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The Commitment and the Reward

Around the time this issue goes to press, our flagship conference, the IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA), will be taking place in Pasadena. The technical program looks very promising, featuring three keynotes, 110 sessions, 23 workshops



and tutorials, and a number of special events including our spring AdCom meeting, which is to be held in the middle of the conference to favor members' attendance, the Women in Robotics lunch, the Graduates of Last Decade (GOLD) reception, and a student party, a new initiative at our conference.

I am writing this column while enjoying a pleasant week of family holiday skiing on the Dolomiti di Brenta in North-eastern Italy. I very much looked forward to the Easter break after a hectic start of the new year and my presidential term. I knew already

from my predecessor Dick Volz about the kind of devotion and the amount of time required of such a demanding societal commitment. Yet, the flow of e-mails and telecons during these first three months, concerning, especially, the appointments of volunteers on the various boards and standing committees, has been simply overwhelming. The reward for such an intensive commitment has been that all the various activities and programs of our Society are on track and a number of new initiatives are being pursued. Here are the highlights from our Boards, and I would like to thank our six vice presidents—an outstanding group to work with (see the masthead on the side).

Conference Activities Board (CAB)

The conference portfolio of the IEEE Robotics and Automation Society (RAS) is getting even more complicated due to the increased number of sponsored conferences and, consequently, the paperwork and finances involved with each conference. The RAS finances now depend more on conferences (surpluses plus *IEEE Xplore* returns) than on any other factor. To manage the conference portfolio, the following steps are being considered:

- ◆ Previously, the meetings chair and the CAB treasurer handled the bulk of conference management. Since more assistance is required, the position of associate vice president of CAB (Shigeki Sugano) has been recast to include the responsibility of managing the conference portfolio. Additional positions to assist the CAB treasurer (Yi Guo) may be created.
- ◆ We are considering hiring an administrative assistant for the Conference Board, to help with all the reporting and financial details and to unburden Society volunteers.
- ◆ The timely closing of conferences and the prompt posting of proceedings on *IEEE Xplore* has a big financial impact. We are considering requiring the assistance of PaperPlaza to expedite proceedings' posting.
- ◆ Of the many sponsored conferences, only ICRA is scrutinized closely in terms of its intellectual impact and operations. Given the RAS exposure to other sponsored conferences, the Steering Committee for Technical Programs (SCTP) chaired by Vijay Kumar (associate vice president of CAB) will begin to scrutinize them similarly.

Financial Activities Board (FAB)

RAS has budgeted the 2008 funds for an initiatives competition, for which proposals were solicited earlier this year. Sixteen proposals were received, which have been reviewed and evaluated by the proper boards, and these are being examined by FAB concerning their financial implications. FAB is also engaged in the preparation of the RAS budget for 2009 to keep us on a good path financially and to make sure that all financial activities flow smoothly.

Industrial Activities Board (IAB)

The annual event between our Society and the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), the Joint Forum on Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Robotics and Automation (IERA), takes place in Munich, Germany, on 11 June 2008. The collocation with Robotik 2008, Germany's largest robotics conference, and Automatica 2008, the International Fair for Automation, constitutes an excellent opportunity to tighten the relationship with people from the industrial community. As in the previous editions of the forum, the Invention and Entrepreneurship Award for outstanding achievements in commercializing innovative robot and automation technology will be presented. IAB is also looking into streamlining its standardization and road-mapping activities, and a bimonthly hookup is being organized.

Member Activities Board (MAB)

The local and student chapter leaders meet at ICRA during a dedicated workshop, organized by the Student Activities

Committee, for discussing, coordinating, and exchanging ideas at the chapter level. A series of scholarships have been arranged to support the travel of student and local chapter officers for attending this workshop.

Publications Activities Board (PAB)

The new *IEEE Transactions on Haptics* will be published semi-annually with the first issue to be premiered this September. It will address the science, technology, and applications associated with information acquisition and object manipulation through touch. Haptic interactions relevant to this journal include all aspects of manual exploration and manipulation by humans and machines as well as the interactions between the two, which are performed in real, virtual, teleoperated, or networked environments. This new journal is cosponsored by our Society (45%), the IEEE Computer Society (45%), and the IEEE Consumer Electronics Society (10%). It is also technically cosponsored by the IEEE Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society. The editor-in-chief is Prof. J. Edward Colgate of Northwestern University, and the Editorial Board has been functional since November 2007. Please visit <http://www.computer.org/th> for more information.

Technical Activities Board (TAB)

TAB is working on several new projects, which are as follows:

- ◆ a triennial comprehensive review of each technical committee
- ◆ an online database for all Distinguished Lectures
- ◆ a new format for the GOLD event at ICRA and IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS).

TAB is also studying new ways to present research milestones in robotics and automation, e.g., an online graphical interface for RAS best papers indexed by year and topic and linked to *IEEE Xplore*.

The sum of these activities is a testimony to the hard work and the spirit of initiative of our team of volunteers, who participate in helping our Society to continue to evolve and improve. We would welcome inputs from all our members. Please send your comments to me, any of the officers, or our Activities Coordinator Rosalyn Snyder. Contact information for RAS officers and committee chairs can be obtained at <http://www.ieee-ras.org>.



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RAS President 2008-2009