

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting
Toronto, Canada, July 6, 2008

João Barros

Attendees: John B. Anderson, Alexander Barg, João Barros, Vladimir Blinovskiy, Ezio Biglieri, Giuseppe Caire, Joseph Boutros, Daniel J. Costello Jr., Robert Calderbank, Thomas Cover, Michelle Effros, Anthony Ephremides, Elza Erkip, Dave Forney, Andrea Goldsmith, Alex Grant, Bruce Hajek, Tor Helleseth, Ryuji Kohno, Gerhard Kramer, Frank Kschischang, J. Nicholas Laneman, Hans-Andrea Loeliger, Muriel Médard, Prakash Narayan, David L. Neuhoff, Alon Orlitsky, Bixio Rimoldi, Nela Rybowicz, Anant Sahai, Shlomo Shamai, Daniela Tuninetti, Adriaan J. van Wijngaarden, Aylin Yener.

The meeting was called to order at 13:00 by Society President Dave Forney, who welcomed the members of the Board and their guests.

1. The agenda was approved by consent.
2. By consent, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the previous meeting (Porto, Portugal, May 4, 2008).
3. The President observed that the Society is in very good shape.
4. Anant Sahai presented the Treasurer's report. The Society's finances were reviewed and found to be in very good health. The Treasurer explained that, under current IEEE financial rules, all conferences could be funded without requiring conference surpluses.
5. Ezio Biglieri presented the report of the Editor-in-Chief. All issues of the Transactions have been mailed out in a timely fashion. The areas of network information theory, space-time block codes and cryptography have witnessed an increase in the number of submissions. There is some improvement in the submission to publication time. The Editor-in-Chief has been investigating Manuscript Central as a possible alternative to the Pareja system currently in use. At least initially, the former would be significantly more expensive. Andrea Goldsmith mentioned the possibility that IEEE might insist on using a unified system.
6. Alex Grant presented the Conference Committee report.

Frank Kschischang gave an overview of the preparation for ISIT 2008. 900 papers were submitted, of which 650 were accepted. About 800 people pre-registered to attend the symposium.

Anthony Ephremides reported on his visit to St. Petersburg, and described how impressed he was with the team and their preparations for ISIT 2011. Vladimir Blinovskiy gave a brief presentation about the venue.

A motion was presented by Alex Grant for the Society to grant a loan of 25,000 USD for the organization of ISIT 2010. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Emanuele Viterbo presented a proposal to hold an ITW in Taormina, Sicily, Italy, in October 11-16, 2009. Alex Grant moved to accept this proposal. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

The board discussed a proposal for technical co-sponsorship of the next Allerton Conference, in a joint effort with the Control Systems Society. Alex Grant moved to approve this technical co-sponsorship. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Muriel Médard presented a proposal to hold ISIT at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 1-6, 2012. General Co-Chairs would be Lihong Zheng and Muriel Médard, and the Technical Program Committee would be chaired by Giuseppe Caire, Michelle Efros, Andi Loeliger, and Alex Vardy. The conference would be held at the MIT campus. The proposal includes a barbecue to celebrate the Fourth of July and to watch the fireworks, as well as various activities for families with children. Andrea Goldsmith and Dave Forney commended this effort to make ISIT attractive for families. Alex Grant moved to accept this proposal. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Elza Erkip presented a proposal to hold ISIT 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. The venue would be the Istanbul Convention and Exhibition Center. General Chair would be Erdal Arikan, and the Technical Program Committee would be chaired by Emre Telatar and Jossy Sayir. The conference facilities are quite unique in Istanbul, and will have to be booked at a very early stage. The President thanked the team for putting together this proposal. The final proposal will be voted on at the next meeting in Allerton.

The President suggested that the Board discuss strategic aspects of ITWs at one of the next meetings.

7. Aylin Yener presented the report of the Student Committee. This year's highlight was the First Annual Summer School on Information Theory, held at Penn State in the first week of June. There were 150 applicants, and 101 students attended lectures by Vincent Poor, Toby Berger, Muriel Médard, and David Tse. Judging from the results of an anonymous survey, an overwhelming majority of participants would like this to be a yearly event.

Aylin Yener moved that the School of Information Theory become an annual event. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Daniela Tuninetti asked about the possibility of combining the School with ITWs. Giuseppe Caire mentioned the financial burden of having the school in distant locations.

The Board thanked Aylin Yener and Gerhard Kramer heartily for their efforts.

8. On behalf of the Membership and Chapters Committee, Frank Kschischang moved that the Chapter of the Year Award be presented to the Kitchener/Waterloo Chapter. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Frank Kschischang informed the Board that he is working with Andrea Goldsmith on a proposal for a revitalized Distinguished Lecturer program.

9. Andrea Goldsmith presented the report of the Awards Committee. The committee handles three paper awards (IT Paper Award, Joint IT/Comsoc Paper Award, and

ISIT Student Paper Award). This year the Committee also generated nominations for the Fink Award (for best tutorial paper in any IEEE journal).

The Committee succeeded in obtaining more nominations for the Joint IT/Comsoc Paper Award, with six nominations altogether. The award was made to a paper by Abbasfar, Divsalar, and Yao entitled “Accumulate-repeat-accumulate codes” (*IEEE Trans. Commun.*, April 2007).

Andrea Goldsmith raised the issue of whether a paper can be nominated for both the IT Paper Award and the Joint IT/Comsoc Paper Award. Another open issue is whether the same paper could win both awards. There will be a proposal at Allerton on awards bylaws to resolve these matters, including cross-nominations, timing of awards and subcommittee size. The Board discussed these issues. Anthony Ephremides suggested giving some recognition for papers with strong impact in a larger window (several decades). Andrea Goldsmith proposed that this topic should be addressed separately. Bixio Rimoldi mentioned that timing and committee composition has a strong influence on the perceived relative importance of these awards. João Barros expressed the opinion that it seems unintuitive to attribute less importance to an award that is sponsored by two Societies as opposed just one. Muriel Médard suggested a similar procedure to that used for IEEE Medals. Finally, there is a need to revise the bylaws to cover the Joint IT/Comsoc Paper Award.

Andrea Goldsmith mentioned that members of the Technical Program Committee (TPC) of ISIT were concerned about conflicts of interest in nominating papers for the Student Paper Award. Another issue is whether someone who writes a paper about his or her Ph.D. thesis after he or she has graduated should be eligible. Gerhard Kramer argued that TPC members should be motivated to nominate papers, and the Awards Committee should eliminate conflicts only at the last decision level. Andi Loeliger criticized the ISIT Student Paper Award, because of the difficulty in differentiating between the student’s and the advisor’s contribution. Gerhard Kramer argued that the positive aspects in terms of student motivation outweigh the negative aspects. Sasha Barg expressed the opinion that the papers should be evaluated based on their technical merit only. Giuseppe Caire and Rob Calderbank stressed the importance of good communication skills.

The committee proposed the following papers for the IT Paper Award: “Compressed sensing,” by David Donoho, and “Near-optimal signal recovery from random projections: Universal encoding strategies?,” by Emmanuel Candès and Terence Tao. Andrea Goldsmith moved to approve this proposal. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

There is a conflict between the way that the nominations for IT Paper Award are currently handled and what is stated in the bylaws. Currently, all nominations from the open call are sent to the Editor-in-Chief, who adds the nominations of the Associate Editors and sends the combined list to the Awards Committee Chair. The bylaws require a minimum number of nominations from the Publications Committee. The Board discussed whether the bylaws should be changed. A proposal will be made at the next meeting.

The President updated the Board on progress in resuscitating the IEEE W. R. G.

Baker Prize Paper Award, and presented the following motion:

The IEEE Information Theory Society, in partnership with other societies, strongly supports the continuation of the historic W. R. G. Baker Prize Paper Award. We are prepared to support modifications in its terms to adapt the award to current conditions and to make it easier to administer, such as restricting the award to fundamental theoretical papers and broadening the time window to five years so as better to assess impact. The IT Society will commit to providing one member to the selection committee every year, and will provide a proportionate amount of the cost of administering the award (now estimated at \$5000 per year, or the equivalent in endowment).

The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Andrea Goldsmith reported that the Committee had nominated Jacob Ziv for the new BBVA award.

Finally, Andrea Goldsmith suggested the possibility of splitting the committee to handle the heavy load of these various awards.

10. Dave Neuhoff, Chair of the Nominations and Appointments Committee, presented the following slate for the Fall 2008 election for the Board of Governors: Helmut Bölcskei, Ning Cai, Suhas Diggavi, Abbas El Gamal, Meir Feder, Alex Grant, Ioannis Kontoyiannis, Gerhard Kramer, Paul Siegel, Emina Soljanin, Venugopal Veeravalli, Sergio Verdú, and Pramod Viswanath. The Board approved the slate unanimously.

Muriel Médard and Giuseppe Caire were nominated for the position of Second Vice-President by Giuseppe Caire and Prakash Narayan, respectively.

11. J. Nicholas Laneman presented the Online Editor's report. There were three main items: (a) Plone experiment by the IT Summer School; (b) anticipation of Web hosting issues; and (c) update on new Web site project. The organizers of the IT Summer School were very successful in setting up their Web site using the Plone system with limited assistance. The Online Editor would like all the Web content of the Society to be under the same service provider. A proposal will be made at Allerton. He compared the current site with the proposed Web site design. The project is going well.

Aylin Yener suggested adding a special pointer to student resources.

Alex Grant stressed the benefits of having a common infrastructure for the Web sites of the upcoming ISIT and ITWs.

Andi Loeliger asked whether there is confidence in the durability of the underlying software. Nick responded that, as an open source software platform, Plone involves a large community, and that having professionals develop the Web site helps to maintain the stability of this platform.

In response to a question as to how the Society could invest part of its surplus in on-line content and services, Nick Laneman presented several recommendations of the ad hoc committee on this subject.

12. Muriel Médard gave an update on the outreach effort of the Society. The first steps of this effort, led by Bob Gray and Muriel Médard, were to request an initial budget of \$3000 from the Society, and to organize an event at ISIT 2008. Similar activities exist at ICASSP and in the Networking and Communications community. In future, there will be an effort to organize events at ISIT and Allerton, and to integrate an outreach page into the IT Society Web site.

Aylin Yener suggested including students in the organization.

The Board discussed the low number of women among the Society's Fellows and Technical Program Committees. Andrea Goldsmith suggested that the relevant committees pay attention to the level of female participation when making their decisions.

13. There was no new business.
14. The next Board meeting will be held in connection with the Allerton Conference on September 23, 2008.
15. The meeting was adjourned at 16:58.