

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Nice, France, June 24, 2007

João Barros

Attendees: John Anderson, João Barros, Ezio Biglieri, Giuseppe Caire, Daniel Costello, Richard Cox, Anthony Ephremides, Dave Forney, Marc Fossorier, Andrea Goldsmith, Alex Grant, Tor Helleseth, Ralf Koetter, Ryuji Kohno, Frank Kschischang, J. Nicholas Laneman, Hans-Andrea Loeliger, Steven W. McLaughlin, Muriel Médard, Urbashi Mitra, Prakash Narayan, David L. Neuhoff, Vincent Poor, Bixio Rimoldi, Nela Rybowicz, Anant Sahai, Sergio D. Servetto, Shlomo Shamai, Ulrich Speidel, Joseph A. O'Sullivan, Daniela Tuninetti, David Tse, Adriaan J. van Wijngaarden, Ken Zeger.

The meeting was called to order at 13:00 by Society President Bixio Rimoldi, who welcomed the members of the Board.

1. The agenda was approved with a change of order. The change was due to the fact that Nicholas Laneman, who was expected to present a proposal for a new initiative, had to leave earlier than planned. Board members were encouraged to look at the agenda and other materials online at the Society development server.
2. The Board unanimously approved the minutes of the previous meeting (Baltimore, MD, USA, March 14, 2007).
3. Anant Sahai presented the Treasurer's report. The Society's finances were reviewed and found to be in good health. The Treasurer explained how, according to the new financial rules of IEEE, half of the operative surplus of the previous year can be spent in an on-budget way until the end of the year. This results in an amount of 208k that can be viewed as a "one-time" spending opportunity. The Treasurer also presented foreseeable risks in the future and expressed some concern regarding a possible reduction of the Society's IEEEExplore revenues.

Some caution was advised regarding the 10% surplus that each conference is expected to deliver to the Society. The Treasurer believes that although IEEE recommends a 20% surplus, the current value of 10% is reasonable in the short term to ensure the health of the Society's finances.

4. The Board agreed on (a) starting with the presentation of proposals for new initiatives and (b) making the corresponding motions after the last proposal was presented.
5. The Online Editor, J. Nicholas Laneman, presented the recommendations of the ad-hoc committee on online content and services with respect to how to invest part of the surplus in order to expand the Society's web infrastructure. The Online Editor underlined the necessity of having typical users testing the system under development to ensure that the interfaces are sufficiently pleasant to use. The recommendations elaborate on several possibilities of improving the use of repositories, providing support for publications (conferences, journals and preprints) and making lectures widely available on the web. A general strategy for improving the Society's use of the web was put to discussion.

The Board discussed whether it would make sense for the Society to take a leadership role within IEEE with respect to using the web for member interactions.

Rich Cox explained that IEEE is planning to put preprints available online, once they are accepted for publication. He also commented that the current recommendation of the ad-hoc committee goes well beyond IEEEExplore in using the web to promote interaction between IEEE members. IEEE estimates that only 20% of its members interact at conferences and meetings.

Andrea Goldsmith expressed some concern regarding forcing a cultural change within the Society and advised some caution regarding the investment and the size of the envisioned project.

Giuseppe Caire explained the difficulties that conference organizers have in finding the right infrastructure for submission and registration support. He recommended that the Society's web-site should provide more help in this direction.

Ulrich Speidel pointed out that the structure of the Society's conferences does not change substantially from year to year, so that the web infrastructure could be re-used easily.

Anant Sahai elaborated on the importance of the web for the younger generation and how it can be a tool to attract undergraduate students to our field.

Ralf Koetter suggested integrating existing software as opposed to designing a whole system from scratch.

Sergio Servetto stressed the need for professional assistance in drawing adequate specifications. A small amount would be necessary to take such initial steps.

6. Sergio Servetto presented a proposal of the Student Committee. The main idea is to start an annual event similar to the Winter School on Information Theory in Europe with the goal of creating opportunities for students to meet each other informally.

The Board discussed means to fund this kind of initiatives, including the use of surplus funds from conferences.

Frank Kschischang suggested that the School be co-located with ISIT to save travel funds.

7. Ulrich Speidel presented a proposal of a fund of 10.000 USD to support graduate

8. The President discussed the possibility of digitizing past proceedings of conferences, specifically CISS and Allerton. It is not yet clear whether the organizers of Allerton would be interested in this effort. The Board discussed the issues of copyright.
9. Steve McLaughlin presented a motion to allocate 10,000 USD for initial specifications regarding substantial (order of 100,000 USD) and modular improvements to the Society's web infrastructure. The proposal shall be presented at the next meeting of the Board at Allerton.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

10. A motion was presented by Prakash Narayan to allocate 10,000 USD to help fund a Winter or Summer School on Information Theory and Coding pending a specific proposal of the Student Committee (Sergio Servetto).

Sergio Servetto clarified that the aforementioned amount would be used as seed money to start preparing the event.

The Board discussed the possibility of discussing a more specific proposal at the Allerton meeting.

The President suggested creating also a distinguished speaker program, as recommended by the IEEE.

The Computer Society Chapter of the Santa Clara Valley Section runs a lecture series called Shannon Lectures. Contacts have been made to avoid name duplication with the Society's Shannon Lecture.

The President thanked all the members who collaborated on the Publications Report and Society Report, which were used for the Quinquennial Review by IEEE. The President mentioned several suggestions made by IEEE, which are included in his report available online.

14. Vincent Poor presented the report of the Editor in Chief (EIC), including mail dates, page budgets and annual volume. The Five-Year Transactions Review emphasized that the Transactions are an exemplary periodical and mentioned that the time from submission to publication has been reduced.

Muriel Médard made the suggestion of promoting a special issue of the Transactions jointly with a journal in biology to explore intersections between the two fields.

15. Ezio Biglieri presented five initiatives to be pursued during his tenure: (1) allowing comments made by readers of arxiv preprints to be taken into consideration in the paper review process of the Transactions, (2) reducing processing time through frequent automatic reminders, (3) re-evaluating the submission of correspondence items and content overlap with conference papers, (4) organizing a series of invited papers, and (5) starting a magazine with news and light tutorial papers.

The Board discussed the page limit for transactions letters.

The President and Anthony Ephremides suggested abolishing the distinction between Transactions papers and letters.

Urbashi Mitra highlighted the implications of the differences between the quality of reviews in conferences and the Transactions.

Giuseppe Caire suggested a single class of papers with no page limit and a flexible policy of re-submission of conference papers.

Vincent Poor stressed that Transactions papers come from different sources, including computer science conferences where the reviewing process is, in some cases, very strict.

The Board approved a motion by David Neuho for the appointment of an ad-hoc committee to re-evaluate the editorial guidelines and the creation of a magazine.

16. Daniela Tuninetti presented a proposal for an online version of the IT Newsletter.

The Board approved a motion to increase the budget allocated to the IT Newsletter by 525 USD per issue to enable the trial of an HTML version.

17. Alex Grant presented the Conference Coordinator's report on the current status of symposia and workshops. The individual reports for each event are available online.

It seems necessary to define whether the awards luncheon at ISIT is an ITSOC event (Society funding) or an ISIT event (conference funding). This issue will be discussed further at the next meeting in Allerton.

The Board discussed the possibility of publishing ISIT tutorials through NOW publishers.

Andrea Goldsmith presented a motion to withdraw from IEEEExplore those ISIT papers, whose authors did not go to ISIT to present their papers, subject to the discretion of the TPC Chairs. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

The Treasurer expressed some concerns with respect to the budget of ISIT 2011 in St. Petersburg.

The Board discussed the necessity of demanding cautious budgets from conference organizers, in particular with respect to number of attendees and anticipated surplus.

Dan Costello presented a motion to hold ISIT 2011 in St. Petersburg with a modified budget to account for a projected surplus of 10%. The budget must be approved by the Treasurer.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

The Board discussed tentative dates for ISIT 2010 in the case that it is held in Austin, Texas.

18. Andrea Goldsmith presented a motion to approve formation of an ad-hoc committee on new initiatives. The goal is to provide a dedicated mechanism for soliciting, developing and evaluating new initiatives.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

The committee will be formed immediately, with its first report given at Allerton.

23. There was no new business.
24. The next Board meeting will be held at Allerton in September.
25. The meeting was adjourned at 18:58.