

Empowering Members

IEEE Sections Congress 2011

August, 19–22
San Francisco

Celia Desmond, Toronto Section

I already knew this is one of the best events run by IEEE. I expected to learn about many new IEEE services, and to get some interesting suggestions for IEEE events and for work; I was not disappointed. I also met quite a few new Section and Chapter people and attended some meetings and sessions that provided some helpful ideas. In addition, I was able to help five or six volunteers to sign up for new activities, which is always gratifying.

There was high interest in the Technical Activities sessions and information provided at the related booth. The concept of a Technical Council was new to many—essentially groups of Societies working together in broad areas of technology. They sponsor member activities such as technical meetings, publishing, promoting educational activities, and developing standards. In the main sessions, there was a lot of cross pollination and networking, which is also beneficial.

The visit to the Computer Museum was a local touch that was also good, giving us the opportunity to meet the local Chapters. They have many Chapters and all are very active, attracting 40-200 people to 8-12 talks a year. Very impressive.

I would encourage anyone who attends Sections Congress to arrive with a clear calendar to allow taking advantage of all the offered events.

Simon DeWolf, Atlantic Canada Section

Leading up to Sections Congress, my expectations were mainly to do with gathering what information I could on improving future technical events and contributing to section operations.

But by the second day there, I realized there was much more to be gained, seeing the level of dedication I found in many of the other attendees. This was not only apparent in the success of academics and captains of industry who claimed awards that evening, but also in younger colleagues who I spoke to at the poster exhibits and around the dinner table. Including the keynote, there were at least three speeches that described humanitarian efforts as part of IEEE's focus in the coming years, and a break-out session show-casing projects already implemented in developing countries (such as Peru and Rwanda). Meeting the engineers who had built infrastructure in those countries and seeing the results of their effort was particularly inspirational.

Another thing I found encouraging was that three of the top five MGA recommendations voted on at Sections Congress were in support of helping students get into the field of engineering. I plan to communicate this to my section so we can put more action toward it in Atlantic Canada.



Bill Gruver, Vancouver Section

Having attended the previous Sections Congress in Quebec City in 2008, I noted the program was similar. However, SC2011 perhaps had closer cooperation with Technical Activities in the organization of sessions. It also included poster sessions for the first time, which I had responsibility for organizing, working closely with Dan Toland from the Member and Geographic Activities Board staff, and Loretta Arellano from San Fernando Valley Section; Loretta was also Program Committee Chair. The poster sessions had 44 participants from Regions, Sections, Chapters, and Societies including posters from each of the technical divisions. It was a proud moment for all of Region 7 as Vancouver Section unveiled its entry, presenting their current centennial activities as well as the past accomplishments. I also chaired the “Serve the World” track, and chaired a breakout session entitled “The IEEE Distinguished Lecturer Program –How it can Benefit your Section Members.” The breakout session on the DL Program had speakers from IEEE Societies/Councils. There was a wide diversity of approaches among the DL Programs that were presented. The presentations can be viewed at http://www.ieee.org/societies_communities/geo_activities/sections_congress/2011/serve.html#sect8

A high point of SC2011 was a plenary presentation by Vint Cerf, who is recognized as one of the “fathers of the Internet.” A very entertaining presentation was given at the Banquet by Grant Imahara, co-host of Mythbusters.

Meliha Selak, Vancouver Section

In addition to attendance by the IEEE Vancouver Section Senior Ex Committee members, I was honoured to represent Societies and Technical Councils. Together with colleagues from other technical societies, I was presenting at one of the Breakout Sessions held Saturday and Sunday. My session was entitled “Squaring the Society-Chapter-Section Triangle.”

The session was about the relationships amongst Sections-Chapters-Societies—benefits that a chapter gets from a Section and what obligations a chapter has toward that section. The discussion included subjects related to chapter organizational aspects, and society services to chapters. A chapter can play a vital role in the professional life of its members, with services and support flowing both ways between chapters and societies. There is a need for coordination of chapter activities within sections, with plenty of benefits. Also, section members active in Graduates of the Last Decade (GOLD) and Women In Engineering (WIE) can be a real asset in Chapter Activities.



to Create the Future

Patrick Wong, Southern Alberta Section

During the Breakout Sessions at Sections Congress 2011 (SC2011), speakers shared information on specific topics with attendees. One topic of particular interest is enhancing the vitality of the geographic units. After all, the IEEE has over 5,000 local geographic units globally, and it is essential to recruit new volunteers and keep the current volunteers engaged.

Region 7 also participated in the discussion to increase awareness of local IEEE activities. The use of social media has been widely successful in several regions, and can be implemented for large events or affinity groups. In addition, IEEE Day has been very well received in many regions, and each geographic unit is encouraged to honour IEEE Day to build recognition locally. The presentations at the breakout sessions can be viewed at the following address: http://www.ieee.org/societies_communities/geo_activities/sections_congress/2011/enhance.html

With regards to our achievements, Region 7 had a very strong representation during the Member and Geographic Activities (MGA) awards announcement at the Opening Ceremony. The night opened with recognition for sections with outstanding longevity with the North Saskatchewan, Peterborough, Waterloo-Kitchener, Montreal and Vancouver sections reaching their 25th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 100th year anniversaries respectively.

This shows the continuing commitment, support and enthusiasm of our local volunteers. Congratulations to the North Saskatchewan, Peterborough, Waterloo-Kitchener, Montreal and Vancouver sections.

The ceremony continued with recognition for the excellent work of a large section and a small section. The 2010 MGA Outstanding Large Section Award recipient was the Vancouver Section and the 2010 MGA Outstanding Small Section Award recipient was the Canadian Atlantic Section. For 2011, Region 7 (IEEE Canada) continued the momentum with Ottawa Section and London Section receiving these same awards, respectively. Activity highlights of the award recipients can be found at the following address: http://www.ieee.org/societies_communities/geo_activities/awards/recipients/outstanding_section.html

Congratulations to the Vancouver, Canadian Atlantic, Ottawa and London Sections for being selected for these awards.

Canada had a large presence in the IEEE Sections Congress 2011, from the breakout sessions to the award ceremonies. The support from the volunteers for local events and/or participation in them is vital to the success of the local sections, and ultimately the region. Let's continue the momentum in the coming years.

Mazana Armstrong, Vancouver Section

My expectations about the Sections Congress were definitely exceeded. This was the first time I attended, and it was more fun and more engaging than what I had anticipated. It was great to see so many sections from all over the world represented. We were able to meet IEEE staff from Piscataway and better understand the complete range of support to volunteers and member services.

As this is our centennial year, we faced some challenges regarding the compilation of our section's history records. Meeting the people from IEEE History Center and joining the discussion during the breakout session was helpful. We were also able to meet IEEE branding department and discuss our new section logo and plans for a future IEEE monument. Everyone was approachable and it felt like a big IEEE family reunion event. We connected many names with faces, and had an opportunity to meet IEEE leaders and staff from IEEE HQ, who make our volunteer duties easier and more rewarding. We were able to spend an hour meeting with Dr. Moshe Kam, the president of IEEE. We were pleased that he honoured our request to meet with him. One of the most valuable things I have learned is that both support and funding is available for sections' projects and initiatives.

So we need to get inspired, set our goals high and good things will happen.

The Congress slogan was about empowering members to create the future, and I would extend that to empowering section volunteers to inspire existing and new members to become active and contribute to our IEEE community. We are the front line of IEEE, often the first and only "human" contact with potential and existing members. For us in the front lines, understanding how IEEE organization works and being aware of all available resources and opportunities can make a huge difference to the operation of any section, anywhere in the world.

I would like to commend IEEE on creating the video "Solutionists"; a truly wonderful tool that explains in very few words what we stand for. The video was shown during our centennial birthday event held just a day after the Congress had ended. We had numerous guests outside the IEEE community commenting on how powerful the video was. It also reminded us, IEEE members, that we have to be proud of the role we continue to play in advancing technology for humanity. The video can be found at the following link: <http://solutionists.ieee.org/>.

Vancouver Section was established on August 22, 1911 — turning 100 years old on the final day of the 2011 Sections Congress. With IEEE banners kindly loaned from that event, the Section celebrated with style the following day in Vancouver (see photo to right). The celebration included Centennial Awards to the many Section members who have contributed to the City and Province through their work. In the photo to the left, Section members (L to R) Kouros Goodarzi, Meliha Selak, Alon Newton, Mazana Armstrong (Section Chair) stand proudly in front of their entries in the poster contest at Sections Congress.

N.Ed. Many thanks to our writers: Celia Desmond, Simon DeWolf, Bill Gruver, Meliha Selak, Patrick Wong, and Mazana Armstrong. Thanks also to Alfredo Herrera for coordinating the creation of these reports.

