

COMMITTEE REPORTS WYNER, MASSEY, AND COVER AWARDS

Wyner Award:

Winner: Joachim Hagenauer

Number of Nominations: 3

Committee Members: Emina Soljanin (chair), Elza Erkip, Bruce Hajek, Ian Blake, Muriel Medard

Observations: Unfortunately, there are only 3 nominees. However, the committee found all nominees very deserving. The chair has personally solicited several nominations, and although the potential nominators seemed enthusiastic, the nominations were never submitted. The winner was informed of the selection since the committee did not remember seeing him at recent ISITs, and thus it did not make sense to keep this award as a surprise to be announced at the conference, as previously done. The timeline for this award was found adequate.

Recommendations: Find a way to ensure more nominations.

Cover Award:

Winner: David Sutter, for his thesis titled: "Approximate Quantum Markov Chains"

Number of Nominations: 9

Committee Members: C. Christina Fragouli (chair), Haim Permuter, Yossef Steinberg, Michele Wigger, Aylin Yener

Observations: The election proceeded as follows. The committee send an initial vote online. Based on this initial evaluation, we identified 5 thesis that had significant support. We discussed these in detail on the committee May 9, 2019 meeting. We unanimously agreed on the winner, although we felt that there other thesis deserving of recognition.

Recommendations: Increase the number of members in the committee;
Consider sharing the award in the future among more than one thesis;
Actively encourage diversity (geographically, underrepresented groups etc) submissions.

Massey Award:

Winner: Salman Avestimehr

Number of Nominations: 7

Committee Members: Tom Fuja (Chair) Wei Yu, Ram Zamir, Erdal Arikan, and Tara Javidi

Observations: Lengthy process of deliberation.

Recommendations:

- The notion of what constitutes a "young scholar" - namely, age 40 or less on January 1 of the year of nomination - is narrow and may negatively impact certain demographic groups (e.g., women) and/or researchers from countries where (for example) compulsory national service may delay graduate education. We recommend that the definition of "young scholar" be broadened to accommodate those realities - e.g., age 40 or less or no more than 12 years past completion of the PhD.
- While the Call for Nominations explicitly says that teaching and research accomplishments are to be weighted equally - and provides plenty of examples of evidence of each - nomination and support letters typically address teaching much less than research. Moreover, if a particular nominator (or supporter) does document teaching to a degree comparable to research, then it becomes difficult to compare such a nominee to one whose research is extolled but whose teaching is described more perfunctorily. For this reason, we recommend that a "rubric" be formed and disseminated so that nominators, supporters, and members of the selection committee have a common understanding of how nominees will be assessed. In particular, nominators and letter writers should be strongly encouraged to take the teaching part of the award very seriously.