EXPANDING IT SERVICES FOR THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERS

For over a year now, Dr. Zhi Ding has been serving as the IEEE Communications Society (ComSoc) Chief Information Officer. Having led an IT task force that I appointed to review and fine-tune the newly developed ComSoc website which was launched in December 2018, Zhi has been developing long term plans to advance ComSoc's IT portfolio to better serve the important needs and expectations of ComSoc members and partners. In this month's column, Zhi would like to further communicate with our fellow members with respect to the ongoing IT projects and plans.

Zhi Ding (F'2003), has been an IEEE member for nearly three decades and has been a volunteer of IEEE and ComSoc for many years. Zhi received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1990 and is currently a Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of California Davis. He served as the TPC Chair of the 2006 GLOBECOM. He also served as a member and then as the chair of the Steering Committee for the *IEEE Transactions on Wireless Communications*.

Since assuming the position of CIO, Zhi has made an effort to consult many ComSoc colleagues who had served as volunteers and elected officers to better understand what role the CIO can play for the society. These conversations helped him understand that a volunteer CIO in a professional organization like ComSoc must examine the key values that ComSoc IT can provide to our members, industry partners, and other constituents. As he shared with you in the August of 2018 column, ComSoc is neither a company trying to sell services or products, nor a typical non-profit organization that advocates a particular cause. We have all seen the many transformative impacts of novel IT tools in the work place in our daily lives. Being at the innovative forefront of information technologies, ComSoc must organize its limited IT resources to provide better services to our members, partners, and the public.

In the August 2018 column, we shared with you the following urgent needs that define the scope of ComSoc IT services:

• The ComSoc website for convenient data retrieval, marketing, education, standards, technical library, and information dissemination.

• A ComSoc membership portal for convenient and efficient networking for members to access IEEE emails, technology alerts, digital media, journals, conferences, outreach, collaborative interaction, and educational materials.

• Consolidated tools including database, project management, record vault, conference planning and coordination that can improve the work efficiency and decision making for our volunteers.

After requesting and receiving many valuable inputs and suggestions from our members, staff, volunteers, partners, and society leaders, in December 2018 we launched the new ComSoc website developed using Drupal-8. We continued to update and improve the ComSoc website and are particularly grateful for more valuable suggestions and support from our members

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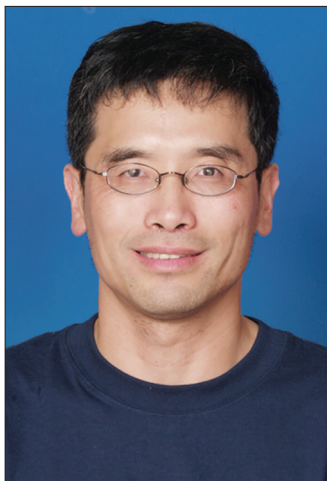
Zhi Ding

in order to provide a good user experience and to present the best face of ComSoc to the world.

In our plan, a high priority item is to develop a membership portal both as an important information channel and as a valuable working tool for ComSoc members. The membership portal enables easy retrieval and dissemination of information, facilitates research collaborations without barriers, and highlights the latest technological trends. We also expect this portal to simplify many works of ComSoc volunteers when organizing technical activities, sharing meeting information, and extracting historical data. Volunteers may easily share and follow best practices, access the database for statistics to guide their decisions, and efficiently manage their respective work projects. Having presented the development plan to the BoG in 2018, we are currently implementing this portal which should be unveiled by June 2019.

Another important IT project is the planned development of a ComSoc smartphone App. This work plan is the outcome of joint cooperation and discussions between the IT team and the marketing team. Over the past decade, we have witnessed the growing importance of smartphones in areas such as business, education, entertainment, and management. The explosive growth of digital media is accompanied by the precipitous drop of print media. In order to address the critical challenges that organizations like ComSoc currently face in education, membership, value proposition, youth outreach, advertising revenue, etc., we should develop an effective ComSoc Mobile App to deliver important digital content and services that our tech-savvy members can easily take advantage of. Such a versatile tool can clearly provide important value to Marketing, Member Activities, and Industry Outreach of ComSoc and will be vital to the future health and growth of the society.

Working with ComSoc's Chief Marketing Officer, Rob Fish, the ComSoc IT and Marketing teams have devised a preliminary roadmap to develop the first version of ComSoc Mobile App. We recognize that having a rich trough of digital media content will be essential to the success of a smartphone App. This content should include tutorial videos, expert interviews, new products, learning and training tools, editorials, best readings, historic reviews, live panels, and industry trends. ComSoc IT and ComSoc Marketing are committed to working with the Director of Online Content and Director of Educational Services, among others, to develop a vast libary of exciting online content to enhance the user experience of the smartphone App, promote public interest, and enhance academic-industry cooperation in developing communication technologies of the future.

As stated before, we are honored to have this opportunity to work with ComSoc colleagues to help deliver the best values and services possible to ComSoc members and partners. The IT team, under the leadership of Dr. Zhi Ding, welcomes valuable suggestions and guidance at any time and hopes to contribute to the continued success of ComSoc.