

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Location: Palmer House, Chicago, USA

Date: 6 October 2018

Time: The meeting convened at 9:00am CDT (GMT-6); the meeting adjourned at 3:43pm.

Meeting Chair: Elza Erkip

Minutes taken by: Stark Draper

Meeting Attendees: Jeff Andrews, Alexander Barg*, Mathieu Bloch*, Suhas Diggavi, Alexandros Dimakis, Stark Draper, Salim El Rouayheb#, Elza Erkip, Matt LaFleur#, Christina Fragouli*, Tara Javidi, Frank Kschischang, Krishna Narayan, Alon Orlitsky, Igal Sason*, Emina Soljanin, Daniela Tuninetti, Aaron Wagner, Gregory Wornell, Michelle Wigger*, Aylin Yener, Wei Yu.

(Remote attendees denoted by *, non-voting attendees by #.)

Business conducted between meetings: Between the June 2018 and October 2018 Information Theory Society (ITSoc) Board of Governors (BoG) meetings, a number of elections and items of business were conducted and voted upon by email. These items and the results are summarized below:

1. **Motion:** "Vote to approve the process to replace the BoG officers that resigned." The motion was approved.
2. **Motion:** Aylin Yener was elected to serve as ITSoc Second Vice President (2VP) for the remainder of 2018.
3. **Motion:** Frank Kschischang was elected to serve as ITSoc Junior Past President (JPP) for the remainder of 2018.
4. **Motion:** "To approve the draft minutes of the 2018 ITSoc BoG meeting held in Vail, Colorado on 17 June, 2018." The motion was approved.
5. **Motion:** "To allocate \$10k USD to support the 2019 North American School of Information Theory, to be held at Boston University." The motion was approved.
6. **Motion:** "To approve Anne Canteaut (INIRIA, Paris) for the position of Associate Editor in Cryptograph of the IEEE Transactions on Information Theory." The motion was approved.
7. **Motion:** "To approve Milan Mosonyi (Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Budapest) for the position of Associate Editor in Quantum Information Theory of the IEEE Transactions on Information Theory" The motion was approved.

At 9:00am local time, ITSoc President Elza Erkip called the meeting to order. She started by reviewing the agenda.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

- 1) **President's Report:** ITSoc President Elza Erkip presented the President's report. She started by congratulating newly elected 2018 Junior Past President (JPP) Frank Kschischang and 2018 Second Vice President (2VP) Aylin Yener. Elza next recapped the BoG officer election process. She reminded the BoG that there was a three-step BoG-approved elections process to fill the seats vacated by the resignations of Helmut Bölcskei (2VP) and Rüdiger Urbanke (JPP). The first step is now complete. The second step is the collection of nominations for the positions of 2019 Second Vice President (2VP) and Vice President (VP). Emanuele Viterbo was originally nominated to the slate of 2019 2VP candidates, but has since he agreed instead to run in the 2018 2VP election, there are at least two new nominations needed are required for the 2019 2VP position. Per the BoG-

approved process, the BoG officers will select **these** candidates with additional nominations from the BoG if there are any. Aylin will become the 2019 VP nominee. **Next**, Elza reviewed the process for additional nominations. After the nominees made by the officers are announced, the BoG has one week to suggest additional nominations. Any nominees must (i) be current members of the BoG, must (ii) agree to serve, and (iii) at least two BoG members must support the nomination. Once step two is complete, step three will follow. Step three is the standard process for electing (via email) the 2019 2VP, VP and President. After the election of the officers is complete, the BoG position of Tsachy Weissman, who resigned his position as regular BoG member and whose term last through 31 Dec 2020, must be filled. As specified in the ITSoc Constitution, within-term vacancies are by appointment by the remainder of the BoG (rather than through the general election). The officers will double check the process with the IEEE before proceeding.

Elza next recapped the Wednesday morning discussion session at ISIT in Vail. This session, on the topic of sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination, was announced to all ISIT attendees. Many junior researchers attended. Suggestions made included the Transactions implementing double-blind reviews to reduce bias, the development of a conference code of conduct, the creation of a society ombudsperson, the deployment of a society climate survey, the holding of plenary session(s) at ISIT focused on the topic of the discussion session, and continuing discussion session like this one.

Next Elza reminded the BoG that in the June 2018 BoG meeting an ad-hoc committee on society finances was approved. Members of that committee include Aaron Wagner (Chair), Elza Erkip (ex-officio as ITSoc President), Gerhard Kramer, Vincent Poor, Daniela Tuninetti, Alex Vardy, Emanuele Viterbo, and Aylin Yener. Members were chosen to represent a wide breadth of ITSoc experience and include former ITSoc treasurers, conference committee chairs, and school committee chairs.

Elza then reflected on her personal view of events in 2018. She talked about how the culture and climate of an organization are important indicators of how an organization runs and how the members feel. Organization culture includes collective values, beliefs and principles. Organizational climate includes recurrent patterns of behavior, attitudes and feelings that characterize life in the organization. She commented that while culture is deeper and more stable, climate is easier to change. Elza pointed to a recent National Academy report on "Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine." Elza discussed this report at the June '18 BoG meeting in Vail and again encouraged all ITSoc members to read the report. The report is not an opinion piece, it is based on decades of research. Elza discussed the importance of examining, and changing for the better, the culture and climate in higher education and also in professional societies, including ITSoc for preventing sexual harassment. As the report states: "Professional societies have the potential to be powerful drivers of change through their capacity to help educate, train, codify, and reinforce cultural expectations for their respective scientific, engineering, and medical communities."

Elza next turned to the question of what constitutes sexual harassment. While one might think of sexual harassment in terms of assault or coercion, a larger component is "gender-based" harassment. Elza presented a plot from the report. The plot is based on data collected from the University of Texas system and reports that 25% of female engineering students reported hostile sexism (reflecting negative views of women who challenge traditional gender roles). Statistics were given separately for male and female students across non-SEM, science, engineering and medicine. The National Academy categories sexual harassment into three categories: (1) Gender harassment (verbal and nonverbal

behaviors that convey insulting, hostile and degrading attitudes), (2) unwanted sexual attention, (3) sexual coercion.

Elza then took a step back asking the BoG to consider what is the culture of ITSoc. She posited the first to be an emphasis on deep mathematical understanding; the second to value quality over quantity; and the third to be a small and tight-knit society. This last aspect helps foster a strong sense of community but can make conflicts harder to deal with since many (perhaps most) Society members have relationships that are both professional and personal with their colleagues. Returning to the events of the past year, Elza stated that it was a difficult year and we were tested. The root of the difficulties was a highly publicized sexual harassment case involving an ITSoc faculty member and an ITSoc student member. That case induced emotional responses from many, resulting in severe disagreements on how to react, with an overall result that impacted the society climate in a tremendously negative way. Returning to the National Academy report, Elza again emphasized that climate is a key factor in helping to prevent sexual harassment.

Elza then reviewed the reaction of the BoG and the Society. In the February 2018 BoG meeting the BoG reaffirmed an IEEE Code of Conduct and Ethics, accepted in principle a draft conference code of conduct presented by some BoG members, and formed an ad-hoc committee on Diversity and Inclusion, one of the mandates of which included finalizing the conference code of conduct. In the June 2018 meeting the BoG passed a statement on sexual harassment, which was followed by a discussion at the BoG meeting and the aforementioned Wednesday morning discussion at ISIT. The road involved severe objections, incurred a high emotional toll, and created deep divisions in the society.

Elza then looked to events in other societies to see how those societies reacted. She first considered what happened at NIPS'17. There a band of statisticians made crude remarks about sexual harassment. Following that on 13 December 2017 Kristian Lum wrote an article for Medium on her experience with sexual harassment and posted a comment on her Twitter feed. The first reply to her post was a comment from the President of the International Society for Bayesian Analysis (ISBA) condemning harassment, and establishing a task team for a safe ISBA meeting. That was followed by lots of on-line discussion. About seven months later at the Joint Statistics Meeting (JSM), there was a late-breaking session "Addressing Sexual Misconduct in the Statistics Community". The session was large (it needed to be moved to a larger room) and was well received. Elza's point was that the statistics community reacted more quickly and materially than did ITSoc.

A second recently highly-publicized case was in the philosophy community. In this case a female professor at New York University harassed her male student. Similar to ITSoc a letter of support was written by about 50 colleagues of the professor suggesting her innocence and that her status and reputation may earn her deference treatment. This case was also widely reported—including in the New Yorker, the Atlantic, the Chronicle of Higher Education—and also engendered lots of open discussion within the community. Many of those latter pieces focused on the support letter, one signatory of which was the president-elect of the modern languages society. Some signatories later recanted their letter of support.

Beyond professional societies, the National Science Foundation (NSF) instituted a new policy requiring awardee institutions to report findings of sexual harassment. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) announced a new policy to revoke elected fellows for misconduct or ethics breach.

Coming back to ITSoc Elza stated that the BoG must provide leadership. While the BoG has passed statements it / we need to work to make sure that the climate of the society is where it should be. While the culture of the society values consensus, we should not be afraid to disagree, and should be prepared to tackle difficult issues. We should always disagree civilly. Elza's key message to BoG was: do not be afraid to disagree, but do so civilly. ITSoc also needs better processes. Today the BoG will consider the revised Conference Code of Conduct. It also needs to develop better reporting mechanisms, and how to work with the IEEE. Sexual misconduct should be on par with research misconduct.

In terms of improving the climate of the society Elza suggested that the bulk of the problem is gender harassment. We should concentrate there, realizing that this is as much an issue for men as for women (if not more). We need to foster a diverse inclusive and respectful environment, should continue discussions, and need to involve and educate members. Elza stated that she is strongly in favor of open discussion sessions, and plenaries on these topics. Elza did not think that ITSoc could have had a session analogous to JSM's "Addressing gender harassment" session in the June 2018 ISIT. That said, there are discussion to hold such sessions at ISIT'19.

Elza concluded her report by sharing with the BoG that IEEE recently created an IEEE Ombudsman position to deal with conflicts across, or within, various IEEE societies. The first Ombudsman is Roberto de Marca, a very active member of the IEEE Communications Society and also an ITSoc member. A senior member of ITSoc reached out to Roberto after ISIT'18 telling him about the conflicts within the society, resignations from the BoG, and asked him to see what he can do to help the society. Roberto reached out to Elza in August. Elza has had a number of conversations with Roberto, and Roberto has also had conversations with other ITSoc members. Elza brought this up in part so that ITSoc members know of the Ombudsman position, they know Roberto's name, and so that they can contact Roberto if they want to.

Following the conclusion of Elza's report there was a discussion within the BoG. Some BoG members whose universities have the position of ombudsman positions stated that the role of such positions is mediative and not investigative. The ombudsman office is not a complaints and grievances office. Further, these BoG members' experience is that professionals in these positions are accomplished mediators. Some questions were raised about the type of role that the IEEE envisions for this position. At the moment that is unclear.

A BoG member raised the concern that some members had promoted on the internet a narrative that the society leadership, and in particular some of the officers, did nothing to address the harassment issue and thereby made the society appear uncaring about harassment relative to sister societies that took action. The BoG member pointed to the various BoG actions that Elza had mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, and added several further initiatives that various officers and ITSoc members had brought to the fore. Some of these were followed up on while others were not. As an example of the former, the supervising officers made changes to increase the diversity of representation of ITSoc membership in the Shannon Movie. An initiative still in process that Elza mentioned is the drafting of an ITSoc conference code of conduct (to be presented and voted upon at this meeting). While a conference code of conduct had not been implemented by ISIT'18, a draft version had been approved "in principle" at the Feb. 2018 BoG Meeting. Some BoG members felt that the BoG failed to execute on having such a code ready in a timely manner, wishing the D&I Ad-Hoc Committee had presented a revised code at the June meeting. Finally, in late 2017 a number of ITSoc members contacted the officers requesting

that the BoG make a public statement about the situation, but the IEEE advised the officers not to post publicly anything too specific. Some BoG member expressed regret in not having been more public about their opinions and in support of the ITSoc student involved. **One BoG member stated that they very much stand by the public statement they had posted and do continue to think the BoG and officers collectively could have done better.** Generally, some present felt that, in contrast to other societies, discussions within ITSoc have been more closed and limited to the BoG, with less being communicated to the broad membership. Other BoG members expressed appreciation of the care that the BoG took in approaching what to say publicly, but noted that things move much more quickly on social media than in the past.

Elza pointed out that in the spring she referred to some BoG members' web postings regarding the events in ITSoc on her Facebook page. This led to lots of push back. Elza thought that, perhaps, what we lacked was not the posting of official statements on the ITSoc website but the ability to have an open discussion. Even the holding of a discussion at the ITSoc BoG meeting in Vail in June 2018 led to severe objections. Perhaps to move forward constructively we can focus on three things. First, we need to trust each others' intention, while agreeing to disagree. Second, we can all think back to what each of us we might have done better or differently, and carry those reflections forward. Finally, we can put in place mechanism, such as those above, to help us in the future.

- 2) Treasurer's Report:** ITSoc Treasurer Aaron Wagner next presented his report. Aaron first recapped the estimated end-of-year fiscal outcomes he presented to the BoG at the BoG meeting in June 2018 at ISIT in Vail. The prediction at that time for the 2018 operating budget was that ITSoc would run a deficit of \$67k (USD), due mostly to a decrease in income from the Transactions. However, as of the October BoG meeting, the situation was looking up. Aaron is now predicting that ITSoc will run a surplus of \$81k (rather than a deficit of \$70k). The change in situation was due almost entirely due to efforts by the Vail ISIT organizers who returned to ITSoc a surplus of roughly \$160k. Aaron thanked the ISIT organizers who, at the last minute, did a lot of work to make ISIT more profitable. For example, they saved \$50k through last minute A/V renegotiation. Aaron noted that that hard-won surplus of \$81k will be placed in society reserves if not spent before 31 Dec 2018. Once in reserves it is hard to get at. He asked if any BoG members had last-minute ideas of how to allocate the funds: perhaps to Shannon movie expenses, to accelerate web server updates, or to schools.

Aaron next discussed the "new initiatives" for 2018 which are funded from ITSoc reserves, rather than from the operating budget. In 2018 \$83k USD was allocated by the IEEE to new initiatives. The Society allocated a little over \$86k: to the children's book (\$8k), the development of YouTube videos (\$30k), and an upgrade to the ITSoc web server (\$48k). Aaron emphasized that all these allocated funds must be fully spent by the end of the year.

Aaron next discussed the 2019 operational budget. The first draft of the budget was submitted to the IEEE on 5 July 2018. The IEEE is currently projecting a decline of \$45k USD in revenue from the Transactions. However, it appears that the Transaction page count will be lower than predicted, leading to a reduction in publication costs which should roughly balance out the \$45k reduction in revenue. Even with that offset and assuming a (somewhat aggressive) \$60k surplus from ISIT Paris, cuts to the budget for schools and other committees are likely forthcoming in 2019. IEEE requested of ITSoc a 2019 budget with a surplus of at least \$22k. The draft budget submitted on 5 July contained a surplus of only \$3k. Aaron is still waiting to hear what the IEEE response is to that draft budget.

Aaron next discussed new initiatives for 2019. The budget for new initiatives is \$120k. There are three components. The first is \$40k for special sessions at ISIT 2019 (people from industry and people in other areas of research connected to IT). The second is \$40k for two other outreach workshops. The third is \$40k for phase-II upgrade to the ITSoc web server.

- 3) **Motion to change order of the agenda:** A motion was made to reorder some agenda items in order to maintain quorum as some BoG members needed to depart early.

Motion: "To change the order of the agenda." The motion was passed unanimously.

- 4) **Journal of Selected Topics in Information Theory (JSTIT):** Chair of the JSTIT Steering Committee Jeff Andrews updated the BoG on the progress made since ISIT. First, the IEEE Publications Development Committee (PDC) completed its financial and marketing projections. These were quite favorable. Next, on 18 September Jeff made a presentation to the IEEE Financial committee, which was supportive.

Looking forward, Jeff overviewed the Phase Two Proposal. At this Chicago BoG meeting Jeff would present a vote to approve the Phase Two Proposal and a vote to approve a call for nominations for the position of Editor-in-Chief (EiC) of JSTIT. Jeff summarized key facts contained in the Phase Two proposal which included the launch of the journal in early 2020 with a target of four issues per year at first, growing to six per year in steady state. A suggestion was made by the BoG was to allow electronic appendices. Jeff indicated that JSTIT will be an electronics-only journal (no hard copies) but even as an electronics-only journal cost continues to scale with page length due to typesetting charges. Further, an added intention of an upper bound on page lengths is to help maintain short review times. In response BoG members suggested that supplemental material might not need to be typeset and that not having page limits would be a cultural norm of the ITSoc. Having non-typeset appendices might both maintain the cultural norm and meet the page limit restriction of the journal (which, in an earlier meeting Jeff had indicated is now applied by the IEEE to all new journals). Some current and former members of the editorial board of the Transactions on Information Theory indicated that the Transactions already has an option for non-typeset appendices. Such materials are posted on Xplore, but are required to be available during the peer-review process. The posting of such materials is at zero cost to the Society. The only restriction is one of a maximum file size limitation implemented by Xplore. In fact, one is allowed to post other types of supplemental materials as well, such as videos. A point was raised that as JSTIT is intended to be a cross-disciplinary journal, the possibility of having supplemental material might help JSTIT flex to the norms of the communities involved in the different special issues. For example, for one issue the important supplemental materials might be data sets while for another they might be mathematical proofs. There was also discussion of whether the supplementary material would be reviewed. Such materials are reviewed in the Transactions on Information Theory, and it wasn't known whether the IEEE allows posting of un-reviewed supplemental materials.

Jeff next reviewed the finances of JSTIT. After discussions with the interested sibling societies, in the end ITSoc will have 100% ownership of JSTIT. Jeff indicated he felt this was the desired outcome, one that would alleviate many possible headaches down the road. Jeff noted that the income from over length charges is used to offset typesetting costs, rather printing, this being an electronic only publication. The projections have JSTIT in the black by year two, though Jeff noted that might be somewhat optimistic. The IEEE Journal

of Special Topics in Signal Processing (JSTSP) provides the Signal Processing Society a net annual income of about \$100k USD.

Jeff next reviewed the proposed leadership structure. JSTIT will have a steering committee, an EiC nominated via an open and transparent process that is subject to BoG approval, and 8-12 senior editors of diverse areas of research to guide submissions. Each special issue will have its own guest editorial team. The EiC will serve a single non-renewable three year term. The proposed process for appointing the EiC is as follows. First, there will be an open call for nominations. Second, the Steering Committee will also solicit and make their own nominations. Third, the Steering Committee will choose from the nominees, confirming interest and availability of the candidate. Fourth, the Steering Committee will submit their nomination to the ITSoc BoG for approval. Regarding the JSTIT Steering Committee, there would be five members with staggered five-year terms. One member would retire each year with the replacement appointment being made by the VP of the Publications Committee (currently the senior past president of ITSoc). The Chair of the Steering Committee would be chosen by the Steering Committee itself.

Regarding the nominations of the JSTIT EiC, BoG members raised the point that ITSoc already has a Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee. Jeff was asked why not simply have the EiC nomination come from from N&A rather than from the JSTIT Steering Committee? Further, it was asked why not also have members of the JSTIT Steering Committee be appointed by the N&A Committee? Jeff noted that the VP of the Publications Committee (as already noted the senior past president of ITSoc), who would be making the appointments to the JSTIT Steering Committee, also chairs the ITSoc N&A Committee. Thinking forward to the possibility of ITSoc having three publications (Magazine, JSTIT and the Transactions), some BoG members indicated that in such an eventuality, it could make sense to have a separate position of VP of Publications. It was generally recognized that the new journal affects the structure of the Publications Committee. Currently in the ITSoc Bylaws the Publications Committee is focused on the Transactions. Thus, the Bylaws will need to be reexamined.

BoG members then asked whether the JSTIT Steering Community would be formed of ITSoc members would aim to have members from outside of ITSoc. There was also a suggestion of having the Steering Committee chair simply be the longest-serving member of the committee. However, following on the previous point about including non-ITSoc members, it was discussed that it could make sense to have members of the steering committee that might not be interested to serve as chair. So, the proposed structure of the committee choosing its chair gives flexibility for such situations. Jeff also indicated that, generally, the steering committee wouldn't be concerned with the day-to-day operations of the journal. He contrasted the role of the proposed JSTIT Steering Committee with that of the Executive Editorial Committee of the Transactions. While the Steering Committee would be the governing body of JSTIT, the Executive Editorial Committee plays a more active role in the operations of the Transactions, e.g., helping the EiC of the Transactions make difficult decisions such as dealing with appeals.

Other suggestions raised by the BoG included the following. Contemplating the draft call-for-papers (CFP) BoG members suggested simply to require double-column submissions and to place a limit on that length. Authors could also submit a single-column version for review, but the call-for-papers can quote page limits in terms of double-column to eliminate confusion. A suggestion made on the Phase Two proposal was **included** to include conferences in theoretical computer science and in cryptography as possible sources of special issue proposals.

Bringing the discussion to a close, Jeff reviewed next steps and the timeline. Assuming the BoG approves the process, the Phase Two proposal will be presented in Vancouver on 15 November. Regarding the appointment of an EiC, the aim is to start to receive EiC nominations by 15 November (perhaps with an extension) with the goal to have a confirmed JSTIT EiC in place by 01 January 2019. The Committee will also try to seed ideas for a few special issues with the initial CFPs to be released in early 2019, with first special issues to be approved in mid-late 2019, and the first issue to be published around March 2020.

As there was much discussion (above) in the meeting the BoG inquired whether they could approve the Phase Two proposal in principle today, and then let the finalized Phase Two proposal come back to the BoG for final vote. A point was made that when subcommittees are formed, the BoG typically places its faith in the committee without the need for detailed oversight of all the specific particulars.

Motion: “To approve moving forward with the JSTIT Phase Two proposal.” The motion was approved unanimously.

Motion: “To approve dissemination of a call for the JSTIT EiC.” The motion was approved unanimously.

There was a final discussion surrounding the call for the JSTIT EiC. The BoG inquired how the call would be distributed; e.g., through ITSoc email lists, directly to individuals, via the ITSoc website. A discussion of the phrasing of the call ensued whether, for instance, it was important to require the EiC to be an IEEE Fellow. As such a fixed requirement might narrow the pool of candidates it was decided to replace the clause “an IEEE Fellow” with “of suitable stature”.

- 5) **Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (D&I):** Ad-hoc Committee Chair Elza Erkip next described to the BoG the efforts of the committee. Elza reviewed the forming of the committee in Feb 2018 and its composition. Updates since the ISIT BoG meeting include the development of (i) a best practices document for ITSoc schools, (ii) a charter for a proposed ITSoc standing committee on D&I, and (iii) a code of conduct for ITSoc conferences, workshops, and events. Regarding the code of conduct, the BoG will have a vote on approving the draft document. Elza noted that there is also an IEEE code of conduct in development. The BoG raised questions about the definition of under-represented groups (URGs), how they change over time and how the definition is allowed to evolve as, e.g., the geographic composition of ITSoc membership shifts. BoG member asked some questions about the specific duties of the committee, the composition, and the term of membership. Elza indicated that the document presented was the sketch asked for by the BoG in Vail with the essence to be distilled out by the Bylaws Committee next year. (The Bylaws Committee was working this year with only one member for the latter part of the year.) At the point that the committee is entered into the Bylaws the exact wording will become binding and therefore much more important and so will be dealt with through the regular process of changing the bylaws.

Motion: “Approve IEEE Information Theory Society Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusion and its Charter.” The motion was approved unanimously.

Elza next presented the proposed ITSoc Conference Code of Conduct. There was a discussion of the actions that are promised in the statement. It was discussed that the specific text can be modified to suit the purposes of the event: “at the discretion of the conference chairs, an appropriate variant of the following note be displayed prominently in the conference programs/hand-outs/websites”. BoG member suggested that the code (or an appropriate variant thereof) be automatically sent to any conference registrant. Some

BoG members suggested that the D&I committee be added as a place to report any form of harassment or bullying experienced at ITSoc event. There was a discussion of whether or not the D&I Committee would be the appropriate group to report to. Some additions and modification of wording was suggested, but it was also noted that BoG approval of the motion does not preclude further improvements / additions to the statement. There was encouragement from the BoG to advertise the statement quickly and broadly.

Motion: “Approve IEEE Information Theory Society Conference Code of Conduct.”
passed unanimously.

- 6) **Newsletter:** There was a discussion of a piece that Tony Ephremides submitted to the ITSoc Newsletter. The submission is currently under review for possible publication. The BoG was asked to consider the piece. Many BoG members expressed their view that the submission provided an opinion on recent events in ITSoc that was not helpful in moving forward constructively. Numerous BoG members felt the submission could be discouraging to young researchers. Some BoG members thought that the piece could be published, though perhaps alongside other op-ed pieces that provide counterpoints. As Tony’s regular Newsletter contributions have been entitled “The Historian’s Column” BoG members asked what was the formal role of ITSoc “Historian”. In fact, there is no such formal role. No role of ITSoc “Historian” is mentioned anywhere in the Bylaws or Constitution. The one place such a role is mentioned is in a task list provided to several ITSoc volunteers. Therein one annual task is for the president to appoint an historian, although no one present recalled such an appointment being made in recent years. BoG members asked what are the official columns of the ITSoc Newsletter. There are two: the President’s Column and, at the discretion of the Transactions EiC, an EiC’s column. There have been other regular contributors such as the late Solomon Golomb who contributed his “Puzzle Column”. Some BoG members questioned the value of having a regular “Historian’s Column”, and the privileging of one person with a permanent and non-technical column, and suggested discontinuing the column all together. There was an agreement not to appoint anyone as historian in 2019.

In the context of the Newsletter evolving into a Magazine, as well as in response to concerns raised by the IEEE, there was a discussion of the oversight of the Newsletter. In terms of Newsletter content the EiC of the Newsletter has final say. One step up, the ITSoc Bylaws stipulate that the Publications Committee (chaired by the EiC of the Transactions) oversees all ITSoc publications. Finally, the ITSoc President directs the BoG and oversees all Society activities. Therefore, final responsibility rests with the BoG as directed by the President. This chain of oversight was also confirmed by the IEEE, which was consulted in the context of the publication of Tony Ephremides' latest submission.

Transactions EiC Sasha Barg had, prior to the BoG meeting, suggested forming an ad-hoc committee to consider Tony’s Ephremides’ submission to the Newsletter— rather than using the Publications Committee for this purpose. Sasha explained to the BoG that the membership of the Publications Committee includes all associate editors (AEs) of the Transactions. He expressed hesitance in involving the entire Publications Committee in discussions of the appropriateness of (and possible revisions to) submissions to the Newsletter. For one thing, such Publication Committee duties (which rarely arise) are not always clearly stipulated to potential AEs when they join the editorial board of the Transactions. And, further, since the AEs already do lots of ITSoc service, making these other (again, rarely arising) duties explicit might serve to discourage potential AEs. The BoG discussed that the formation of an ad-hoc committee as suggested by Sasha would need to be approved by the BoG (i.e., a BoG motion made and approved).

Returning to the issue of Newsletter oversight, a former Newsletter editor commented that in their tenure there were some occasions that submitted content was not appropriate for publication. In general, there was broad consensus that there is not a well formalized mechanism (as, e.g., there is in the Transactions) to deem whether content submitted to the Newsletter is appropriate, to manage possible revision cycles, and to decide upon final acceptance or rejection. The BoG concluded that based on Sasha Barg's comments regarding the unsuitability of the Publications Committee to review the submitted column, there is a need to make the editorial committee of the Newsletter (not currently mentioned in the ITSoc Bylaws or Constitution) more formal. BoG members pointed out that, due to the (anticipated) launch of JSTIT, lots of changes to Bylaws that concern publications will shortly arise. The BoG decided that these considerations regarding the Newsletter should be bundled into those decisions regarding changes to the bylaws. The decision was then made for the BoG to use its authority on overseeing society publications to appoint an ad-hoc committee to assist and advise the Newsletter EiC in the handling of this specific case.

Motion: "To appoint an ad-hoc committee to handle the revision and possible publication of the historian's column and any opinion pieces regarding the column." The motion passed unanimously.

- 7) **Schools Subcommittee:** Stark Draper, Chair of the Schools Subcommittee, presented the report of the schools committee. He pointed the BoG to two items posted to the BoG meeting website. First, the Schools Committee had been requested by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to start to collect statistics on who attended the schools. Stark's report included such statistics from the first such collection, for the India 2018 school, reporting on gender and geographic diversity as well as whether attendees had previously attended an ITSoc school. The second is a "best practices" document the Committee is putting together to help future schools organizers. Finally, Stark presented two motions to support schools in Australia and in India in 2019.

Motion: "To support the holding of the Australia Information Theory School in Sydney Australia in the amount of \$7000 USD." The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: "To support the holding of the JTG/IEEE ITSoc Summer School in Madras, India in the amount of \$7000 USD." The motion passed unanimously.

- 8) **Conference Committee:** On behalf of Conference Committee Chair Emanuele Viterbo, Daniela Tuninetti presented the Conference Committee Report. Daniela reviewed the conference committee membership. Everything is on track for the currently approved International Symposia on Information Theory (ISITs) with expressions of interest to propose ISITs in 2022 and 2023. ITSoc workshops are on track. A proposal to hold the 2020 Information Theory Workshop (ITW) in Italy was next discussed.

The proposal was to hold ITW 2020 in Riva del Garda, Italy. Marco Dalai and Enrico Paolini would serve as general co-chairs with Nicolò Cesa-Bianchi, Olgica Milenkovic, and Alon Orlitsky serving as Technical Program Committee co-chairs. The workshop would be four days in length, from 21 to 24 September 2020, and wouldn't conflict with other major events. Daniela reviewed the conference center, travel to Riva del Garda, hoteling options, the budget and the structure of the technical program. Daniela confirmed that hotels have provided special **hoteling** rates for conference attendees and that there are less expensive options for students than the hotels included in the proposal. Daniela informed the BoG that the expected surplus would be around 15%.

Motion: "To approve the proposal to hold ITW 2020 in Riva del Garda, Italy." The motion was approved unanimously.

- 9) **Constitution and Bylaws:** Committee chair Alon Orlitsky reminded the BoG that last year lots of clarifications were made by the committee. These changes have been reviewed closely by the IEEE. Two of those changes, the IEEE is asking the BoG to modify; one the IEEE is asking the BoG not to add, the other the IEEE is asking the BoG to remove.

The first change concerns the chair of the Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee. Prior to last year the relevant clause was “The Chair shall not be eligible to be elected to the Board of Governors during his or her term of service.” Last year, in 2017, the BoG voted to replace that clause (ITSoc Bylaws Article V Section 2) with “The two most recent past Presidents of the Society.” While this effectively means the same thing, the IEEE is asking ITSoc to keep the original wording because according to IEEE governing documents “Chairs shall not be eligible to be elected to the [governing body] during their term of service”.

Motion: Retain the phrase “The Chair shall not be eligible to be elected to the Board of Governors during his or her term of service.” in the society bylaws. The motion was approved unanimously.

The second was a clarification added to ITSoc Bylaws Article III. Here the Bylaws read “..... the President shall vote only if his vote would change the outcome.” In 2017 the BoG voted to add the clarification “That is, the President may vote positively when the positive and negative votes of the other members of the Board are equal, and may vote negatively when the positive votes exceed the negative votes by one...” The IEEE is asking ITSoc not to add this clarification as it doesn't deal with situations when there are, e.g., three candidates, it is not consistent with other societies, and in general it “embellishes” the bylaws which is undesirable.

~~We voted to add the clarification “the president should vote only if his vote would change...” The IEEE asked not to add not clear, e.g., if there are three candidates therefore not comprehensive / inconsistent with other societies / “embellish”.~~

Motion: “Do not add the phrase ‘That is, the President may vote positively when the positive and negative votes of the other members of the Board are equal, and may vote negatively when the positive votes exceed the negative votes by one’ to the society bylaws. Also change to ‘his / her vote’.” The motion was passed unanimously.

- 10) **Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee:** N&A Committee Chair Alon Orlitsky presented his report. He first discussed results of the ITSoc BoG election. Although of the 12 candidates five were not from North America, only candidates from North America were elected. These new BoG members are Matthieu Bloch, Suhas Diggavi, Stark Draper, Olgica Milenkovic, Prakash Narayan, and Henry Pfister. These results perpetuate the lack of geographic diversity on the BoG. Alon then discussed how ITSoc Bylaws stipulate that the top nominee from every “under-represented” regions “shall be elected to the BoG”. For the purpose of the discussion the possibly under-represented regions are 8, 9, and 10 (Europe, South America, and Asia-Pacific). To be under-represented the region needs to have at least 5% of ITSoc membership as of 31 December 2017 and to have most one BoG member after the election. Region 8 has over 5% of ITSoc membership (about 20%) and two members on the BoG (Michelle Wigger and Igal Sason) and so is not under-represented. Less than 5% of ITSoc membership is from South America and so Region 9 is not under-represented. Finally, Region 10 has about 25% of ITSoc membership and, as of 1 January 2019, will be represented by only one BoG member (Stephan Hanly) and so thus is under-represented.

Alon next described to the BoG that the the IEEE and the ITSoc officers differ on what “at most one” means. The IEEE believed that “at most one” means zero. The officers believe that “at most one” means zero or one. After some discussion, the IEEE agreed that the ITSoc officers’ interpretation is also valid and asked the BoG to vote to approve its interpretation. A BoG member pointed out that as the BoG has about 25 members and 5% of 25 is one, perhaps the intent of the Bylaws was indeed that “at most one” should be interpreted as zero. Alon then presented the following motion. Since at this point in the meeting, due to travel commitments of BoG members, the meeting had lost quorum, the following motion was presented and discussed, but not voted upon. Voting would be conducted by email following the meeting.

Motion: “The board interprets `at most one board member’ to mean zero or one board members, and hence that for the current board elections, Region 10 should be considered as under-represented.”

Finally the IEEE suggests rewording the Bylaws to be “less than two” though perhaps “strictly less than two” or “zero or one” would squash uncertainty on anyone’s part.

Following the vote, several options were discussed to address the issue of the geographic diversity of the BoG. For example, due to Tsachy Weissman’s resignation there is another open seat on the BoG. Perhaps the candidate with the next highest number of votes could fill Tsachy’s seat (all the rest of the BoG candidates were not from North America). Alternately, one might increase geographic diversity by appointing the next Conference Committee Chair to be someone from the Asia-Pacific region.

11) Final matters: As mentioned above, at this point quorum had been lost and thus no further votes were taken. Other matters on the agenda — the Shannon movie, awards, educational videos — were briefly mentioned.

12) Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:43 local time.