
Global Communications Newsletter

April 1998

ComSoc Membership Development – North America

By Khoi Nguyen, Director of North America Region

This year marked the beginning of a newly restructured IEEE Communications Society, poised to meet the increasing demands of its members around the world. Indeed, the world we live in has become a global village. As of February 1997 there were nearly 42,000 registered ComSoc members living and working in all regions of the world, from North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the Asia/Pacific region. Byeong Gi Lee, Editor of *Global Communications Newsletter*, pointed out that “we may interpret (the restructuring) as reflections of ComSoc’s strong resolve to become a truly global professional society” (for details about the new ComSoc structure please see the article by Carole Swaim and Allan Ledbetter in the January 1998 issue of *GCN*, or visit the ComSoc Website at www.comsoc.org).

Membership Development (recruiting new members and expansion) is one of the four strategic areas targeted by ComSoc (the other three are Technical Activities, Membership Services, and Society Relations). Heading up Membership Development as Vice President is Dr. Ron Horn, assisted by six Directors drawn from volunteers in different regions of the world:

Director, Asia Pacific: Byeong G. Lee
Director, Europe/Africa/Middle East: Horst Bessai
Director, Latin America: Leonor Wilches-Chaux
Director, North America: Khoi Nguyen
Director, Information Services Development: Dale Armor
Director, Membership Programs: Savo Glisic

As Director of the North America Region, I look forward to working with ComSoc chapters in the United States and Canada to find ways to further strengthen chapter operations and recruit new members for ComSoc.

I must admit that, although I have been a ComSoc volunteer for over 11 years, my experience has mostly been limited to the chapter and section levels in the San Francisco Bay area. I have been a telecommunications engineer for over 20 years, and I found my volunteer work in the Oakland/East Bay Chapter of the IEEE ComSoc highly satisfying and enjoyable. Having held various positions, such as Chapter Treasurer, Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chair, I have learned different aspects of chapter operations such as fund raising to make the chapter financially strong, attracting volunteers to run the chapter, involving student chapters, conducting membership surveys, recruiting members, inviting qualified speakers, and organizing meetings. I enjoy the camaraderie of a dedicated group of volunteers who are willing to do whatever it takes to make our chapter strong. I also enjoy net-

working with other practicing engineers in my profession and learning about their exciting work. My volunteer work with ComSoc has given me that, and more. For instance, I felt particularly proud when our chapter, Oakland East Bay, was awarded the first ComSoc Chapter of the Year Award in 1994. I feel that perhaps our chapter has done a good job, but I also feel we can do even better in the future if we can learn from the success of other chapters.

It is my hope that the bonds between ComSoc chapters from different regions of the world will be strengthened as we move forward with the new ComSoc structure so that we all can learn from each other’s success. It is with this in mind that I have accepted to serve as Director of Membership Development for North America. From the sheer size and numbers, this is a big region. From the February 1997 membership statistics posted at ComSoc’s Web site, North America, which consists of the United States (Regions 1–6) and Canada (Region 7), has some 69 chapters, accounting for over 19,000 active members, or 56 percent of the total ComSoc active membership. I also see in the same statistics over 6600 members in arrears, and a sizable drop in active members since December 1996. I must admit that I do not fully understand these statistics yet, but I can see both great opportunities and big challenges ahead, and I really look forward to getting to know and working with the volunteers in all North American chapters in 1998.

Activities Planned for 1998 by ComSoc Chapters in Region 8

By Dr. Jacob Baal-Schem

Region 8 ComSoc Chapters Coordinator

The number of Communications Society Chapters in Region 8 (Europe, Middle East, and Africa) is constantly growing. At last count we had 23 active Chapters, and several Sections have already sent petitions for additional Chapters. In 1998 we intend to organize a Chapters Chairs meeting, and the IEEE Brussels Office, who is supporting the activities, has contacted all Chapter Chairs in order to check their willingness to participate in this meeting and to find an appropriate venue for the meeting. The main aims for the Chapters Chairs meeting are to discuss the possibilities and procedures for getting more ComSoc conferences and symposia to Region 8, as well as to discuss the main problems encountered by ComSoc Chapters.

One of the main activities of Chapters is to organize technical lectures, and the Israel and Cyprus Sections are planning to hold a

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NSB as a New Actor in the Norwegian Telecommunications Market

By Algirdas Pakstas, United Kingdom

January 1998 finally brought to the telecommunications market in Norway a new actor: Norwegian State Railways (NSB). Currently NSB has modern 140 Mb/s fiber optic infrastructure which was built for their own use. Reserve capacity not currently used by NSB is about three times 34 Mb/s, and there are many old and just starting telecom operators who want to rent it, primarily for carrying Internet traffic.

It was digital-only (GSM) mobile teleoperator NetCom who earlier showed the greatest interest in renting NSB fiber optic lines, but they were unable to do it because of the 10 years long agreement between NSB and Telenor. In April 1997 this agreement was terminated with the purpose of increasing market competition. However, rental of NSB's lines was delayed because the Ministry of Communications, according to the official explanation, "was busy by clarifying legal issues in the former NSB and Telenor contract in order to

avoid future misunderstandings with new users." The Ministry of Communications is actually the "owner" of both NSB and Telenor. Activity of the Ministry was carefully watched by interested parties, and the Ministry was even blamed for attempts to prioritize Telenor before other operators. NetCom and other participants of the Association of Teleoperators (Teleoperatørens Forum) put their formal complaints to the authorities about unfair business and discrimination, and they finally succeeded.

As was announced in the last week of January 1998, the Ministry of Communications gave their conclusions and NSB is preparing technical arrangements which will allow connecting interested teleoperators to the NSB network. It was expected "in a few weeks," meaning February–March 1998.

NSB is planning to install SDH equipment during 1998 which, without additional investments in the fiber optic infrastructure, will increase capacity by a factor of 16. An additional advantage of the new SDH-based network will be its easier and more flexible management than for the existing PDH network.

According to Håkon Grimstad, Chief of Telecommunications in the Bane Tele division of NSB, the company expects a large increase of internal traffic and primarily intends to use this increased capacity for internal purposes. "NSB will rent out only unused rests." We note that this will indeed be a very necessary addition to the NSB budget because during the last few years railways were chronically discussed for their financial inefficiency in comparison with other means of transport in Norway.

Mr. Grimstad stressed that currently NSB has no other plans except to rent out their fiber optic lines (i.e., no plans to become a telecom operator on their own). Because of their own lack of "teleaggressiveness" it is expected that NSB prices will be very competitive. NSB's marketing strategy will be based on convincing users that it is cheaper to rent from NSB than to build their own infrastructure. Plans to lay new fiber optic lines are uncertain and will depend on the interest of cooperative partners.

There is close cooperation in the new SDH project between NSB and their Swedish colleagues, who are already exploiting their SDH network and successfully selling reserve capacity "for hundreds of millions of kroner per year."

It is clear that renting of NSB lines will most benefit those telecom operators located in the most populated parts of the country covered by the railway network. This includes Sorlandet (the counties of Aust-Agder and Vest-Agder, including the cities of Kristiansand, Grimstad, and Arendal), Vestlandet (Bergen region), Akerhus (Oslo and Drammen), and Sor-Trondelag (Trondheim). These regions also contain the largest student population (the Universities of Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim, as well as many regional colleges), which is considered an essential market base for Internet use. Northern Norway is not covered by the railway network at all and will have to find alternative solutions for enhancing Internet infrastructure.

The Australian Telecommunications Environment

By Craig Skinner, Australia

For local telecommunications engineers and technical staff, the new competitive environment is having dramatic effects on employment prospects. The combination of new employers entering the market and productivity-motivated cutbacks by existing employers means more dynamic, and less certain, career paths. Nowadays, it is even more essential to keep one's skills up to date.

Toward the end of 1997, the Australian government successfully completed one-third privatization of what used to be the government telecommunications monopoly, now called Telstra. Despite the large size of the float relative to the Australian stock market and the market volatility at the time, the demand for shares was still high and required scaling back the share allocations.

As part of the license agreements with the new digital mobile network (GSM) operators Optus and Vodaphone, the Australian government promised to enforce shutting down the analog mobile network (AMPS) owned by Telstra by the year 2000. The migration of analog users across to the three digital networks (Telstra also runs a GSM network) has been slower than expected. AMPS user groups, particularly in rural areas, have been lobbying the government to retain analog service in areas where digital service is perceived to be inadequate. The government will soon be releasing details of any changes to the existing phase-out plan.

The Australian government also intends to auction the 800 MHz (currently occupied by the AMPS network) and 1800 MHz (currently occupied by various fixed radio links) spectrum blocks by April 1998. A limitation on the spectrum is that it cannot be used to run an AMPS network. The auction process to be used is a simultaneous ascending auction similar to the U.S. PCS auctions. The Australian government is currently considering allowing national roaming onto the existing GSM networks to provide an incentive for new market entrants.

The New South Wales Section of the IEEE, with the IEEE Communications Society, is carrying out the organization of GLOBECOM '98, which will be held in Sydney, Australia in November this year. It is anticipated that 666 papers will be accepted for presentation in up to 16 parallel technical sessions. The four mini-conferences which will be held will be on communications theory, the Internet, access networks, and technical management briefings (or applications sessions as these are also known elsewhere). Tutorials and workshops are being scheduled for the Sunday and Thursday, the days preceding and following the technical sessions and mini-conferences. For further information about GLOBECOM '98 visit our Website at <http://www.monash.edu.au/oce/globecom98/> or contact Maureen Kemp by phone: +61-3-9905-1340; fax +61 3 9905 1343; or e-mail globecom98@adm.monash.edu.au.

The IEEE ComSoc European Operations Corner

By Jacques Kevers, Brussels

Considering the various questions the Brussels office recently received concerning Chapter activities, a short overview of these matters would probably be of interest to readers of the *Global Communications Newsletter*.

What Is a Chapter?

A Chapter is a technical subunit within one or more Sections or a Council, operating in unison with its parent Society and the Section. A Chapter's goal is to meet the technical information needs and interests of its members. Chapter-sponsored technical meetings provide essential educational opportunities "close to home."

ComSoc Chapters in Region 8

Within Region 8 (Europe, Africa, Middle East), Communications Society Chapters have been created in countries/regions such as Benelux, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom/Ireland, and Yugoslavia. There still are a number of countries in Region 8 with a significant number of Communications Society members where no Comsoc chapter has been established.

Chapter Benefits

The IEEE Communications Society provides the following benefits to its Chapters:

Distinguished Lecture Tours — Lecture tours can be arranged in response to a request from one or more Chapter Chairs. The list of Distinguished Lecturers and their fields of expertise can be obtained from the Brussels office. Funding is provided to enable a Distinguished Lecturer to address multiple groups on a lecture tour.

Chapter Funding for Activities — Limited funds are budgeted to assist ComSoc Chapters in some of their activities. More details about this can be obtained from the Brussels office.

Free Publications to Chapters — Each Chapter Chair receives complimentary subscriptions, upon application, to

IEEE Communications Magazine, *IEEE Network*, *IEEE Personal Communications*, *IEEE Transactions on Communications*, and *IEEE JSAC* for use by Chapter members.

Chapter of the Year Award — This award consists of a certificate, a check for \$500, and travel expenses for the Chapter Chair to attend ICC or GLOBECOM to receive the award.

Grants to Attend Conferences — A limited number of professional travel grants are available to professionals from low-income countries to allow them to attend our conferences.

A home page — On the Communications Society server.

How to Form a Chapter

Chapters may be formed by submitting a petition to the IEEE Section Executive Committee. The basic requirement is that there are at least 12 higher-grade members in the Section who are ComSoc members. Special rules exist for creating Student Branch Chapters.

There may be sections where there are insufficient members of one society for forming a new Chapter, or where the density of society membership in any key location would not support a viable Chapter. One possibility is then to form a joint Chapter with another technically related society. Joint Chapters can be split later into separate viable Chapters when there is a reasonable number of members from each of the sponsoring societies.

Finally, there are many countries and areas in the world in which individuals have economic difficulties to join the IEEE. These countries and areas cover wide parts of the globe, and are very important to ComSoc, who is prepared to make special efforts to make access of its programs and activities possible.

The IEEE has a kit that can be sent to new Chapter organizers. It contains several helpful documents, including the "Petition for the Establishment of an IEEE Society Chapter." Requests for this kit, or for more details on Comsoc's Membership/Chapter Development initiatives in difficult countries and areas, can be sent to the Brussels office (phone: +32-2-770-66-34; fax: +32-2-770-85-05; e-mail: memservice-europe@ieee.org). The office is of course prepared to provide organizers with any other support they may need.

Your 1998 Renewal Invoice Payment

By Fanny Su Beh Noi, Singapore

Our office has been receiving enquiries regarding the 1998 renewal invoice payment, especially from those who have not renewed and are hesitating to do so because of the drop in currency exchange rates against the U.S. dollar, which is affecting the majority of countries in the Asia Pacific region.

The IEEE is aware of the currency turmoil and the effect it is having on our members. Our priority is to retain these members.

Please let your local members know that if they have not renewed, they can send in their renewal with a local currency bank check using the exchange rate indicated on their renewal invoice. The exchange rate is very much more favorable than the current exchange rate.

For example, a member in Singapore can send in his renewal invoice by cutting a check drawn on a local bank in Singapore (United Overseas Bank, etc.) and sending it back along with the renewal invoice in the enclosed envelope back to the United States. When the check reaches the United States, it will go through a banking clearinghouse for reconversion back to U.S. dollars. The IEEE has agreed to hold that exchange

rate constant for the entire membership renewal cycle.

If you are uncertain as to what the exchange rate for your currency is against the U.S. dollar in your renewal invoice, please e-mail us and we will let you know what it is.

Note: if you have authorized payment via your credit card, the transaction by the credit card company will be in U.S. dollars. The credit card company will bill you at equivalent local currency at the current market exchange rate against the U.S. dollar, not at the exchange rate stipulated on your renewal invoice.

Members have until the end of April 1998 to renew before they are dropped from the membership list and their subscriptions terminated. So please encourage your local members to renew as soon as possible.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Best regards,
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IEEE Communications Office
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The Choice Is Yours

By Jenny Long, Administrative/Service Executive, Singapore

Ben Tan is a lecturer at a reputable university. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. Because of his merry nature and positive outlook on life, he is very well liked by his students. If a student is having a bad day and is unable to concentrate on his/her studies, Ben will think of ways to motivate him/her and tell the student to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing his style and popularity has made some other lecturers curious. Someone went up to him one day and said, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all the time. How do you do it?"

Ben replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, 'Ben, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood.' I choose to be in good mood.

"Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. When someone complains to me, I can either choose to accept their complaining or point out the positive side of life. I choose to point out the positive side of life."

Ben said, "Life is about choices. In every situation, there is a choice. You choose how to react to situations, how people will affect your mood, to be in a good or bad mood. The bottom line is, it's your choice how you live your life."

One day, Ben had a really bad car accident. When the paramedics arrived at the scene of the accident, Ben had stopped breathing. After 15 minutes of cardiopulmonary resuscitation by the team of paramedics, they finally got his pulse and heartbeat going.

The doctors and nurses in the hospital were amazed that Ben was able to make it. He had lost too much blood during

the accident. It takes a miracle to survive his condition.

Three months later, one of his students asked him, "How did you survive the accident?"

Ben replied, "I had two choices: to live or to die. I chose to live."

The current currency turmoil has affected a lot of people in the Asia Pacific region. Like Ben, we do have choices: we can either fight it and look at the positive side of the situation, or feel depressed and do nothing.

The choice is yours.

Conference Report on APNOMS '97

By Dongmyun Lee and Jong-Tae Park, Korea

The Asia-Pacific Network Operations and Management Symposium (APNOMS '97) was held at the Renaissance Seoul Hotel, Seoul, Korea, 8–10 October 1997. APNOMS is a new form of meeting where researchers and practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region get together, present their work, and share their ideas and views on the field of network operations and management. APNOMS '97 was co-sponsored by KICS KNOM and IEICE NOSC and co-supported by IEEE CNOM, NMF, and *The Electronic Times*.

APNOMS '97 was attended by more than 200 participants from Asia-Pacific countries as well as some from North America and Europe. The theme of this symposium was "Toward Global Network Management." This three-day symposium featured tutorials, keynote speeches, technical sessions, exhibitions, and a panel session.

The APNOMS '97 participants were treated to a very interesting and exciting panel discussion on the theme of "Integrated Management: How?" This panel session was chaired by Makoto Yoshida (NTT-AT, Japan) and included panelists Graham Chen (CiTR Pty Ltd, Australia), who gave a TMN management solution provider's view; Jong-Tae Park (Kyungpook National Univ., Korea), who gave a regional as well as academic view; Masayoshi Ejiri (Fujitsu, Japan), who gave a vendor's view; and Masahiko Matsushita (Maebashi Institute of Technology, Japan), who gave a standards view.

The next symposium, APNOMS '98, is scheduled to be held in Tokyo, Japan, in October 1998.

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series of lectures by one of the Distinguished Lecturers of the Communications Society.

The Communications Society has decided to provide technical co-sponsorship to MELECON '98, the 9th Mediterranean Electrotechnical Conference, to be held in Tel Aviv, Israel, 18–20 May 1998. Communications Society President Tom Plevyak is considering participating in the conference. About 40 papers on communications will be presented during the conference, and most of the tutorials will be on communications subjects, including one on "Trends in Wideband/Broadband Communications" by Stephen Weinstein, Past President of the Society. We hope for much participation of ComSoc members from Israel and other countries.

The Communications Society and Region 8 are cooperating in broadening the technical activities of the ComSoc Chapters in this Region, which is home to a large percentage of ComSoc.

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www.comsoc.org/pubs/gcn

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