ISIT GUIDELINES (revised 18 January 2014)

This document provides guidelines for the organization of an IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory (ISIT).   It includes an explanation of the approval process, guidelines for proposals, a timeline and task list, and a ten-point list for post-conference reports. The *IEEE Conference Organizers Manual*, available on the IEEE website (go to ieee.org, click on "Conferences and Events", then click on "Running an IEEE Conference" reference materials), is a key information source for organizers of any IEEE conference. This document is meant to complement that manual, specifically for ISITs. This document is being maintained by the IT Society Conference Committee, and the most recent version is posted on the IT Society website.[1]

Approval Process

The IT Society CC of the IT Society Board of Governors (BoG) serves as an interface between conference organizers and the BoG. One role of the CC is to ensure a steady flow of proposals for hosting the annual ISIT meetings.   If you are contemplating organizing a future ISIT meeting, please consult with a CC committee member about open dates for future ISITs, possible competing proposals, and the timetable for approval of ISITs.   Typically, proposals for ISITs are approved three to four years in advance.   Often it is a gradual process, in which organizers express interest, and tentative time slots are identified. At some point, three to four years before the date of the ISIT, a formal proposal is submitted for approval, including the specific items listed below.   The long lead time is necessitated by the need to reserve conference facilities at hotels or convention centers.

Proposals for organizing an ISIT are to be submitted to the CC for comment and possible revision at least six weeks before the meeting of the BoG at which the proposal will be discussed. Then the revised proposal should be sent to the BoG for approval, at least two weeks before the BoG meeting. Typically, the organizers make a brief presentation at the BoG meeting (10 minute presentation plus 15 minute question and answer). The BoG then votes on final approval of the proposal, taking into account the recommendation of the CC.

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[1] Comments, suggestions, and corrections for revision of this document, and completed ten point summary reports (see last page of document) are being collected by Elza Erkip elza@poly.edu. Potential conference organizers interested in receiving past reports, should contact her.

Guidelines for proposals

A proposal should cover the following specific items:

I.   Date of symposium. The preferred/targeted dates are late June to early July, but deviations are permitted. Include a brief paragraph about alternative dates, if appropriate.

II.   Location of symposium
        A. The city or general setting of the conference and a paragraph about the suitability of that setting, including attractiveness, transportation, availability of hotels, and range of hotel pricing.
        B. The proposed specific venue for the conference and a paragraph justification.   This could be a particular hotel or convention center.   Preliminary pricing information is desirable. In some cases, there may be more than one possible venue within a given location, but some pricing information for at least one of them should be given. Would there be a charge for using the facility? If so, what would the facility charge be in round numbers? If not, but if there is a requirement that a minimum number of participants take rooms at a conference hotel, what would the approximate room rate be?

III.   Principals of Organizing Committee
        A. Proposed conference chairs (minimum of two required).
        B. Proposed technical program chairs (minimum of two required).
        C. Proposed chair of local arrangements committee (if determined).
        D. Proposed chair of finance committee, or treasurer (if determined).
        E. Proposed person for being the primary interface with IEEE (could be a co-chair or highly committed liaison).
        F. Proposed plans for raising funds, including sponsorship from industry and government grants for travel support. A conference chair or highly committed committee member should cover this aspect of the conference organization.

IV.   Conference Finance
        A. Preliminary half page budget, including estimated registration fees, estimated surplus (should target a 10% surplus), and required advance loan (typically around US$25K).
        B. Proposed percentage of IT Society financial commitment. This is typically a percentage, and the percentage is typically 100%.   Thus, this item would typically consist of the following statement: "The IEEE Information Theory Society will cover 100% of the loss in case of a loss, and receive 100% of the surplus in case of a surplus." The same percentages must be listed in the financial percentages section of the *Conference Information Schedule*, which must be filed with the IEEE after approval of the conference by the IT Society BoG.

Timeline and Task List for ISIT Organizers

This section lists the important dates and tasks involved in the conference organization. The conference co-chairs should make sure that all tasks are assigned. The list of committees for ISITs is not totally standardized, so there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the tasks listed here and conference committees.

Combined Timing Schedule:

• Board/conference committee approval of proposal	3-4 years in advance
• Conference location selected and hotel contract signed	3-4 years in advance
• Conference information schedule filed with IEEE	3-4 years in advance
• Website launched, conference logo	3 years in advance
• Preliminary announcement printed	2 years in advance
• Meeting of all conference organizers at ISIT	2 years in advance
• Conference committee/BoG and IEEE approve budget	1-3 years in advance
• Co-chairs and finance chairs file PBOC/COI forms	1-3 years in advance
• Banquet location selected and banquet contract signed	1 year in advance
• Call for papers printed (include plenary speaker/tutorial info)	14 months in advance
• First mailing of posters (e.g., use mailing list from previous ISIT)	14 months in advance
• Meeting of all conference organizers at ISIT	1 year in advance
• 10-minute entertainment/promotion at previous ISIT (if appropriate)	1 year in advance
• Local arrangements planning meeting(s)	6-12 months in advance
• Program chairs appoint TPC	2.5 years in advance
• Approve wording in call for papers	26 months in advance
• Appointment of TPC complete	26 months in advance
• Fix submission deadline	26 months in advance
• Proposals to fund travel grants submitted	18 months in advance
• Plenary and tutorial speakers lined up	18 months in advance
• Website open for submissions	10 months in advance
• Submission of Conference Publication Form to IEEE	6-12 months in advance
• Confirm requirements for IT Society BoG events at conference	6 months in advance
• Conference deadline for submission of papers	about 6 months in advance
• Technical program committee meeting	about 4 months in advance
• Speakers notified, program posted, call for travel grant applications	3 months in advance
• Invitations to chair sessions sent	3 months in advance
• Deadline for registration of one author = advance registration deadline	10 weeks in advance
• Papers with no registered author removed	8 weeks in advance
• Deadline for authors to upload final manuscripts	8 weeks in advance
• Session chairs, room names in program listing	8 weeks in advance
• Final program received from program committee	8 weeks in advance
• Final program to publications chair with session chairs	7 weeks in advance
• Final program booklet and proceedings to printer	3 weeks in advance
• Post conference article with pictures for newsletter	within 1 month after
• Auditor selected and provided documents	within 4 months after
• Submission of ten-point report to IT conference committee	within 4 months after
• Repayment of loan, payment for surplus, closing the books except audit	6 months after
• Pass final audit	12-18 months after

Communication with IT Society and IEEE

After approval of an ISIT proposal by the BoG, the conference organizers are required to file a *Conference Information Schedule* with IEEE and submit a budget for approval by the CC and the IT Society Treasurer (see the *IEEE Conferences Organization Manual*). To a large extent, most ISITs have a similar format, including: an opening reception on a Sunday evening, technical program running from Monday through Friday, with possible half day on Friday, Wednesday afternoon free with possible optional tour, Tuesday noon awards luncheon, Thursday evening banquet, and a poster session for recent results. Half or full day tutorials are encouraged preceding the meeting. The format is not mandatory, is always evolving, and can be adapted depending on circumstances. However, significant deviations from previous ISIT formats should be discussed with the CC, which in turn brings major issues to the BoG.

The conference organizers are requested to keep the CC and BoG informed of progress by sending a brief update to the CC at least four weeks before each BoG meeting, alerting the CC about any special plans or difficulties. The CC will include the updates in its report to the BoG. It is not anticipated that ISIT organizers will make reports at BoG meetings, other than the initial proposal presentation.

Organizers of different conferences are expected to help each other. It is desirable for chairs of one conference to attend the planning meetings of other conferences, a year earlier or a year later. Each conference is expected to promptly complete a ten-point post-conference report (see guidelines at the end of this document). Each conference is requested to make available a list of postal addresses of participants for use by subsequent conferences to mail promotional material, such as conference posters.

Finance

Responsibilities of the treasurer or finance chair include: oversight of conference finances, checking major contracts, making sure miscellaneous expenses were properly paid for, watching for surprises from the hotel during the conference, writing checks and collecting receipts, keeping an eye on registration revenue, and preparing a financial statement for the final audit. Typically the treasurer will open a checking account. IEEE Policy Statement 10.1.6 states that conference budgets are to be submitted to IEEE well in advance of the planned meeting date, preferably one year prior to the conference. IEEE Policy 10.1.4 requires conferences with budgeted revenues or expenses exceeding 25,000 USD be submitted for approval. IEEE conference services recommends use of a Mellon Bank account.

Minor note: Typically the IT Society has certain events, such as a Board of Governors meeting or Board of Editors meeting, at the ISIT location, and these events incur expenses which are to be paid by the IT Society (and not by the conference). In some years we have obtained a separate bill for IT

Society expenses, which was paid directly by the IT Society Treasurer This can be complicated, because inevitably the hotel mixes up the bills. Currently we recommend putting all expenses on one bill, and then making note in the conference finance report about what expenses are the responsibility of the IT Society. In essence, the conference loan amount can be reduced by the amount of those expenses.

The IEEE requires that the registration fee for participants who are not IEEE members be at least 20% higher than the registration fee for participants who are IEEE members. Also, IEEE requires that the registration fee for IEEE Life Members be no greater than the student registration fee. In addition, the IT society strongly recommends cost differentiation of at least $100 for members and $50 for student members for registration fees for IT Society Members and Non-Members. Hence there should be 3 classes of fees: (1) non-IEEE; (2) IEEE but non-IT Society; (3) IEEE and IT Society. For example, in-advance rates might be:

$700 member of IEEE and IT Society
$800 member of IEEE but NOT IT Society
$840 nonmember registration (i.e. 20% higher than minimum)
$350 student member of IEEE and IT Society
$400 student member of IEEE but NOT IT Society

The finance chair and the conference co-chairs need to file the Principles of Business Conduct/Conflict of Interest (POBC/COI) forms with IEEE early on. To see the form select "Conference-Finance" from the drop down box at:
http://www.ieee.org/web/volunteers/compliance/conflict_of_interest/coiandpob.html

Preconference Tutorials

Half or full day tutorials on the day before ISIT have been popular in recent years, drawing 20-120 attendees each, assuming two choices running in parallel at any time. The tutorials enhance the symposium in several ways: they help participants understand background material for regular talks during the symposium, they help space out the arrival of participants to ISIT, easing the registration crunch, they raise the general level of activity surrounding the conference, and they help with publicity. A webpage on tutorials should be set up, including for each tutorial: final title, outline and/or other description of tutorial content, speaker's biographical material, and links for more information. Tutorials can be arranged by the program committee chairs, but it is recommended to have a tutorial chair. A timeline and suggestions for the tutorial chairs follows.

Timing Schedule for Tutorials Chair

• Generate ideas for tutorial topics and speakers	14-18 months in advance
• Sign-up tutorial presenters	1 years in advance
• Post names, titles, abstracts, images, bios of speakers on website	6 months in advance
• Obtain the pdf files of slides from presenters	3 months in advance
• Insure written material from presenters is nicely formatted, prepare covers	1-3 months in advance
• Advertise tutorials to local companies	2 months in advance
• Ask conference organizers to send email to registrants about tutorials	6 weeks in advance

- Check audio-visual needs of presenters   3 months in advance
- Double check to make sure all items are happening, keep on top   0-14 months in advance
- Get booklets for attendees for each tutorial printed   2 weeks in advance

The ideal number of tutorials is probably four. Aim for a mix of cutting edge topics (e.g. statistical physics, systems biology, quantum information theory, etc.) as well as newer topics that have matured somewhat (e.g. cooperative communications, iterative coding techniques, MIMO systems, etc.) Poll the TPC Chairs, General Chairs, and selected colleagues to get a diversity of ideas. Making face-to-face invitations at the ISIT the previous year can be used to finish up the line-up of speakers, if necessary.

Contact the editors of the *Foundations and Trends* Journals (Sergio Verdu – communications, Tony Ephremides – networking, and Bob Gray – signal processing). Perhaps a tutorial at ISIT could be coordinated with the publication of an FnT issue. The FnT folks in the past have offered reduced prices for their publications to ISIT tutorial attendees. The FnT queue shouldn't drive tutorial choices, but perhaps "inspire" tutorial choices.

Early on there should be good communication with the other committees of the symposium, to have an understanding of how many rooms will be available for the tutorials and how many attendees they can accommodate, to insure that the tutorials are budgeted, to insure that the tutorials are advertised on the website, in posters, and mailings, to make sure that tutorial registration is available both along with ISIT registration and **after** a participant has already registered for the symposium, and to decide who will print/bring the booklets to the conference. You may have to check with the general co-chairs or local arrangement committee to make sure the rooms are properly equipped, including: classroom style setup (ideally), wireless (not hand held) mikes, pointers, computer projection system, an extra white board or flip charts with pens for the presenters to write side information. Also, make sure there is a way to make copies on-site at the last minute, as needs may arise.

The tutorial chair should make sure the tutorials are advertised in various communications, networking, and signal processing community mailing, and at local companies, especially since attendees do not need to attend ISIT to attend a tutorial.

Before the tutorials, ask the presenters to bring copies of their talks, just in case there is a problem.

Determine a policy for tutorial materials for those who did not attend – a nominal fee for handouts might be good. Make sure this policy is well publicized on the tutorial/ISIT web site before ISIT and perhaps even announced at the first plenary talk after the tutorials.

At the tutorials themselves, double check the room size and visibility, especially from the back of the room. If visibility is poor and can't be improved, you may want to reduce the cap on the number of people who can register. Make sure the wireless microphones, pointers, and white board or flip charts, are in order. Get all talks uploaded onto laptops in the right rooms, as needed, in advance.

Technical program committee

The program committee chairs appoint the program committee. An important aspect of the selection of the committee is to select reliable experts to cover the technical areas expected from the submitted papers, while striving for geographic diversity, gender diversity, and a healthy mix of somewhat junior to senior experts in the field to promote a pipeline for future conferences to draw upon.

The program chairs, in consultation with the program committee and other conference organizers, select the plenary speakers. Here also attention should be paid to technical, geographic, and gender diversity. An increase in the number of female plenary speakers, to match the rise in the number of female participants at ISITs, is surely in order. Plenary speakers are often offered an honorarium or travel grant, but it is fairly modest, unless the speaker is from outside the usual IT community or otherwise hard to recruit. The society, rather than the conference, gives financial remuneration to the Shannon lecturer.

It is strongly recommended and it has been traditional to have a meeting of the technical program committee at the end of the review period. The purpose is to make decisions on borderline papers and to make preliminary groupings of papers into sessions. The meeting serves as a deadline for when reviews must be in. A problem is that often only a small fraction of the program committee members attend the TPC meeting. It helps somewhat to hold the program committee meeting in conjunction with another conference. The TPC chairs should do everything possible to facilitate TPC member attendance at the meeting, or establish mechanisms to receive their guidance remotely.

An important logistical question for the TPC is what system it will use for submission and review of papers. It is strongly recommended that the conference/TPC contracts with an existing paper handling service, rather that having software for this purpose written from scratch. Also, copyright forms will have to be provided.

Sometimes authors submit papers in the hope they will be published and entered into the IEEE Xplore system, even though the author has little or no intention of attending the meeting to present the paper. One negative effect of this is cancelled talks at the meeting. Therefore, a policy at ISITs is to require that at least one author register by a particular date, which could be the same as the early registration cut-off date, about eight weeks prior to the conference. Authors of papers with no author registered should be contacted, but at some point, papers with no registered authors should be dropped. (There is currently no policy on the following variations: Is a student registration sufficient? Can one registered author count for several papers?)

Leave adequate time between the Shannon lecture and the following sessions. This may require delaying the schedule for the remainder of the day by 10 minutes or so.

ISIT Student Paper Award The technical program committee has a responsibility, spelled out in the IT Society Bylaws, to help the IT Society Awards Committee in the selection of winners of the ISIT Student Paper Award. Those bylaws are repeated here:

Article XII. International Symposium on Information Theory Student Paper Award

Section 1. The International Symposium on Information Theory (ISIT) Student Paper Award shall be given annually for up to three outstanding papers at the ISIT for which a student is the principal author and presenter. This author must be a registered student at the time of paper submission to be eligible for this award. The criteria for the award shall include both content and presentation. The award consists of a $500 honorarium to be divided equally between all student authors of the paper, and a plaque for each such author.

Section 2. The Awards Committee (AC) shall be responsible for selecting the winner(s) of this award, with the support of the ISIT Technical Program Committee (TPC). The ISIT TPC shall select between 8 and 12 eligible papers as finalists and notify the authors accordingly. These papers shall be scheduled by the TPC for presentation during the first three days of ISIT. The AC shall judge the presentations during the Symposium, select the award winner(s), and announce the winner(s) at the ISIT banquet (or other suitable occasion).

Policy on multiple submissions on same topic The call for papers should include the sentence, "Authors should refrain from submitting multiple papers on the same topic." This does not preclude an author from submitting multiple papers on different topics. While the definition of "topic" is loose, the sentence conveys the general intent.

Interdisciplinary papers Traditionally, interdisciplinary papers have been welcomed at ISITs. The TPC cochairs should point out to TPC members that interdisciplinary papers, which bring fresh problems and perspectives to ISIT attendees, with novelty and value in problem formulation. "Emerging applications of information theory," could be listed as an area in the call for papers and/or as a category in the paper submission website. In addition, the call for papers could include the following sentence, "Researchers working in emerging fields of information theory or on novel applications of information theory are especially encouraged to submit original findings."

Policy on appeals of rejected papers In recent years, typically twenty to thirty authors have sent emails to the TPC chairs to appeal rejections of their papers. Most of these emails are received in the first day or two after the rejection emails are sent out, with some coming several days later. The TPC chairs should have a plan of action to address these emails. It is recommended that the default position should be "Unfortunately, we have no mechanism for review rebuttals." As with everything else in the IT Society, this rule should be tempered by the personal touch when the author makes a clear case that an error has been made. Individual appeals could be handled by the TPC chairs or their designees. For nearly all appeals that seem to have some merit, it is reasonable to engage the original TPC member, and occasionally a reviewer, of the original paper. It is not a tradition of the ISIT conferences to have a full appeals process with new reviews of all appealed papers. The following is a sample response letter used for ISIT 2007:

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Dear X,
  Unfortunately, we have no mechanism for review rebuttals, paper revisions, or additional review
rounds based on revisions. As stated in the decision email, we received an unusually large number
of high quality submissions and we were able to accommodate only a limited number of papers. Every
paper received 2 or more reviews and TPC review by a TPC member in the area of the paper, and all
papers and their reviews were carefully scrutinized by the TPC and chairs before final decisions
were made.
   In your case, the three reviewers were all experts in the field, as was the TPC handler. You
can view the TPC review on EDAS, which took all the reviews into account and put your paper in the
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borderline category. The final paper decision was made based on the TPC recommendation as we were
unable to accommodate many good papers in this borderline category, including yours. Sorry that
the outcome of your paper decision was not more favorable.

Sincerely, YYYYYY (on behalf of the TPC chairs)
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Policy on registered authors In order to limit the number of accepted papers with no presenting authors, the instructions for authors should inform them, and the registration system should enforce, that at least one author per paper must register by some cutoff dates for the paper to appear in the Final Program and the Proceedings. One author registration can cover up to three papers. Note that one of the authors must present the paper at the conference.

IEEE Policy about Papers Not Presented   One of the most challenging issues for IEEE conference organizers is dealing with accepted papers that are not presented, for whatever reason. Like many issues, planning and preparation are needed to properly address those situations that will occur.

   Organizers are expected to provide an appropriate and adequate forum and time for oral presentation and discussion of all accepted papers. The conference committee should work to minimize author no-shows by ensuring an author has every opportunity to attend and present. This includes: * Submitting your conference for IEEE approval early (12 months or more before) to allow adequate lead time for venue selection, contracting and communication (as examples).
* Making hotel, travel and visa information accessible to authors as early as possible, plus supporting individual requests in a timely and thorough fashion.
* Offering presentation alternatives as the Conference Committee deems appropriate.

   Authors who offer a paper for presentation at an IEEE conference or accept an invitation to present a paper are expected to be present at the meeting to deliver the paper. If unforeseen circumstances prevent its presentation by an author, the program chair should be informed immediately, and reasonable substitute arrangements should be made, in line with the approach adopted by the technical program committee in the planning stages.

   Organizers and the conference sponsors have the right to exclude any paper from distribution (or limit its distribution) if the paper was not presented at the conference. If they choose that approach, organizers must clearly communicate the following to all authors prior to or at the time of submission (with special attention on the Call-For-Papers): "IEEE reserves the right to exclude a paper from distribution after the conference (for example, removal from IEEE Xplore) if the paper is not presented at the conference.   Papers excluded from further distribution will be archived at IEEE but will not be indexed or appear in IEEE Xplore." For more details, please see the IEEE Meetings & Conferences Operations Manual.

Payments to Speakers When an IT Society workshop or symposium invites someone to deliver a plenary or keynote talk, there is the question of whether the conference should offer financial compensation.   This could include a registration fee waiver, reimbursement of travel expenses, or an honorarium. The IEEE policy is against paying speakers anything, except in cases that they give a short course or some other sort of lecture for which attendees pay a fee. Specifically, IEEE Policy prohibits payments of honoraria for the presentation of a paper at a conference, except for a lecture or other educational activity for which a tuition fee is charged.   The IT Society policy on this point is the following.

According to the IT Society Bylaws, the Shannon Award recipient is to receive an honorarium from the Society and travel expenses for the ISIT at which the award is presented and the Shannon Lecture is given. Travel expense is understood to include conference registration. These expenses are to be paid by the IT Society, not the ISIT, although as a convenience the ISIT and IT Treasurer may agree that a registration waiver be granted by the ISIT and charged to a Society tab. (Another item on such a tab could be expenses for Society sponsored meetings, such as a Board of Governors meeting.)

A long time tradition at ISITs (which is not set in stone!) is to have, in addition to the Shannon lecture, four plenary lectures per ISIT. If a plenary lecturer is someone who often attends ISITs, s/he could be offered a registration fee waiver as a small token of appreciation by the ISIT, but no other payment. If a plenary lecturer is someone from outside the usual information theory community, it may be necessary to offer payment beyond the registration fee waiver. Such payment would typically be in the range of $1000 to $2500, which could be taken in a combination of reimbursed travel expenses based on receipts and honorarium. The split between expense reimbursement and honorarium could be determined by the lecturer, and the total offer determined by ISIT organizers based on what is likely to be needed to enlist the lecturer.

Often half-day tutorials are offered during the day preceding an ISIT, and registrants pay to enroll in such tutorials. Sometimes there is a discount if a participant enrolls in both a morning and an afternoon tutorial. IEEE recognizes that offering a short course is similar to consulting by the offerer, and that payment is appropriate. While the exact level of payment can be determined by an ISIT organizing committee, we recommend the following approximate amount, which includes an incentive for attracting lots of registrants (in 2012 dollars): $600 + ($25 per registrant in excess of 40). If multiple speakers jointly present a tutorial, this amount would be split among them according to their instructions. Note that no conference registration fee waiver is included.

In recent years the conference policy has been to discourage payment to ITW speakers, with the possible rare exception of necessary payment for hard to get people from beyond the group of usual IEEE IT meeting attendees.

Recent Results Session

In recent years, there have been poster sessions for presentations of recent results. There should probably be one or two people serving as recent results session chairs to oversee this activity (such as members of the local arrangements committee, because of the poster logistics).

Publications

A book of abstracts and program are typically distributed at the conference. In addition, CDs containing all the papers are distributed. A reputable service (IEEE or other) should be contracted for burning the CDs and printing the jacket covers. In addition, the papers must be forwarded to IEEE in IEEE Xplore compliant format.

Instructions for preparation of papers, including templates, samples, and style must be posted on the website. (See IEEE online resources regarding IEEE Xplore compliance.) Copyright forms are needed for each paper. (It may now be possible for authors to sign copyright forms online.) Include a downloadable copyright form for authors on the website, ideally filled in with paper title, authors, and paper tracking number, for authors to send in by mail or fax. It is probably worthwhile to contract this out, perhaps to the same entity that handles paper submission and/or registration.

Awards luncheon booklet

This is typically handled by someone on the publications committee, the local arrangements committee, or a general co-chair. A 10-20 page awards booklet is printed up and put on each seat at the awards luncheon. The awards include IT Society awards (paper awards, Service Award, Shannon Award—pictures and bios of winners is the norm), certificates to outgoing Associate Editors, and IEEE awards (IT Society members being elected to Fellow grade along with possible IEEE medals, technical field awards, and paper awards.) The conference organizer must obtain the award information from the IT Society President and the Editor-in-Chief of the Transactions.

Sponsor support and travel grants

It is beneficial to the conference if on the order of US$100K can be raised for travel grants. Around half of that total or more has been provided in recent years through grants from US funding agencies (NSF, DARPA, ONR). In these cases, the proposals were written by a conference organizer, and a conference organizer made the decisions on which participants to support, but the grants were made to IEEE for IEEE to administer (taking in the money, sending it to people identified by the organizers on the basis of applications, and taking care of the required tax forms.) Money raised from U.S. federal agencies often can be used only for U.S. participants. (This does not mean citizens, or even permanent residents, but simply participants from a U.S. company or university.) Experience has shown that industry sponsors typically won't commit more than a year ahead of time. It is worth contacting them early, say 12 to 18 months ahead of time, but if initial contact is not successful, then try again 6-9 months in advance. Funds from industry are typically entered into the ISIT budget. Those industry funds used for travel grants are typically distributed to the grantees by payments from the treasurer. This may require the grantees to sign tax forms (such as U.S. forms W8 or W9).

Based on the demand and funds available, the organizers might define two or three levels of support, with higher levels for participants with further to travel or special needs. Usually no distinction is made between a coauthor and speaker. Reimbursement is based on an expense report submitted by the participant after the conference. For a small number of participants, reimbursement after the conference is not a good option. For those participants a registration fee waiver might be granted. Another possibility is to arrange for vouchers with a local hotel for a small number of participants. Past experience shows it is not a good idea to hand out cash at the conference.

Sample description of grant policy:

A limited amount of money is available to support scientists to participate in ISIT 2xxx. Support will be given in the form of waivers of registration fees and/or partial reimbursement of local and travel

expenses. You may apply for support to attend ISIT 2xxx from the organizing committee if the following two conditions are fulfilled

- You have an accepted paper

- You are   1) a Ph.D. Student (with supporting letter from your supervisor)
or   2)   Young faculty or staff (with supporting letter from your department head)
or   3)   Scientist from an economically disadvantaged country

Please indicate the requested amount. Your request must reach us before April 1st, 2xxx. Send your requests to (name and email address of committee contact). You will be notified of the decision by May 1st.   Reimbursement will be based on an expense report submitted after the conference. Attendance at the conference is required for reimbursement, even if it is only to cover a registration fee.

Sample letter to grantee

To: Jane Doe

The organizing committee for ISIT2xxx has decided to award you a grant travel. The grant is contingent on your registration and attendance at ISIT ---.   The amount of the grant is up to xxxx, to be reimbursed on the basis of a suitable expense report filed after the conference.   If this method of reimbursement is not satisfactory for you, please send a note of explanation and an attempt will be made to make payment through a registration waiver and/or a lodging voucher.

If you cannot accept the grant, please let me know as soon as possible.

Publicity

Publicity could be assigned to a separate committee, or incorporated into another committee, such as the website committee. The mission is to publicize the symposium and to oversee the front end of the website. A sharp logo for the conference, connected with the location, is helpful. At the ISIT two years prior to the meeting, bookmarks could be passed out, or organizers could wear T-shirts, to promote awareness of the meeting.

One, or preferably two, mailings of large (size equal to four to six sheets of paper), attractive posters is helpful.   These could be mailed to attendees of a past ISIT (ask the previous organizer for a mailing list), who can then post them on their doors or in their hallways. This serves to raise awareness of the meeting in hallways all over the world. The second mailing of posters should include logos of sponsors.

The publicity committee should have conference announcements listed on conference calendars and in newsletters of other societies, such as the IEEE Communications Society, and in various e-letters. Typically such listings are free of charge.

Announcements for the meeting should appear in several issues of the IT Society Newsletter. A first conference announcement can be prepared two years before the meeting and be distributed at other conferences. About 14 months before the conference, the first call for papers can be prepared, listing plenary and tutorial speakers. Copies of it should be made available at the ISIT a year earlier, and at related conferences such as Globecom, ICC, ISITA, and other meetings throughout the world.

ISIT organizers often give attendees a smart looking conference bag with a conference logo.

Registration

A list of tasks associated with registration follows. These could be handled by contracting with an outside service.

1.   Design the registration form and have it available online.
2.   Provide for registration via web, fax, and mail.
3.   Establish an escrow account. Bulk transfers are made from it to a main conference account.
4.   Link registration to paper submissions to ensure that all papers have a registered author.
5.   Provide all registration and accounting data to meet IEEE audit specifications.
6.   Provide two on-site personnel for registration during the conference.
7.   Format and produce full color badge sheets for the conference.
8.   Supervise on-site volunteers for advance registration.
9.   Assist registration chair and answer all attendee correspondence.
10.   Provide name tag (badge), receipt, tickets for banquet (and, possibly, luncheon and reception).
11.   Provide for sale of extra tickets to banquet or luncheon at on-site registration.

The service might also be involved with making hotel reservations, but this should be done sparingly, since participants can usually make their own lodging arrangements. If there are any designated conference hotels, web links should be provided. The same service could handle selling tickets for excursions, but excursions can also be contracted out to a local tourist agency. The local organizers may need to insure there is a laser printer and copy machine at the on-site registration. Typically 20-25% of attendees register on-site

Upon registration, attendees are given receipts, name tags (badges), tickets, and a conference bag including a final program booklet, a book of abstracts of papers, a CD with the complete papers, and optional items such as a map of the area, other brochures (often available free of charge from a tourist office), a restaurant list, a pad of note paper, and a pen/pencil.

The IT Society does not have a general policy regarding reimbursements, but it is recommended that ISITs allow a partial refund for cancellations by a given date, or maybe two levels of partial refund for two different dates. In some unfortunate instances, registrants were unable to secure a travel visa, and then requested reimbursement. Such reimbursements have been granted in full or in part by some past ISITs.

Local Arrangements

SELECTION OF CONFERENCE HOTEL The IEEE conference manual recommends getting professional help in negotiating with a hotel. It warns organizers against signing contracts on their own.   These warnings are well founded.   It is definitely a good idea to have an experienced negotiator on your side. Ultimately, IEEE Conference Services has to sign off on any large contracts.   They will watch for items, sometimes buried in the fine print, that could cost the conference a lot of money.   For example, they will look at how much the conference owes if something goes wrong.

As a general rule of thumb, in any aspect of negotiating, as a meeting organizer, you are in a much better position if you have alternatives. Ideally, you should get fairly accurate total package estimates from two different hotels, two different transportation companies, two different audio-visual companies, two different printers, and so on, and then select the ones with the better price/service/quality. Once you are committed to buy something from someone, there is little room for you to negotiate the price.

A large part of the budget will be for the social events (reception, luncheon, breaks, and banquet).   If possible, negotiate fixed pricing for these events, including all taxes and service charges, before signing the contract.   Event pricing depends on the number of participants. Accurate estimates of numbers of participants are essential. The implications of over estimating and under estimating attendance should be understood.

If the hotel or local regulations require the conference to hire people to run the projectors or do similar tasks, then the fees for those people should be included in the original contract with the hotel. If the hotel requires that it provide the audio-visual support (computer projectors, screens, microphones), then the pricing for that service should be included in the original signed contract and negotiated. You do not want to commit yourself to paying undiscounted rates for any major items!

You should consider negotiating computer or wireless access for conference attendees with the hotel in the original contract.

Minimum room seating requirements for technical sessions: 700, 200, 150, 150, 100, 100, 70, 70. If the large room for 700 can be used for morning plenary sessions, and then split into two, it can account for the first two rooms on the list.

If use of conference facilities is contingent on a certain number of guest room nights in a conference hotel, it is important not to overestimate how many participants will stay at the hotel. In recent years, the total room block usage for the conference has been around 1300 room nights.

Many attendees at ISIT conferences are strongly value oriented.   They will seek and appreciate lower cost hotel options.   They also appreciate the lowest possible registration fee.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT VOLUNTEERS Students registering for ISIT by the early registration deadline received a $50 discount if they volunteer to be a student aid for the symposium. A volunteer can be assigned as an aid for each session to help with speaker transition and equipment maintenance. The session assignment and instructions to students should be taken care of before the meeting. A schedule of volunteer assignments can be posted onsite near the conference registration area, and the registration material can remind volunteers that they have a job to do.

AUTHOR SUPPORT Provide material on request, overhead sheets and pens, memory sticks, and so on.

SIGNAGE Provide signs to steer participants to correct locations upon arrival, for lectures, for the banquet, and so on.   Session listings, with paper titles and authors, should be posted outside each session door throughout the meeting. An IEEE Information Theory Society banner(s) (obtained from previous conferences, or a banner specific to the meeting) is a nice touch, if not too expensive.

TRANSPORTATION Arrange for buses and trolleys between hotel and banquet location, or between a remote conference site and hotels, if necessary.

MENU SELECTION (for welcoming reception, awards luncheon, breaks, banquet, and closing ceremony)   Offer vegetarian options, appreciated by 25-30% of participants.

PRE-CONFERENCE TUTORIAL BREAKS Arrange for food for breaks during Sunday's pre-conference tutorial sessions

AUDIO-VISUAL Computer projectors, overhead projectors, screens, microphones, pointers.

VIDEO TAPING OF SHANNON LECTURE The IT Society requests that an audio-video recording of the Shannon lecture be made.

INTERNET CAFE Prices and infrastructure vary widely from one venue to the next. But participants appreciate (and often expect) wireless Internet access. Cost should not be more than 10% of registration fee.

ENTERTAINMENT Some background music or amusement is often provided at the opening reception, banquet social hour, or at the end of the banquet.   Contact the next year's ISIT organizers to see if they would like to schedule anything to promote their meeting.

SUPPORT FOR SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETINGS The BoG President usually asks the local organizers to help make arrangements for a BoG meeting, including catering a meal and/or snacks. The Editor-in-Chief, or Chair of the Chapters committee, may also request help in organizing meetings. Charges should be billed directly to the IT society.

EXHIBITS A conference organizer must interface with the book vendors. A separate task is to oversee the book vendors at the conference.   They need to be notified about the meeting, charged, and assigned display locations at the conference site. A simple approach it to talk to the book vendors at a previous meeting.   The vendors should be charged somewhat more than the regular

nonmember registration fee. There could be a base price for one table, and an increment for a second table, if space is tight.

EXCURSIONS Keep in mind that only a quarter to a third of the attendees are typically interested in paying to go on a group excursion on the free half day (typically Wednesday afternoon).

IT SOCIETY BOG events The IT Society Board of Governors sponsors (and pays for) several events at ISITs.   A list of such events at ISIT 2010 in Austin is listed below.   The conference organizers should have the likelihood of these events in mind when making arrangements for conference venues, and plans for these events should be firmed up six months in advance of the conference.

Society award luncheon: PoC President (Financially part of the conferences.)

BoG meeting: PoC Society President, 35 persons on Sunday 12-6. Buffett lunch and snacks & coffee continuously through the event. AV: A speakerphone for people to call in, power extension chords (6), projector and screen

Student Lunches: PoC Student committee chair Aylin Yener, Monday and Thursday. 120 attendees plus.   Boxed/preset lunch for all attending students, microphone. Tables and chairs for panelists on Thursday.

Publications committee meeting. PoC: Editor-in-Chief, 25 attendees on Tuesday. Water service only.   They went out for dinner afterwards, whereas some years dinner is provided by the conference hotel.

WITHITS Event. PoC: Outreach Committee: Christina Fragouli, planned for 100 attendees on Wednesday. Tables, chairs and microphone for panelists, water service.

Chapter's lunch: Poc: Second VP Muriel Medard, planned for 40 people on Thursday. Lunch Buffett provided.

Mentorship breakfast: Poc: Outreach Committee:Mentoring Todd Coleman, breakfast on Tuesday, 30 people

Spouse's program

Arrange a place for daily meetings of spouses during the Symposium at around 9:00, with coffee and light food. This allows spouses to make plans for small group excursions, either during the day or evening. Spouses living locally could volunteer to help out.

Miscellaneous notes

In some cases participants will need a letter from the organizers to obtain a travel visa. Typically these letters are issued after the program is set, so that the letters can state that the participant has been selected by the technical program committee to present a paper at the conference. This makes for a tight schedule, as consulates often operate on a slow time scale. It could thus save a lot of time and energy on the part of the organizers, and help the participants, if letters of invitation are mailed to persons in certain countries at the same time that acceptances are sent.

IEEE mandates that IEEE members be given a meaningful registration discount at all IEEE sponsored meetings. This should be on the order of 10%. The IEEE Information Theory Society requires that an additional discount or other incentive be given for membership in the Information Theory Society. That could be an additional 5% discount, for example. An alternative is to offer the awards luncheon for free to IT Society members, but to sell (discounted) tickets to the luncheon for those who are not members of the IT Society.

ISIT Post-Conference Report Ten Point List

The organizers of each ISIT are requested to submit a post-conference report to the CC, (see footnote on first page for which CC member is currently collecting these) to be made available to organizers of future ISITs, addressing the following ten points:

1. Dates, city, specific venue of conference, and organizing committee composition.
2. Number of papers submitted and number of papers accepted.
3. Total number of registrants and breakdowns: number of students and number of registrants that registered on-site.
4. Room block usage. For any hotel for which the number of guest rooms used by participants was counted, what was the conference rate available and how many rooms were used on each of the nights just before, during, and after the conference?
5. Number of persons attending social events, such as the opening reception, awards luncheon, and banquet. Also, the number participating in excursions.
6. What system was used for submission of papers and formation of the technical program? In particular, did you pay for a particular service? Do you have any recommendations for future organizers?
7. What system was used for online and onsite conference registration? In particular, did you pay for a particular service? Do you have any recommendations for future organizers?
8. Who provided the audio-visual equipment used by the conference (such as the hotel, conference center, or outside company)?
9. Amount of money raised for travel grants, number of travel grants, and sources of support.
10. Include the IEEE final report financials spreadsheet along with this report.