

Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Conferences, Board of Governors of the IEEE Information Theory Society August 25, 2006

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Background: The ad-hoc committee on conferences, appointed by President David L. Neuhoff in June 2006, was charged to investigate the formation of a standing Conference Committee and to make a formal recommendation regarding such. The ad-hoc committee was also asked, if it recommended to form such a standing committee, to include recommendations for its charge, its membership, and the changes needed to the Bylaws. Through email exchanges and a meeting on July 14, 2006, the ad-hoc committee came to the recommendations below by consensus.

The ad-hoc committee recommends that the IT Society institute a standing committee called the Conference Committee.

A. Charge of the Conference Committee:

(a) Provide oversight of technical meetings (symposia and workshops). (i) Make recommendations to the BoG regarding Society sponsorship of proposed technical meetings, (ii) Monitor the pipeline of technical meeting proposals, stimulate new proposals, and coordinate organizing teams as needed, (iii) Maintain guidelines for IT Society meetings, concerning formats of meetings, formats of publications, technical focus, etc. (iv) Insure there is a BoG approved policy in place regarding profit sharing by meeting organizers, and differential registration rates for nonmembers individuals. Meeting organizers should seek approval from the committee for implementing significant deviations from past practices. Major changes should be brought before the BoG for approval, with recommendations from the committee.

(b) Provide advice to meeting organizers. Insure that guidelines and practical advice are passed down from one meeting organizer to the next, regarding such things as hotel room counts, mailing lists, vendors, sources of outside support, lists and contact information for publishers sending representatives to meetings, etc. Maintain Guidelines for Workshops (including guidelines for workshop proposals, final reports, and organization) and Guidelines for Symposia (including guidelines for symposium proposals, final reports, and organization).

It is envisioned that much of the work of the committee will take place through various communications throughout the year.

B. Recommended changes to bylaws:

Change "subcommittee" to "committee" throughout the bylaws. (Discussion: The board should have standing committees, rather than, as currently written in the bylaws, standing subcommittees with no committees. If this change is not accepted, then the proposal below for adding a new standing committee should be changed to a proposal for a new standing subcommittee).

Add to Article V, Section 1 (the list of standing committees): "8. Conference"

Add to Article V: (short form)

Section 10. The Conference Committee shall consist of the Society Conference Coordinator and two additional members. The Conference Coordinator shall be appointed by the Nominations Committee, with approval by the Board. In turn, the Conference Coordinator will appoint two additional members, also with approval by the board. Typically members of the Committee will serve for three years, with staggered terms. The Committee shall be responsible for providing oversight of technical meetings on behalf of the BoG, with major policy issues and approval of specific conferences left to the BoG, based on recommendations provided by the Committee. Specific responsibilities include: (i) Making recommendations to the BoG regarding Society sponsorship of proposed technical meetings, (ii) Monitoring the pipeline of technical meeting proposals, stimulating new proposals, and coordinating organizing teams as needed, (iii) Maintaining Guidelines for Workshops and Guidelines for Symposia, which would include guidelines for meeting proposals and final reports, and helpful information and suggestions, (iv) Insuring there are BoG approved policies for certain aspects of meetings, including possible profit sharing by meeting organizers, and differential registration rates for nonmember individuals.

Revise Article VI, section 1, by the addition of words (indicated here by underline):

Article VI, section 1: The Society shall sponsor an annual International Symposium on Information Theory. The Board will select the venue and dates for the Symposium, and shall direct the appointment of the Symposium Chair or two Co-Chairpersons, taking into account recommendations of the Conference Committee. The Symposium Chairpersons will have the entire responsibility for planning and executing the Symposium subject only to appropriate IEEE regulations and such guidance as the Board and Conference Committee wish to provide.

C. Additional comments of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Conferences:

1. The ad-hoc committee felt that the portion of the BoG meetings dealing with meetings could be run more efficiently by making clear what items are information items and what are action items, and spending less time on the information items.
2. Meetings involving the Conference Committee and organizers of conferences could be held during some of the IT Society workshops or symposia, but the ad-hoc committee thinks some experimentation is called for here, and specifics should be left up to the Conference Committee.

3. Regarding bylaws changes, we intend that the Conference Coordinator would regularly attend BoG meetings, and that Conference Committee members not on the BoG would often do so. But the Conference Coordinator and other members would not be granted voting privileges on the BoG. In keeping with the level of detail in the bylaws about other committees, it seems best that such considerations not be included in the bylaws for this committee.