

Membership & Chapters Committee Report

Giuseppe Caire

March 15, 2009

1 Introduction

In the last BoG of 2008 it was decided that a new committee, named *Membership & Chapters Committee* (M&C committee in the following), should concentrate certain activities that have become relevant in the recent past and have been traditionally handled either by a single officer (second VP) or informally on a case-by-case basis (e.g., Schools of Information Theory). The structure of the M&C committee is similar to that of the conference committee, with appointed members and a committee chair (second VP).

At the Officers' Meeting in La Jolla, the following objectives agenda for year 2009 was discussed and approved:

1. Produce an item in the IT-soc. bylaws, similarly to what done for the conference committee, describing responsibilities and mode of operations of the M&C committee.
2. Submit to the BoG the list of proposed members of the M&C committee and get approval.
3. Revamp the *Distinguished Lecturers Program* by proactively contacting the society Chapters and informing them on this program and at the same time soliciting distinguished lecturers to volunteer for the program.
4. Act as a contact point and coordination point for the organizing committees of Information Theory Schools, similarly to what done for conferences by the conference committee.
5. Define and finalize the Padovani Lecture, endowed by the gift of Roberto Padovani to the IT soc..
6. Lead a broad discussion and brainstorming on how to revitalize Chapters, on outreach initiatives for countries with low presence of Information Theory and on fostering new IT membership.

This document reports to the BoG the progresses made along the above points.

2 Committee members

The second VP, Giuseppe Caire, has invited to be part of the MCC the following people:

- Frank Kschischang
- Gerhard Kramer
- Ruediger Urbanke
- Han Vink
- Sae-Yung Chung
- Uri Erez
- Stephen Hanly

Other potential candidates were contacted upon suggestions, but they either declined or were not responsive.

We propose that the BoG approve the above committee members.

3 Distinguished Lecturers Program

Several IEEE Societies have distinguished lecturers programs (DLPs). A particularly successful one is the program of the IEEE Communication Society. A brief survey on the Chapter activity in the period 2007-2008 (from the IEEE database http://ewh.ieee.org/cgi-bin/l31/Query_Search.pl) reveals that with over 200 meetings organized by the Chapters in 2007-2008, only 10 were organized as “Distinguished Lecturer Program”. The distribution of distinguished lectures (DLs) is very concentrated, with only a few chapters that have taken advantage of the program while many others, although they have organized several meetings, have not used the program.

A “good practice” rule used on other societies (notably, the Communication Society) is that a committee appoints a set of distinguished speakers, and that these speakers contact local Chapters in occasions of their travels, in order to take advantage of their presence in some region while saving on the travel budget. The M&C committee will serve as the link between the appointed distinguished lecturers and the local Chapters, in order to facilitate the contact and foster the organization of such lectures.

We propose that the BoG approve the following operational mode:

1. A target number of \sim 10-12 active DLs.
2. DLs are appointed for a period 2 years.

3. In order to start up the process, in 2009 we shall appoint a first batch of 5-6 DLs, and at the beginning of 2010 we shall appoint another batch of 5-6.
4. Jan 2010 on, we will work in steady state, where each year one half of the DLs ends their term and is renewed. This is in order to avoid a full change of the whole set of DLs, in fact, organizing distinguished lectures requires time in advance, and resetting the whole group every two years may incur planning problems and continuity issues.
5. Every year, starting from now, an open call for nominations shall be posted on line and forwarded to the IT mailing list. The M&C committee can make nominations.
6. The M&C committee will select the nominees: notice that this is not as an “award”. Being a DL requires a certain level of commitment, time availability and willingness of preparing lectures and adding days to travel schedule. The M&C committee will make sure that the appointed DLs respond to these requirements.

4 Padovani Lecture

In December 2008, Roberto Padovani kindly donated 10,000\$ to the IT-soc for some special initiative. After some discussion among the IT-soc officers, it was decided in agreement with Roberto that the gift would be used to endow a “Padovani Lecture”. It was also proposed that the would select distinguished speakers for this lecture. At the Officers meeting in La Jolla, after some discussion, we reached the conclusion that the best venue for the Padovani Lecture is the Annual IT School. In fact, ISIT and ITW do not seem appropriate because of too many other events and the presence of the Shannon Lecture. inserting it as a part of the DLP does not make significant distinction, and in addition DLs are typically “regional” in nature, organized by local chapters. In contrast, having a special lecture at the IT School will have the advantage of helping the school budget with stipend/travel money for one special speaker, and presenting to the graduate students (typical audience of the schools) the “role model” of Roberto Padovani.

We propose that the BoG approve this decision.

5 Information Theory Schools

The first IT-soc Annual School on Information Theory was organized in 2008 by Aylin Yener and Gerhard Kramer at the Penn-State University campus. It has been a great success. It is understood that such schools should become regular events, and their organization is similar to that of conferences both in the planning effort and in the volunteer human resource involved. The M&C committee will help, coordinate and supervise the organization of such schools, by soliciting organizing committees,

helping them by keeping the history and memory of past schools, and acting as the liaison with respect to the BoG and the IT-soc.

The proposed operational mode for school organization is as follows:

1. The M&C committee receives proposals or solicit proposals (in the case of lack of candidates ... solicitations are intended only for the North-American Annual School so far, spontaneous proposals may be from anybody. The European School has a long-standing tradition and for the time being it evolves on its own).
2. The M&C committee discusses (internally) the proposals and when they are judged to be sufficiently refined, it invites the proponents to expose their proposal to the BoG (as it happens for conferences).
3. In emergency cases (timing issues), a school proposal can be submitted to the BoG via the IT web and an email vote may be solicited (e.g., as it happens now for Conference co-sponsorship).

The purpose of having IT Schools organizers to present their proposal to the BoG implies some sort of *screening*: the organizers must be motivated enough to come to the BoG, prepare a presentation etc ...

We propose that the BoG approve this mode of operation.

6 New Membership/Outreach Initiatives

A phase of brainstorming and creative thinking is needed to this regard. Also, some analysis on past Chapter activity is needed, in order to detect which Chapters can be considered “active” and which should be considered as “dead” or “almost dead”. Critical cases should be detected and pro-active contacting of the M&C committee to the Chapters not in good shape may be needed. The M&C committee (in particular, the second VP and committee chair), will take care of organizing the annual Chapters dinner at ISIT as always done in the past. **The M&C committee is responsible to nominate the Chapter of the year.**

Current actions:

1. Chapter chairs have been emailed, in order to verify the consistency of the contact information that we have on the IT web and create a Chapter mailing list.
2. The On-Line Committee (Nick Laneman and Anand Sarwate) have started some testing with a few motivated Chapters (beta-testers) in order to have a standardized “Chapter” activity page on the IT-web.
3. Soon, every chapter will have such a page and will be able to post activities on-line.

4. In steady state, this will serve, in particular, to advertise distinguished lectures organized through the DLP of the IT society.