



## Membership

Some argue our Society does not need a large quantity of members, but that it does need quality membership. Some argue that size does matter. We are the fourth largest IEEE Society with more than 16,000 members; however, we are the largest Society without our own division director (IEEE Board of Directors). Perhaps both are equally right—we need quantity *and* quality!

The number of IEEE Signal Processing Society (SPS) members peaked at more than 20,000 in 1995, after which membership began to decline steadily. The reason was not because the field of signal processing became less active. On the contrary, the number of pages in publications has grown from 2,200 pages in 1990 to over 19,300 pages in 2012. And the number of submissions to and attendance at SPS conferences continued to increase significantly as well. It was the introduction of IEEE *Xplore* that changed the paradigm of membership and the notion of individual members. One no longer needed to join a Society to receive a copy of a journal thanks to institutional memberships, which cover the costs of journal subscriptions. Many individuals thus chose not to join a Society.

During the Society's major bylaws revision in 2009, the Society decided to seriously face the daunting membership challenges by introducing the Membership Board, with John Treichler as the first Vice President chairing it, and which now consists of four elected regional directors representing the United States, Asia-Pacific region, Europe and Mediterranean area, and Latin America and Canada. These regional directors are also nonvoting members of the Board of Governors (BoG). Their job is to bring the regional voices to the attention of the

leadership as well as channel the messages back to their Regions.

We have a Director–Membership Services whose job is to oversee value and benefit issues that concern our members. We learned from past studies that one of the top reasons a member decided to leave SPS was the lack of continuing education learning programs. Frankly, that dissatisfaction was right on, for we have paid too much attention to original research publications in journals and conferences.

Therefore, one key project of the Director–Membership Services is to establish summer and winter schools on various emerging topics. As Membership Services Director, Shuvra Bhattacharyya was in charge of developing such a program. Just last summer, three summer schools were offered in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, which were all well attended.

Another important task is to create an Internet-based e-learning tutorial and education program. John McAllister is chairing this committee to produce high-quality audio- or video-based presentations that will enable online learning. It is progressing well and we are expecting to see its debut during ICASSP this year.

Next, the Membership Board has been addressing the concern of open access services through a new initiative called the SigPort project. SigPort is envisioned to be similar to arXiv, which is an open access database of papers that are currently under review by a journal or conference. Most importantly, arXiv secures a time stamp for a work to claim its stake in the research and scholarly community. Since arXiv unfortunately does not have a signal processing category and is out of the purview of the Society, the BoG has approved an initiative to explore the creation of SigPort, which stands for “signal processing portal,” to serve as the front end of our journal and conference publications. One would be able to post on SigPort first

before the submission at a very low price to obtain the time stamp, and while the work is being reviewed, it can be accessed and therefore read and cited. Min Wu is chairing a committee to jump-start this project.

We also have an Industrial Relations Committee, chaired by Mazin Gilbert, to foster and maintain relations with industry. This committee was one of the main pillars behind the new IEEE International Conference on Emerging Signal Processing Applications, held in January 2012. A very important issue for SPS is that the percentage of our industrial membership is much less than our peers such as the IEEE Computer Society, IEEE Communications Society, and IEEE Power & Energy Society. Can we do something to improve this?

The last committee created in the Membership Board is the Student Services Committee. It is chaired by Kenneth Lam to address the issues that are important to student members. Again compared to our top three sister Societies, our number of student members is also significantly lower. We will see an event dedicated to students at ICASSP as well.

In 2010, after a long, steady decline in membership to about 13,000+, we created the Membership Board. We started to see an upward trend. Our membership now stands at around 16,500+. We would like to maintain this momentum, and we continue to welcome more of you to join us. Some said it was probably a coincidence, but I said no. God helps those who help themselves, as the saying goes.

Only when we are in touch will our members be in touch. Is there a better way?