Conference Organizer Newsletter

ANNOUNCEMENT

Improved Services for SPS Conference Organizers

By Mercy Kowalczyk

Conference organization is a demanding activity. You know because you've already done it or are currently in the thick of it. The IEEE Signal Processing Society has been supporting your efforts through a small staff component. Its mission is to provide the utmost quality support to volunteer conference organizers. Meeting that mission requires change in order to help you with the challenges you face.

Recently, the Conference Services Department underwent a study that examined tasks, skills, time, and growing requirements. The outcome was an approach that generated both philosophical and structural changes. The change in philosophy is the realization that the staff's customers are the volunteer organizers. Thus, volunteer-facing services are structured differently to provide the broadest possible services considering the boutique size of the staff, and the need to deliver services with quality, accuracy, timeliness, and a volunteer-friendly mindset. Some specifics follow.

Linda Skeahan now fills the post of **Conference Services Coordinator-General Services**. Linda's focus is on providing first-line assistance for the following activities: Conference timeline planning; proceedings status; publicity requests (includes e-notices, on-line and print advertisements, etc.); organizer resources (online and other, upon request); information on conference social media sites; detailed histories of events such as dates, attendance statistics, numbers of sessions, numbers of accepted papers, etc.; joint conference steering committee activity support and monitoring; coordination of post-conference surveys; and many other, general details of conference planning and conference portfolio coordination. While Linda will continue to receive financial information from organizers, the details of conference finance will be provided by IEEE Technical Activities (TA).

Inside this issue:

Nicole Allen, as **Conference Services Coordinator-Technical Services**, has a broad role that includes, but is not limited to, coordination of the Conference Organizer Solutions (COS) registration and submitted paper support tools; maintenance of the ICASSP, ICIP, ICME, ISBI, and other conference reviewer databases and submitted paper support statistics; monitoring project timelines for COS implementation; coordination and implementation of Technical Co-Sponsorship (TCS) approved applications; coordination of website requests and website compliance; coordination of requests and postings to IEEE.tv.

Lisa Schwarzbek is **Manager, Conference Services**. Her brief is the Signal Processing Society's conference portfolio and management of staff and resources in assistance to you, the conference organizers. Lisa's duties are necessarily strategic and her day-to-day activities include preparing requests for proposals; reviewing and negotiating contracts; reviewing budgets and providing Society-level conference administrative and budget approvals; supervising contractors and vendors; and supporting the activities of the Vice President-Conferences and the Society's Conference Board.

One of the arrangements managed by Lisa is a new concept being tested with the IEEE Technical Activities (TA) Conference Finance Group. The growth and complexity of the Society's conference portfolio, and attendant tasks such as opening concentration banking accounts, processing vendor and contractor payments, arranging loans, conducting budget reviews, etc., in compliance with Society, IEEE Technical Activities, and IEEE policy and requirements, creates a demanding workload.

Currently, conference activities at the TA level are undergoing substantial change, including improved coordination of conference financial requirements.   The Signal Processing Society's arrangement with TA assigns care for all SPS conference financial needs to TA **Conference Financial Analyst, Kartik Patel**.   While he does not work directly for the Society, the interface between Kartik and the Society's Conference Services Department is being managed by Lisa, with budget documentation coordinated through Linda Skeahan.   Kartik's involvement, though largely transparent to SPS conference organizers, is making a very positive difference in the speed and breadth of financial assistance the staff are able to provide.

The SPS Conference Services Department of the IEEE Signal Processing Society is here to serve you, the Society's volunteer conference organizers. Please take advantage of the knowledge, skills, and energy of the Department's staff. They stand ready to assist you in meeting the compliance requirements of the Society, TA, and IEEE as well as to augment your event planning with a broad variety of services and expertise.

I look forward to meeting you at a Society conference event in the near future.

Event Insurance – Part 1

By Lisa Schwarzbek

IEEE maintains General Liability Insurance which provides coverage for IEEE Financially Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conferences. This insurance coverage is maintained by IEEE to protect its financial interest in the event of a claim in which IEEE is found to be liable. The policy is automatically extended to cover your conference as soon as the Conference Information Schedule is approved by IEEE. IEEE does not carry event cancellation insurance; however conferences can purchase individual policies.

Event Cancellation Insurance was a hot topic in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The meeting planning and insurance industries worked together to develop products and services to make sure PCOs and the organizations they represent have the kinds of protection they need. Since then there have been many changes.

In light of the recent natural disasters and political upheaval around the world, the topic of event insurance has become popular again.

What will event insurance cover?

Event insurance can cover everything from lost revenue and out-of-pocket expenses to refund attendee and exhibitor registration fees. In some cases event insurance could cover attrition penalties as well as nonrefundable expenses. The circumstances that event insurance protection would cover any or all of these expenses are very few.

As disasters have stimulate demand, insurance providers have narrowed the scope of what a event cancellation policy includes and put caps on the amount of damages that can be collected. Insurance companies are more careful, for instance, since the SARS epidemic happened, you can no longer get coverage for epidemics. Also, cancellation policies usually have limitations that do not cover meetings held after a certain amount of time has elapsed following a disaster. A conference scheduled to occur in a location hit by a hurricane more than 12 months prior will not be protected even if the hotels are gone and the airport is unusable.

Event insurance that applies to meetings derailed because of terrorist acts has come under especially close scrutiny. Many policies are written so that they only cover a disaster happening in the meeting locale. The problem is that a major terrorism event in Europe can affect a U.S. meeting if it makes people disinclined to get on airplanes.

Cancellation policies have become more specific in regard to terrorism, usually offering several levels of coverage, ranging from no coverage to full coverage that pertains to any act of terrorism, whenever and wherever it takes place.

Full coverage is preferred, but it is very expensive; partial coverage is a more popular option, albeit one with a lot of restrictions. For example with partial coverage, the act of terrorism must occur within 25 miles of the meeting venue, the meeting must be scheduled to take place within 30 days of the terrorism event and there is a $250,000 cap payout.

SPS conferences have not purchased additional insurance in recent years because IEEE maintains General Liability Insurance and because the cost of additional insurance can be very costly.

(Continued online)

PART – 2

How to Protect Your Conference

Who Needs Event Cancellation Insurance?

Conference Finance – Policy Changes

By Linda Skeahan

Several recent procedural changes became approved policy during the ICASSP 2011 Board of Governors meeting.

These changes are a response to the changing financial climate at IEEE and the changes in the Society's conference business. As some of you were notified last month, IEEE's independent auditors determined that there is an almost $3 million gap in financial reporting due to late-closing conferences. Therefore, conference teams throughout IEEE are being asked not only to exert every effort, but succeed, in closing conferences within six months of the end of the conference.

The revised SPS policies are designed to make it easier for the Society to close our conferences within six months of the last day of the conference.

Please take a few minutes of your time to read the revised policies online; Signal Processing Society Policy and Procedures Manual section 7. The policies that have been revised, added, or replaced are 7.2, 7.2.1, and 7.7.2.

Conference Planning Tips

By Nicole Allen

Improve the quality of internet provided at the conference:

- Understand the venue's capabilities – how much activity can the network handle?
- Provide a help desk or telephone number so attendees can get the help they need
- Include wired solutions with Wi-Fi in an internet café
- Monitor daily internet usage and make adjustments as needed.
- Provide utilization reports to the next year's conference organizing committee to assist in planning the next conference.

Keep the conference fresh during and after the conference:

- Stream live scenes from the event on the website and offer new content from speakers or participants daily.
- Refresh the website after the event is over so that the website is not left stagnant for months or years. Posting information about the proceedings or pictures from social events of the conference on the website can help to entice new registrations for the next event. I will also keep the conference in the minds of the attendees well after it is over.
- Post information about the next conference in the series to keep the attendees involved in the series. Include a link to the next conference's website and a note from the next general chair inviting them to come back for another great conference.

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WEB ADDRESS:

Welcome to Our Newsletter…

Welcome to the IEEE Signal Processing Society Conference Organizer Newsletter. In each bi-monthly edition you will find informative articles about planning and implementing an IEEE-SPS conference.

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Upcoming Conferences	Call-for-Paper Submission Deadlines	Locations	Conference Dates
2011 IEEE Thematic Meetings on Signal Processing (THEMES)		Brussels, Belgium	September 11, 2011
2011 IEEE International Conference on Image Processing (ICIP)		Brussels, Belgium	September 11-14, 2011
2011 IEEE International Workshop on Machine Learning for Signal Processing (MLSP)		Beijing, China	September 18-21, 2011
IEEE Workshop on Signal Processing Systems (SIPS)		Beirut, Lebanon	October 4-7, 2011
2011 IEEE Workshop on Applications of Signal Processing to Audio and Acoustics (WASPAA)		New Paltz, NY	October 16-19, 2011
2011 IEEE International Workshop on Multimedia Signal Processing (MMSP)		Hangzhou, China	October 17-19, 2011
2011 IEEE International Workshop on Information Forensics and Security (WIFS)		Foz do Iguaca, Brazil	November 16-19, 2011
2011 7th International Conference on Natural Language Processing and Knowledge Engineering (NLP-KE)		Tokushina, Japan	November 27-29, 2011
2011 IEEE International Workshop on Genomic Signal Processing and Statistics (GENSIPS)		San Antonio, TX, USA	December 4-6, 2011
2011 Automatic Speech Recognition and Understanding Workshop (ASRU)		Hawaii	December 11-15, 2011
The Fourth International Workshop on Computational Advances in Multi-Sensor Adaptive Processing (CAMSAP)		San Juan, Puerto Rico	December 13-16, 2011
IEEE International Symposium on Signal Processing and Information Technology (ISSPIT)		Bilbao, Spain	December 14-17, 2011
IEEE International Conference on Emerging Signal Processing (ESPA)	September 5, 2011	Las Vegas, Nevada	January 12-14, 2012
2012 IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing (ICASSP)	September 27, 2011	Kyoto, Japan	March 25-30, 2012