

# IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

## October 13, 2009, Taormina, Italy

Muriel Medard and Aria Nosratinia

**Attendees:** Andrea Goldsmith, Dave Forney, Muriel Medard, Dan Costello, Gerhard Kramer, Vince Poor, Hans-Andrea Loeliger, Nihar Jindal, Giuseppe Caire, Helmut Boelsckei, Nick Laneman. The following attended by phone: Michelle Effros, Ken Zeger, Frank Kschischang, Prakash Narayan, Tracey Ho, Aylin Yener.

The meeting was called to order at 19:00 hours by the Society President Andrea Goldsmith, who greeted the members of the board.

1. By consent, the board approved the minutes of the previous meeting with the following changes: Emina Soljanin and Dave Forney were not present at the last BoG meeting.
2. The agenda was approved by consent.
3. The president presented her report. The society is in good shape, with a great number of activities. The finances are in good shape. The looming issues include new changes to the IEEE Explore revenue due to new rules, which could put the society in the red. The end of the term of the Editor in Chief of the Transactions is on the horizon. Other issues include changes in paper handling system (Manuscript Central) for our Transactions. The new distinguished lecture program will start next year.

Our Transactions continues to be highly prestigious and highly cited, although the “sub to pub” time (publication delay) has remained essentially unchanged so far despite our efforts. The committees are very active, society members get many awards per capita, new chapters have been instituted, and the society’s new website is very successful.

We still have a large budget surplus. It is unlikely there will be a large proposal to spend the surplus this year, which otherwise goes to our reserves, whence spending is heavily limited by the IEEE rules. Reserves are down by \$1.2M and now stand at \$1.8M, taking us to 2006 levels. Market recovery is likely to be reflected later in our reserves. Reduced IEEE Explore fees may reduce our income by about \$120K, which is a substantial hit. Library subscriptions are also generally trending downwards. Among the possibilities to be considered for increasing the surplus: new publications, tutorials or magazines, increase print charges, as well as sponsorship for IT School and Distinguished Lecturer program.

On the subject of governance: we need to push BoG members to become more involved in committees. Most BoG members have expressed their interests and preferences in service in committees to the president, who will make use of this information and forward it to the Nominations and Appointments Committee. The Publications Committee by rule consists of associate editors, publication editors, and newsletter editor. Should we change the by-laws and include (some) BoG members in the Publications Committee? There is little flexibility from bylaws in assigning members to some of these committees (e.g. Shannon Award Committee).

A subcommittee is being considered to help with sub-to-pub time. Ezio Biglieri has put considerable effort in the sub-to-pub effort, and the President has made this a central issue of her tenure. Our current sub-to-pub is the highest in the IEEE. The

reduction of publication delay involves both cultural and administrative challenges in our society.

There have been initiatives to address this problem: The number of associate editors has been increased. Moving our web-based manuscript handling from Pareja to Manuscript Central should allow better tracking of papers. A new “best practices” document is being developed. Budget has been assigned for a half-time person as managing editor, who helps track papers and sends reminders to associate editors about the status of papers. A task force is being contemplated to monitor and improve sub-to-pub, which might become a standing Steering Committee. The president indicated that we must become more businesslike in our paper processing; develop an editorial policy for authors and reviewers; create and impose firm deadlines, while leaving leeway for editor judgment; track the statistics on associate editors, reviewers, and authors. There have been suggestions to publish the statistics and highlight the issue to the community at large. The task force for sub-to-pub is generally well received by the BoG.

There have been changes to IT paper awards process (bylaw). Open call nominations go to the Awards Committee chair. The Publications Committee generates a separate list of nominations. The Awards Committee recommends up to 3 papers (3 weeks before ISIT). In the annual BoG meeting, the BoG votes to accept Awards Committee report or asks for revision; if accepted a vote is taken.

The Baker prize was endorsed by the IEEE TAB and Awards Board. It will be submitted to IEEE Board of Directors at their November meeting. The Baker prize will recognize, in the 3-5 year window prior to nomination, contributions to the fundamentals of electrical engineering, computing and related arts and sciences within the IEEE. This prize went from a near-dead proposal to one co-sponsored technically by 19 societies, with great help from Jose Moura (SP).

The new officers for 2010 are as follows. President Frank Kschischang, 1st VP Giuseppe Caire, 2nd VP Muriel Medard, Junior Past President Andrea Goldsmith, Senior Past President G. David Forney, Secretary Aria Nosratinia, Treasurer Nihar Jindal. The service of the outgoing treasurer Anant Sahai was recognized. In addition, Bixio Rimoldi was recognized for his exceptional service over his five year officer term, which ends this year. Election for 6 new BoG members closed the day before the current BoG meeting. Results will be known by Oct 12. For the first time web-based voting was used for this election. The BoG meetings for the next year have been announced by Frank Kschischang. The BoG meetings take place at noon Sunday January 31 just before the ITA workshop, at noon Sunday June 13 at ISIT in Austin, TX, and 6:30pm on Tuesday Sept. 28 at Allerton in Monticello, IL.

The President thanked the BoG and fellow officers, and commended the new initiatives. The BoG warmly recognized the service of the current president.

4. The treasurer’s report was presented by Nihar Jindal, the incoming treasurer, for current treasurer Anant Sahai. The society has approximately \$100K surplus, so that shifting expenses to this year would be beneficial. Otherwise the surplus will go into reserves controlled by IEEE which does not allow ready access for projects. ISIT and ITW did well financially and the current ITW will be close to breaking even.

There is long term uncertainty about our finances. About \$200,000 in print sub-

scriptions, mostly by university libraries at approximately \$1,000 per institution, is in doubt (example: MIT and UC Berkeley). We expect that IEEE Explore revenue sharing may be decreased by \$120K starting next year.

We effectively subsidize member print transactions, costing us \$70K. Reduction in this subsidy some years ago was intended to phase out subsidies eventually. For long term stability we need to increase transactions revenue (reducing sub-to-pub should help), maybe also increase surplus in conference fees, membership dues, sponsorship for IT schools and the distinguished lecturer program.

5. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee report was presented by the Junior Past President Dave Forney. The amendments will be published on the society website. The changes in the bylaws are modest except in prize paper category, as discussed in the President's report. Nominations and Appointments Committee will not appoint any of its members to any committee. For the Awards Committee language, listing of the specific awards was removed and replaced with category of awards. Frank Kschischang and Andrea Goldsmith have revised the prize paper awards to reflect the discussion at the ISIT BoG meeting. All proposed changes were approved by the BoG.
6. The Publications Committee report was presented by the IT Transactions Editor in Chief, Ezio Biglieri. At this time we have 46 associate editors, up from 26 in June 2007. The Editor-in-Chief highlighted the dichotomy of senior vs junior associate editors. Junior editors are more eager and motivated, while senior people often do not even accept the appointment.

The following appointments to associate editor were proposed and approved: Gerard Cohen, Navin Kashyap, Jean-Pierre Tillich, Pascal Vontobel.

Several questions were raised by the editor in chief. Should only tenured individuals be appointed to associate editor? (Noting that several of the recent appointments are not from academia.) The question of loading untenured junior faculty was raised, as well as the potential for unwanted influence, for example getting recommendation letters for tenure from people whose papers they may have handled. There is no hard and fast rule, but it is preferable that editors be tenured, although there may be extenuating circumstances (for instance previous career in industry). The question was raised whether a BoG vote is necessary for appointment of editors, which was answered in the affirmative. The question was raised whether appointments can be done by e-mail or only in BoG meetings. Some preference was expressed for BoG meetings, with the possibility of appointing acting associate editors.

A Best Editorial Practices document is being prepared with instructions for new associate editors, with the goal of the reduction of sub-to-pub time. A training session may be organized for associate editors at the ISIT.

A new special issue is being considered on IT and Interference Networks. Among guest editors are Syed Jafar and Sennur Ulukus who are already associate editors. The special issue is scheduled for March 2011. Another special issue is scheduled for Feb 2011, two years after passing of Ralf Koetter and also marking the tenth anniversary of codes on graphs special issue that Ralf co-edited. This can be linked with Fest for Ralf Koetter in Fall 2010. Authors will be invited to submit to both the fest and the

special issue, but not necessarily with full overlap. The BoG expressed support of the two special issues and puts the details into the hands of the Editor-in-chief.

Regarding web-based manuscript management: migration of all data from Pareja to Manuscript Central (MC) is not automatically feasible, so both will co-exist until all Pareja papers arrive at the end of their editorial life. In the mean time associate editors will use two websites. Pareja will be progressively offloaded, and hence more stable (disk size a major problem currently). At some point in the future, all new papers will be submitted on MC; this will start by the end of the year or may be delayed until the term of the next Editor-in-Chief begins in June 2010.

Some recent statistics were presented by the EiC. Sub to pub time average was 97.2 weeks in July 2009 and 99 weeks in October 2009 (the latter average reduces to 85 weeks after removing 3 outliers).

IEEE is preparing a new author gateway in October, to help keep track of papers. Authors can pay a certain (yet unknown) sum of money to allow open access of that paper IEEE wants to abandon paper-based issues (although they will still print them) in favor of single article publications.

7. The Conference Committee report was presented by Bruce Hajek. The final report for ISIT 2008 Toronto has been received. The report for ISIT 2009 Seoul is uploaded. Vince Poor presented a short report on ISIT 2009, indicating that 589 papers were accepted out of 955 submissions from 47 countries. (For comparison, at ISIT 2008 603 out of 993 were accepted.) Special sessions and tutorials were very successful. There were 375 registrations for the tutorial and 805 for the symposium, a total of 841 attendees. The banquet registration count was 700. \$490 was provided for student support to each of 78 graduate students. The budget surplus is expected to be approximately \$64K at the current exchange rate.

Turning to the future ISITs: ISIT 2010 Austin is moving forward satisfactorily. For ISIT 2011 Saint Petersburg the dates are firmed up July 31-July 5. Muriel Medard reported on ISIT 2012, indicating that everything is moving forward well. ISIT 2013 Turkey has been able to reduce the costs by changing the dates from June to July. They are currently considering the Hilton where ICC 2006 was held. This group will either indicate firm intention or withdraw by January. The predicted registration rate is 700 Euros, which the BoG considers to be high, but encourages the committee to continue their efforts.

Regarding ITW's: for ITW 2008 Porto the report is needed. ITW 2009 Volos anticipates a \$2.5K surplus. Update received for ITW 2009 Taormina. ITW 2010 Dublin has changed venue to Radisson Hotel. ITW 2010 Cairo program is nearly complete and the BoG is asked for approval of its budget. There are 125 submissions to ITW Cairo. The plan is to accept 45 as regular papers and 25 in poster sessions. In addition there are 35 invited papers and 8 plenary talks.

Sueli Costa has proposed a workshop October 16-20 2011 in Paraty Brazil, focusing on coding and cryptography (which is the strength of local organizing committee). Workshop co-chairs are Amin Shokrollahi and Valdemar Cardoso da Rocha. TPC co-chairs are Joao Barros, Max Costa, and Jaime Portugheis. Financial co-chairs are Marcelo Pinho and Charles Cavalcante.

The workshop was proposed to be located in Paraty, a small village and a historical

heritage location. It is 4 hours from both main Brazilian Airports, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Preliminary budget is on the order of \$55K. It is proposed to use Stilema as conference agents. Projected surplus is on the order of \$6.6K, with regular registration on the order of \$600. The BoG expressed concern about the remoteness of the site and urged the organizers to consider an alternate venue.

For the longer term, there has been interest in ITW 2014 from Hawaii and in ISIT 2015 from China.

Four workshops have asked for technical co-sponsorship: CISS 2011, WiOpt 2010, NetCod 2010, and Turbocodes 2010. All have been technically co-sponsored before and all were approved

8. The Online Committee report was presented by Nick Laneman. The committee consists of several volunteers as well as some ex-officio members from BoG. Committee members Matthieu Bloch and Anand Sarwate have been very active in interacting with conferences and chapters to get the relevant information on the website. The website has over 250 visits per day, the school page is the #2 location (in terms of visits) on the website.

The committee requested feedback about incorporating both the Newsletter editor and the society secretary into the committee (does not require a vote).

Some policy issues were discussed, among them the question of whom we allow to register on the website to post profiles. The recommendation is that this privilege should be granted to all members of the IT Society, IT authors, and also graduate students whose advisors work in the area. The BoG indicated the preference that the contents be visible to all, but that only members be allowed to post. It was noted that the students at IT school submit their slides through the website, and a tight policy would require membership from them. It was decided that the officers will have further discussion about this issue and, after consultation with the online committee, make a proposal to the BoG about website registration.

The question was raised whether to allow commercial announcements on the IT Society website, for instance Elsevier Special Issue, Cambridge Publishers, etc. This led to a question about charging for the ads. Response: this should be possible, for example this was done in ISIT 2007. Concern was raised whether this is an issue that needs IEEE approval.

Several related issues were raised regarding tutorial/survey articles in the newsletter and overlap between the website and the newsletter. The BoG indicated its support of obtaining a more general type of content and of jointly publishing on the website and the newsletter. The BoG requests that the Online Committee and the newsletter editor put together a more concrete proposal for the BoG.

9. The Membership/Chapter Committee report was presented by Giuseppe Caire. The distinguished lecturer program is on track. The committee nominated Amin Shokrolahi, Alon Orlitsky, Michael Gastpar and Sergio Verdu for distinguished lecturers, and is looking for a fifth person. The lecturer information will be available on the web, and the committee will contact chapter chairs to encourage them make use of the distinguished lecturer program. There is a plan to have about 10 active distinguished lecturers, with a tenure of 2 years, with 5 distinguished lecturers stepping into the

program every year. Given the success of posting the content of the schools on the web, we can consider placing the distinguished lecture materials on the web.

The Padovani lecture by Abbas El Gamal at the North American IT School was very successful. The 2010 Annual North American School of Information Theory will be held at USC. In 2011, it will be held in the Houston area.

Taipei won the Chapter of the year. The chapter lunch at ISIT was successful and the contact list from all the chapters has been updated.

This year a 1/2-year membership was included with registration at ISIT. It is recommended that a process will be put in place so that the ISIT organizers and Membership Committee will interact for a smooth implementation of the 1/2-year membership incentive.

10. The Fellows Committee Report was presented by Dan Costello. The size of the committee has been increased from 5 to 6. Two new members will be needed. The IEEE introduced an all-electronic nomination system this year. The system allows any Fellow in the Society to be an evaluator for a nominee. The evaluation was done internally, but there is the possibility to send out the reviews to a larger field of people. We have 5 more nominations this year compared with the past years.

11. The Student Committee report was presented by Gerhard Kramer. The second annual School of IT was held in August at Northwestern University with 140 students, a 40% increase in student attendance over the last year. Videos of the lectures are available on the IT Society website. Local organizers were Dongning Guo and Randall Berry, applications and program was handled by Daniela Tuninetti and Natasha Devroye, and the website by Matthieu Bloch. Many thanks to the local volunteers.

Lectures by Dan Costello on Coding Theory, Bruce Hajek on Networks, Abbas El Gamal (Padovani lecture), and Bob Gallager (keynote lecture).

Financial support was provided by the IT society, DARPA, NSF, Northwestern University, USC, Notre Dame and Padovani Lecture.

Students had poster sessions in the afternoons. The school provided breakfast, coffee breaks, snacks, lunch, wireless LAN, and dorm rooms fully paid for all students. (students initially paid \$100 that was later reimbursed thanks to the generosity of the sponsors). The dorm rooms comprised approximately \$29K of a total budget of \$58K. Modest travel supplements was provided to 31 students, totaling \$3K. A survey of the attendees showed overwhelmingly positive results.

For 2010, the school switched to USC from Caltech, since there are more resources and space in the dorms at USC. The IT school requests funds in order to sign the contract for USC dorms, which require a deposit. The BoG approved \$10K for deposits, subject to approval of the North American IT School by the Membership/Chapters Committee.

12. The Outreach Committee report was presented by Muriel Medard. There was a panel at ISIT 2009 with the purpose of highlighting the issues in the industry. It was noted that it was difficult to find IT Society women in industry. There was local participation from Samsung employees.

A successful mentor/mentee breakfast was held, and it is recommended to make this a regular event at ISIT, with a suggestion to hold the event early at the Symposium

to help encourage interaction. Todd Coleman agreed to take over the mentor/mentee events. The BoG expresses its appreciation for the care he has devoted to his work on behalf of the Society during his five years as officer.

13. The meeting was adjourned.