

Report on IEEE Sections Congress 2014

Held in RAI Convention Centre, Amsterdam, 22-24 August, 2014
by Donald Bailey, Primary Section Delegate for NZ Central Section

The first day (Friday 22) started with a Region 10 meeting which provided an update of the activities within R10. Of particular interest were the following addresses:

- Women in Engineering chair, Nita Patel, outlining progress and activities of Women in Engineering
- Young Professionals chair, Timothy Wong, outlining the changes from GOLD to Young Professionals. In particular, part of the reason was to take a more liberal view of “Young”, and rather than restrict it to 10 years, extend it to cover up to 15 years after graduation.
- Brief addresses by the candidates for President Elect of IEEE, outlining the current issues as they saw them.

Here is the official photo of the R10 delegates.



This was followed by the Australian Council meeting, to which the New Zealand delegates were invited. It was useful meeting the Australian chairs and other delegates, and to hear some of the issues that they are grappling with. In particular, it was useful to meet with Pina Dall'Armi-Stoks, who is the chair of the WIE affinity group for IEEE-SA section. She was happy to assist in promoting WIE within the NZ Central section, and I have passed details onto our WIE coordinator, Bing Xue.

Here is the official photo of the Australia and NZ Council participants:



We also had a NZ Council meeting at Sections Congress. The main issue discussed was the incorporation of IEEE within NZ. We had a meeting with Eileen Lach and David Meza, where they gave an overview of the legal status project worldwide, and explained the legal risk that sections pose to IEEE, and the legal risk to volunteers through organisation of section events. Briefly discussed were some of the compliance costs associated with this. At the discussion, it was agreed that the most straight forward approach was to have a single incorporated society within New Zealand, (at the Council level) under which the individual sections could retain their autonomy. However, nothing definitive was agreed on, and there are many details and issues still to work through.

The main keynote address of the Congress was by Luc Van den hove, CEO of Imec, on “Technology Directions – from Connecting Lives to Improving Lives”. He discussed the role of nanoelectronics in a wide range of new technologies that will be improving lives. It was inspiring to see some of the exciting things currently being worked on.

I also attended the IEEE Honours ceremony. It was interesting to see the range of honours bestowed for a wide range of achievements.

Other presentations attended:

- Professional Productivity and Collaboration Tool, a new tool being introduced to foster collaboration, and joint work on projects. It has features for networking (including V-tools integration), career development (a little like LinkedIn), Research, and Collaborative authoring (a little like Google Docs). I have signed up as a beta user when the tool is pre-released later this year.
- IEEE Conference Exchange, outlining the updated requirements and processing system for conference organisation under the IEEE banner. This was followed up by discussing the new costs being introduced for conference technical sponsorship. Apparently all conference proceedings are checked by a 3rd party for overall quality before uploading into IEEE Xplore.

- Section / Chapter Sponsored Conferences – a brief presentation on how sections can sponsor conferences. Much of this we are already doing anyway.
- Best practices for Small and Mid-Size Sections. This was more of a group discussion. Some of the key points:
 - Have a local section operations manual on how to do things, to make transitions easier as new volunteers come onto the committee, and to make the transition easier for new officers.
 - Perhaps provide online CLE (Centre for Leadership Excellence) training for all in the committee?
- Use the IEEE Certificates Program. We can apply for certificates for Continuing Education Units (1 CEU = 10 hours) for many events. This can apply for everything from DL talks (perhaps less useful) through to workshops and other longer industry training events.

One of the features of Sections Congresses, is that a series of recommendations are voted on. The top five SC2014 recommendations are:

- Include free access to IEEE Digital Library as a member benefit. Promote other IEEE services and products based on their usage and preferences (adopt Google Business Model).
- Develop an incentive and recognition program for companies that invest in full or partial support of their employees' IEEE membership dues.
- Introduce loyalty rewards such as publication access, conference fees, standards for continued membership
- Provide a tool to build, promote, record, host, and broadcast technical events at the local level and make them available to IEEE members.
- Enhance vTools for better usability by volunteers and provide a training program to the Sections.

Overall, it was a privilege to attend Sections Congress and represent NZ Central Section. There were a lot of activities all compressed into such a short time that it will take a while to fully assess it all. Of greatest benefit was meeting with counterparts from all over the world, and discussing some of the common issues, and being inspired in what I do with the IEEE.