

## IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Location: Remote

Date: June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Time: The meeting convened at 9:30 am EDT; the meeting adjourned at 4.10 pm EDT

Meeting Chair: Wei Yu

Minutes taken by: Lara Dolecek

Meeting Attendees:

Erik Agrell, Matthieu Bloch, Amitalok Budkuley (#), Robert Calderbank, Joseph Boutros (#), Themistoklis Charalambous (#), Marco Dalai (#), Michael Deering (#), Natasha Devroye, Suhas Diggavi, Alex Dimakis, Lara Dolecek, Stark Draper, Meir Feder, Christina Fragouli, Massimo Franceschetti, Andrea Goldsmith, Camilla Hollanti, Jerry Huang, Sid Jaggi, Tara Javidi, Vijay Kumar, Brian Kurkoski, Matt LaFleur (#), Olgica Milenkovic, Prakash Narayan, Henry Pfister, Joachim Rosenthal, Stefano Rini (#), Parastoo Sadeghi, Anand Sarwate, Emina Soljanin, Vincent Tan, Olav Tirkkonen (#), Daniela Tuninetti, Lalitha Vadlamani (#), Lele Wang (#), Edmund Yeh, Aylin Yener, Wei Yu

Non-voting members are denoted by (#).

### Business conducted between meetings.

1. In April 2021, the following motion was issued:

**Motion:** To allow a search for the Editor-in-Chief of the IEEE Transactions on Information Theory for an initial 2-year term starting July 1, 2021, and to allow the Transactions to transition into an area editor model, with the area editors appointed by the EiC, subject to BoG approval.

As this is a significant change of the editorial structure of the Transactions, President Yu solicited input and feedback from the BoG via a Google form.

The motion passed.

2. In May 2021, the following motions were issued.

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of the ITSoc BoG meeting on March 20, 2021.

The motion passed.

**Motion:** To approve the proposal of the organizers of ITW 2021, Kanazawa Japan to go fully virtual, keeping in mind the local and global situation with respect to the pandemic.

The IT Society conference committee has examined the budget and is in support of this motion. The proposed budget along with attendant justification in the form of a PDF file, is attached. (Also attached are the original fully-in-person June 2019 proposal and budget).

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 thanking everyone for their service. He then went over the mission of the ITSoc -- our mission is to support open exchange of ideas in information theory, broadly construed, through publications, communications, meetings, outreach, education, mentoring, and recognition of excellence. The three pillars are community building, outreach, and teaching excellence. Next, President Yu went over the membership statistics and dues. Current society annual dues are \$25 for members and \$1 for student members. For 2022, these will be \$25 and \$5, respectively. For 2023, the dues for the preferred membership will be \$35 for members and \$10 for students; for essential membership will be \$15 for members and \$1 for students; membership dues for members from developing nations will be 50% of the essential dues; membership dues for members from low income economies will be 80% of the essential dues. Membership dues for 2022 and preferred membership dues for 2023 will include a printed copy of the BITS magazine.

Next, President Yu went over the status of the IEEE Transactions on Information Theory. Special issue published in June 2021 was dedicated to the memory of V.I. Levenshtein. Olgica Milenkovic was the Guest EiC. Next, President Yu thanked Igal Sason for his service as the EiC of the Transactions and Erdal Arikan for his service as the EE of the Transactions. There were three invited papers during Igal's term. The acceptance rate of the journal is around 50%. Impact factor of the Transactions was 3.036 in 2019. This number is computed by looking at the papers published in 2017-2018 and evaluating how many citations they had in 2019. Percentile rank of the Transactions was 90% 20 years ago and now it is 70% of all journals. In addition to USA and China, notable geographic representation of authors includes Israel, France, and Singapore.

President Yu then discussed the status of the Open Access and asked for feedback from BoG on whether the society should start a Gold Open Access journal. An ad-hoc committee on Open Access will be formed.

Next, President Yu briefly discussed the future of conferences and stated that 90 minutes of today's meeting will be devoted to the discussion on how to organize ISITs in the post-pandemic world. He stated that there were 750 respondents to the survey on this matter that had been sent out.

Next BoG meeting will be held in October. A straw poll: How likely will you travel to an in-person workshop on "Information Theory and X" as part of October BoG meeting, was issued. It was noted that international restrictions may still be in place in October.

The result of the straw poll was mixed: there were 15 votes for unlikely/very unlikely; 4 votes for neutral; 9 votes for likely/very likely.

Next, President Yu announced that the recipient of the Aaron D. Wyner Distinguished Service Award for 2021 is Gerhard Kramer.

### **Nominations and Appointments Committee – Emina Soljanin**

Next presentation was given by Emina on behalf of the Nominations and Appointment Committee. Emina stated that Osvaldo Simeone is replacing Kannan Ramchandran on the Fellows Committee and that the 2021 work on appointing committee members is ongoing.

Emina presented the slate of the 2021 BoG election candidates. The slate consists of: Li Chen, Marco Dalai, Bikash Dey, Lara Dolecek, Stark Draper, Michael Langberg, Mehul Motani, Henry Pfister, Parastoo Sadeghi, Changho Suh, Sennur Ulukus, Shun Watanabe.

Emina stated that the call for the EiC of the IT Transactions was answered by four very strong candidates. The committee selected Muriel Medard, and she accepted the nomination.

### **Constitution and Bylaws Committee – Emina Soljanin**

Emina next continued in her role representing the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. She asked if we should have VP for Publications. VP for Publications would oversee our three publications, lead Open Access plans, interact with IEEE, among other duties. VP for Publications would be a BoG member whereas EiCs would not; this VP could be a past president or past IT Transactions EiC and could be appointed or elected. Emina said that the discussions regarding this position will continue over Slack.

Wei asked if there were any additional nominations from the board for the slate of 2021 BoG election candidates. No additional candidates were nominated.

The following motion was issued.

**Motion:** To approve the slate of 2021 BoG Candidates.

The slate was approved.

Next, this motion was issued.

**Motion:** To approve Muriel Medard as the EiC of the IT Transactions.

The selection of the EiC was approved.

Next, Wei proceeded with the Officer nominations. A BoG member nominated Christina Fragouli for President. Another BoG member nominated Matthieu Bloch for First VP. A BoG member nominated Stark Draper as Second VP, and another BoG member nominated Daniela Tuninetti as Second VP.

Voting for the Officer positions will take place over the period of 3 weeks following this meeting.

### **FITS Initiative – Brian Kurkoski**

Next presentation was given by Brian. He stated that the new itsoc.org website went live at the end of March. IEEE enabled single-sign-on. Despite a few minor bugs, site is working well. Brian also said that they are now working on the microsites for BITS, Newsletter, and Outreach. He also stated that the IT Transactions doesn't have a microsite, and that establishing it can be a new initiative. Brian also thanked Matthieu Bloch for his on-going help with the FITS Event Platform. Brian showed visual examples of the structure of the new microsites. He then provided the update on the Newsletter Microsite: in 2022, Newsletter will be exclusively online; microsite will be developed to accommodate the new format; there are ongoing discussions with Christina Fragouli, Rob Calnderbank, and Changho Suh about the content in BITS vs. Newsletter, but the site is mostly content-agnostic. The current status is that the specifications were sent to the developer with the estimated cost of \$12,160. Brian said we will have a working site before January 2022. Next, Brian presented the status of the Outreach Microsite. It targets non-IEEE members and links to external resources: Shannon movie, Information in Small Bits book, animated cartoons, "art of the problem" videos, and student video competition. The estimate to develop this site is \$3,340. Current status is a preliminary wireframe. A BoG member asked whether it would be possible to add hand populated list of content for members only. Brian said it would be possible but may take some work.

### **IT Schools Update – Parastoo Sadeghi**

Next presentation was given by Parastoo Sadeghi in her role as the Schools Subcommittee Chair. She presented the motion to support ESIT 2022. Specifically, the organizers requested funds for plan A in the amount of €12,800. She stated that ESIT 2020 had been approved for around €13,000, and referred to the supplementary material for interested parties for more details as well as for plan B/C budget estimates.

Next, she presented the status of the upcoming schools. NASIT 2022 will be held in Los Angeles and Rick Wesel is leading this effort. EASIT 2022 will be held in Shenzhen, China. General co-chairs are Li Chen and Shao-Lun Huang. Proposal has been received and is under review/revisions; six speakers are confirmed. JTG/IEEE ITSoc India School 2022, IIT, Mandi is led by Satyajit

Thakor. Pre-proposal details have been received and pre-vetted by the Schools Subcommittee Chair; two keynote lecturers and two invited lecturers are confirmed. It was noted that the budget for EASIT was revised from \$20K down to \$3.6K.

There was some discussion regarding ESIT 2022. A BoG member clarified that this school was a carryover from 2021 as no European school was held in 2021. It was also clarified that the school organizers are not always themselves presenting their proposal at the BoG meeting and that often the committee presents on their behalf. A BoG member also added that this school was already vetted twice. There was some concern about some speakers being outside of the Information Theory area. It was noted that the speakers are of international stature. A BoG member asked that the school presentations be detailed enough in the future for assessment even if presented by the school committee.

**Motion:** To support ESIT 2022 in the amount of \$15.5K.

The motion was approved.

### **Conference Committee – Vijay Kumar**

Next presentation was given by Vijay in his role of the Conference Committee Chair. Vijay thanked all the committee members for their continued service. He welcomed new members: Henry Pfister and Parastoo Sadeghi. Vijay stated that in light of the current situation, all events need to be revisited.

Next, Marco Dalai provided the update on ITW 2020. There were 160 submissions and 106 accepted papers. There were 25 invited talks, 6 plenaries, and 2 tutorials. Marco went over the attendance statistics, and budgets for cost and income. He also stated that the communication with MCE was difficult and exhausting. BoG thanked Marco and the rest of the conference organizing team for all their hard work, as they first had to postpone the (in-person) conference, then hold it virtually.

Next presentation was given by Brian Kurkoski on behalf of the ITW 2021 organizing committee. Brian stated that the workshop had to switch to the fully remote mode as the visitors cannot enter Japan. BoG had approved this change along with the new format and budget. Brian clarified that there is no cancellation fee as no contract was signed. He went over the paper charge and participation fee. He also stated that the budget for interactive sessions on Zoom had not been budgeted for so the currently projected surplus may not end up being as high. Brian stated that he would like to see support from BoG for interactive sessions.

After Brian concluded his presentation, Navin Kashyap presented the proposal for ITW 2022 to be held in Mumbai, India. He stated that the workshop was originally planned to be held in Goa, but that it was subsequently moved to Bombay. Workshop would be held as a hybrid event with a fully virtual back up plan. Navin stated that the selected venue is flexible size-wise and the cost is acceptable, and that Bombay is well connected. Navin went in detail over the key dates and milestones; the list of topics of interest; the daily breakdown of the schedule in the hybrid mode,

discussing both the virtual and the in-person component, as well as the daily breakdown of the schedule in the fully virtual mode. He presented the budget for both scenarios, and registration charges. In summary, he said that the IT community in India is very vibrant and that this event would only be the second time in two decades ITW is held in India, and that as a result considerable interest is anticipated. It was also recognized by BoG that there were several members of the conference organizing committee who are young researchers.

The following motion was issued.

**Motion:** To approve the proposal from the ITW 2022 India organizing committee.

The motion passed.

Next presentation was given by Joseph Boutros. He presented the preproposal for ITW 2023 to be held in Saint Malo, France. Target date is April 2023. He showed images of the location and said the convention center is 10 minutes from the old city. He stated that the plan is to decrease registration fee for students and to pursue further sponsorship after the formal approval.

After Joseph concluded, Henry Pfister provided the update on ISIT 2021. Henry explained that the short time for paper uploads was due to the constraints from the vendor, as the initial deadline was extended by two weeks and the winter storm had impacted computer resources. Statistics of the technical program were presented. Henry stated that there is a lot of work done being the scenes to ensure the quality of the program including checking videos uploaded by the presenters.

Next presentation was given by Themistoklis Charalambous on behalf of the ISIT 2022 organizing committee. The conference is scheduled to take place in Espoo, Finland, in June-July 2022. The committee anticipates in person attendance from countries with high vaccination rates. It was clarified that the hybrid mode can be more expensive than the in-person mode. The committee plans for high volatility, and if the in-person attendance is at 20-30% or below, they would switch to fully virtual.

Next presenter was Stefano Rini who provided the update on ISIT 2023 to be held in Taipei, Taiwan. The preference of the organizing committee is to hold the conference in person. He presented the details of the virtual and in-person segments, stating that they would have separate deadlines. There will be a no-video no-show rule for the virtual segment.

Anand Sarwate was the next presenter. He presented the preproposal for ISIT 2024 to be held in New York. He went over the local attractions and the organizing committee. He said that Cythia Rush from Columbia will be responsible for local arrangements. Anand stated that a major binary decision needs to be made regarding whether ISIT will be held in the traditional or in the “fusion” style. The former would entail a large in-person participation and booking of a hotel such as Hilton in Times Square. The latter would entail a cap on in-person attendance and the venues would be at NYU or Columbia. He stated that there is 300 room booking requirement at Hilton but there are many other hotels participants can choose from. A BoG member expressed a concern that 5 TPC chairs maybe too many and it would not be clear who is in charge. There was also a concern that 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend being a US holiday may not be good for participants with families.

Next presentation was given by Vijay Kumar on the Survey on the Format of a Possible Hybrid ISIT in the Future that had been sent out to the community, with over 750 respondents. Vijay presented in detail the statistical breakdown of the multiple choice answers.

In the ensuing discussion, there was some concern on the BoG that hybrid will default to fully virtual. Vijay summarized that based on the answers to one of the questions on the survey, there is lukewarm support in the community for either option of spreading the in-person component over more days vs. fewer days. A BoG member commented that in the hybrid mode, local arrangements as well as virtual organization need to be made and that this requires two sets of vendors, complicating the overall organization and coordination. A comment was made to restrict the in-person component in order to restrict travel for climate reasons.

Two straw polls were issued:

1. Given the conference survey results, the BoG requests future ISIT organizers to institute a hybrid format for the next 2-3 ISITs. The BoG recognizes the considerable uncertainty in in-person attendance numbers for hybrid ISITs and is willing to provide backstop to ensure the financial viability of the conference.
2. Given the conference survey results, the BoG requests future ISIT organizers to keep in mind, the following guidelines in organizing a trial hybrid ISIT over the next 2-3 years:
  - (a) A hybrid ISIT should be structured so as to encourage in-person attendance;
  - (b) A hybrid ISIT should not increase the cost of in-person attendance as compared to a traditional ISIT;
  - (c) A hybrid ISIT should prioritize in-person experience while providing as good a virtual experience as possible.

For the both straw polls, the majority answered in the affirmative.

After a short break, the meeting continued.

### **IEEE Foundation Presentation – Michael Deering**

Next presentation was given by Michael Deering from the IEEE Foundation who manages donation accounts. He went over the *Realize the Full Potential of IEEE* campaign, stated the mission of the foundation, described the societal impact of the campaign, described how the foundation engages a wider audience in appreciating the value and importance of engineering and technology. He stated that 2.9% of \$32.1M raised in the campaign will be devoted to the IT Society. He talked about how foundation supports the Padovani Lecturer, Goldsmith Lecturer and Shannon Centennial programs.

### **Treasurer Report – Edmund Yeh**

Edmund started his presentation with the overview of the IEEE accounting, specifying that the surplus of general funds gets split evenly between the reserves and special projects (50% spending each) for the following year and that additionally 3% of reserves can be used for the special projects. He next went over the 2020 general funds and stated that the final end-of-the-year operational surplus was \$774.5K. This end value was due to several contributing factors, most notably an increase in revenue for the IT Transactions and JSAT and the decrease in conference and meeting expenses. For the 2021 general funds, year-to-date surplus is \$170.5K. Next, Edmund went over the special projects for 2020 and for 2021.

The following motions were issued.

**Motion:** To approve 50% Spending of the General Funds for the following projects, in the total amount of \$120K:

- Art of Information Theory: \$40K
  - Graphic art with resource center
  - Distinguished lecture editing
- Information Theory and X workshop: \$80K

**Motion:** To approve 3% Spending of the reserves, in the total amount of \$150K:

- Webservice upgrade: \$30K
- Future of the Information Theory Society: (FITS): \$50K
- Magazine marketing: \$20K
- Information Theory and X workshop: \$50K

The two motions passed.

### **IEEE BITS Magazine – Rob Calderbank and Christina Fragouli**

Next presentation was given by Rob as the EiC and Christina as the Chair of Steering Committee for the IEEE BITS Magazine. Rob went over the Editorial Board, including Editors and Column Editors, timeline for the upcoming issues, the list of invited papers to date, and the division of content between the magazine and the newsletter. Rob thanked Christina for the effective organization. Website for the magazine was shown and the IEEE administrative assistant was introduced. Rob thanked Anand Sarwate and Brian Kurkoski for their work on the website. Manuscript Central submission portal opened on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2021. Rob encouraged submission of new articles. Christina added that the first few years are important to set the right tone moving forward and echoed that strong contributions are important.

### **Paper Awards Committee – Christina Fragouli**

Next presentation was given by Christina on behalf of the Paper Awards Committee.

Votes were issued to accept the report of the Paper Awards Committee and for the IT Society Paper Award. Only members without conflicts were permitted to vote.

The Paper Award Committee's report was accepted. The BoG voted to accept the Paper Awards Committee's recommendation of the ITSoc Paper Award recipient.

After the executive session, the next presenter was Tara Javidi.

### **Massey Award Committee – Tara Javidi**

Tara went over this year's selection process for the Massey Award. She stated that six excellent nominations were received by the committee. The committee selected Prof. Changho Suh from KAIST as the recipient of the award. She stated that three of the nominations can carry over to the next year and suggested that it would be good to involve department chairs and advertise the award broadly.

### **Cover Dissertation Award Committee – Roy Yates**

Roy went over the nominations the committee had received, and stated that the committee had selected Dr. Anuran Makur who had received a PhD degree from MIT as the recipient of the award.

### **JSAIT Update – Jeff Andrews**

Jeff went over the executive summary and stated that JSAIT is overall doing well. The number and quality of submissions is healthy with the acceptance rate of around 2/3. First five issues are already published. Jeff went over the submission data for the issues. Next he went over the timeline for the next three upcoming issues. Jeff presented the budget and stated that JSAIT had a profit of over \$76K to date. He next went over the editorial board, including the EiC, senior editors, and the steering committee. The call for the new EiC will be issued by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, and the 3-year term of the new EiC will start on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Jeff also stated that senior editors should be appointed in staggered order. He also stated that a goal for the journal is to increase the number of unsolicited proposals.

### **Proposal for Tutorial/Overview Paper Award – Suhas Diggavi**

The next presenter was Suhas. He first explained the rationale for introducing a tutorial award. He then asked that this award be named after the late Joy Thomas. Suhas went over Joy's biography and accomplishments, and recalled how he himself had heard of Joy when he was a middle schooler in India. He went over the details of the Joy Thomas Foundation.

The following motion was issued.

**Motion:** To approve the institution of a J. Thomas Information Theory Tutorial Award that recognizes exceptional tutorial publications in the field of information theory.

The motion passed.

Next, the following motion was issued.

**Motion:** To extend the meeting by 45 minutes

The motion passed.

### **External Nominations Committee -- Muriel Medard**

Muriel went over the goals for the committee for this year, the committee members, and the summary of their recent activities.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Committee – Stark Draper**

Stark gave the presentation as the Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. He thanked other committee members for their service. Updates since the last BoG meeting included ITSoc Scholarships for undergraduates from groups currently underrepresented in ITSoc for which the nominations are due June 7<sup>th</sup>; events at ISIT 2021; and the preparation plans for the D&I climate survey, which will be sent out to the community in the near future.

### **Membership Committee – Matthieu Bloch**

President Yu presented on behalf of Matthieu. He went over the committee members, chapter and school activities. He then went over the structure of the Meet the Shannon Lecturer event. Prof. Alon Orlitsky is the winner of the 2021 Shannon Award. This event will be a recorded interview conducted by Olgica Milenkovic and Jayadev Acharya. Next, Wei went over the details of the mentoring event that will take place at ISIT 2021. The purpose of the event is to connect junior researchers with senior members of the community, who can share their career advice and experiences. Last, Wei described the Four Minutes, Two Techniques Contest. This online challenge is for registered ISIT student participants who in teams of two explain each other one concept each. Winning videos will be posted on the ITSoc webpage and the winning team will receive a monetary award.

It was stated that WITHITS report will be presented another time.

President Yu relayed a message from Senur Ulukus, as the Chair of the Fellows Committee. Senur's message is that the committee is short staffed and needs more support.

The meeting adjourned at 4.10 pm EST.