



## A Chapter's Role in Networking and Continuing Education

**T**he IEEE is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to serve its Members. The IEEE Signal Processing Society (SPS) is one of the IEEE's 38 technical Societies. We are a membership organization, and our primary goal is to serve you, so it is very important for us to understand our members and what they expect from us. We cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach as our membership is very diverse, both in terms on the job function (academia, graduate students, undergraduate students, industry, government) and geography.

While IEEE membership has been steadily growing (from 380,000 in 2000 to 430,000 in 2013), the number of total Society memberships has been decreasing (from 400,000 in 2000 to 350,000 in 2013). Many IEEE Members joined Societies to gain access to their journals or magazines. But when IEEE *Xplore* was introduced in 2001, many IEEE Members could access Societies' publications through their university's or company's institutional membership. This started the decline in Societies' memberships as the value proposition had changed.

After a steady drop in membership (from 20,000 in 2000 to 15,000 in 2009), the SPS started gaining members, ending 2013 with 17,433, as the fourth-largest Society in the IEEE. Most of that growth came from Region 10 (Asia), whereas Society membership in the United States (Regions 1–6) had a slow but steady decline, accounting for 42% of all

members in 2013 down from well over 50% a decade ago.

About 30% of those members are faculty in universities and 12% are graduate students. Both faculty and graduate students comprise a large percentage of the attendees to the Society's conferences and also a large percentage of the contributors to papers and articles in the Society's journals and magazine, respectively.

About 50% of the Society's members are in industry and 3% are undergraduate students. Many of these industry members have told us that they cannot easily attend international conferences, but that they would like to attend local events. Attending local Chapter events is something that ranks high in member surveys not only for industry members but also for students, and academics.

The Society has 134 Chapters worldwide. Society Chapters organize many activities for the members in their area, such as hosting talks and networking events. This is a great opportunity for our members to keep up with important new developments in signal processing. Such Chapter events usually offer refreshments either before or after the talk, providing members with an opportunity for networking. Many such talks are held in the evening to make it easier for working professionals to attend.

This past August, I attended a talk by one of the Society's Distinguished Lecturers at an event organized by the Santa Clara Chapter. The talk was inspiring and the networking that took place was energizing. I was thrilled to see that 80 people attended this vibrant meeting. I'd like to thank the leadership of the Santa Clara

Chapter for reinvigorating the Chapter, organizing many more events than in the past, all of which were very successful.

The Society's Membership Board understands how important Chapters are in serving many of our members and how they help create a sense of community and pride in our profession. We have started to recognize Chapters that have done a great job through the Chapter of the Year Award: the Malaysia Chapter won the first award in 2011, the Tainan Chapter in 2012, and the Italy Chapter in 2013. We have also started a Chapter certification process to help all our Chapters leverage best practices.

Chapters can also request funding from the SPS Membership Board (sp.bd.membership@ieee.org) for activities such as SPS seasonal schools, meetings featuring industry executives, outreach programs to get students in primary schools interested in signal processing, and more.

Please help us increase the vitality of our Chapters by volunteering to serve on the board of your Chapter. You can contact the SPS Vice President of Membership Kostas Plataniotis, Chapters Committee Chair Sven Longaric, or our Regional Directors: Anthony Kuh (Regions 1–6), Douglas O'Shaughnessy (Regions 7 and 9), Mauro Barni (Region 8), and Mark Liao (Region 10). I'd also love to hear from you—how can we do better?

**SPS**