote of the BoG.

The ITSoc nomination for the BBVA Frontiers of Knowledge Award for Information and Communication Technologies was Dr. Andrew Viterbi. This nomination was endorsed by the IEEE Signal Processing Society and IEEE Communications Society.

Giuseppe Caire indicated that the ISIT best student paper award is not yet in the bylaws, and there is no clearly understood procedure to run the award. This year there were 250 self-nominated papers with no pre-selection or consistent recommendation from the TPC regarding the student paper awards. The Awards Committee selected 43 papers to be further considered. The session chairs of these papers have been asked to provide feedback about the presentation quality, and the Awards Committee will also attend as many as possible. The large number of papers after the cutoff presents difficulties, and it is desirable that more pre-filtering be done by the TPC.

The discussions in general re-affirmed the importance and continuation of the ISIT best student paper award. The motion was made to formally codify the best student paper award in the society by-laws. The motion was carried by a majority vote.

The suggestion was made that instead of "best paper award" it can be named "outstanding paper award," in recognition of the fact that strict ordering of the quality of conference papers is difficult.

10. The Online Committee report was presented by Nick Laneman. More people are being involved in the committee, and also the Online Committee is working with other committees. No significant request for funding is expected for the next year. Some statistics from the web site were presented. The web site traffic is growing, the development is continuing, and the

committee is evolving. The photo carousel is generating a large amount of traffic, so if any of the committees have activities that they want to highlight, they might consider this.

Another issue is advertising on the web site, on which the Online Committee would like to get the sense of the BoG. It was mentioned that there would be additional work in managing sponsorships and advertising.

A software is being used that allows the construction of “sub-sites.” One example of it is the summer school. Although the Online Committee is not currently in a position to absorb, e.g., a conference, but that capacity may soon come into existence, and this will give the conference organizers the option of erecting their web site inside the IT society web site.

11. The incoming Editor-in-chief, Helmut Bölcskei, presented some thoughts on the editorial practices. Some ideas from the structure of the journal “Annals of Statistics” were presented. Several ideas were discussed, including: recruiting tenured editors from academia, recruiting senior editors who have served before, training sessions for new editors. Comments were made on the transition to ScholarOne. Some of the transition difficulties include: system flagged actions, provision for special issues, and the ability of the editors to set review deadlines in a case-by-case basis. The pros and cons of having a dedicated editorial assistant, who will send some personalized notifications and tend to specific requests by authors and associate editors, was discussed.

An idea was presented for an executive editorial board (EEB) consisting of several senior, highly recognized people in the field, to be appointed by the BoG on a rotating basis, to work closely with the EiC regularly. One of the EEB members will be designated to fill in during any absence or vacation of EiC. The EEB helps in finding new AEs, help AEs that underperform, deals with plagiarism cases, and handles appeals and complaints. The EEB also helps in fast-rejecting papers, identifying topics and authors for tutorial/survey/condensation papers, identifies papers for awards, and identifies topics and guest editors for special issues.

12. The Student Committee report was presented by Aylin Yener. A new networking event was introduced at CISS, geared towards graduating students looking for jobs, which was attended by approximately 100 students. Two events are planned for ISIT: a round table research discussion and a panel discussion on “recipes for good talks.” An update was presented on the progress of the summer school of information theory, Aug. 5-8, 2010. In 2008 and 2009, the format of the summer school consisted of three lectures each lasting 4.5 hours. The new format this year consists of six 2-hour lectures. The school was registered with IEEE as a conference, and ITsoc has confirmed its sponsorship. The applicant number shows a 50% increase over the previous year, and an effort was made to accommodate all applicants. So far, 193 have confirmed that they will attend. The total estimated budget is approximately \$70k, the majority of which is for accommodations and food.
13. A proposal for the 2011 winter school for information theory in Barcelona was presented by Ezio Biglieri. The organizing committee and the proposed instructors were introduced. A projected financial outline of the operation of the winter school in Barcelona was outlined. The requested funds from the ITsoc is approximately 8,000 euros. The anticipated participation includes 50 students. The expected registration fee is 200 euros per person. There is a week-long program, with 3 hours of lectures every morning, and 3 hours of student presentations in the afternoon, with one afternoon off. The motion for providing 8,000 euros for the winter school was carried.

14. The report of the Chapters and Membership Committee was presented by Muriel Médard. Many of our chapters are very active. The chapter of the year award goes to the Russia chapter in light of many significant events with good attendance. There are two new chapters: South Africa and Vancouver. There are some challenges, including getting the chapters to post their activities on our web site. Also the utilization of the Distinguished Lecturers program has been an issue. It has been proposed to collect some best practices from active chapters, and identify the underlying issues in under-performing chapters.

Our membership is slightly on the decline, with some signs of recovery. Student membership is particularly encouraging.

15. The report of WITHITS was presented by Christina Fragouli. Some statistics about membership and (co)authorship of papers was presented. WITHITS has organized an event at ISIT 2010.
16. The Conference Committee report was presented by Bruce Hajek. There is a board-approved transition in this committee. Martin Bossert will start serving after this meeting; the BoG thanked Alex Grant, the out-going member, for his services.

A revised budget for ISIT 2011 was presented. The motion for approval of the revised budget was carried.

The proposal for ISIT 2014 in Honolulu, Hawaii, was presented by Anders Host-Madsen. The proposed general chairs are Anders Host-Madsen, Venu Veeravalli, and Aleksander Kavcic. Several options for the conference venue were presented. The Conference Committee recommended the BoG to approve the proposal for ISIT 2014 in Hawaii. The motion for the approval of the venue was carried.

The report from ISIT 2010 is that everything is going well. ISIT 2012 and 2013 are progressing according to plan. The upcoming workshops are Dublin and Paraty. There are no other workshops on the horizon, and the Conference Committee welcomes proposals for ITWs.

The motion for society sponsorship of NetCogs 2011 was carried.

17. Frank Kschischang presented the report for the Wyner and Shannon Awards Committee. The committee enquired the sense of the BoG regarding the issue of a joint Shannon award in the hypothetical case where two persons have made most or all of their contributions jointly. The general sentiment was that this is not consistent with the nature of the Shannon award.
18. Bruce Hajek requested input from the BoG regarding the issue of a potential decrease of the percentage of IEEE members elevated to fellow each year (currently set to 0.1% of the membership). The opinions expressed were that the standard of the ITsoc is very high and it would not be appropriate to raise that bar any higher, but also some dissatisfaction was expressed that the standard for elevation to fellow does not seem to be uniform across IEEE societies.
19. The meeting was adjourned at 17:50 hours.