

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Allerton House, Illinois, September 26, 2007

João Barros

Attendees: João Barros, Matthieu Bloch, Giuseppe Caire, Daniel Costello, Anthony Ephremides, Dave Forney, Marc Fossorier, Andrea Goldsmith, Frank Kschischang, J. Nicholas Laneman, Steven W. McLaughlin, Urbashi Mitra, Prakash Narayan, David L. Neuhoff, Bixio Rimoldi, Anant Sahai, Anand Sarwate, David Tse, Venugopal V. Veeravalli, Aylin Yener, Ken Zeger.

The meeting was called to order at 18:22 by Society President Bixio Rimoldi, who welcomed the members of the Board.

1. Board members were encouraged to look at the agenda and other materials online at the Society development server.
2. The Board unanimously approved the agenda of the meeting.
3. The Board unanimously approved the minutes of the previous meeting (Nice, France, June 24, 2007).
4. The President presented his report and miscellaneous announcements.

The President thanked all those that helped the Servetto family after the accident of Sergio Servetto.

The President thanked Nick Laneman and the web committee for their efforts in putting together a comprehensive proposal.

The President also thanked the organizers of ISIT, ITW Bergen, ITW Lake Tahoe.

The President reported on the status of Membership in the Society in comparison with other IEEE Societies. The number of student members decreased by 11.5% within one year. The Board discussed possible strategies to counter this negative evolution. As a possible incentive, Andrea Goldsmith suggested limiting participation in student events and access to travel grants to Student Members of the Society.

Frank Kschischang was elected Second Vicepresident of the Society.

Giuseppe Caire, Dan Costello, Urbashi Mitra, Venu Veeravalli and Ken Zeger have reached the end of their term as members of the Board. The President thanked them for their service and dedication to the Society.

The next meetings will take place at the following venues:

- BoG Meeting 1: ITW in Porto
- BoG Meeting 2: ISIT in Toronto
- BoG Meeting 3: Allerton

5. The Board discussed ways of organizing the participation of IT-SOC representatives at IEEE meetings such as TAB in a way that enables a sustained contribution to IEEE strategy and activities. The President informed that Tony Ephremides agreed to represent the Society in a committee which helps in IEEE's strategic planning.
6. The Board thanked Bixio Rimoldi for his service as President of the Society.
7. The Treasurer reported on the financial status of the Society. The current situation is stable. Anant Sahai also presented an update on the surplus intended for new initiatives and explained that a rush to spend this amount is not justified. The Treasurer recommended that the Society keeps the mandatory surplus with respect to Society conferences, so as to ensure that there are enough reserve assets to counter difficult times.

Steve McLaughlin asked how publications affect the revenue of the Society. Anant Sahai explained that at the moment this impact is difficult to estimate, because IEEE has changed its policies.

The Treasurer expects there to be significant fund available next year for additional Society activities.

8. The Web Editor, Nicholas Laneman, reported on the efforts of the Web Committee in writing a proposal to improve the Society's internet presence.

The Members of the Board were encouraged to read the committee's short proposal and the detailed version available on the Society's document server.

The Society now has several mailing lists for fast dissemination of information. The needs of the members of the Society were assessed via a survey. Nicholas Laneman explained the concept of content management system and how it could be used to implement some of the envisioned features. Detailed workflows were presented to several possible developers. Several cost estimates and related documents are available on the Society's document server.

David Neuhoff asked for more information on the maintenance costs. Nick Laneman explained that these costs should be considered jointly with the costs of hosting the website. Possibilities include distributing the load over several servers at different universities or hiring a service provider.

As a comparison, Giuseppe Caire described the costs of implementing the webpage for ISIT 2007.

Andrea Goldsmith raised the issues of ease of use, participation and content contribution, once a strong investment in the website's development has been carried out. Nicholas Laneman explained that these are important issues that have been incorporated in the proposal.

The Board decided to vote on the web development proposal independently of the other initiatives.

A motion was made to approve a budget of up to 60 000 USD to implement the proposal made by the web committee. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

9. The Board discussed a proposal by Gadiel Seroussi for the Society to provide a grant to help promote Information Theory in Uruguay.

A motion was made to provide a grant of 10000 USD in support of research activities in IT in Uruguay, mainly travel grants for participation of Uruguayan researchers in workshops and symposia organized by the Society. These travel grants should be awarded exclusively to members of the Society. The Board encourages the creation of a Uruguay Chapter where these funds could be located.

The motion was unanimously approved.

10. Aylin Yener presented a proposal by herself and Gerhard Kramer on behalf of the Student Committee for an annual School of Information Theory to be held in North America, taking inspiration from the Winter Schools that have taken place in Europe. Funding is to be requested from external sources such as NSF and DARPA, and from the IT Society. In the general discussion, it was pointed out it would not be acceptable for the Society to restrict support of such schools to North America on a continuing basis, although a start-up grant would probably be acceptable. Aylin Yener made a motion for a grant of \$20,000 to support travel by IT Society members to a first School of Information Theory at Penn State in 2008, to be dedicated to the memory of Sergio Servetto. A motion to amend the amount to \$10,000 was made by Daniel Costello and approved. The amended motion was approved.

11. Steven W. McLaughlin presented a proposal for the Society to make a donation to the Servetto family fund.

The Board discussed the implications of this donation. Suggestions were made to increase the amount of private donations, including inserting paypal in the fund's web announcement and adding an option to donate via the online conference registration forms of the Society's main conferences.

Steven W. McLaughlin will present a motion to be discussed and voted on via email.

12. Andrea Goldsmith presented a report on the activities of the Student Committee. Following the unexpected passing of Sergio Servetto, the Student Committee organized a tribute to his life to take place at Allerton on September 27, 2007.

Andrea Goldsmith believes that the Student Paper Award at ISIT 2007 was a success. The Board discussed concerns raised in a letter to the Board signed by Amos Lapidot, in particular with respect to the impact of the selection procedure on the relationship between advisors and students.

The Board discussed whether the Student Paper should be continued every year at ISIT.

There was a motion to have the ISIT Student Paper Award every year. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

13. Daniel J. Costello presented the report of the conference committee. All conferences are on track.

There was a motion to approve a loan of 40000 USD for the organization of ISIT 2009. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Anant Sahai presented a motion for the approval of loans up to 10% of the budgeted receipts for ITWs and ISITs to be at the discretion of the Treasurer and the Conference Committee, after the conference and its budget has been approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Anthony Ephremides reported on the status of the proposal for ISIT 2011 in St. Petersburg.

The Board unanimously approved a motion to hold ISIT 2011 in St. Petersburg.

A guideline document for organizers of ISIT is now available on the Society's document server.

14. Steve McLaughlin described the composition and the role of the Nomination and Appointments Committee. There will be a solicitation by email to find two new members.
15. David Neuhoff described the constitutional amendments to be taken under consideration, among which adding the Editor in Chief of the Transactions as a voting member of the Board. Another proposal adds a one term limit, as recommended by the TAB Periodicals Review Committee after the Society's Five Year Review.

The Board unanimously approved the proposed amendments.

16. The discussion of the last point of the agenda, which concerned funding issues, was postponed at the request of Venu Veeravalli.
17. There was no new business.
18. The next Board meeting will be held in Porto, Portugal, in May 2008.
19. The meeting was adjourned at 23:41.