

IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors Meeting

Location: Catamaran Resort, San Diego, USA

Date: 11 February 2018

Time: The meeting convened at 1:00pm PST (GMT-7); the meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Meeting Chair: Elza Erkip

Minutes taken by: Stark Draper

Meeting Attendees:

Alex Acero#, Jeff Andrews, Sasha Barg, Suhas Diggavi, Alex Dimakis, Stark Draper, Michelle Effros#*, Yonina Eldar#, Elza Erkip, Christina Fragoulli, Andrea Goldsmith#, Stephen Hanly, Michael Langberg#, Matt LaFleur#, Pierre Moulin, Prakash Narayan, Krishna Narayanan, Alon Orlitsky, Salim El Rouayheb#, Anand Sarwate#, Emina Soljanin, Daniela Tuninetti, Rüdiger Urbanke, Emanuele Viterbo, Aaron Wagner, Tsachy Weissman*, Michelle Wigger, Greg Wornell, Aylin Yener, Wei Yu.

(Remote attendees denoted by *, non-voting attendees by #.)

Business conducted between meetings: There were no votes conducted by email between the Oct. 2017 Information Theory Society (ITSoc) Board of Governors (BoG) meetings and this meeting.

At 1:00pm local time, ITSoc president Elza Erkip called the meeting to order. She started by reviewing the agenda.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the agenda. The motion passed.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the draft minutes of the Oct. 2018 ITSoc BoG meeting. The motion passed.

- 1) **President's Report:** Elza presented the President's report. This is the 70th anniversary of Shannon 1948 paper and, while the Society is moving into a more senior role, 70 is the new 40, so it stays young at heart! Thanks were made to Michelle Effros, who served as senior past president last year. Elza recognized Michelle's years of service and the many roles she played. Elza then welcomed Helmut Bölcskei, to the presidential cycle and reviewed the presidential suite. Elza recognized Daniela Tuninetti's service as ITSoc Treasurer. Daniela concluded her term at end of 2018 and will be presenting her final report today. Elza recognized retiring BoG member Ubli Mitra, and welcomed back four re-elected BoG members: Stephen Hanly, Vincent Poor, Aylin Yener and Wei Yu. She also welcomed back Daniela in her new role as elected BoG member. Tsachy Weissman was welcomed to the BoG as a new member. Elza thanked Michael Langberg for his three years of service as ITSoc Newsletter editor. Elza thanked Dave Neuhoff, who most recently served as external nominations committee chair. Ubli Mitra will be chairing that committee going forward.

A number of ITSoc members received IEEE Awards this year. Two received IEEE Medals. The first was Nambi Seshadri, who received the IEEE Bell Medal, and Erdal Erkan, who received the IEEE Hamming Medal. IEEE technical field awards were awarded to Peter Shor (IEEE Sumner Award) and Nicolas Laneman (IEEE Tomiyasu Award).

Elza then looked forward. The Shannon documentary is nearing completion. An in depth report was to follow later in the meeting. She quickly reviewed progress on the two possible

new ITSoc publications, a special topics journal and a magazine. More detail on both will be presented later in the meeting, with votes on the appointment of the respective steering committees to be held. The special topics journal will, pending BoG approval in this meeting, shortly move to the Phase I proposal stage. For the moment the (shortly to be approved) magazine steering committee is recommending pausing the magazine approval process to allow consideration of the special topics journal to occur first.

Elza next reviewed ongoing outreach efforts regarding which the BoG will hear today: the children's book, the "Information Theory Hall of Fame" videos, and Webex initiated seminars.

Elza then pointed to an IEEE-level review of the Society, scheduled to happen later this week, with a report on the Society to be presented at the ISIT Vail BoG meeting. She also mentioned a number of discussions at the IEEE and Society levels regarding diversity and inclusion. Elza will present a statement from the IEEE that the BoG can choose to adopt later in the meeting. There have also been grassroots movements to produce an ITSoc statement that would contribute to a conference code-of-conduct, and also to form a Society-level ad-hoc committee on diversity and inclusion. Discussion of both will follow in this meeting.

Elza next brought a few motions to the BoG's attention regarding appointments to various service roles.

Motion: To approve Aaron Wagner as new Treasurer of ITSoc. The motion was moved and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: To approve Salim El Rouayheb as the new editor of the ITSoc Newsletter. The motion was moved and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: To approve a steering committee for the Journal on Selected Topics in Information Theory (JSTIT) consisting of Jeff Andrews (Chair), Robert Calderbank, Muriel Médard, Vincent Poor, Rüdiger Urbanke. The motion was moved and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: To approve a steering committee for the Information Theory Magazine consisting of Wojciech Szpankowski (Chair), Dan Costello, Christina Fragouli, Ubli Mitra. The motion was moved and seconded. After a discussion, summarized below, the move carried.

The BoG discussion surrounded a recommendation by Wojciech to hold off, for now, the appointment of a final member of the steering committee. Wojciech hopes that, once the steering committee is convened, the initial members can jointly identify an additional candidate that could provide a diversification of research interests complementing the initial composition. The BoG raised the question of whether increased geographic diversity should also be considered in the formation of the steering committee(s), and perhaps inclusion of a representative from industry. The duration of the committee was also asked about. Indeed, one aspect of both steering committees is to define their own charters (then to be presented to the BoG) which would set guiding principles and would also specify logistical considerations such as duration of tenure.

Finally, Elza asked Rudi to discuss nominations to fill an open slot on the Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee. Elza clarified that this nomination is a hold-over from last year and so is being handled by Rudi. Rudi discussed how one Society goal is to increase geographic diversity in the composition of our committees. As the N&A Committee is the "mother" of all other committees, having geographic diversity on the N&A Committee is especially important. Two candidates were presented for the BoG's consideration: Prof.

Jong-Seon No (of Seoul National University) and Prof. Raymond Young (of the Chinese University of Hong Kong). Voting will be conducted online.

2) Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's report was deferred till later in the agenda due to flight delays.

3) Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committees: Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee Chair Alon Orlitsky began by reviewing the composition of the N&A committee. As was previously noted N&A needs one additional member. Alon then reviewed the composition of the Fellows Committee. Aylin Yener was a member of this committee but has been appointed to the IEEE-wide Fellows committee and so she has asked to be recused from the ITSoc committee for a year. Antonia Tulino has agreed to join the committee for a three-year term. Alon next reviewed the shift-register pipeline of the Editor-in-Chief (EiC) and Executive Editor (EE) of the Transactions. The current EiC Prakash Narayan and EE Sasha Barg nominated Igal Sason of the Technion to be the next EE. Alon reviewed Igal's CV. The BoG asked what the process is for nominating the EE. Prakash was at the meeting and reviewed the criteria he and Sasha considered: technical capabilities, service, areas of expertise that complement the current EE (the future EiC), and sounding out candidates on their interest to take on the position. He and Sasha then make a recommendation to the N&A Committee. There was a discussion of complementing the current process with an open call, e.g., perhaps through the Newsletter.

Motion: There was a motion to confirm Igal Sason as the new EE of the Transactions. Coming from a committee a second was not needed. The motion passed unanimously.

4) Membership Committee: On behalf of Committee chair Helmut Bölcskei Elza made the report of the Membership Committee to the BoG. Elza first reviewed the ITSoc Distinguished Lecturers program. Each year five new lecturers are appointed for a two year period. This year Marco Dalai, Amos Lapidot, Vincent Tan, Sennur Ulukus, Aaron Wagner were appointed. All have committed to give at least one lecture over the next two years. Elza also reviewed the set of continuing lecturers. Elza then turned to the Schools Subcommittee. Aylin Yener has chaired this committee for many years and Elza thanked her for her service. She then nominated a new chair.

Motion: To confirm Stark Draper as chair of the Schools Subcommittee. The motion passed.

Elza then turned to the Outreach Subcommittee. She thanked outgoing chair Aaron Wagner and nominated a new chair.

Motion: To confirm Vincent Tan as chair of the Outreach Subcommittee. The motion passed.

As came up in earlier meetings, and was raised by the IEEE in the last Society review, Elza reminded the BoG that the IEEE wants Societies to establish better connections with young professionals in industry. The officers and the N&A committee have been looking for an ITSoc member in industry to play two roles. In the first he/she would serve on the ITSoc Membership Committee. In the second he/she would serve as the ITSoc representative on the IEEE Young Professional Committee. The N&A Committee is recommending Yony Murin, who works at Apple, for this role. Yony completed his PhD at the Ben-Gurion University, Israel, and was a postdoc at Stanford University.

Motion: To confirm Yony Murin as ITSoc Young Professionals Representative. The motion carried.

The report concluded with a discussion of the ongoing reorganization of the Membership Committee. The Schools and Outreach committees are to be reorganized under the Membership Committee. While that reorganization has not yet been completed, the above confirmations match the future organizational structure of the Membership Committee. We are currently in a transition period.

- 5) **Treasurer's Report:** Outgoing Treasurer Daniela Tuninetti next presented her (final) Treasurer's report. Daniela reviewed the budget from 2017, the approved budget for 2018, and some upcoming initiatives and deadlines.

Daniela showed the 2017 results as per the FM13 (fiscal month 13) report. Revenue and expenses seem mostly to be as budgeted, with some normal variations, with the following two exceptions.

First, in 2017 \$105k USD was budgeted for new initiatives under the "3% rule" for continuation of the Shannon Centennial Broad Outreach initiative. Of this, less \$50k USD appears to have been spent as of FM13. It was, however, noted that a number of expenses for new initiatives, including \$30k USD for videos, were filed only very late in the year and thus may not yet have appeared on the official IEEE ledger.

Second, in 2017 the IEEE budgeted ITSoc revenue from periodicals of \$863k USD (from publications, digital library, and fees). However, FM13 reported income was only \$706 USD. Alex Acero (Director of IEEE Area IX, who was in attendance) mentioned that overall IEEE revenue from publications is expected to be less than budgeted and that this will result in less revenue redistribution to societies and councils. ITSoc has seen a trend in declining publication revenue over a number of years, and this is expected to continue as a result of the decline in IEEE Xplore clicks for the Transactions and IEEE-level changes in revenue redistribution. It is expected that the overall revenue will be \$109k USD less than budgeted.

Final numbers for 2017 will only be available from the IEEE in March.

Daniela then discussed the 2018 budget. The budget includes \$68k USD under the "3% rule" for continuation of the Shannon Centennial Broad Outreach initiative, resources that will soon need to be assigned to ongoing projects. The 2018 budget for new initiatives under the "50% rule" will be available once the IEEE books close in March 2018. Daniela reminded the BoG that the goal of a zero operational net means that any variation can leave the Society in the negative.

Due to the large shortfall in 2017 revenue, in comparison to IEEE predictions, there was a discussion of how ITSoc gets its budgeting information from the IEEE. Generally the Treasurer and Officers felt that they could use help understanding the budgetary forecasting process at the IEEE level. Assistance was offered by Alex Acero.

Finally, a number of ideas were raised by Daniela and other BoG members regarding sources of increased revenue. First, in comparison to other societies, ITSoc revenue has traditionally come more from publications than from conference fees, but the gap between the two is decreasing as publication revenue decreases. Increasing conference fees would yield an immediate increase in income. Second, ITSoc has only one publication at the moment. Sibling societies have many more. The new initiatives of a special topics journal and a magazine could, in the long term, increase revenue. However, over the next few years, as these publications are getting established, they will contribute more to expenses than to revenue. Third was a change approved by the BoG at a previous meeting; the subsidy for printed subscription to the Transaction is ending. This is expected to have a smallish net positive effect on overall Society income. Other possibilities raised by the BoG

include enforcing page limits or extra page charges. Neither has ever been applied to the Transactions, though one or both will almost certainly be applied to any new publication.

- 6) **Conference Committee:** Conference Committee Chair Emanuele Viterbo updated the BoG on the membership of the Committee, which includes three new members to be voted upon for approval. He thanked outgoing members Rudi Urbanke and Ubli Mitra. The proposed three new members are Daniela Tuninetti, Li Chen, and Salman Avestimehr.

Motion: To confirm Daniela Tuninetti, Li Chen, and Salman Avestimehr as members of the Conference Committee. The motion passed.

Emanuele then reviews the IT Symposia. Barcelona'16 is closed with a surplus of 8.1%, the audit is concluded. Aachen'17 is almost closed, with a surplus of about 10%. There was nothing to report about Vail'18. Paris'19 is requesting BoG approval of its loan so that it can place a deposit on the venue. Los Angeles'20 needs BoG approval of its budget for IEEE to sign contracts. There was nothing to report about Melbourne'21.

There was a question about the relative costs of ISIT versus non-IEEE conferences, some of which are significantly less expensive, and what ITSoc might learn from those conferences. Ideas on how to reduce costs included not to have a full awards lunch or banquet or to make them an extra charge. Apparently, in the past ISIT followed such a model. The Symposium could be shortened, e.g., limiting it to four days instead of five. There was a discussion of how quickly such ideas could be implemented. It was asked whether symposia, the planning of which is already ongoing, could adopt some of these cost-reducing measures. Emanuele will relay these ideas to organizers to see what flexibility can be built into registration offerings and budget. The BoG vote to approve the budget of ISIT 2020, Los Angeles, will be held online a few weeks following the BoG meeting. This will provide the organizers an opportunity to consider alternative arrangements for the banquet to reduce cost and increase the surplus.

A question was raised about industry sponsorship and whether the Society might help organizers to get industry support, rather than leaving each organizing committee to start from scratch. The BoG also asked clarifying questions regarding the number of this year's ISIT submissions, and how that number has varied over time.

Emanuele then reviewed IT workshops. Cambridge'16 is closed. Kaohsiung'17 has closed its budget with a surplus of 6.26%. Guangzhou'18 is on track. A proposal was made for holding an ITW in Visby, Sweden in late August 2019. A proposal will be made at the ISIT'18 BoG meeting to hold an ITW in Italy in 2020.

Motion: To approve the proposal to hold ITW in Sweden in 2019. The BoG raised a concern about timing, less than two months after ISIT'19 which will be held in Paris. After this discussion the motion was approved.

- 7) **Schools Subcommittee:** School Subcommittee Chair Aylin Yener reviewed the schools from 2017, and discussed the upcoming school for NASIT'18 to be held at Texas A&M. Krishnan Narayanan, chair of NASIT'19, reviewed preparations for the school. Aylin also reviewed the ESIT'18 school. Michelle Wigger presented a proposal to hold ESIT'19 in France at Eurocom with students to be housed in Antibes.

Motion: To support the holding of ESIT 2019 in France and support ESIT'19 in the amount of \$15,000 (USD). The motion carried.

Aylin concluded her report by discussing the NASIT'18. There were 40 attendees at NASIT'18, whereas in the past attendance has been approximately 100. Hopefully this year was an anomaly. There was an unfortunately overlap in dates with a major CS conference.

BoG members also noted out that it is very important to advertise the program of schools early and widely, before students firm up plans for summer travel or internships. The schedule, list of speakers, and speaker topics, should be made available as soon as possible. The Committee will monitor attendance.

- 8) Publications:** EiC Prakash Narayan next discussed the state of the Transactions. Prakash will be stepping down as EiC on 30 June 2018. Sasha Barg will take over as EiC on 1 July 2018. And, as was approved above, Igal Sason will start his term as EE on 1 July 2018. Prakash reviewed the number of papers published and the sub-to-pub time. The latter has dropped from 20.7 months in 2012 to 15.4 months in 2017. For the past few years the annual page count of the Transactions has been roughly 7500. In 2017, however, the page count was close to 8000. The page count in 2018 is expected again to be close to 8000 due to an extra (thirteenth) issue; the special issue in memory of Solomon W. Golomb. Prakash then reviewed some recent initiatives. The first is the invitation of cross-cutting articles that connect information theoretic ideas to developments in complementary fields. Currently two such articles are in review and two more are awaited in the next few months. The second is the monthly email delivery to subscribers of the Transactions' table-of-contents. Prakash reviewed the editorial board and thanked retiring associate editors. He then made a motion.

Motion: To approve two new associate editors to the editorial board: Bikash Kumar Dey and Maxim Raginsky. The motion carried.

- 9) Newsletter:** Outgoing Newsletter Editor Michael Langberg reviewed the parameters, logistics, and goals of the ITSoc Newsletter. He discussed regular columns and ongoing projects which include developing content on open problems, columns on how to teach information theory, the provisioning of space in the Newsletter for funding agencies to advertise opportunities to the research community, and an upcoming series of columns on the history of information theory. Michael also discussed the upcoming turn-over of the editorial board and raised the question of whether the four annual issues of the Newsletter are really required. Three issues may suffice, and would better correspond to the academic calendar and cycle of BoG meetings. Looking forward, a change to a three-yearly cycle may also ease the transition of Newsletter content into the proposed ITSoc Magazine.
- 10) Online Committee:** Online Editor and Online Committee Chair Anand Sarwate update the BoG on his committee's work. Ali Tajer has been appointed to the committee. His initial focus will be on collecting and organizing information on past Shannon lecturers. Anand discussed maintenance issues and statistics of the monthly email distribution of the Transactions' table-of-contents: 30-40% of subscribers open the message and 10% click through to view articles. Anand next discussed the ITSoc YouTube video content. In the four weeks preceding the BoG meeting (mid-Jan to mid-Feb 2018) there were 1724 views with 11,348 minutes of viewing time. The direct link to the ITSoc YouTube channel is <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNCCcJS339B8H2PVtq68YQg>.

Anand is concluding his term and shared some thoughts on how the role of the Online Committee and its chair should evolve. Anand first suggested creating a shift-register model for the Online Editor, paralleling that recently put in place for the Transactions. Under this model the role of the Online Editor could become more about soliciting and curating content rather than generating content. He suggested that the website could profitably evolve into a landing space for the general public to learn about information theory. He suggested that the development of outreach to industry could be an added aspect of the website and suggested that material should be reorganized by subject rather than by event (as it is

currently). To support these ideas, as well as to provide needed maintenance and upgrades, additional funding will be required.

11) IEEE Division IX, Director: IEEE Division IX Director Alex Acero attended the meeting the better to connect to ITSoc, which is one society within Division IX. Alex works at Apple and has been an IEEE volunteer for 25 years, closely affiliated with the Signal Processing Society. His hope in attending the BoG meeting was to learn from ITSoc so that he can use what he learned both to help the IEEE and to help ITSoc within the IEEE. As Alex has served on many committees within the IEEE he offered that his experience, e.g., on serving on financial committees, might help ITSoc better navigate some of the financial challenges (mentioned above) that it is currently facing. Alex overview the organization structure of the IEEE including the IEEE Board of Directors, the Technical Activities Board (the “TAB” of which ITSoc is a part, and the role of which is to represent the interests of the technical societies), Member and Geographic Activities (MGA), Educational Activities, IEEE Standards, Publication and Service Products, IEEE USA. Alex is the director of Division IX for 2018-19. Division IX consists of seven societies. The grouping of societies into divisions is by size, not by topic. There are ten divisions in all. In contrast, MGA divides up members by geographic regions, of which there are also ten. Currently 43% of overall IEEE membership (which is roughly 417,000) is in the US. Six of the MGA regions are in the US, an historic artifact of the fact that the IEEE was founded in the US. While IEEE membership in the US has decreased by 14% in the past 10 years (it currently stands at 181,000), it has increased by 123% in India (currently 52,000) and 286% in China (currently 19,000). Most membership in India and China is at the student member level. The greatest drop in membership has been among industrial members. E.g., in 2000 60% of (non-student) members were in industry while only 14% were in academia. In contrast those numbers respectively stand at 47% and 29% today. It appears that a significant contributing factor to the drop in industrial membership is the emergence of the ArXiv. Due to the ArXiv, (former) industrial members no longer need to be able to log in to IEEEExplore to access state-of-the-art research results. Alex discussed challenges that facing societies across the IEEE, in particular that growth has slowed across the board. There was a discussion of how large and small societies fit within the IEEE, how IEEE overhead impacts societies, and the formula for distributing resources to societies. Alex discussed some of the dynamics within IEEE, how the committees work, and the objectives of the IEEE Board of Directors.

12) Shannon Centennial Committee: Dawn Faelnar, a designer who has been working with Anna Scaglione and Christina Fragoulli on the children’s book, next made a presentation. She discussed possible distribution channels, mainly via Amazon. Amazon can both produce and ship the book (ITSoc simply provides the PDF). Amazon has options regarding the amount of royalties that would be accrued per book, from negligible to larger. Anna next discussed final revisions, the possibility of producing translations, and outstanding questions of copyright and royalties which involve discussions with the IEEE. Anna discussed how to connect to target audiences, discussing the appropriate age range, groups such as “Girls who code”, and developing educational experience that could be provided to schools in conjunction with the book. The BoG raised the question of whether IEEE Education could support the final revisions and provide a direct distribution channel. However, meeting attendees that have interacted with IEEE Education voiced the opinion that the younger age brackets the book is written for is not a target audience of IEEE Education, it is too young. In closing Anna presented a request for a final round of funding to complete the project. The BoG decided to defer that discussion pending greater clarification of the 2018 budget.

Motion: Conditioned on approval from IEEE regarding copyright issues, the Committee can make the book available for distribution. The motion was seconded. The vote carried.

- 13) Video Project:** Suhas Diggavi presented an update on the YouTube videos that are being created by Matthieu Bloch, Michelle Effros, Christina Fragouli and him. The first two videos, on Network coding and space-time codes, are now both available online:

Network coding: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0ZcAWEvjCA>

Space time codes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbD4NsZQKYw>

Two additional video efforts are in the works. The first will be on the Lempel Ziv algorithm and the second on low-density parity-check codes (where Rüdiger Urbanke is also involved). Looking forward, Suhas conveyed the following message from the entire team involved with this project. They would really like participation from the the BoG (and the broader ITSoc membership) to identify topics for videos that would cater to interests both inside and outside of ITSoc. He commented that a more systematic approach is required to broaden the set of people involved, necessary to sustain the effort.

- 14) JSTIT Proposal:** Jeff Andrews discussed the proposed IEEE Journal of Special Topics on Information Theory (JSTIT). A letter of intent (LoI) was submitted to the IEEE in August 2017, following a BoG vote at the July 2017 BoG meeting. The LoI was approved and IEEE provided some feedback. The next steps were the formation of a steering committee and the submission of a “Phase I” proposal to the TAB. Jeff reviewed the membership of the steering committee (see the President’s Report, above) and its key responsibilities. The latter include directing the journal to technical and financial success, selecting the EiC, selecting the initial senior editors, seeding early special issues, and drafting the bylaws that will govern the JSTIT. Jeff reviewed the process of the Phase I proposal and (assuming success) the follow-on Phase II proposal. He also reviewed the rationale for the journal: technical/scholarly, logistical, and financial.

There was a discussion of the finances of the new journal, whether it could be funded from society reserves as a new initiative or would need to be supported as part of the annual budget, and how ITSoc’s annual budget would be impacted. Jeff reviewed income numbers for the IEEE Journal of Special Topics in Signal Processing (JSTSP) which was founded in 2007. (The Journal of Special Areas in Communications, JSAC, is much more established, so less fitting as a comparison.) JSTSP spent about five years losing money but for the last five years, and at present, is about \$100k USD in the positive each year. This revenue is income for the Signal Processing Society. Jeff was asked about the break down of that \$100k USD in income; roughly two-thirds comes from IEEEExplore and one-third from over length page charges. A small amount comes from open-access fees.

A question was raised whether the existence of JSTSP could reduce submissions to (and therefore income from) from the Transactions. A meeting attendee that serves on the JSTSP editorial board stated that this is not the case for JSTSP. In other words, the existence of the JSTSP appears to have had no impact on submission to the Transactions on Signal Processing. Jeff committed to provide data on this for the next BoG meeting.

In conclusion, Jeff reviewed the timeline. The Phase I proposal is to be submitted to the TAB in March. The recruiting of senior editors is to occur in mid-2018. The editorial board will then start to line up the first special issues in the second half of 2018. The JSTIT will hopefully launch in mid-2019. A final comment was made regarding the timing of the proposals of the special topics journal and the magazine. It was felt that gaining approval of

the TAB for a special topics journal is less automatic than getting approval for a magazine. For example, the relationship of the proposed special topics journal to existing publications must be mapped out. In contrast, all societies are approved to have a magazine. Therefore, first efforts will be dedicated towards getting the special topics journal approved, with work on the magazine to follow.

Motion: To submit a Phase I Proposal for the Journal of Special Topics in Information Theory in March 2018. The motion carried.

15) Discussion on Statement to Reaffirm IEEE Code of Conduct, IEEE Code of Ethics, and IEEE Non-discrimination Policy: Elza Erkip next discussed the increasing recognition, and broad societal conversations regarding, harassment, bullying and discrimination. IEEE has several exiting relevant policies: the IEEE Code of Conduct, The IEEE Code of Ethics, the IEEE Policy on Nondiscrimination. Through joining the IEEE all IEEE members have agreed to uphold the values in these codes and policies. That said, because of recent high-profile cases, the IEEE has been in process of formulating a statement, led by the IEEE TAB Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, for societies to adopt, at their own discretion. The following statement, vetted by IEEE lawyers, is being presented to societies for their discussion / approval / adoption / posting on their website and materials, etc. The IEEE is also voting on adopting this statement.

Motion: To approve the dissemination of the following statement: “IEEE members are committed to the highest standards of integrity, responsible behavior, and ethical and professional conduct. The IEEE Information Theory Society reaffirms its commitment to an environment free of discrimination and harassment as stated in the IEEE Code of Conduct, IEEE Code of Ethics, and IEEE Nondiscrimination Policy. In particular, as stated in the IEEE Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, members of the Society will not engage in harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment, or bullying behavior, nor discriminate against any person because of characteristics protected by law. In addition, Society members will not retaliate against any IEEE member, employee or other person who reports an act of misconduct, or who reports any violation of the IEEE Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct.” In the discussion that followed a question was raised regarding which “law” the statement applied to. As the IEEE is a US-based organization it was thought to refer to US law. The motion passed

16) Information Theory Society Conference Statement and Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion: Following the discussion of the IEEE Code of Ethics and Non-discrimination Policy, Stark Draper described an independent grass-roots effort, from within ITSoc, to develop an ITSoc Conference Statement in response to recent reports of gender harassment. Stark described two motions that a group of BoG members formulated. The group included Elza Erkip, Tara Javidi, Tsachy Weissman and Stark. The group was motivated by the current and broad societal conversation on harassment (#MeToo, #WomensMarch, #GBV) events at related technical conferences (NIPS’17), in Hollywood, and in politics (U.S., Canadian, and elsewhere). The group felt that it is important for ITSoc to take an explicit stance to spell out that the BoG is committed to encouraging a safe, welcoming, and equitable environment for all. The group felt that the BoG being prompt and visible in its actions would help people of all groups (including women, and those of all ethnicities, religions, gender identities, and sexual orientations) to decide to join and to stay in our community and to help ensure the relevance and vibrancy of our discipline. The group felt also that this objective falls squarely in line with strategic discussions the BoG has been having over the past year. These have focused on how to ensure the relevance and impact of ITSoc and information theoretic perspectives on a broad range of scientific

disciplines. Not only do we need to develop connections — e.g., evidenced by the launching of the special topics journal and the magazine — but we need the best and brightest to choose information theory as their discipline of choice, and to stick with ITSoc. Stark described two proposals. The first is a statement that is proposed to be included in all ITSoc conference, workshops. The second is a proposal to form an ITSoc ad-hoc committee on diversity and inclusion. Both motions are described below and the ensuing BoG discussion is detailed thereafter.

Motion: The IT Society BoG is committed to creating and ensuring an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for everyone in the field of information theory at all of our events and experiences. In particular, we require ITSoc sponsored conference/workshop organizers to commit to uphold this standard at ALL events held at or in conjunction with their main conference/workshop, even and particularly at those events broadly defined as conference social events and non-technical activities. We require that the following note be displayed prominently in the conference programs/hand-outs/websites:

“Social outings, events, and activities are integral components of many academic workshops, and conferences. Despite the inherent hierarchical nature of academia in terms of seniority, advancement, contributions, and recognitions, academics often strive to build communities of collaborators, and friends across seniorities, generations, and institutions. Various conference-related social events with their less formal environments provide a great resource to the attendees to network, advance their careers, learn about others’ works, make friends and meet potential mentors. On the other hand, exactly because of their less formal settings, these events can fall short of providing an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for all.

In this context, we respect and encourage those who have chosen to speak out, in effect demanding that the academic and professional communities pay more attention, take notes, and continued actions. We would also like to take their lead and remind each and every attendee to take it upon her/himself to ensure that these social events do not become fertile grounds for abuse of power, sexual harassment, and/or bullying. Furthermore, we recommend our attendees to use common sense, support each other, and create a safe space by speaking up against any form of harassment or bullying.

We will also like to remind our attendees to review the IEEE’s code of conduct and follow the suggestions and best practices for how to make the IT Society conferences and venues safe and inclusive. Please consult the IEEE website and online sources for resources on how to report and combat all forms of harassment.”

Motion: Form an Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

After reading the first motion on the conference statement, Stark described potential activities of the ad-hoc committee. It could, for example, write an article in the Newsletter to reach out to and involve community members. It could develop a set of metrics to track on diversity and inclusion. It could partner with the new IEEE-level TAB Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

A number of points were raised in the BoG discussion. First, Stark was asked to clarify who drafted these motions. It was the group of BoG members mentioned above — Draper, Erkip, Javidi, Weissman. A question was asked whether the statement would need to be displayed by conferences that are co-sponsored, and a second questions was asked about meetings that are held in international locations since it seems quite possible that in certain

jurisdictions such a statement would not “fly”. While the answer to the former would need to be considered, regarding the latter it appears that a similar concern applies to umbrella IEEE policies on non-discrimination. Questions were raised on whether such a statement was necessary, whether it simply falls under the existing code-of-conduct. Members voiced opinions that the proposed statement is a nuanced version for conference and makes it clear that the above expectations hold also for social events associated with conferences (a point that was confirmed is already the case by those in the room with experience at the IEEE level). Some members also thought that, even if the some of the ideas fall broadly under IEEE statements, it is good to be explicit. Some IEEE statements are vague and a statement such as this one — coming up from the society level — could serve as a template for other societies to build off. Questions were raised about, once we have a statement, what is the procedure if something does occur. It was affirmed that there is already an IEEE process, one that can lead to loss of membership and loss of the ability to publish in IEEE publications. A worry was raised that conference organizers cannot really control all the things that occur at conference, so perhaps we should limit the statement to what the organizers can control. Others felt that the purpose of the statement is for the organizers to remind the attendees about these matters.

At this point Stark made the first motion on the conference statement. The motion was seconded by Suhas Diggavi, Daniela Tuninetti, and Wei Yu.

A number of points were then raised about the design of the statement, its length, certain phrasings, and whether it could be made more positive. One BoG member quickly formulated a shortened version as an example of one option. A question was asked on how time-sensitive this is, and whether the task of revising the motion could be given to the ad-hoc committee (yet to be approved) as its first task.

At this point Elza moved to postpone the vote on the conference statement to take up the second motion on the ad-hoc committee. Alon seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

Elza then spent some time clarifying the purpose of the ad-hoc committee. Elza had already reached out to Emanuele (as Chair of the Conference Committee) and Stark (as, now confirmed, Chair of the Schools Committee) to formulate statements, best practices, and metrics on data on diversity and inclusion in the activities those conferences oversee. This aligns with the proposed conference statement (i.e., the postponed motion) so a committee charged with these tasks would be a good to have within the ITSoc. The idea is that it would work closely with the IEEE-wide committee.

Stark then made the motion to form an ad-hoc committee. Elza seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The BoG then returned to the motion on the conference statement. After a recap of discussion, and Robert’s Rules-of-order, it was noted that the mover can modify the moved motion. Suhas proposed the following revised motion (to which Stark agreed):

Motion: The BoG accepts the intent of the submitted (original) statement as an initial draft and charges the ad hoc committee to prepare a final version of the statement for a future vote by the BoG prior to publication. The motion was seconded by Jeff Andrews. The motion passed with three abstentions.

17) Update on Shannon Documentary: Elza updated the BoG on the movie and asked the BoG to look at the slides that provide an update of the Shannon Documentary.

Motion: A group consisting of the President and his or her appointees are empowered to negotiate the crediting given to different people in the Shannon movie with the IEEE, the

director, funders, and other involved parties, on behalf of the BoG. The vote passed with 10 voting in favor and 5 abstentions.

18) Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:20pm local time.