

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Location: Remote

Date: March 20th, 2021

Time: The meeting convened at 9:30 am EDT; the meeting adjourned at 3.40 pm EDT

Meeting Chair: Wei Yu

Minutes taken by: Lara Dolecek

Meeting Attendees:

Erdal Arikan, Erik Agrell, Matthieu Bloch, Rober Calderbank (#), Marco Dalai (#), Natasha Devroye, Suhas Diggavi, Alex Dimakis, Lara Dolecek, Stark Draper, Andrea Goldsmith, Meir Feder, Christina Fragouli, Sid Jaggi, Ioannis Kontoyiannis (#), Vijay Kumar, Brian Kurkoski, Matt LaFleur (#), Olgica Milenkovic, Prakash Narayan, Enrico Paolini (#), Henry Pfister, Joachim Rosenthal, Parastoo Sadeghi (#), Anand Sarwate, Igal Sason, Emina Soljanin, Vincent Tan, Daniela Tuninetti, Aaron Wagner, Edmund Yeh, Aylin Yener, and Wei Yu.

Non-voting members are denoted by (#).

Business conducted between meetings.

The following motions were issued in December 2020.

Motion: To approve the BoG October 2020 meeting minutes.

The motion passed.

Motion: To permit ISIT 2021 (July 11-16, 2021, Melbourne) to be held as a fully virtual conference.

The motion passed.

Motion: To approve Edmund Yeh as treasurer for the Society starting January 1, 2021.

The motion passed.

Motion: To approve Lara Dolecek as secretary for the Society starting January 1, 2021.

The motion passed.

Motion: To approve Sennur Ulukus as Fellow Committee Selection Committee Chair, for 2021-2022.

The motion passed.

Motion: To approve Changho Suh as the newsletter editor, for 2021-2023.

The motion passed.

Motion: Nominations and Appointments Committee member appointment. The vote was for one of the two candidates or abstain:

1. Elza Erkip
2. Muriel Medard

Elza Erkip was elected.

The following motions were issued in March 2021.

Motion: To make the following appointments in the Conference Committee:

- Li Chen for the term February 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.
- Pablo Piantanida for the term February 1, 2021 through December 31, 2023.
- Henry D. Pfister for the term July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2023.
- Parastoo Sadeghi for the term July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2024.

The motion passed.

Motion: To make the following appointments in the Membership Committee:

- To appoint Vincent Tan as the chapters liaison for 2021-22.
- To appoint Lele Wang as the WITHITS Liaison for 2021-22.

The motion passed.

Motion: To appoint Elza Erkip as a member of the IEEE BITS Ad-hoc Steering Committee.

The motion passed.

At 9:30 am EST, ITSoc President Wei Yu called the meeting to order.

Attendees introduced themselves. President Yu thanked everyone for joining the meeting.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the agenda.

The motion passed.

President's Report – Wei Yu

President Yu started by first thanking everyone for their service, welcoming new members, thanking the outgoing members, and congratulating members on their distinguished awards. The newly elected BoG members are: Natasha Devroye, Massimo Franceschetti, Brian Kurkoski,

Anand Sarwate, Vincent Y. F. Tan, Daniela Tuninetti, and Aaron Wagner. President Yu expressed sincere thanks to the outgoing members: Elza Erkip, Vince Poor, and Parastoo Sadeghi. Edmund Yeh is appointed as the Society's Treasurer and Lara Dolecek is re-appointed as the Society's Secretary. Newly appointed committee chairs are: Roy Yates as the Chair of the Cover Dissertation Award Committee, Sennur Ulukus as the Chair of the Fellows Evaluation Committee, Muriel Medard as the Chair of the External Nominations Committee, and Parastoo Sadeghi as the Chair of the Schools Subcommittee. New appointments are : Changho Suh is the new ITSoc Newsletter Editor and Lele Wang is Women-in-Engineering WIE Representative. President Yu next congratulated Society members for their IEEE Medals and Technical Field Awards: Jacob Ziv received the IEEE Medal of Honor, Raymond Yeung received the IEEE Richard W. Hamming Medal, Emmanule Candès received the IEEE Jack S. Kilby Signal Processing Medal, Andrea Goldsmith received the IEEE Leon K. Kirchmayer Graduate Teaching Award, and En-hui Yang received the IEEE Eric E. Sumner Award. He next congratulated 12 new IEEE Fellows from the Society, 5 of whom were nominated by the Society. They are: Stephan Ten Brink, Chan-byoung Chae, Dongning Guo, Tara Javidi, Francis Lau, Sandeep Pradhan, Hyundong Shin, Erik Strom, Edward Tiedemann, Daniela Tuninetti, Pascal Vontobel, and Birsen Yazici.

Next, President Yu went over the membership statistics. He stated that at the moment the Society has 3107 members. By size of the membership, the Information Theory Society is significantly smaller than the Communications Society or the Signal Processing Society. He also presented the data regarding the membership overlap with sister societies, as well as geographic and gender membership distribution.

Afterwards, President Yu discussed the budget and new initiatives. He stated that the overall business model of IEEE is to use the subscription and conference revenue to finance its operation and new initiatives. He stated that for 2020, ITSoc had an interim net surplus of \$641K, and the project spending in 2020 was \$138K. He stated that for 2021 the operating budget is at the near zero surplus.

Next, he went over the priorities for 2021, which are: 1) FITS Initiative for virtual support of conferences, schools, journal, magazine, newsletter, and distinguished lectures, 2) Magazine for our members, with the cost of \$55K according to IEEE, and could be \$90K according to Phase II proposal, 3) Schools for our students, supported in part by Padovani and Goldsmith funds, and 4) Outreach for general public including videos and animations.

He next stated that there are \$300K in funds available to support new initiatives. He also went over the future challenges regarding conference organization and publication format. He concluded by proposing the date for the next BoG meeting.

Treasurer's Report – Edmund Yeh and Aaron Wagner

Next presentation was given by Edmund Yeh as the new treasurer of the Society. He thanked the former treasurer Aaron Wagner for the guidance. Edmund next presented IEEE accounting in one slide. He explained how the surplus of general funds in a given year is split 50% each to the reserves and to the special projects for the next year. A total of 3% of general funds can also be used for special projects. Next, he went over the 2020 general funds. The expectation based on the

information from December 2020 is that there will be \$641K in funds available, due to a combined increase in the net revenue from the journals and the conferences. Then, he presented 2021 general funds, which currently have a surplus of \$5.4K. He went over the 2020 and 2021 special projects. For 2021, three special projects are approved so far. Edmund encouraged further submissions as there is room for more. Next, Edmund explained what constitutes a new initiative, both for the 3% and for the 50% rule. He stated that for the 3% rule, a new initiative requires BoG but not IEEE approval. It was clarified that JSAIT with open access for one year cannot be counted as new initiative. It was also clarified that many of our 2020 special projects had to be canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic..

FITS Committee Update – Brian Kurkoski and Matthieu Bloch

Next presentation was given by Brian Kurkoski and Matthieu Bloch. Brian started the presentation by stating the new itsoc.org website was ready to go live. He showed that there are many new features on the website. Preview is available for viewing and the scheduled date to go live is Monday, March 29 2021. He also discussed the status of the newsletter microsite and online efforts to support outreach. He next discussed the development of the itsoc.org website, and stated that all of their design goals have been met, and that nearly all content from the old site has been migrated to the new site. Brian thanked Samir Perlaza, Anand Sarwate, Christian Senger, Matthieu Bloch and the team at Specbee particularly the project manager Shri Ganesh Hegde, for all their hard work in making this project happen. Brian showed the snapshot of the new landing page.

Brian clarified that one can create a new profile with the IEEE single sign on, but may also need manual intervention by him. He also clarified that all data migration is already completed and further changes will be done manually. He also showed JSAIT microsite and Schools microsite. A BoG member asked how to collect outreach materials, as videos have already attracted 160k views. A special site where all the materials would be was requested. Brian asked for feedback and community participation, and provided the status and the anticipated cost for the Online Newsletter and the Outreach websites.

Next, Matthieu provided an update on the development of the Conference website. He stated that he has had weekly meetings with the developers for the back end. He showed the snapshot of front end. He stated that the front end is already done, and that the back end is now being worked on. One idea would be to tag talks with keywords to navigate the talks more easily. He concluded by stating that further updates will be provided at the next BoG meeting and thanking Brian for having done a fantastic job.

IT Schools Committee Update – Parastoo Sadeghi and Matthieu Bloch

Next presentation was given by Parastoo Sadeghi. She first thanked Stark Draper, Christian Senger, and Matthieu Bloch for their service. She provided the following updates. 2020 IEEE European School of Information Theory (ESIT 2020) was held virtually in November 2020. There were 159 registered participants. Total expenditure was around 4K euros. There was a surplus of around 11K euros due to having to switch to the virtual format. 2021 IEEE North American School of Information Theory (NASIT 2021) will be held virtually in June 2021. She stated that enough

local sponsorship was secured and no funds are requested from ITSoc. Lectures will be live and lecturers are confirmed.

Next, Parastoo went over the status of the IEEE IT Society Summer School in India to be held virtually in June 2021. Revised funding budget of \$6K is requested. She went over the planned format and provided the list of confirmed lecturers.

Next, Parastoo went over the status of the Virtual East Asian School in Information Theory (EASIT 2021), to be held in August 2021. She stated that this is a new initiative. Lectures will be pre-recorded. During the school, lecturers will go over their lectures again live with pauses and allow for Q&A. Several lecturers are confirmed.

Parastoo then went over the list of the upcoming IT Schools planned for 2022 and their status, before the following motions were issued.

Motion 1: IEEE Information Theory Society to support the JTG/IEEE ITSoc Summer School 2020 (delayed to 2021) with a budgetary allocation of \$6K.

Motion 2: IEEE Information Theory Society to support the 2020 (delayed to 2021) East Asian School in Information Theory (EASIT) with a budgetary allocation of \$3.6K

Both motions passed.

Conference Committee Updated – Vijay Kumar

Next presentation was given by Vijay Kumar. He thanked outgoing conference committee members and welcomed incoming members. He explained the staggered terms of the current members of the committee.

Next, he presented the status of the ITW 2021 to be held in Kanazawa, Japan on Oct 17-21, 2021. He went over the organizing committee and focus topics for the workshop. The workshop as of now will be held either virtually or in a hybrid mode, with the final decision on the format planned for May 10, 2021.

Next, Vijay went over the status of ISIT 2022 to be held in Helsinki, Finland. He went over the organizing committee and stated that the website is up at isit2022.org; TPC co-chairs are in the process of selecting plenary speakers; venue contract is signed with Tavicon; and the organizers are in communication with IEEE regarding insertion of a suitable “force majeure” clause.

Afterwards, Vijay presented the status of ITW 2022 to be held in Goa, India. Options being considered are virtual and hybrid. Vijay went over the organizing committee, and presented two conference dates, one being in November and the other one being in September 2022, along with the preferred choice of venue. The organizing committee has proposed three different operating points, with a varying degree of in-person participation. Organizing committee plans to have a firm proposal in the October 2021 BoG meeting. Committee is also exploring non-hotel venues and is in close contact with other conference organizers for guidance and suggestions.

Next update was regarding ISIT 2021. The conference will be held virtually in Melbourne, Australia in July 2021. Parastoo Sadeghi and Emanuele Viterbo provided the most up-to-date status. Updates include:

- 10% venue deposit was fully refunded and the contract was formally cancelled;
- Conference Catalysts was selected as Virtual platform (same as ISIT'20) and the contract was executed;
- PCO ICMSA will handle only registrations, promotion, sponsorship, and finance; contract addendum was executed;
- 5 Plenary speakers were announced and their talks will distributed over July 12-20 (9 days);
- A record of 8 tutorials were announced and are scheduled on Sat/Sun, July 17 and 18, 2021;
- There were 801 submitted papers, roughly 5% more than in 2020;
- Notification of acceptance will be extended from April 23 to 30 due to Texas storm which affected the CMS paper review system;
- Registration portal will open on April 30;
- Final camera ready versions to be uploaded by May 10, and short (4min) and long (20min) videos to be uploaded by May 31;
- Tweets and email blasts will be sent to give updates on the program;
- Call for Recent Results is coming soon;
- Organizing committee is planning virtual social events, awards ceremony, and industry sessions.

Next, tentative registration fees were presented. There will be separate paper fee and attendance fee. There will be one registration fee per paper.

Afterwards, an update on the status of ITW 2020 (Virtual, postponed to 2021) was provided. The conference will be held virtually April 11-15, 2021. Technical program is available online. There are 6 plenaries, 2 tutorials, 25 invited talks in 5 themed sessions, and 104 contributed talks in 21 sessions. Papers are presented with a pre-recorded 20-minute videos and live Q&A sessions, 10 minutes per paper, including 5 minutes of live presentation. Registration fee model is one registration per paper. So far, non-author registration is low.

The following motion was discussed in an executive session.

Motion: To make an exception and to provide technical co-sponsorship (TCS) to the 2021 edition of REDUNDANCY while having the IT Society pay for the TCS fees.

Motion passed.

Transactions on Information Theory Update – Igal Sason and Erdal Arıkan

Next presentation was given by Igal Sason in his role as the Editor-in-Chief of the IEEE Transactions of Information Theory.

Igal presented the following statistics: Sub-to-first review: average: is 29 weeks, and median is 26 weeks. Sub-to-Online publication: average is 57 weeks, and median is 50 weeks (referring to the Q4 of 2020).

These numbers are in spite of the significant extension provided by EiC during the last year (since March 18, 2020) due to the pandemic. Despite considerable extensions, the sub-to-pub statistics are about the same as 3 years ago. Extensions were given as follows. For authors, minor revision was changed from 45 to 90 days, and major revision was changed from 90 to 150 days. For reviewers, first review was extended from 75 to 120 days, and the review of a revision from 45 to 90 days.

Paper length statistics for the last 6 months (Nov. 20 – April 21) are 4029 pages / 237 papers = 17 pages/ paper. Standard deviation: 6.8 pages.

Igal stated that the Special Issue devoted to V. I. Levenshtein is forthcoming. There are 27 papers in the issue, and one paper was routed to the regular issues. Olgica Milenkovic was the Guest Editor-in-Chief for this special issue.

Next, Igal presented the candidates for the position of the Associate Editors of the IT Transactions.

BoG approved the following candidates:

1. Antonia Wachter-Zeh – Coding Theory
2. Jun Chen – Shannon Theory
3. Sheng Yang – Communications
4. Shirin Jalali – Probability and Statistics
5. Yuejie Chi – Statistical Learning

The following motion was issued:

Motion: to take a short break.

Motion passed.

Meeting resumed at 12.45 EST.

JSAIT Update – Andrea Goldsmith and Jeff Andrews

Next presentation was given by Andrea Goldsmith in her role as the Editor-in-Chief of JSAIT. She started by going over the executive summary. Next, she went over the first three published issues. Overall acceptance rate is 64%. She next presented top highly cited papers that have appeared in JSAIT. Upcoming issues are as follows:

- Seventh issue: Coding for Data Management and Delivery in Networks. Papers due May 1.
- Sixth issue: Coded Computing. Closed March 15.
- Fifth issue: Sequential, Active, and Reinforcement Learning. Closed October 15. Expected publication is April 2021.
- Fourth issue: Privacy and Security of Information Systems. Closed August 15. Publication is imminent.

Andrea next presented a working list of future topics, and provided submission data per issue. The first issue on deep learning had the most submissions.

She next explained that the first 12 pages are free, and that page charges are \$200 per page for up to 15 total pages, and that the charges are waived for financial hardship and for tutorial papers. One issue she pointed out is that sometimes authors move reviewed material to supplementary material, and that is not appropriate.

Andrea next went over the JSAIT leadership structure. Steering committee members currently serve a 5-year term. In the future this term may be reduced. She also went over the editorial board and the industrial advisory board. She discussed current startup issues that are being worked on: better onboarding of guest editors, rooting out Manuscript Central issues, and better informing authors about the page charge policy. She presented issues for discussion, which included how to utilize industrial advisory board, and most importantly, how to get more unsolicited proposals.

BITS Magazine Update – Christina Fragouli and Rob Calderbank

Christina started the presentation. She stated that the BITS Magazine is a major undertaking with possibly very high impact factor, and is a new opportunity for us to reach wide audience.

Rob next went over the editorial board, columns, and content. He also thanked Christina for her service. He stated that ideas and suggestions on the columns and contents should be sent to him via email. Current column editors are: Muriel Medard with the focus on connecting to other communities, Alon Orlitsky with the focus on explaining technical terms as an opportunity to engage student members, and Aaron Wagner with the focus on the next big thing. Rob next went over what is in the works, both in terms of people and topics. He clarified for prospective authors that articles should be the same format as articles in the IEEE Signal Processing Magazine, and that they will welcome equations when they are needed to tell the story.

Christina continued the presentation by thanking Rob for popularizing the magazine. She went over the steering committee and the advertising campaign for the magazine. The cost of the campaign is \$15K. Inaugural issue is coming in Summer 2021. She next presented the new website for the magazine, and thanked Anand Sarwate and Brian Kurkoski for their help in launching it. Christina reiterated that the committee welcomes feedback and input from the community members. She next went over the print version of the magazine.

She mentioned that as the magazine is projected to initially lose money, at the time of application we opted for common design support from IEEE to reduce costs. However, for the cover illustrations we will be using a professional illustrator. BoG members had suggestions on featuring an article in the cover page design or the topics, and linking papers to associated videos that are already available.

Christina clarified pricing fees from IEEE including for illustrations but these reuse existing images and are typically not original art. A BoG member suggested external resources to be used to create illustrations that go along with the articles.

The following motions were issued.

Motion 1: To replace U. Mitra and D. Costello with E. Soljanin and R. Yeung in the BITS Steering Ad Hoc Committee.

Motion 2: To use \$20K new initiative funding in 2021 in support of BITS promotion.

A friendly amendment to increase the funding to a total of \$40K was made.

There were no objections to the amendment.

The motions passed.

Information in Small Bits Cartoon – Christina Fragouli

Next presentation was given by Christina. She asked for funding to support the completion of the cartoon.

The following motion was issued:

Motion: To use \$20K new initiative funding to produce the remaining two chapters of information in small bits in cartoon format.

The motion passed.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee – Stark Draper

Next presentation was given by Stark Draper in his role as the Chair of the of ITSoc Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee.

Stark started his presentation by thanking the members of the committee for their service. He went over the codes of conduct. Stark clarified the difference between bylaws, which are rules, and best practices, which are customs and past wisdom. He next presented the plan for a ITSoc D&I Climate

survey. He also thanked Nihar Shah who has done a similar survey in the machine learning community and has shared ideas on this matter.

To further support outreach activities in the society, the following motions were presented.

Motion 1: To approve \$1000 for support of conducting the ITSoc D&I Climate survey.

Motion 2: Approve \$560 for support of scholarships for undergraduates from underrepresented groups to attend ISIT and ITSoc schools

Both motions passed.

Nominations & Appointments / Constitution & Bylaws Committee – Emina Soljanin

Next presentation was given by Emina Soljanin as the chair of the Nominations and Appointments Committee. Emina thanked outgoing members and welcomed new members of the Wyner Committee and the Paper Award Committee. She stated that the committee will appoint replacements for the members whose term is ending in 2021, after the feedback on this year's operations.

Next, Emina presented on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. She explained that there are currently quite a few constraints on who can be a member of the Wyner and Paper Awards Committees, making it hard to diversify under these constraints.

Discussion on Future Directions (Executive Session) – Wei Yu

Discussions on future directions on publications and open access were held.

The following motion was issued.

Motion: To extend the meeting by half an hour.

Motion passed.

Discussions on diversity and inclusion were held. The following motions were issued:

Motion 1: That the IEEE Information Theory Society reaffirms its support for open scientific exchange irrespective of all barriers.

Motion 2: Report our wishes to TAB level D&I committee for IEEE to provide equal access all regions for scientific exchange.

Both motions passed.

The meeting adjourned at 3.40 pm EST.