

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors meeting minutes

ITW Paraty, October 17, 2011, 7pm - 11pm

Natasha Devroye

Present: Giuseppe Caire, Muriel Medard, Gerhard Kramer, Natasha Devroye, Alex Vardy, Emanuele Viterbo, Nick Laneman, Andrea Goldsmith, Matthieu Bloch, Max Costa, Sergio Verdu, Amin Shokrollahi, Frank Kschischang (Skype)

The meeting was called to order at 7:43pm by the society President, Giuseppe Caire, who welcomed the Board of Governors. Frank Kschischang joined on Skype. Since only 11 voting members were present, (14 is needed for Quorum), all votes will be carried out by email soon hereafter.

1. The agenda was approved.
2. The minutes of the BoG Meeting on 07/31/2011 at ISIT were approved.

3. Giuseppe Caire presented the President's report:

- welcomed the officers elect: Muriel Medard for President, Gerhard Kramer for 1st Vice President, and Abbas El Gamal for 2nd Vice President

- he sent an enormous thank you to Andrea Goldsmith for serving on the BoG for 8 years (including her time as president)

- the new treasurer is Aylin Yener

- the new chairs of the Student Committee are to be appointed in 2012 by Muriel Medard **ACTION: Muriel Medard appoints Student committee chairs**

- Tracey Ho will end her term as EiC of ITSoc newsletter **ACTION: appoint a new EiC of the newsletter**

- the future of the Transactions was a big item at the last BoG. Since then, a new "Ad hoc Committee on the Future of the Transactions" led by Abbas El Gamal was created. Giuseppe Caire is reporting on his behalf. Members of this ad hoc committee are Helmut Bolcskei, Emmanuel Candes, David Forney, Frank Kschischang, Madhu Sudan, Alexander Vardy (and more coming). Some particular questions that will be addressed by this committee are:

1. Has this growth indeed hurt quality compared to an absolute standard or top journals in cognate elds (e.g., computer science, statistics, operations research, mathematics, and physics)?
2. How have leading journals in these cognate elds managed size and growth?
3. Has this growth compromised the value of the Transactions to its readership (e.g., in timeliness or browsability)?
4. In general, how is the Transactions viewed by its readership broadly dened?
5. What actions, if any, need to be taken to ensure the future of the Transactions as a leading journal in the information sciences?

A work plan has been laid out:

- Compile a list of people to interview about the Transactions.
- Compile a list of journals in cognate elds and the information to collect about them.
- Based on the initial interviews, rene the charge and prepare a set of questions to use in interviewing a broader set of people.
- Based on the feedback from the interviews and journal comparisons, prepare a set of recommendations
- Milestones: progress report by ISIT 2012 and a nal report in Fall 2012 or rst Bog of 2013

- Alex Vardy stated that the committee has started work on this. Andrea Goldsmith asked whether there's any take away from last time this sort of committee was formed? Alex Vardy replied that the report from the last committee was forwarded to Abbas El Gamal. Of the the last committee's three recommendations, 1.5 were followed.

- an Ad Hoc Committee is being created on Community Activity to Support Research Visions, as brought up by Michelle Effros at the Annual BoG. Michelle Effros will chair it. Michelle is writing down a charter and recruiting people - if anyone wants to be a member should contact Michelle Effros. She will present an initial report at the first BoG meeting of 2012.

- the IT Transactions review is coming up in February 2012. IT society review is scheduled for November 2012.

- Ezio Biglieri is soliciting nominations for the Hamming medal. This may be done individually or may be given to the new external nominations committee to be discussed later on. Muriel Medard says that any nomination with an array of backers / coordination is stronger.

- Giuseppe Caire, thanked everyone for their efforts and wished the best to the next president and officers.

4. The treasurer's report was given by Giuseppe Caire on behalf of Nihar Jindal:

- the final numbers for 2010 were confirmed: a net surplus of +\$492,700; the reserves at the end of 2010 were \$3.44 million. The projection for 2011 is -\$58,000, but in reality we expect the net to be around zero given the conservative estimates of the society.

- investment returns beyond our control are decreasing, operational surplus fairly steady

- the cost of the print copies of the IT Transactions was discussed: it was agreed that the print subscription fees would change in the following way, which will take effect in 2012:

- ITSOC members: regular \$45 increased to \$65
- ITSOC members: student and retired \$23 increased to \$33
- IEEE members but not ITSOC members: regular \$85 increased to \$105
- IEEE members but not ITSOC members: students and retired \$43 increased to \$53

- the treasurer is concerned about the fact that the print subscriptions are still being subsidized by the ITSOC (not revenue neutral) and that, even as the number of member subscriptions decreases, there is an incompressible cost associated with printing independent of number of copies printed. Three options were proposed for discussion:

1. Bring up a motion at this BoG for a further fee increase for 2013
2. Defer decision until next BoG meeting, so that we have some data for 2012 print subscriptions
3. Decide not to further increase fees

- this led to a discussion on the IT Transactions fees. Sergio Verdu believes it is wise to leave it as is, as in one year we increased the fee by substantial amount and increasing it even more would send the wrong message to the members. Alex Vardy stated that it is also not clear whether increasing fees would solve anything - it may make costs increase if the number of subscriptions drops even further. Muriel Medard stated that the original plan was to become revenue neutral for the IT Transactions and that steady increases in fees were a deliberate plan to get there and reduce the number of member subscriptions (library subscriptions would remain and are revenue neutral). We should have been revenue neutral by now. Andrea Goldsmith believes some subsidies are OK. Giuseppe Caire believes that seeing as there are many different opinions at the BoG, and since the new prices are not in effect until 2012, we cannot predict the future number of subscriptions and it may make sense to hold off the discussion until we have some numbers. Muriel Medard stated that in terms of mechanics, there is a correspondence between the treasurer and the treasurer's interlocutor at IEEE which makes a pricing recommendation, and suggests that the future treasurer price a few possibilities. Frank Kschischang is in favor of ranking up the cost of the print subscription to members, as, even if we lose those members, this would be revenue positive. Sergio Verdu states that the goal of the society is not to make money but to spread the gospel of our founder Claude Shannon. Giuseppe Caire states that in order to become truly cost neutral, we would need to charge \$105 per member, assuming that nobody would drop out given the cost increase. As such, he believes that the objective of becoming cost neutral is not achievable. Muriel Medard stated that there is a fixed printing cost for libraries that will always be there (even if there are no member subscriptions), as these are non-member subscriptions and these are all revenue positive. Giuseppe Caire asked whether there will be a motion to raise member subscriptions now or wait for 2012? Andrea Goldsmith suggested thinking about the demographics of the subscribers to better understand before making decisions. Sergio Verdu suggested tabling this issue. Muriel Medard stated that this issue involves a substantial amount (\$100,000) so an important issue and should be carefully thought out. Muriel Medard volunteered to contact the IEEE. **ACTION: new treasurer must figure out who the members who are subscribing are and think about this once we see the 2012 subscription numbers. ACTION: Muriel Medard to contact IEEE regarding the pricing of IT Transactions.**

-Giuseppe Caire asked whether we might want to make the IT Transactions the first transactions to have a kindle version. Matthieu Bloch said that the IEEE is creating kindle versions of the IEEE Communications Magazine and IEEE Spectrum.

5. Andrea Goldsmith presented the report from the Nominations and Appointments committee:

- first went through the summary of the Bylaw changes for 2011:

1. Following a suggestion of Dave Forney, various Articles of the Bylaws describing Awards have been

gathered into a single Article entitled "Awards". The awards are described as Sections of this Article. This change achieves consistency with the manner in which Standing Committees are described in the Bylaws. Some of the references to former Articles needed to be changed to point to Sections of the new Awards Article.

2. Added responsibility of contributing members to serve on the ComSoc/ITSoc Joint Paper Award Selection Committee to Awards Committee description.
3. Removed responsibility for external award nominations from Awards Committee (this responsibility now moves to a new "external nominations committee") – came out of fact that Award Committee was getting over-taxed. Will not be chaired by an Officer, formed by Nominations and Appointments Committee, members will serve for 2 years. Responsible for the solicitation, processing and submission on behalf of the Society nominations for appropriate IEEE awards and awards outside the IEEE. President will be on committee for historical connection and to write the letters of support.
4. In the description of the Membership and Chapters Committee, changed "group" to Society. (friendly amendment)
5. Changed the membership of the Fellows Committee from 5 members to 7 members, changed the staffing requirement from Oct. 1st to Dec. 31st (with Chair appointed by Oct. 1st), and noted that members typically serve three years with staggered terms.
6. Added the Online Committee as a Standing Committee, with President and 1st VP ex officio. Chair is selected by the Nominations and Appointments committee.
7. Added the Student Committee as a Standing Committee, with 2nd VP ex officio. Friendly amendment: change "in conjunction with Conference Committee" to "in conjunction with Membership and Chapters Committee".
8. Created an External Nominations Committee with President ex officio, and moved responsibility for generating external award nominations away from the Awards Committee to this committee.
9. Noted that external nominations are possible for C. E. Shannon Award with deadline of March 1st. Noted that the committee may consider all possible candidates (not just those nominated).
10. Changed external nomination deadline for A. D. Wyner award to March 1st. Noted that the committee may consider all possible candidates (not just those nominated).
11. Changed "the best" to "an outstanding" in the description of the Chapter of the Year Award.
12. Updated the Joint award deadline to February 15th for consistency with ComSoc, and noted that ITSoc members of subcommittee are drawn from Awards Committee.

- all present BoG members approved these changes. **ACTION: send out email to BoG for approval of Bylaw changes with friendly amendments.**

6. Muriel Médard presented the Award Committee report:

- the 2011 ISIT Student Paper Awards result was decided. Students took their nominations and presentations very seriously which resulted in a very strong set of papers/presenters and a difficult decision. Finally, as per the Bylaws no more than 3 papers may be selected, the following were awarded:

- A. Ingber, for the paper "The Dispersion of Infinite Constellations coauthored with R. Zamir and M. Feder
- Y. Wu, for the paper "Degrees of Freedom of the Interference Channel: A General Formula", co-authored with S. Shamai and S. Verdu
- L. Zhang, for the paper "Capacity of Gaussian Channels with Duty Cycle and Power Constraints", co-authored with D. Guo

- this year for first time there was ability to have some online material which increased the lengths of the paper and hence the workload on this committee. This is something to bear in mind for future years.

- in future years, it will be important to consider how to better manage time on Awards committee. In particular, offloading the Baker award to a different committee would improve the load dramatically (more on this later).

- proposed locations for BoG for 2012: ITA (UCSD), ISIT (MIT), ITW (EPFL). Feedback was welcomed; there were no complaints.

- the issue of Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest (CoI) was discussed now (moved from the end of the agenda). Frank Kschischang, who bought up this issue over the BoG email list, believes in two principles: 1) Confidentiality: would not expect members to declare how they voted on various awards topics; 2) Declaration of Conflict of Interest, which appears in two guises, a direct CoI and a perceived CoI. Frank Kschischang proposed that as a matter of routine, in all awards committees, CoI would be explicitly included in the committee reports, all members would report their own and perceived CoI, and committee members should be explicitly reminded of confidentiality. If the award committee decides that a particular CoI is fine, the committee member may proceed to serve on the committee. A definition of the CoI was included in Frank Kschischang's report. NSF's definition of a CoI was used as an example (not to be followed necessarily).

- a discussion on the Confidentiality and CoI ensued. Sergio Verdu asked whether CoI isn't just a common sense issue? Giuseppe Caire stated that it has been so far, but this has caused some problems in recent years and it may be time to set a more formal policy to help committee chairs. In the best case scenario, people clearly declare their CoI and the committee is left to opine on it. Muriel Medard, having just chaired the Awards committee, stated that a formal CoI and Confidentiality policy and reminders would be very useful in providing some structure. Andrea Goldsmith is strongly against imposing hard rules for CoI, which would be impractical given the size and interconnections in our society. She believes individuals and committee members should be trusted to determine whether members will be impartial. Gerhard Kramer stated that Frank Kschischang would like us to systematically read off these new CoI and Confidentiality rules to remind committee members of various things, and that Frank Kschischang would like to eventually include these in the society Bylaws. Giuseppe Caire would like to include this in the Bylaws; Andrea Goldsmith believes this is too early as this issue has not been discussed at a full BoG. Giuseppe Caire suggested that we include this in the Bylaw changes for 2012. Frank Kschischang suggested that we defer the vote to the last meeting of the 2012 BoG. Giuseppe Caire stated that it would be useful for anyone involved in any awards committees to pledge to abide by these guidelines and report the results at the ISIT BoG (when awards committee reports are disclosed). **ACTION: chairs and members of awards committees will follow proposed Frank Kschischang's procedure and report at next ISIT.**

7. Gerhard Kramer presented the Membership and Chapter Committee (MCC) report:

- outgoing Membership and chapter committee members: Max Costa, Michelle Effros, Amin Shokrollahi, Raymond Yeung, Lizhong Zheng

- continuing Membership and chapter committee members: Shraga Bross, Nick Laneman, Emanuele Viterbo, Liang-Liang Xie

- the future and proposed Schools of IT are as follows:

- 2011: Taiwan, Europe School (Barcelona), Wireless School (Oulu), North America School (Austin)
- 2012: North America (Cornell), Europe (Turkey)
- 2013: North America suggestion is Purdue. MCC suggests approval of location but to work on the format and consider funding issue again in 2012

- the Distinguished Lecturer Program was discussed. The general consensus is that this program is underutilized and is not a dynamic, exciting program at the moment. Andrea Goldsmith suggested creating an Ad Hoc Committee on how to improve the program; she was a Distinguished Lecturer and attempted arranging to give some lectures, but this was very difficult given the confines of the programs. Giuseppe Caire stated that the Chapters are not particularly proactive. Tying these lectures to Chapters as is currently done may be too restrictive; we may want to loosen the restrictions to get it off the ground. We might also want to announce this program at large gatherings, e.g. the Awards Lunch at ISIT. Emanuele Viterbo suggested that distinguished lecturers be required to make a program of where they intend to go. Giuseppe Caire suggested posting more information about the lecturer on the ITSOC website, possibly with a calendar of where the distinguished lecturers will be traveling (so as to possibly combine trips). **ACTION: how to get the distinguished program going in the future.**

- the proposal for the 2013 North America School at Purdue was discussed. It was suggested that the organizers revise / iterate the proposal which was not deemed satisfactory at the moment due to the lack of ITSOC members and junior faculty on the organizing committee, and that the BoG would approve the proposal after several iterations (motions for funding to be handled at later BoGs). **ACTION: amend the proposal and have send out out the proposal to hold the 2013 IT School at Purdue with the BoG motions.**

8. Muriel Medard presented Conference Committee report on behalf of Bruce Hajek:

- the future ISITs are all on track, to be held in

- ISIT 2011 in St. Petersburg made \$80,000.
- ISIT 2012: Cambridge, MIT all on track
- ISIT 2013: Istanbul
- ISIT 2014: Hawaii
- ISIT 2015: Hong Kong

- regarding ITWs, the upcoming 2012 ITW Lausanne is on the way, none others have stepped up yet beyond that; the pipeline is a little emptier than usual.

- regarding future ISITs: interest was expressed from Barcelona and Stockholm. The 2016 ISIT location will be decided in the 2012 BoG meeting in Cambridge

- new requirement from IEEE conference finance - they have been questioning contracts more than before

- technical co-sponsorship including IEEE Xplore access is requested from **ACTION: vote on motion for ITSOC to become technical co-sponsors.**

- ITA 2012, February 5-10, San Diego
- WiOpt 2012, May 14-18, Paderborn, Germany
- Netcod 2012, June 29-30, MIT/Cambridge, MA
- 50th Annual Allerton Conference on Communications, Control, and Computing, first week in October 3-5, 2012, Monticello, Illinois. (may begin one or two days earlier)
- ISITA, October 28-31, 2012, Hawaii Convention Center, Honolulu, HI
- SCC2013, Jan 21-24, 2013, 9th International ITG Conference on Systems, Communications, and Coding.

- Sergio Verdu also mentioned that a technical co-sponsorship request should have been received for CISS 2012 in Purdue **ACTION: follow up with Bruce to make the technical co-sponsorship request formal**

- keeping track of technically co-sponsored conferences was discussed. Some conferences are regularly sponsored, others (a fairly large list) are more sporadic. Does the BoG want to get more involved in collecting data and keeping track of ITSOC attendance at these conferences? Could we obtain data about IT member attendance at IT sponsored events? Might be a good idea to ask conference committees that ask for co-sponsorship to have them add this to the registration.

- Natasha Devroye spoke on behalf of all vegetarians (as requested per Olgica Milenkovic), and mentioned that vegetarians have requested more (there are a larger number than one might expect) and better quality choices at conferences, and hoped that future conference committees would be more aware of the presence of vegetarian ITSOC members.

9. Matthieu Bloch gave a report on the ITSOC website:

- the ITSOC mailing lists are still pretty much down. Would like to use this as an opportunity to kill the mailing list system, as there is a lot of spam on these lists which is a pain for the list administrator (the online committee officer) to filter. Given the new website infrastructure, Matthieu Bloch proposed an alternative which would better exploit the utility of the new website. The mailing list used for two things: advertisements, and votes. Matthieu Bloch proposed that the users of these lists subscribe to getting emails about events online; then whenever a new event / etc. is posted online, it would be sent to all the subscribers. There would be no filtering of the list as all events are website based. Nick Laneman said that the mailing list existed before the website and is essentially still being used for historical and inertia reasons. The website changes things - the website can suck things out of website and sends it out directly, via subscriptions, in one shot. The proposed service is already running. Matthieu Bloch says that if adopted, they would have a 6-8 month transition period. Giuseppe Caire stated that would be important

to alert members to subscribe (for general announcement mailing list). The BoG has to be private, and can also be done via one click online (when the BoG members are updated). An extensive example of how this would be used was given by Matthieu Bloch. A replacement for the BoG announce-list was also proposed. Nick Laneman said that the announce, discuss and vote list for the BoG were historically introduced when Bixio was president.

- contracts with SixFeetUp (the contractors for the website) were discussed. Matthieu Bloch stated that he would like BoG approval before doing renewing the next contracts. Now, contracts are task-based, whereafter SixFeetUp charges billable hours after the tasks are complete. He proposed making contracts based on billable hours rather than on tasks, which would avoid interactions with IEEE who are very slow in responding to contract requests (and did not keep Computer Committee chair in loop). Would still identify tasks but give us more flexibility.

- the upgrade of the system infrastructure was discussed. It is based on plone right now; every few years one has to make sure the system is upgraded, that we have all security patches etc. Matthieu expected it to cost a few thousand dollars, which could affect the operating budget and thus suggested considering it as a one-time event outside of the operating budget. Gerhard Kramer voiced that it makes no sense to run surpluses given the inability to access the reserves. **ACTION: Matthieu will prepare a motion for this expense at next BoG.**

- website statistics: greatly increasing number of visits to the websites; it's becoming the portal for all information related to ITSOC.

- Giuseppe Caire asked whether there is some form of IEEE form for tracking the activity of Chapters. The extremely active Korea chapter that received the best chapter award was updating its progress on the ITSOC website, but did not report to IEEE directly. Gerhard Kramer stated that Chapter chairs need to fill out a form to the IEEE directly; website activity and chapter updates are not sent to the IEEE automatically. Currently, while there is a form, chapter reporting to the IEEE is not standardized. Matthieu Bloch is making some documentation to help chapter chairs.

- looking into streaming video on website **ACTION: Matthieu Bloch will look at this in the coming year.**

10. Giuseppe Caire presented the Student Committee report on behalf of Aylin Yener:

- Aylin Yener is ending her appointment to become Treasurer. She thanked everyone for supporting her initiative - the School of Information Theory. the BoG heartily thanked her for her service which went above and beyond all expectations. She was the longest serving chair of this committee.

- the 2011 events at WiOpt and ISIT were summarized

- we should all encourage our students to step up and get involved in the student committee

11. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45pm.