

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting Minutes

Hilton Chicago O'Hare, 9 AM-2 PM
Edmund Yeh

Present: Michelle Eros, Alon Orlitsky, Ruediger Urbanke, Edmund Yeh, Daniela Tuninetti, Anand Sarwate, Elza Erkip, Wei Yu, Abbas El Gamal, Aaron Wagner, Emina Soljanin, Jeff Andrews, Urbashi Mitra, Michael Honig, Michael Langberg, Nick Laneman, Gerhard Kramer (via WebEx), Frank (via Skype), Vijay Kumar (via Skype), Osvaldo Simeone (via Skype), Andrew Barron (via Skype), Stephen Hanly (via Skype), Tracey Ho (via Skype)

The meeting was called to order at 9 AM Chicago Time by Information Theory Society (ITSoc) President, Michelle Eros.

1. Voting on the minutes from the June 2015 BoG meeting will be conducted over email.
2. **Motion:** Vote to approve the meeting agenda. Motion was passed.
3. Michelle presented the President's Report. Michelle first gave an update on Society finances. The Society financial outlook is good, with healthy reserves. Michelle reviewed the 50% rule, and discussed a new source of funds from the IEEE-level call for initiatives. It was suggested that the Society should at all times have a prioritized new initiatives list.

Michelle next discussed publications and events. Management of the Transactions is going smoothly, and the Transactions remain very prestigious. Symposia and workshops have been highly successful, involving a wealth of applications of information theory. The Society should foster and preserve the good will of volunteers. The Society should be aware of symposia trends and targets. We should pursue joint initiatives with other communities. IT schools are continuing with success.

Michelle next reviewed society committees, which have been very active. It was recommended that the Chair of the Information Theory Society (ITSoc) should be elected for a two-year term. It is recommended that there be a rotation of the Chair of the Information Theory Society (ITSoc) among the members of the Board of Governors.

Michelle next discussed the Society's financial situation. The Society's financial situation is good, with healthy reserves. The Society should continue to seek out new sources of funding. The Society should also consider the possibility of a new source of funding from the IEEE-level call for initiatives.

Society volunteers.

Michelle introduced the new officers for 2016: Abbas El Gamal (Senior Past President), Alon Orlitsky (President), Ruediger Urbanke (First Vice President), and Elza Erkip (Second Vice President). She also introduced new BoG members with terms starting 1/1/2016: Jeff Andrews, Matthieu Bloch, Suhas Diggavi, Pierre Moulin, Krishna Narayanan, and Emina Soljanin.

For 2016, the tentative BoG meeting dates are Sunday, January 31, 2016, San Diego (ITA), Sunday, July 10, 2016, Barcelona (ISIT), and Friday or Saturday after the Allerton Conference.

4. Daniela Tuninetti presented the Treasurer's Report. Daniela reviewed the main components of the Society budget. From 2014 actuals, periodicals make up 60% of the revenue, 59% of expenses; conferences make up 38% of the revenue, 35% of expenses; membership make up 2% of the revenue, 5% of the expenses.

Daniela presented the 2016 budget (as of August 2015), with a project surplus of \$35.8k. Daniela then reviewed 2014 actual revenues and expenses. The 2014 actual net was \$275k, compared with a budgeted net of \$60k. This resulted in part from additional revenue and lower expenses from ISIT 2014. Fifty percent of the 2014 actual net has been donated to the IEEE Foundation "Shannon Centennial" Fund.

Daniela continued to the 2015 budget. The budgeted 2015 year-to-date (YTD) net was \$217.1k. The actual 2015 YTD net is \$162.0k. If the Society stays on track according to the budget, the end-of-year net is projected to be \$70k. Daniela also projected that the worst case end-of-year net is \$6.5k.

A discussion followed Daniela's presentation. It was pointed out that with large surpluses and reserves, the Society should find ways to spend beneficially. For instance, conferences with large surpluses could refund some registration fees to students. It was suggested that the financial goal of the Society should be a zero budget surplus.

5. Frank Kschischang presented the Editor-in-Chief (EiC) Report. Frank first thanked outgoing associate

Frank continued with a proposal for the creation of a Managing Editor position. Frank pointed out that the EiC job is demanding, requiring one to two days per week on average. To alleviate the load, Frank recommends adopting a shift-register model by appointing a Managing Editor (ME) who will transition into Editor-in-Chief after 18 months, upon appointment of next ME. The ME would be responsible for day-to-day paper handling/assignment, dealing with authors and AEs, and interacting with ScholarOne. The EiC would take overall responsibility, be responsible for producing issues, handle appeals, interact with IEEE Production Portal, recruit new AEs (in consultation with ME and EEB), write reports, and make presentations.

A discussion followed. It was agreed that the IT EiC position is very demanding and should be supported with some decentralization. It was suggested that the proposed change is minimal, and could be supplemented by other support, such as area editors. The proposed change would require BoG approval but does not require bylaw changes. Informal support for Frank's plan was noted.

and "Somewhat" responses. The conference used a special committee for selecting semi-plenary papers. Elza asked whether ISITs should continue to highlight a subset of papers. Would venue constraints at upcoming ISITs allow for that, and are there other possible formats?

A discussion followed. It was suggested that 86% is a very high percentage, and the Board could encourage this format by making sure future ISITs select venues which allow for semi-plenary sessions. This could

Sarwate, Matthieu Bloch, Adriaan J. de Lind van Wijngaarden, Stefan Moser, and J. Nicholas Laneman. Committee activities since ISIT 2015 include bringing in Matt LaFleur to assist in website maintenance, consulting with other societies on website design, requesting and obtaining funds from IEEE for major site redesign, surveying ITSOC membership about site needs/desires, initiating redesign and upgrade process with Six Feet Up, and transferring ISIT Plenary and Shannon Lectures to hosting on Vimeo.

The committee is focusing on improving internal and end-user performance by (1) working with Matt LaFleur to make a master checklist of updates and deadlines to ensure more timely posting and updating of content, (2) overhauling and redesigning the site, (3) soliciting volunteers to assist in curating/organizing/generating content for the site, (4) reaching out to existing initiatives to offer online support.

Anand mentioned that other societies (SPS, Comm, etc.) have external hosting and site design from outside of IEEE, as well as dedicated IEEE staff webmaster who handles light maintenance.

Anand reviewed the results of the ITSoc membership survey. Problems with the site mentioned in the survey response include technical issues (slow page loads, etc.), inconsistency and lack of comprehensiveness, failure to encourage exploration, the shortage of content regarding information theory in general. Features desired by respondents include (in order of popularity): more videos, archiving of old conference sites, hosting of existing conference sites, outreach material, and self-organization into interest groups. Desired content include more videos, links to social media, blogs, twitter, etc., talks/slides for general audiences (c.f. TEDtalk/Khan Academy), free technical materials or surveys, fora for people to ask questions (technical and general), regular updates and new content, methods to organize a more global audience.

Anand proposed the following work for site upgrade: providing more content; creating mailing lists for each committee; redesigning the main navigation to reduce the number clicks, modernize look and feel, and help promote the Shannon Centenary; upgrading the user management system, sub-site system, and fix load times, database issues.

The Online Committee has requested and received \$45k from IEEE to defray costs. It is currently pushing upgrades (back-end) to the front of the schedule. The total expense for the proposed changes will be \$47,000 to \$78,000 depending on the complexity. The Committee requests authorization to spend an additional \$15k (in addition to the \$65k from IEEE and current budget) to expedite the proposed site changes.

Anand continued: the site now has a nascent social media presence: ITSOC Twitter account. Twenty-six videos from ISIT are up on our Vimeo page. The site is coordinating with Shannon Centenary initiatives around the web.

Anand continued with Shannon's Channel: a video initiative. Subject to approval, the Online Committee will work with Salim El Rouayheb's "Shannon's Channel" YouTube/videocast talk series. For this, talks are announced ahead on the webpage and are given using the Google+ Hangout platform. Anyone can watch the talks live and ask questions. The talks are recorded and made available on YouTube and can be watched at anytime.

Finally, Anand mentioned that the Committee has started working with Elza Erkip on investigating possibilities for conference app development.

11. Michael Langberg presented the report on the IT Newsletter. The Newsletter is currently published four times a year (March, June, September, December) in hard copy and also on the ITSoc webpage. The number of subscribers is roughly 3300. The editorial board consists of Michael Langberg (Editor since

March 2015) and the editorial committee: Frank Kschischang, Giuseppe Caire, Meir Feder, Tracey Ho, Joerg Kliever, Anand Sarwate, Andy Singer, and Sergio Verdu.

Michael reviewed the timeline for publication of the Newsletter. The current sections include the President's column, Technical contributions, the Historian's Column, the Students' Corner (new), "From the Field", Chapter column, Puzzle Column, Reports, and Calls/Announcements. The Newsletter solicits technical contributions from the community for the community, from "adjacent" communities for the community (introduce our readers to new and exciting problems) and from the community for "adjacent" communities (broaden the influence of our society).

The Newsletter encourages everyone to share any ideas regarding potential contributions, new columns, and any interesting events/topics that need highlighting.

A short discussion followed. It was asked whether the Newsletter should become a more magazine-like publication. It was agreed that this would require a substantially bigger effort. Ubli Mitra agreed to look into such a transition ongoing for the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society.

12. The Fellows Committee report by Rob Calderbank was presented. The 2015-16 IT Fellows Selection Committee members are Helmut Boelcskei, Andrea Goldsmith, Bert Hochwald, Vijay Kumar, Emre Telatar, Roy Yates. The committee had five strong candidates to evaluate, and provided IEEE with a rank ordering of the candidates before the IEEE deadline. Discussion of candidates was conducted by email. Each candidate was assigned to a committee member who initiated our group discussion by drafting and circulating a succinct description of the candidate's outstanding contributions. Contributions to the email discussion were collected by the Chair, shared with committee members as the discussion proceeded, and they formed the basis for assignment of scores at the end of the process.

The number of nominations is cause for concern. When there are few candidates the expectation is that not all will be elected, so well-qualified candidates start to make the calculation that their chances are better if their nominations were submitted to the Communications and Signal Processing societies. While it is disappointing to have only five candidates, it is unusual to have five strong candidates. If it is because members of our community delay making nominations until a candidate is well above the bar, then we may want to change our practice.

A discussion followed. It was suggested that the Society provide guidance on the timeline for applying for Fellow. It may be helpful to generate a list of members with associated IEEE grade. More names should be suggested to the Fellows Committee by for instance, former Fellows Committee members.

13. Ruediger Urbanke presented the Membership and Chapter Committee report. The committee is working on an archiving tool for committee tasks which will keep old folders as archive and prepare new folders for successors every year.

The Committee is closely monitoring the activities of chapters around the world. The UK and Ireland as well as the Norway chapters were to be dissolved, but Yossy Sayir and Deniz Gunduz have stepped up to save the UK chapter. The Washington, Kitchener-Waterloo, Philadelphia, South Australia, and Russia chapters are currently on the watch list. New chapters have been started in India (Madras), Italy (Marco Dalai, Ezio Biglieri, Michele Zorzi), and Chicago (Daniela Tuninetti).

For 2014-2015, the Distinguished Lecturer Program hosted Giuseppe Caire (Macedonia), Frans Willems (South Africa), Gerhard Kramer (Spain) and Suhas Diggavi (Canada).

14. Osvaldo Simeone presented the Students Subcommittee report. The subcommittee is currently co-chaired by Osvaldo and Deniz Gunduz. Student/postdoc Volunteers for the subcommittee are Jonathan Scarlett (EPFL) and Bernhard Geiger (TUM).

At ITA 2015, the subcommittee co-organized a panel discussion on "101 reasons to study IT" with the Outreach subcommittee. The panelists were Ubli Mitra, Andrea Montanari and Emina Soljanin. The event had very high attendance. At ISIT 2015, the subcommittee organized lunch with Shannon awardee Rob Calderbank. The interview from the event will be available online soon. Expenses for the ITA 2015 and ISIT 2015 events total \$3,500. Other initiatives include the introduction of a new "Student Column" in the IT Newsletter (in collaboration with M. Langberg).

For 2016, the subcommittee will select a faculty co-chair to replace Deniz Gunduz, extend membership to students/postdocs with the aim of enhancing diversity and establishing a presence in Asia and Latin America, continue with the ITA panel and ISIT Meet the Shannon Awardee events. The budget for 2016 is set at \$5k.

15. Alon Orlitsky presented the Schools report on behalf of Aylin Yener. For 2015, all schools have concluded. The European school took place in April (reported presented in Hong Kong). The North American school took place in August. The East Asia school, India school, South Africa school, and Australia took place in June 2015, July 2015, August 2015, and November 2014, respectively. No report has been received for these schools yet.

for students and postdocs, positioning IT graduates successfully for getting academic positions and giving good job talks; (2) for junior faculty: how to choose and successfully advise students, how to get research grants.

At ISIT 2015, WITHITS held an event which included two networking and mentoring oriented games. Natasha Devroye and Lalitha Sankar ran the meeting. The event had about 30 participants. The aim of the event was to encourage a sense of community by finding what the participants had in common with each other.

18. Ruediger Urbanke gave an update on the activities of the Shannon Centennial Planning Committee. The committee consists of Christina Fragouli, Michelle Eros, Ruediger Urbanke, and Lav Varshney. The committee's mission is to plan and coordinate events for Shannons Centenary, and to make the general public aware of Shannons contributions.

Ruediger introduced a crowd-sourced logo for the Shannon Centennial celebrations. The committee has contacted various schools concerning the Centennial celebrations. A Wikipedia entry has been created for the Shannon Centenary, and the ITSoc website is featuring the event. Emre Telatar and Greg Wornell are working to list Shannon's contributions as an IEEE Milestone. A number of volunteers are designing posters featuring different aspects of Shannon's contributions. Joerg Kliewer, Aaron Wagner, and Anand