

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Information Theory / Société canadienne de théorie de l'information

Wednesday, June 6, 2018, 5:00 – 6:20 PM, ENG-LG21, George Vari Engineering and Computing Centre, Ryerson University, Toronto, ON (@ BSC 2018)

Present: Fady Alajaji (Queen's), Bijan Betel-Miri (Queen's), Anas Chaaban (UBCO), Jun Chen (McMaster), Julian Cheng (UBCO), Maryam Davoudpour (Ryerson), Chen Feng (UBCO), Silas Fong (UofT), Steve Hranilovic (McMaster), Frank Kschischang (UofT), Ali Miri (Ryerson)

1. Call to order - Meeting called to order by Julian Cheng. Opening remark by Julian.
2. Approval of the minutes of 2017 meeting – Julian reviewed the previous meeting. CSIT had an approximately balance of \$66,000 by the end of 2016. We kept our account information private. We talked about officers. We had a lengthy discussion on CATR (Canadian Award of Telecommunications Research). We talked about CWIT 2017. We then had some general discussion about future workshop locations. Motion to approve the minutes moved by Julian Cheng and seconded by Frank Kschischang. All in favor.
3. Officers' reports:
 - a. President's Report (Julian Cheng)
 - i. Julian talked about the history of CSIT (a non-profit Canadian federal corporation established in 1986). CSIT manages two technical conferences CWIT (in odd years) and BSCs (in even years since 1962) as well as manages the CATR.
 - ii. Current elected officers: Julian Cheng (President), Yongyi Mao (Treasurer), and Chen Feng (Secretary). Current board of directions: Ravi Adve, Andrew Eckford, Shahram Yousefi, Octavia Dobre, and Ashish Khisti.
 - iii. Membership: One becomes a member by registering any CWIT or BSC. A member has the right to participate and vote. It is a relaxed and informal definition of membership. Most COMSoc requires to attend at least 2 out of last 5 meetings/conferences. We don't have such restrictions yet.
 - iv. Talking about CATR (Canadian Award for Telecommunication Research) award, which is a major award for communications in

Canada. The 2017 CATR was awarded to Victor C.M. Leung at UBC. We have ordered a metal gold plate. BIRKS will deliver the CATR metal gold plate in early July 2018. The cost is \$775. Call for 2019 CATR nomination will be announced in early 2019. The award procedure has been clearly stated and posted on CSIT's website. We will form a committee and the committee will make recommendations to the board. The decision making of CSIT is mostly the board.

- v. Introducing a new CSIT best paper award to 1) recognize the technical contribution and to 2) promote more submissions. The award committee will consist of three members: the previous conference chair, a current TPC chair, and the third member appointed by the president. The reason we have the previous conference chair in the award committee is to "decouple" the influence because the TPC chair is picked by the conference chair. Julian also showed the award procedure (which defines the scope and the purpose of the award as well as the conflict-of-interests). The selection criteria should focus not only on timely topics, but also on fundamental contributions to an important problem. The award-winning paper is not necessarily the one with the highest score. At this moment, the award is solely based on the paper. It is not based on oral presentation. It is selected through a very rigorous procedure. The award committee only makes the recommendation. It is subject to the board to approve. The conference chair will make the announcement at annual meetings. Also, we reserve the right of not giving the award to maintain the quality of this award.
- vi. Frank asked about the potential conflict between the board and committee members. Julian mentioned that the committee members are often not the board members. Frank asked what if the board, for some reason, doesn't believe the committee. (Perhaps the committee didn't do due diligence practice.) Julian mentioned that the board can say no in this case.
- vii. Frank suggested to omit the word "best" and call it paper award. Many paper awards just omit the word "best" such as Information Theory Paper Award. It is hard to say a paper is the best.
- viii. Julian mentioned that the proposed procedure has received many feedbacks, especially from U of Toronto including Ashish Khisti and Wei Yu. After the approval, we will make it official and post it on CSIT website.
- ix. Fady asked about whether it is a student paper award or just paper award. Julian mentioned that it is just paper award because our

conference is small. So, it doesn't make much sense to make it only student paper award.

- x. Someone asked about how many papers are supposed to get. Julian estimated to be 70 submissions depending on the location of the conference. (Perhaps 35 submissions this year and 25 accepted.)
- xi. Frank asked about the financial reward. Julian suggested it is just a recognition. Frank mentioned that we have more than \$66,000 in the bank.
- xii. Motion to approve the paper award procedure. Moved by Julian, seconded by Jun, approved by all.

b. Treasurer's Report (Yongyi Mao, presented by Julian Cheng)

- i. CSIT received a check of \$9482.50 in Jan 12, 2018 from the organizers of CWIT 2017. The operation of CWIT generated a net profit of $\$9482.50 - \$2500 * 3 = \$1982.50$.
- ii. CSIT provided \$5000 seed money to BSC 2018.
- iii. For 2017 Tax Filing, we have a net income of \$8495. In prior years, we had a net income of \$3604.
- iv. We use Lindsay Tax Service with annual fee \$650 plus tax. She has a degree from U of Waterloo and has 10 years of experience.
- v. As of Dec 31, 2017, CSIT investment account had a balance of \$42003.76 (\$8918.69 in money market and \$33115.07 in balanced fund).
- vi. As of Dec 31, 2017, CSIT investment account gained \$984.39 since Jan 1, 2017, and gained \$2423.50 since Jan 1, 2016.
- vii. As of Dec 29, 2017, CSIT business account had a balance of \$2405.09; As of May 30, 2018, CSIT business account had a balance of \$31,887.59.
- viii. As of Mar 30, 2018, CSIT had total cash and investment of \$41,731.13 (investment) + \$31,887.59 (business) = \$73,618.72.
- ix. Some discussions:

Frank Kschischang: Since CSIT is a non-profit organization, it is a good idea to spend the money.

Julian Cheng: For CWIT 2013, we spent quite a lot of money on

student travel expenses. Julian and Andrew had a discussion on how to spend the money. One of the proposals is to spend the money for the Communication theory workshop which will be held in Banff. The hotels there are expensive. CSIT can subsidize the accommodation of Canadian students.

4. Report on BSC 2016 Proceedings

- a. We would like to add BSC 2016 proceedings to IEEE Xplore. Currently, 13 BSC papers are not in IEEE Xplore.
- b. The main cause is on IEEE Vancouver section sponsorship. We had a last-minute decision to hold BSC 2016 in Kelowna. We contacted IEEE Vancouver section before the conference but the sponsorship action was not carried through due to miscommunication and oversight.
- c. The good news is that IEEE can still publish proceeding papers if post-event sponsorship is acquired. The bad news is that IEEE Vancouver section chair denied our request citing "its executives having little visibility and was unwilling to set a precedent."
- d. One possible solution is to find another venue to publish BSC 2016 papers, such as Curran Associate Inc. This is, however, not an ideal solution.
- e. Recent development: IEEE Vancouver section is willing to re-open the discussion of this issue on June 14, 2018.
- f. Some discussions:

Steve Hranilovic: What about local IEEE section?

Julian Cheng: We don't have IEEE Kelowna section.

Julian Cheng: As lessons learned, we should seek for sponsorship as early as possible from local IEEE section. There is also a historical reason. Previously, IEEE didn't have a streamlined process for sponsorship. Now, IEEE has a simple webpage to fill in information and get signatures. They have a very easy and streamlined process these days.

Steve Hranilovic: Workshop moves. It is a moving target. Are there any other places we can seek for sponsorship?

Julian Cheng: One alternative is to seek sponsorship from ITSoc or COMSoc or Radio Communications Committee. Normally, they would sponsor. Still, the leadership of these committees may keep changing.

Julian Cheng: According to my recent email communication with them, the

new Vancouver section chair doesn't know us, leading to all these issues.

5. Report on BSC 2018 (Ali Miri, the order is switched after CWIT 2019 report)

- a. Ali Miri: I didn't prepare the slides. I can answer questions. At first, I want to keep it the first week of May to avoid the overlapping with other conferences. One person who agreed to come then told me that he was going to ICC. It also overlaps with VTC. I already avoided ISIT.
- b. We advertised the extended deadline a few times. I was surprised that the submission was low. Toronto is a big city. Normally, the submission shouldn't be a problem. Back to 2007, we received much more papers for a conference in Ottawa.
- c. Julian gave me some suggestions, such as having tutorials. We make it a 2-day program.
- d. Financially, we haven't worked it out. But I am sure we will not be in red.
- e. Some discussions:

Julian asked about sponsorship for this year. Even if it is red, it is OK. The society is in a very health condition financially. The lunch was great!

Ari Miri: We got the price from the university.

Julian Cheng: Don't worry about going red. Normally, we have 3 speakers. This time, we have only 1 speaker. Perhaps this will help.

Ari Miri: The speaker is very generous. He is doing fine with money. He offered to give us money back. But we don't need it. If we ask the speakers, they sometimes use their own grant to cover the travel cost.

Julian Cheng: It is easy for us to spend the money to speakers. It may be good to keep the same amount. Last year was \$2500 for each. What if they talked to each other and compared?

Ari Miri: The papers are generally good even the number is low. The quality turns out to be good.

Steve Hranilovic: What is the acceptance rate?

Ari Miri: The rate is high. We decided to use EasyChair rather than EDAS. EDAS is much more polished, but EasyChair is getting there. Previously, EasyChair cannot be used to prepare the proceedings. Now it can do this.

Chen Feng: I haven't had the chance to announce the paper award. Since you are already here, I think it is better for you to make the announcement.

Ari Miri: CSIT decided to create a paper award. This is actually the first year. The committee read the paper; they looked at the rating etc. Finally, they

picked a paper. This year's paper is "Secrecy Beamforming for SWIPT MISO Heterogeneous Cellular Networks" by Hui Ma, Julian Cheng and Xianfu Wang. Congratulations!

Julian Cheng: Are they following the procedure?

Ari Miri: Yes.

Julian Cheng: Prior to the procedure, you mentioned that you and the TPC chair has picked a paper.

Ari Miri: It is the same paper prior and after the procedure. It is the one that has received the highest rating by the reviewers. Sometimes, people give high ranking. So, we did look at the 2nd and 3rd highest ranked papers. We picked the top 3 and then we compared them again after the procedure. The committee picked the same paper as we did before.

Julian Cheng: So, there was an agreement?

Ari Miri: Yes. Also, we will post this information. What is the procedure?

Julian Cheng: The procedure says that it will be announced at our annual CSIT meetings. So, you are following the procedure. We thank Ali for organizing the conference!

Motion by Frank to give \$1000 to the winner. Seconded by Ali, subject to the approval of board.

6. Report on CWIT 2019 preparations (Steve Hranilovic)

- a. Steve Hranilovic proposed to host CWIT 2019 at McMaster University.
- b. McMaster University is one of the five Canadian universities consistently ranked among the top 100 in the world. It is a lovely space (comprised of 300 acres of scenic property at the western end of Lake Ontario) with good location (between Toronto and Niagara Falls). It has never hosted CWIT and BSC before.
- c. How to get McMaster University?
From Toronto: 65km drive or Go train/bus (from Union Station to McMaster).
From Toronto airport: Go Transit provides weekday shuttle service.
From Kitchener/Guelph/Cambridge: Go transit.
From London: Greyhound bus service.
- d. The proposed dates are June 2 - 5, 2019, making CWIT dates far away from ICC and ISIT.
- e. Proposed deadlines
Paper deadline: April 5 (Note that ISIT outcome will be on Mar 31. Good for papers that just need 3-5 days of revision to be submitted to CWIT.)

Decision: May 6
Final submission deadline: May 17.

- f. Proposed committee
General Chairs: Steve Hranilovic and Tim Davidson
TPC Chairs: Jun Chen and Ashish Khisti
Treasurer: Jian-Kang Zhang
Sponsorship and Industry Chairs: Julian Cheng and Yongyi Mao
Publication Chair: Sorina Dumitrescu
Webmaster: Andrew Eckford

- g. A tentative workshop program is as follows:

Sunday (June 2): arrival with reception at 8PM on campus.

Monday: Plenary Talk 9-10am, e.g., IT for neuroscience (Michael Gastpar)
10-10:30am for coffee break
10:30am to 12:30am for Invited Papers: 40 min each * 3
12:30pm to 1:30pm for lunch
1:30pm to 3pm for Regular Session 1: 15 min each * 6
3:00pm to 3:30pm for coffee break
3:30pm to 5pm for Regular Session 2: 15 min each * 6

Tuesday: Plenary talk 9-10am, e.g., IT for optical systems (e.g., Gerhard Kramer, Erik Agrell, Rene-Jean Essiambre)
10-10:30am for coffee break
10:30am to 12:30am for Invited Papers: 40 min each * 3
12:30pm to 1:30pm for lunch
1:30pm to 3pm for Regular Session 1: 15 min each * 6
3:00pm to 3:30pm for coffee break
3:30pm to 5pm for Regular Session 2: 15 min each * 6
7:00pm to 9pm: banquet (Convocation hall or Niagara Winery).

Wednesday: Plenary talk 9-10AM, e.g., IT and machine learning (e.g., Andrea Montanari)
10-10:30am for coffee break
10:30am to 12:30am for Invited Papers: 40 min each * 3
12:30pm to 1:30pm for lunch
(If sufficient papers received)
1:30pm to 3pm for Regular Session 1: 15 min each * 6
3:00pm to 3:30pm for coffee break
3:30pm to 5pm for Regular Session 2: 15 min each * 6

- h. Some discussions.

Julian Cheng: The proposed deadline is later than usual. The advantage is that

it will not compete with ISIT deadline. The disadvantage might be the visa application for international attendees. Since most of the attendees are Canadians, hopefully visa may not be an issue.

Fady Alajaji: Previously, CWIT/BSC deadlines competed with ISIT deadline.

Julian Cheng: Any possible overlapping with ICC?

Steve Hranilovic: ICC will be in May in Shanghai. Also, it is after GLOBECOM submission.

Julian Cheng: We may approach Fields Institute, Mitacs, NSERC regional office. Note that Fields Institute has certain restrictions on the spending.

Frank Kschischang: Can we try to get some money from Huawei?

Steve Hranilovic: We will book MDCL (Michael G. DeGroot Centre for Learning&Discovery) 1110. The capacity is 144 and internal rates are available. One issue is about the accommodation, since there are no hotels nearby. Some hotels are 2-3 km away (such as Vistors Inn). McMaster has on-campus accommodation, offering suites (2-bedroom to 4-bedroom style) with private washroom at a rate of \$65-\$73/night.

Ali Miri: Perhaps you can provide options so that people can choose in terms of parking permits?

Steve Hranilovic: Parking permits are already reserved.

Steve Hranilovic: How shall we give attendees the proceedings?

Fady Alajaji: ISIT this year just uses emails.

Steve Hranilovic: No USB. People can download our proceedings. This is no point to get another low-quality USB driver. Preprints should be OK.

Julian Cheng: Associate dean is going to sponsor or not?

Steve Hranilovic: They are waiting to see the amount of commitment we can get from CSIT and from industry sponsors.

Steve Hranilovic: How much does EDAS charge for the overhead of registration fees?

Julian Cheng: There is some cost/fee on the conversion to USD.

Ali Miri: The overhead is small. The conversion might be an issue.

Steve Hranilovic: There is some internal system at McMaster. This is kind of in-kind contribution from McMaster.

Julian Cheng: Does McMaster take a cut for the sponsorship money?

Steve Hranilovic: I don't think so. We are looking for sponsorship from the associate Dean.

Julian Cheng: What about the overhead charged by McMaster?

Steve Hranilovic: Typically, in the range of 4-5% overhead. The associate Dean is willing to waive that overhead.

Steve Hranilovic: We are sensitive to the registration cost. We want to make sure that the attendance is high. Students should be charged at low cost to encourage their attendance. Full-registration set to obtain required profit margin for sustainability.

A brief sketch of the budget

rooms: \$1020 (\$340/day)

A/V: \$300

WiFi: \$0

reception: \$1500

coffee breaks: \$1500

lunch: boxed lunch \$10-\$15 each; hot buffet \$20 / person / day (which requires 5 – 10 min walk)

banquet (two options): conference hall \$40 per person; winery (e.g., Vineland Estates) \$80-\$90 per person + bus \$600-\$900

plenary speaker: \$9000

EDAS: \$3000

paraphernalia: \$2000

Total: \$26,720 (= \$534/delegate)

Steve Hranilovic: What is a reasonable price for the full registration? How much is too much? \$500, \$600, \$700?

Julian Cheng: How much did we pay this year?

Ali Miri: \$200 for students. \$475 for full registration.

Julian Cheng: In the past, I received complaints before. They pay USD\$690 to cover 3 papers in an international conference like GLOBECOM. Why we are charging \$475 plus tax for one paper in a local conference? It seems to be more expensive than ICC or GLOBECOM.

Ali Miri: We allow the second paper at the student rate this year. It is not expensive. Shall we have reduced rate for students? Say, \$200-\$300 for student registration. Will this be an issue?

Julian Cheng: Not an issue.

Julian Cheng: It seems that we are shooting for a low acceptance rate.

Steve Hranilovic: The acceptance rate at CWIT is typically around 70%.

Julian Cheng: There seem to be many plenary and invited speakers. You may not have too many rooms for regular papers.

Steve Hranilovic: Don't worry. This is plenty of room for regular papers. The last CWITs have less than 35 papers. We can have 12 papers per day.

Julian Cheng: I think this is a good problem to have. If we have many

submissions, this is good.

7. New Business – No new business

8. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn: Julian Cheng. Carried unanimously.