

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting
Location: Zoom Remote Meeting

Date: October 10-11, 2020

Time: The meeting convened at 10:00 am EST October 10; the meeting adjourned at 1.52 pm EST October 11, 2020

Meeting Chair: Aylin Yener

Minutes taken by: Lara Dolecek

Meeting Attendees:

Erik Agrell, Erdal Arıkan, Matthieu Bloch, Suhas Diggavi, Alex Dimakis, Lara Dolecek, Stark Draper, Elza Erkip, Meir Feder, Christina Fragouli, Andrea Goldsmith, Camilla Hollanti, Sid Jaggi, Tara Javidi, Vijay Kumar, Matt LaFleur (#), Olgica Milenkovic, Prakash Narayan, Henry Pfister, Vince Poor, Joachim Rosenthal, Parastoo Sadeghi, Igal Sason, Emina Soljanin, Daniela Tuninetti, Aaron Wagner, Aylin Yener, and Wei Yu.

Non-voting attendees are denoted by (#).

At 10:00 am EST, ITSoc President Aylin Yener called the meeting to order.

Attendees introduced themselves and the roll call was taken. President Yener thanked everyone for joining the meeting and especially for joining across different time zones.

The following motion was issued.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the agenda.

The motion passed.

President's Report – Aylin Yener

President Yener gave the outline of the presentation, which consisted of the following: summary of activities since the last meeting; final membership campaign stats; IEEE related updates; and lessons learned from other IEEE societies.

She went over the activities since the last meeting in June 2020, including officers election, which was completed in July, Distinguished Lecturer program, which was reinstated online in July, and Board of Governors election, which was run and executed in September. She welcomed new Board members, and expressed Big Thanks to the outgoing members. The new elected Board members for the period 2021-2023 are: Natasha Devroye, Massimo Franceschetti, Brian M. Kurkoski, Anand D. Sarwate, Vincent Y. F. Tan, and Aaron B. Wagner. She noted that Vincent and Brian are Region 10 representatives. The outgoing members are: Elza Erkip, Vince Poor, and Parastoo Sadeghi.

She then went over the membership statistics. There are 741 total new members who joined via the campaign, including 158 Student Members (116 Graduate Students), 237 Senior Members,

337 Members, 9 Fellows, and 258 new members from Region R10. Total membership count as of October 9 is 3781 members.

Regarding the update from the IEEE, she stated that the budget is still favorable. Regarding the conference revenue, she stated that it was expectedly low, but that there were also concurrent reductions in other expenses, such as travel to IEEE meetings. She stated that there were no reported issues with our operational funding or new initiatives, and that in fact we have new approved initiatives.

President Yener then updated on the Systems Council Membership to which the Information Theory Society was invited. She stated that there is a fee to being a member but that the fee was waived. She stated that we as a society can be as involved as we want. She then went over the concrete outcomes, which are to advertise for the main conference and for the new Information Theory magazine. The Council requested one person from the society to be in their governance, and President Yener volunteered for that position.

President Yener then went over lessons from other IEEE societies, and what possible ideas can we also adopt. She mentioned that ICASSP 2020 conference while being fully remote had over fifteen thousand attendees. Successful strategies can include themed online lectures, more involved social media interactions, and industry engagement and competitions.

Regarding the division meetings, President Yener stated that we are with the Signal Processing Society in Division 9. Some societies are already engaging in hybrid meetings and that the fee structure is being studied.

New Committees – Aylin Yener and Wei Yu

The presenters went over the goals of the committee which are to group ad hoc committees under themes and establish standing committees, and have the chair of each committee be a BoG member at time of appointment. Then, the scope of the External Outreach committee was presented. It was stated that our society has been engaged in a number of outreach activities for non-members, and that this should continue to be the case, and that successful activities are carried out by several volunteers separately, including the book, pilot videos, and the movie. Proposal is to establish an external outreach committee as the union of the above activities and more. It was suggested to implement two or three year term limits, renewable up to two times. It was also stated that current memberships have overlaps and synergy. The presenter then went over the FITS committee and stated that the committee has been operating since May, and that it includes digital platform efforts for now, adding that in the long run, the committee can turn into a strategic committee. Aylin also asked BoG members to chair and participate in committees.

The following straw poll was issued:

Item 1: Each standing committee shall have a chair who is a BoG member at the time of appointment.

Item 2: External Outreach committee shall consist of at least five members (including the chair) and shall be responsible for coordinating the outreach efforts to general public in promoting the field and its impact.

Item 3: FITS committee shall consist of at least five members (including the chair) and shall be responsible for strategic initiatives of the society, including a unified digital presence through online activities and social networks.

A BoG member suggested to change the outreach to inreach on the other committee having a similar name, and make this one an outreach committee. Another BoG member suggested to have inbound and outbound subcommittees.

It was clarified that the chair of the standing committee should be a BoG member but the subcommittee chair need not. It was also pointed by a BoG member that for the real vote precise wording needs to be in the bylaws.

The result of the straw poll was as follows:

Item 1: 19 yes, 2 no, 2 abstain votes.

Item 2: 20 yes, 1 no, 2 abstain votes.

Item 3: 20 yes, 1 no, 2 abstain votes.

The following motion was issued:

Motion: to extend the meeting by 45 minutes.

Motion passed.

Paper Awards Committee – Wei Yu

The next presentation was given by Wei Yu on behalf of the Paper Awards committee. Wei thanked the members of the committee for their service. He then presented the status of the ITSoc paper award. He stated that there were 8 occasions for two concurrent papers, most with independent discoveries. He stated that the committee believes that it is now the time to consider allowing up to two winners, which requires a Bylaws change with 2/3 majority votes by the BoG. First, Wei went over the current bylaws and stated that this year the committee considered a total of 16 nominations, and that the size of nomination pool was similar last year. He then presented the growth chart of the Information Theory in terms of publications. It used to be that one paper was selected out of 200 published papers, but that now it is one out of 500. Next, Wei stated that the new Journal on Selected Areas in Information Theory (JSAIT) is already organizing five issues this year, and that as a result there will be significant increase in the number of overall published papers in ITSoc, as well as in the diversity of topics. He then presented Pros and Cons for expanding the award paper limit to be up to two papers per year. He also presented the comparisons with peer IEEE societies in terms of their size and number of paper awards.

The following straw poll was presented:

Item 1: The Information Theory Society Paper Award is given annually for up to two outstanding publication(s) in the fields of interest to the Society appearing anywhere during the preceding four calendar years. The purpose of this Award is to recognize exceptional publications in the field and to stimulate interest in and encourage contributions to fields of interest of the Society.

Wei stated that the Paper Awards committee members unanimously support engaging the BoG to discuss the possibility to allow the above flexibility.

Then, Wei discussed the conflict of interest. He stated that this year, 4 out of 9 members were excluded at various stages of the award deliberation process. Committee suggestion is to replace Paper Awards Committee members who are co-authors of a nominated paper. This action will be done by N&A after the nomination deadline (March 1).

The following straw poll was presented:

Item 2: Authors of papers nominated for the ITSoc Paper Award should not serve on the Paper Awards Committee.

A discussion among the BoG members regarding the status of the paper award ensued. A BoG member said that it might be hard to differentiate between one paper and one result. Another BoG member said that a single award would be most prestigious and that other awards could be instituted. Some BoG members raised a concern that increasing the paper limit would lower the prestige. A BoG member said that the increase would give the committee needed flexibility.

The result of the straw poll was:

Item 1: 14 yes, 6 no, 0 abstain votes.

Item 2: 20 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain votes.

IT Schools – Stark Draper

The next presentation was given by Stark Draper as the Chair of the ITSoc Schools Committee. Stark first thanked Parastoo and Christina for their service. He recalled that 3 of the 4 Schools planned for 2020 — NASIT'20 (Vancouver, July), EASIT'20 (Seoul, August), India'20 (Kanpur, July) — were deferred to 2021. He stated that ESIT'20 (Stuttgart), originally scheduled for May will be held November 23-27 as a virtual school. He shared ESIT'20 update from Christian Senger and Stephan ten Brink as school organizers. The update is that lectures will be pre-recorded, and videos will be ITSoc-branded for consistency. He also stated that the ESIT organizers are in close contact with lecturers and will be providing support. In particular, videos will be made available online prior to event; time during the event will be used for moderated Q&A with speakers, and live interaction with school attendees; participants will provide posters together with one-minute-madness videos; two, maybe more, virtual poster session will be hosted by Christian and Stephan. Each poster will have a “sub-session” to allow participants to hop from poster-to-poster and to interact with the poster presenter directly. Proposed registration fees for the school are: free for ITSoc members, 30 Euro for IEEE members, 100 Euro for non-IEEE members. ESIT will be the only school held this year. The organizers will send back feedback and share best practices.

Stark also stated that all deferred schools plan to hold their events in 2021. Vienna school organizers are to be contacted if they are still interested. He also mentioned that a School needs to be somewhat decoupled from the hosting university so as to avoid conflict of interest with the employer.

There was a brief discussion indicating that Stark's term as the school subcommittee chair is ending this year. There will be a BoG vote in accordance with our bylaws for the confirmation of the new chair.

The meeting entered a recess at 1.40 pm EST on Saturday, October 10.

The meeting resumed at 10 am EST on Sunday, October 11.

First, President Yener took the roll call. The following members were in attendance: Erik Agrell, Erdal Arikan, Matthieu Bloch, Suhas Diggavi, Alex Dimakis, Lara Dolecek, Stark Draper, Elza Erkip, Meir Feder, Christina Fragouli, Andrea Goldsmith, Camilla Hollanti, Sid Jaggi, Tara Javidi, Vijay Kumar, Matt LaFleur (#), Olgica Milenkovic, Prakash Narayan, Henry Pfister, Vince Poor, Joachim Rosenthal, Parastoo Sadeghi, Igal Sason, Emina Soljanin, Daniela Tuninetti, Aaron Wagner, Aylin Yener, and Wei Yu.

All attendees joined remotely via Zoom; non-voting attendees are denoted by (#).

10:00-10:05 Attendance

10:05-10:25 Treasurer's Report (Wagner)

Treasurer's Report – Aaron Wagner

The next report was given by Aaron Wagner in his role as the Society's Treasurer. This was Aaron's last report as his term is ending this year.

Aaron started with overview of how the funds are allocated towards general funds and special projects. He then went over the status of various categories comprising 2020 general funds.

He noted that IEEE carries conference insurance with a pandemic rider. This should cover the difference between expected \$103K and actual \$31K ISIT surplus for ISIT 2020. The payout will likely occur in 2021, but there will be no coverage for ISIT 2021.

Next, Aaron said that 2020 Special Projects were scrapped due to the pandemic and the new list was made, with fewer items.

Next, Aaron went over the 2021 General Funds. He stated that in 2021, unlike how it is normally done, IEEE did not make any requests/recommendations, even for the bottom line. They only sent forecasts for the line items that they control. Aaron reported that he submitted the budget. He went over the key details of the proposed budget, stating that it in the worst case has \$61k deficit.

Then, Aaron went over the financials of the IT Transactions. There was a continued downward trend which was suddenly reversed last year. Aaron investigated this phenomenon and figured out that the upward spike was due to the overall IEEE profit increase. His take-away point was that shorter papers have financial benefit. Editorial considerations towards that practice could be a financially beneficial cultural change.

EiC Transactions on Information Theory – Igal Sason

Next report was given by Igal Sason in his capacity as the Editor-in-Chief of the IT Transactions.

Igal presented candidates for the positions of Associate Editors of the Transactions. He stated that there is a need in the technical areas for which these candidates are proposed. He provided biographies and list of key publications for each candidate.

BoG was appreciative that there were candidates from industry. A BoG member expressed concern that there was no gender diversity amongst the candidates. Igal stated that 20% of current editors are females. Another BoG member expressed concern that the editorial board is moving more towards CS. It was echoed that the diversity should be sought from within the community. Another BoG member suggested that criteria should be well known to solicit a broad pool of candidates to make the process transparent. It was also suggested to keep a record of who was invited and had accepted or declined.

The following motions were issued:

Motion: To approve Alekh Agrawal (Machine Learning Area) as an Associate Editor.

Motion: To approve Salman Beigi (Quantum Information Theory Area) as an Associate Editor.

Motion: To approve Pradeep Kiran Sarvepalli (Quantum Information Theory Area) as an Associate Editor.

Motion: To approve Akshay Krishnamurthy (Machine Learning Area) as an Associate Editor.

All four motions passed.

Online Committee – Matthieu Bloch reporting on behalf of Brian Kurkoski

Next presentation was given by Matthieu who was filling in for Brian. He went over the development of the new itsoc.org website. He stated that copyright compliance is encouraged to avoid glitches. The goal of the new site is to make a unified online presence. Project is going well so far and Matthieu praised Brian for his leadership. Matthieu stated that expenses are coming up and budget is being spent, and that the maintenance cost is likely to decrease in the future. Matthieu showed initial pages, and stated that the committee welcomes inputs now as they start rollout in 2-3 weeks.

FITS Report – Matthieu Bloch

Next presentation was given by Matthieu on behalf of the Future of the Information Theory Society (FITS) Committee. Matthieu over the executive summary which is to unify and strategize all our online activities. He presented several ongoing efforts, which are: IEEE single sign-on authentication; hosting of media resources and integration with website; support for remote events; distinguished lecturers' (DLs) recordings; organization of hybrid meetings; leveraging web to support and enhancing BITS magazine. Several efforts are on track and some such as DL lecture recording are delayed. Matthieu went over the status of the IEEE authentication, summarizing that this set-up will be released with the new website by the online committee. Then, Matthieu went over the status of hosting of multimedia resources and stated that the new AWD CDN integration will be released with the new website by online committee. Next, Matthieu presented the status of the support for remote events, stating that the support will also be available with the new website. He stated that the committee needs help for unified licensing of the content. Regarding support for remote events and video conferencing, he went over both the short term objectives as well as long term vision. He stated that related expenses are not just operational but can also be viewed as a conference expense. Matthieu stated that big organizations are doing remote conferencing in new and radical ways, and that now is the

opportunity to innovate. Regarding Distinguished Lecturer program recordings, Matthieu stated that it is in progress. He emphasized that there is a lot more than meets the eye, and that volunteer help is needed. Regarding the organization of hybrid meetings, Matthieu went over the current situation and on-going efforts. Erik has started the first draft of guidelines. The committee needs help in the form of an additional pair of eyes. Next, Matthieu went over the status of BITS on the Web. There has been constant communication with Rob Calderbank to enhance BITS with online content. Matthieu presented representative examples, including 2 pages on polar codes, and 2 minute videos to support published articles. He stated that help is needed here as well.

A BoG member stated that expenses can be budgeted for to support BITS. Another committee member suggested to integrate content with the existing online IT content. Another BoG member suggested to have a part of the content be outward for public, and another part be login-based for the society's members, as a part of the membership value.

After a short break the meeting continued.

Conference Committee – Vijay Kumar

The next presentation was given by Vijay as the chair of the conference committee. He started by going over the members of the committee and thanking them for their service. Next, he went over the status update for 2021: ITW 2020 is most likely virtual; ISIT 2021 preference by the organizers is virtual/hybrid/in-person, in that order; ITW 2021 will be hybrid if possible, else virtual. For the next set of conferences, the status update from the organizers is: ISIT 2022 had the conflict of interest resolved, and in-person is preferred; ITW 2022 organizers are rethinking the proposal given the feedback; ISIT 2023 in-person or hybrid is preferred; and potential ISIT 2024 organizers are rethinking proposal given comments, and looking for guidance.

Regarding ITW 2020 to be held in Riva del Garda, Italy, Vijay stated that the new dates in April 2021 are confirmed as are participants and the organization team. It is likely that the format is fully virtual, with a small chance of being in person. Submission deadline has been extended and online contracts and virtualization are in progress.

Regarding ISIT 2021 to be held in Melbourne, Australia, Vijay went over various format choices and cancelation penalties. All options are open with virtual being most likely. He went over deposits and sponsorship as well as preliminary budget for the virtual format. Vijay stated that the organizers will postpone decision on changing to either virtual or hybrid until last minute possible. Once they decide, their request to the BoG is to conduct a quick motion to approve of their conversion to virtual or hybrid as the case might be.

He next went over the status of ITW 2021 to be held in Kanazawa, Japan. He noted that there will be two ITWs that year. Preference from the organizers is to make it hybrid, then virtual. Vijay went over the format of different choices and associated cancelation penalties.

For ISIT 2022 to be held in Helsinki, Finland, the preference from the organizers is to have it in-person, then virtual, as hybrid was seen as a challenge. A conflict of interest involving IEEE and Aalto University arose as the conference treasurer is also Aalto employee. This issue was resolved with President Yener's help. Vijay stated that format and contract agreements are in progress.

For ITW 2022 to be held in Goa, India, Vijay stated that the organizers will rethink the conference format and report back at the next BoG meeting.

For ISIT 2023 to be held in Taipei, Taiwan, the organizers are watching closely how will Globecom 2020 be conducted in the hybrid format, as the same venue is planned to be used for ISIT. Hybrid model is preferred.

For ISIT 2024 to be held in New York City, which is in the pre-proposal stage, the organizers are re-thinking the situation, due to high local cost and the pandemic crisis, and are looking for guidance from BoG.

Vijay stated that the action items are to fill vacancies on the committee, and to re-think topics and format of future IT conferences and workshops.

Constitution and Bylaws Committee – Elza Erkip

The next presentation was given by Elza as the Chair of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. She went over the purpose and responsibilities of the committee, and its members. She thanked the members for their service. In regards to the new publication BITS, Elza stated that EiC is Rob Calderbank and that the Steering Committee (SC) Chair is Christina Fragouli. She then stated that the bylaws need to be updated to reflect the new journal. Next Elza presented three issues: update the Publications Committee; inclusion of the BITS governance in the bylaws; and ex-officio BoG membership.

Next, Elza went over the Publication Committee structure, raising a point for discussion regarding the representation on BoG. She also raised a question whether the steering committee should be appointed by VP of Publications or Nominations and Appointments Committee. Regarding BITS governance, she raised a point of discussion whether BITS EiC should be a voting member of the Board as an ex-officio member. She next went over the Ex-Officio BoG membership and presented 3 options: 1) to add BITS EiC, 2) to add BITS EiC and with Transactions Executive Editor (EE) no longer ex-officio BoG member, 3) to have an appointed VP of Pubs who is the only ex-officio BoG member representing Publications.

She went over the pros and cons of different options, and stated that option 1 is preferred by Transactions EiC and EE, that option 2 is preferred by BITS SC Chair, and that option 3 is preferred by BITS EiC, JSAIT EiC, and JSAIT SC Chair.

A discussion among the Board members ensued. Several BoG members presented arguments for favoring option 1 and several presented arguments for favoring option 3.

The following motion was issued.

Motion: to extend the meeting by one hour.

Motion was approved.

After the motion was approved, the discussion continued. It was concluded that it would be beneficial to investigate this issue further.

The following straw poll was issued.

To add BITS EiC and Chair of the Steering Committee to the Publications Committee.

The result of the straw poll was: 20 yes, 1 no, 2 abstain votes.

3 options plus another new option to investigate further and abstain

The following poll was issued in regards to the ex-officio BoG membership.

Vote for one of the following options:

- Option 1: Add BITS EiC to the BoG
- Option 2: Add BITS EiC to the BoG, Transactions EE no longer ex-officio BoG Member
- Option 3: Have an appointed VP of Pubs who is the only ex-officio BoG member representing Publications
- Option 4: Investigate further options involving nonvoting ex-officio BoG members
- Abstain

The result of the straw poll was: option 1 – 6 votes; option 2 – 1 vote, option 3 – 4 votes, option 4 – 10 vote, 6 abstains.

In conclusion, Elza said she would follow up.

Constitution and Bylaws Committee – Elza Erkip

The next presentation was given by Elza on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. Members of the committee are Elza Erkip (SPP, Chair) and Emina Soljanin (JPP). Elza went over potential bylaws changes regarding new committees, paper awards, and publications. She stated that reaching unanimous vote needed for change is hard over email as no response is abstain.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee – Stark Draper

The next presentation was given by Stark. He thanked members of the committee for their service and acknowledged everyone's input and help.

He went over the 4 phases, which are 1) Start-up, Jul-Oct'20, 2) Quick wins (QW), Sep-Dec'20, 3) Assess & Analyze (AA), Oct'20- Aug'21, and 4) Build & Launch (BL), 2021-2022. First two will be done by the end of the year and the third will be done by next ISIT. Current focus of the committee includes: governance, data, and activities. He then presented context & purpose of the committee, its responsibilities, and a detailed project plan. Next, Stark went over the IEEE Information Theory Society reporting on D&I efforts in Governance, in Awards, in Symposia, and in Publications. Committee's detailed response was organized bullet by bullet.

Membership Committee – Christina Fragouli

The next presentation was given by Christina Fragouli on behalf of the membership committee. The following motion was issued:

Motion: To extend the deadline for nominations for Distinguished Lecturers, Padovani Lecturer, and Goldsmith Lecturer to November 15, 2020.

The motion passed.

BITS magazine – Christina Fragouli, presented for Rob Calderbank

Christina presented on behalf of Rob. She went over the timeline, highlighting that first publication will appear in 2021. She then presented the new magazine logo. She summarized the advertising campaign, status of the Manuscript Central submission and the website. New initiative funding proposed by Aaron and approved by Aylin were used towards new magazine efforts. Rob has started soliciting inputs and submissions. End of October is targeted as the submission deadline.

Discussion – Aylin Yener

President Yener led the closing discussion. She highlighted that a lot was accomplished despite the circumstances. She thanked outgoing members Vince Poor, Parastoo Sadeghi, and Elza Erkip for their extensive service to the BoG.