

Membership/Chapters Committee Report

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1 Introduction

In the last BoG of 2008 it was decided that a new committee, named *Membership/Chapters Committee* (MCC 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 MCC is similar to that of the conference committee, with appointed members and a committee chair (second VP).

Subject to discussion and approval from the IT-soc. officers and possibly of the BoG, we propose the following objectives agenda for year 2009:

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 MCC.
2. Submit to the BoG the list of proposed members of the MCC 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.
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.

Some of the above topics shall be discussed more in details in the following sections.

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

Marcelo Weinberger and Stephen Hanly were also contacted, but Marcelo essentially declined the offer and Stephen never responded. It is proposed that the above nominated MCC members are approved, and possibly some more members are included.

Point of discussion: The recently established “diversity/outreach” committee led by Murier Medard seems to fit naturally in the scope of the MCC. One possibility is to merge these two initiative, include “diversity” under “membership outreach” and have Muriel be a member of the MCC with this special task.

3 Distinguished Lecturers Program

Several IEEE Societies have distinguished lecturers programs. 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/131/Query_Search.pl reveals that with over 200 meetings organized by the Chapters in 2007-2008, 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 task of the MCC is to revamp the program, proactively informing the Chapters of this possibility, and at the same time contacting potential distinguished speakers. 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 MCC may 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.

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 MCC would select distinguished speakers for this lecture.

Point of discussion: what would be an appropriate venue for the Padovani Lecture? Possible options are:

- ISIT and ITW do not seem appropriate because of too many other events.
- Insert this as a part of the Distinguished Lecturers Program. However, this program targets the organization of talks in specific places with typically “local” audience, and this does not seem appropriate for an endowed lecture.
- Have a special lecture at the Information theory School: this would 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.

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 MCC 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.

Points of discussion:

1. Should the school be organized every year or every other year, alternating with a similar EU initiative?
2. Should the school be “North America-based”, or be organized worldwide, as ISIT or ITW?
3. Should the school be open to IT-soc (student) members only, in order to leverage it for increasing membership?

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 MCC to the Chapters not in good shape may be needed. The MCC (in particular, the second VP), will keep to organize the annual Chapters dinner at ISIT as in the past. It is proposed that the MCC is responsible to nominate the Chapter of the year.