IEEE Information Theory Society Board of Governors meeting minutes

GlobalMeet web meeting, 09.20.2014, 7 AM - 9:30 AM Paci c Time

Edmund Yeh

Present: Abbas El Gamal, Alex Dimakis, Alex Vardy, Alon Orlitsky, Andrew Barron, Aylin Yener, Elza Erkip, Frank Kschischang, Michael Honig, Michelle E ros, Paul Siegel, Ruediger Urbanke, Tracey Ho, Vijay Kumar, Edmund Yeh, Urbashi Mitra, Gerhard Kramer, Matthieu Bloch, Raymond Yeung, Suhas Diggavi, Sergio Verdu, Pierre Moulin, David Tse, Muriel Medard.

After resolving some technical issues, the meeting was called to order at 7:30 AM Paci c Time by Information Theory Society (ITSoc) President, Abbas El Gamal.

1. **Motion**: Vote to approve the meeting agenda. Motion was passed.

2. Abbas presented the President's Report. Abbas reviewed the main work items for the BoG for 2014. Abbas rst noted that the nal report of the Committee on New Directions (chaired by Je Andrews),

There is no reason not to have initiatives if the money is there. In fact this appears to be the only way to meaningfully spend the surplus we make as a society. Furthermore, the reserves are not easy to tap into. For 2014, using the 50% rule, we have $55k for initiatives. Support for three new schools in 2014 has been set at: East Asian School ($20k), India School ($10k) and Australia School ($15k). These are set up as initiatives. There is room to support more initiatives in 2014.

Aylin moved on to the 2015 budget, which has been nalized. The rst version was prepared by the June BoG meeting, projecting an $85k surplus. The second version was prepared in August. The good news is that there is now a projected increase of $40k on our publication revenue (most of it from Transactions, about $8k from conference papers). Thus, our new projected surplus is $125k. This means that we should not have any problem supporting the new Schools.

In 2015, support for various outreach activities total $98k. The Student Subcommittee will receive $10k; Outreach and WITHITS will receive $3k each (with a possible increase to $5k each). The North American and European Schools will receive $20k each (already approved at the BoG meeting in Honolulu). It is proposed that the East Asian and India Schools receive $15k and $11.5k, respectively.

4. Elza Erkip presented the Conference Committee Report. Elza rst discussed ISIT 2017 in Aachen, Germany. The new dates June 25-30 have been proposed and it was asked whether this led to any con icts. None were mentioned during the meeting. Elza then discussed ISIT 2018, for which a number of possible locations have been mentioned, including Chicago (Wojciech Szpankowski and Bob Brown), Colorado (Rockey Luo), and Paris (Pablo Piantanida).

Elza moved to ITW 2015 in Korea. The workshop will have an advanced registration fee of $660 for ITSoc members, and $330 for students. A surplus of more than 10% is expected. A loan of $10k is requested by the workshop. The conference committee recommends BoG approval of the budget and requested loan.

Aylin mentioned that we can decrease the registration fee by nding some industry support. She also indicated that we should have separate votes on approving the budget and loan.

Motion: To approve a loan of $10,000 for ITW 2015 in Korea. Motion was passed via an email vote which took place September 20-27, 2014.

Elza moved to ITW 2015 in Jerusalem. After a recent update of the budget, the conference organizers (Steinberg, Zamir, Ziv) have requested a 25% increase in the registration fees, which are set at $750 for ITSoc members and $300 for students. The main reasons for the fee increase include profes-3814-28(ers4nding)-41profes

sponsorship for CISS since 2006. Conference committee recommends BoG approval. Concerns were expressed regarding the lack of a formal review process for CISS papers, which are published on Xplore. It was suggested that rules be developed regarding ITSoc technical co-sponsorship of conferences.

Motion: To approve technical co-sponsorship for CISS 2015. Motion was passed via an email vote which took place September 20-27, 2014.

Technical co-sponsorship of NetCod 2015 is also proposed. ITSoc has provided technical co-sponsorship for NetCod since 2008. Conference committee recommends BoG approval. Next, Technical co-sponsorship of the 2015 IEEE International Radar Conference is proposed. Elza mentioned that the radar community is interested in developing fundamental bounds and ITSoc members are becoming active in the radar area. Conference committee recommends BoG approval.

Motion: To approve technical co-sponsorship for NetCod 2015. Motion was passed via an email vote which took place September 20-27, 2014.

Motion: To approve technical co-sponsorship for the 2015 IEEE International Radar Conference. Motion was passed via an email vote which took place September 20-27, 2014.

Elza moved to discuss ISIT 2015 in Hong Kong, chaired by David Tse and Raymond Yeung. The conference organizers have proposed a new semi-plenary session format for ISIT 2015. This was reported to the Conference Committee and the BoG at the ITA 2014 meeting, but details were not available at that time. A detailed proposal has now been presented, and feedback on the proposal is sought. The conference committee is in favor of adopting the new semi-plenary session format. The conference organizers also propose developing a smartphone app for the conference. This would cost about $5-6k and would be added to the conference budget. One question is whether the app would be rented or developed. It is suggested that we investigate what other societies do for such apps.

David Tse gave a detailed explanation of the proposed semi-plenary session format for ISIT 2015. The semi-plenary sessions will be dual track, occupying the 9:50 - 11:10 AM time slots on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Each talk will be 20 minutes long and will be selected from the submitted papers. One of the main aims of the semi-plenary sessions is to highlight works that explore new directions, present new ideas, make interesting connections, and broaden the boundaries of the eld. As an auxillary goal,

5 extra pages have been allocated in the submission (to be read at the discretion of the reviewers/TPC members) so that the authors can add details that they could not fit into the main paper.

A discussion followed. Enthusiasm regarding the proposal was expressed. The Conference Committee expressed its support for this one-time change. On the other hand, it was noted that there was negative feedback on the proposal as well. Specifically, there was concern that with the new semi-plenary format, there will effectively be two tiers of papers at ISIT, with the semi-plenary papers being regarded as \more valuable." There was concern that the change of format is radical for ISIT, which has maintained the same format for many years. There was skepticism expressed on the ability to judge which papers will be worthy of the semi-plenary sessions. It was noted that the criteria for choosing the semi-plenary papers may vary with conference organization, and therefore the change will introduce a new element of variability to ISIT. It was noted that many years ago, ISIT had long papers and short papers, with the selection of the long papers (which were in regular sessions) being a complicated process. It was suggested that papers by TPC members be excluded from consideration for the semi-plenary sessions, and that papers which have already appeared elsewhere not be considered. In addition, there was concern that 10 parallel sessions may be too much, putting added strain on conference facilities. For instance, 10 parallel sessions cannot be accommodated at ISIT 2016. It was noted that we need to ensure that conference format changes are sustainable for the long term.

On the other hand, it was noted that the new format creates an incentive for researchers to submit papers exploring new directions. The existence of the forum indicates that exploration of new directions is rewarded. The ISIT format has not changed in 20 years, and perhaps it is time for some experimentation. Since the IT Society is currently exploring new directions (cf. the Report of the Committee on New Directions), this may be a good time to experiment. It was also reiterated that papers containing significant contributions in well-established areas would also be considered for the semi-plenary sessions.

Questions were raised on how to establish the criterion for judging whether a paper leads to a new direction, or whether the paper represents a significant enough contribution to a well-established area. The process may involve too much value judgment, and lead to a highly imperfect system. With the new system, there may be an implication that papers which are not selected for the semi-plenary sessions, are not significant or path-breaking enough.

It was suggested that perhaps the semi-plenary sessions should be restricted to papers presenting new directions. On the other hand, it was noted that there is not much mass in those new areas yet, and perhaps the new sessions are therefore not warranted. It was also suggested that perhaps there should be an adaptive process by which the length and frequency of the semi-plenary sessions can be determined based on the paper submissions. It is noted that this can be accomplished by adjusting the first session in the morning, e.g. with fewer parallel sessions.

In summary, the discussion points to an adaptive process for determining the number of semi-plenary sessions. The sessions could include papers leading to new directions, containing significant results in well-established areas, and student papers nominated for best paper. One possibility is to restrict the sessions to include only papers leading to new directions. It was suggested that the TPC be given leeway to implement the new system.

The ISIT 2015 conference organizers would like to see an advisory vote from the BoG for feedback on the semi-plenary proposal. It was suggested that the positions be summarized before an advisory vote is taken. The Conference Committee will confer further with the conference organizers.

5. Matthieu Bloch presented the Online Committee Report. Matthieu presented a brief overview of the media resources available on itsoc.org. The resources are operational on the development server. Re-encoding of some videos is in progress, and there are still some minor technical details to gure out. With respect to IEEE.tv, the Committee is still waiting for o cial feedback. A test channel is available at https://ieeetv.ieee.org/player/html/viewer?channel=information-theory. There is still a need to test the embedding of the channel in the website.

With respect to Pareja, Matthieu pointed out that the last backup was archived by the Online Committee. September should be the last month of hosting with web.com. On Social Media, an experimental Facebook page has been set up at https://www.facebook.com/pages/IEEEInformation-Theory-Society/339934289488983. Further experimentation will take place before the page is advertised publicly. The Online Committee is currently in the process of moving various media resources to the ITSoc website. These include ISITs (2006 and later), Schools, ITWs, student events, WITHITS. The moving process will take about 3-6 months. Video re-encoding is currently in progress.

6. Aylin Yener presented the Schools Committee Report. Aylin rst discussed the 2014 Schools. For the North American School (NASIT), the books have not yet closed. An NSF grant provided support for 15 US-based students. The reimbursements are ongoing. The books are expected to close by the end of the year. For the European School (ESIT), Vitaly is working with IEEE on closing the books. This was complete as of the end of August. There is a surplus of 2515.39 EUR. The Australian School of Information Theory will take place November 10-13, 2014.

Aylin moved on to the 2015 Indian School. The School Committee requested that the proposal be revised to have the speaker honorarium be either removed or paid by non-society funds. The organizers have agreed. The revised proposal is uploaded for BoG review. The School will take place over four days and feature two topics. Each day will have two hours of lecture, followed by one hour of discussion (which includes student research presentations). Speakers and topics include: Gerhard Kramer (multiterminal communication theory) and Yihong Wu (high dimensional statistics). The School will take place at IISc Bangalore during the May/June/July time frame, depending on anticipated local climate conditions, conference schedules and speaker availability. The organizing committee includes Srikrishna Bhashyam, Radhakrishna Ganti, Krishna Jagannathan, Andrew Thangaraj (IIT Madras), Rajesh Sundaresan, Navin Kashyap (IISc), Vinod Prabhakaran (TIFR Mumbai), Sibiraj Bhaskaran Pillai (IIT Bombay). The estimated budget is $17k. The School seeks IT Society support of $11.5k.

Motion: To approve funding at $11.5k for the 2015 Indian School of Information Theory. Motion was passed via an email vote which took place September 20-27, 2014.

Aylin reviewed the 2014 East Asian School (EASIT) on behalf of Sid Jaggi. The School took place July 7-11, 2014, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. There were 62 participants from the East Asian region. Speakers included David Tse, Alon Orlitsky, Ruediger Urbanke, Yasutada Oohama and Chdv-26

RobCalderbank, Pascal Vontobel (coding theory). The estimated budget is $21k. The School seeks IT Society support of $15k.

Aylin pointed out that the organizers are hoping for higher attendance and cheaper costs (most speakers will be attending ISIT anyway). The organizers have applied for external funding from the Croucher Education Foundation, and expects to hear in December. If the School receives the Croucher funding, it will not need ITSoc support (at least not all of it), and may go with a more ambitious program.

Motion: To approve funding at $15k for the 2015 East Asian School of Information Theory. Motion was passed via an email vote which took place September 20-27, 2014.

7. Alon Orlitsky presented the Membership Committee Report. Alon mentioned continued discussions on new chapters in Brazil, China, India, Italy, as well as Arizona in the U.S. Alon emphasized the importance