

APPROVED

May 17, 2024 |

📅 RAS AdCom WebEx Meeting - ICRA 2024 Yokohama

Attendees:

1. **Meeting Called to Order, and Welcome (P Wensing)**
2. **Roll Call and Review of Consent Agenda (P Wensing)**

Attendees:

- **18 Elected Members (Voting Members)**

Class of 2026: Greg Dudek, Barbara Mazzolai, Tetsuya Ogata, Marcia O'Malley, Yu Sun, Michael Wang

Class of 2025: Alin Albu-Schaeffer, Sabine Hauert, Yasuhisa Hirata, Lydia Kavradi, Eiichi Yoshida, Hong Zhang

Class of 2024: Arash Ajoudani, Fumihito Arai, Allison Okamura, Karinne Ramirez Amaro, Inna Sharf, Kenji Suzuki

- **5 Society Officers (Voting Members):** Aude Billard, Frank Park, Patrick Wensing, Tony Maciejewski, Nancy Amato, Enrica Tricomi

- **10 Non Voting Members:** Darwin Caldwell, Jing Xiao, Andra Keay, Katja Mombaur, Bram Vanderborght, Kyujin Cho, Ludovic Righetti, Chad Jenkins, Jen Jen Chung, Seth Hutchinson, Helen Wang, Terence Martinez

- **RAS Staff and Guests:** Lukrecija Lelong, Kathryn Harrison, Amy Reeder, Kyung Mi Bae, Grace Zhao, Nick Milton, Patrick Hanna, Zhidong Wang, Yasuhisa Hasegawa, Hugo Rodrigue, Hiromi Mochiyama, Daniel Leidner, Eduardo Bayro-Corrochano, Abderrahmane Kheddar, Jasmine Park, Gaurav Sukhatme, Nicholas Roy

3. **Approval of Agenda (Including Consent Agenda and Standing Orders) (P Wensing) [Full agenda at: <https://agd.ieee.org/mpt/Agenda.aspx?eid=18811>]**

Included:

- Approval of Past Minutes: 25 March 2024
- Approval of Clarifying Edits to IROS 2023 Bylaws Updates
- Approval of "The Peter Luh Memorial Best Paper Award for Young Researcher"
- MSB Financial Motions (3 motions, \$50K, \$20K, \$20K)
- Budget to Support local organizers' DEI events at the RAS sponsored conferences (\$15K)
- Financial Motion - MAB Events Amendment (\$20K)
- Scholars at Risk Membership (\$5K)
- Budget to Support Travel costs of YP chair to attend major RAS sponsored conferences (\$12K)

4. State of Society (A Billard)

- See PDF slides for full presentation details
- Presented high-level RAS growth and financial status
- Presented plans for next AdCom in July 2024, and at ICRA@40
- Gave follow-ups on Reviews/Reviewers (see slides for details)
- Gave follow-ups on Sustainability (see slides for details)

5. ICRA 2024 Wrap up (Z Wang)

- Gave ICRA 2024 Statistics
 - 3937 submissions
 - 2337 papers in 285 sessions
 - Accepted conference papers: 1760 papers (acceptance rate is 44.7%)
 - RAS journal: 577
 - Workshops: 73, Tutorials: 6 [146 proposals]
 - Late breaking results posters: 226 [243 submissions]
 - Participants (On-site: 6821, Online: 343)
- Discussed EXPO (80 robots), Exhibits (120 booths), and competitions (11)
- Lessons Learned
 - A large number of RA-L papers were withdrawn at the last-minute
 - VISA support important (1300 people supported)
 - Raise last-minute registration fee
 - Special Workshops really active
- Interim Finances: \$5.8 million revenue, with targeted surplus of \$353,598

6. ICRA 2028 ICRA 2028 Proposal Introduction (M. O'Malley)

- Discussed rules of the presentation process for competing bids

7. ICRA 2028 Proposal Guadalajara, Mexico (E Bayro-Corrochano)

- See slides for presentation details
- Questions and Discussion:
 - Discussed capacity in terms of rooms and attendees per room
 - Discussed need for a theme of the conference
 - Discussed how to host 2,000 presentations in a limited time
 - Similar to template of ICRA 2024
 - Discussed how to handle participant numbers $\geq 10,000$?
 - The expo has done 10,000 people before, largest event had 12,000 people

8. ICRA 2028 Proposal Anaheim, CA (G Sukhatme)

- See slides for presentation details
- Questions and Discussion
 - Date scheduled for late April, how to adapt the Review schedule?
 - First proposed early April, can work the review process by that deadline

- Discussed student lunch beyond current lunch with leaders
 - Weave in industry leaders
 - Show more diverse career paths for students
 - Hope recruiters will lead students at the lunches
- Discussed the cost of the Exhibitor Industrial Program

9. ICRA 2028 - Evaluation and Vote - Executive Session (M O'Malley)

- Guadalajara was selected for ICRA 2028

10. AdCom / ExCom Photo

11. Break

12. FAB Report (J Xiao /T Maciejewski)

- See slides for full presentation details
- RAS Budget 2023 Summary
 - Not including investment gain/loss
 - Revenue from products: \$17 mil
 - Expense: \$14 mill
 - Net: \$2.8 million
 - 50% net surplus is \$1.43 million
 - Can be used for new initiatives in 2024
- 2024 RAS budget including expected (predicted) surplus
 - \$1.3 million expected surplus
- Discussed VP budgeting practices for upcoming year
 - Individual travel reimbursements for board members other than ExCom and AdCom members via discretionary spending
 - No motions for 3 or 4 years
- New IEEE budgeting Policy for 2025
 - No spending previous-years operational surplus for 2025
 - IEEE working on new budgeting process for 2026 and beyond
 - Planned initiatives result in a net deficit, that deficit cannot exceed 1% of reserve balance (would be ~\$260K for 2023)
- Questions and Discussion:
 - Regrading new budgeting procedures: discussed if previous motions are then effectively all gone
 - Clarified that the intent is for a list of activities in 2025 and list of costs, compared to last year
 - Discussed measures to reduce surplus
 - Disucssed if it's good to increase the budget for activities or limit activities / revenue

13. PAB Report (B Vanderborght)

- See slides for full presentation details

- Presented impact factors, acceptance rates, and publication times for RA-L, T-ASE, T-Ro, etc.
- Gave update on new journals IEEE RAP and IEEE T-FR
- Raised possibility of Transactions on Robot (& Automation) Learning
 - Gauged AdCom's enthusiasm: Concerns were raised regarding the impact on T-Ro and RA-L
- Raised possibility of Soft robotics & Materials journal
- Presented progress on Open Review and Generative AI Guidelines
- Presented budget: Some budget toward goal of making RAM compete with Science Robotics
- Questions and discussion
 - Discussed if there were other robotics journals that didn't have a publisher "home" that RAS could support.

14. CAB Report (D Caldwell)

- See slides for full presentation details
- IROS MoU
 - MoU signed for 2024-2025
 - Sponsoring Societies: RAS 35%, RSJ 35%, IES 15%, SICE 15%
- Gave update on data collection for IEEE dispute resolution
- Gave plans on updated IROS Conference governance
- Presented stumbling blocks related to IROS governance
- ICRA@40: CAB passed motion to provide support
- Raised topics for AdCom feedback
- Questions and discussion:
 - Discussed competitions attendance
 - Discussed plans for documenting ICRA best practices

15. MSB Report (L Righetti)

- Presented actions on setting up social media committee for social media strategy
- Partnering with Spectrum for video capture at ICRA
- Budgeted up to \$100k for website redesign - survey related to re-design is out
- Looking into providing science communication training
- Professional copy-writing/graphics design
 - Several committees have noted the need for this.
- RAS Google share drive now available
- Questions and Discussion:
 - Questions raised whether the science communication for robotics is different than science communication training provided at universities. Discussed the benefits (to our members and the public) of providing the training regardless.

16. AdCom Discussion

- Discussed how to reduce surplus

- Conference Surplus: steering committee to adjust instructions to conference organizers
- Discussed overlength page fees
 - May be difficult to reduce Overlength page fees as it may be coming directly from IEEE Publications
 - May be needed because each journal has a page budget
- Do we want to reduce the budget or increase spending?
 - Suggestion to expand TAB budget
 - Suggestion to give conference organizers more startup funds
 - Suggest to re-invest into more RAS staff or more conference organizing staff
- Discussed the possibility of a Science and Technology watch board
- Discussed inclusion of MCE in other conferences for easier support for RAS events and activities at those conferences
- Discussed a need to restructure workshops
- Substantial discussion on possibility of new journals
 - Suggestion to limit proposals to one at a time to prevent some from being rejected due to quantity
 - Suggestion to think about instances where we can stand up journals in place of conference proceedings
 - Sentiment raised that if we don't create journals on timely topics, other big companies will, and that won't serve our members
 - Positives raised regarding having specialized journals for subcommunities
 - Suggestion to partner with other societies (e.g., materials)
 - **Summary:** need to clarify is there a need for the journals, more SWOT analysis, see finances, will give feedback in later discussion

17. Lunch

18. IAB Report (A Keay)

- See slides for full presentation detail
- Discussed IERA Award (shared with IFR)
- Pitched idea of IAB Advisory Board
- Presented Board finances
- Requested AdCom feedback
 - There is a desire for IAB activities at other conferences
 - Asked for feedback on what factors for broadened industry participation are most important

19. MAB Report (K Mombaur)

- See slides for full presentation detail
- Discussed status of IDEAS, Member Support Program, and Support Program to foster Academic Relationships and eXchange (SPARX)
- Topics for AdCom Feedback (QR code to Google form)

- Input on how to implement programs in conferences
- Feedback on IDEAS program
- Proposals for additional services
- 2024: \$1.9 million budget: Optimistic that they can spend everything by EOY
- Questions and Discussion:
 - Sentiment raised that IDEAS program should be expanded
 - Sentiment raised that we should increase budget for successful program that already exist

20. TAB Report (K Cho)

- See slides for full presentation detail
- Discussed TABXSAC Dinner, student reps, and ICRA 2024 Welcome Kits
- TAB Lunch (2nd) outcomes:
 - TC co chairs voted to boycott endorsement letters
 - Triennial Review: Now report based - asking to submit specific data
 - Cluster Chair Solicitation of Robots for Unstructured Environments
- New TC Proposals
- Discussed TAB TC Activities Review
- Discussed budget process for TCs
- Topics for AdCom Feedback
 - Discussed TC role in workshops
 - Discussed using TC chairs to help review and make decisions
 - Discussed TAB organizing workshops directly

21. EAB Report (C Jenkins)

- See slides for full presentation detail
- Presented 3 main programs
 - Technical Education Program
 - Robotics History Project
 - RAS University (RAS U)
- Budget: Spending will ramp up throughout the year as the board gets started
- Discussion
 - Raised opportunity for board to provide education for younger students
 - Need an AVP to help with such activities
 - Noted that Member Services Committee is also excited about the Robotics History Project

22. Governance Updates (P Wensing / J Chung)

- See slides for full presentation details
- Policies and procedures last updated in Sept 2016
 - Target: Updated copy for vote at ICRA@40
 - Focus on AdHoc Committees, financial process, awards, board assignments

- Discussed plans to incorporate formal DEI position in MAB
- CESAR AdHoc Committee:
 - Active for over 3 years
 - It's a great connection point, so would like to transition this to a standing committee under the president
 - Discussion
 - Discussed outcomes of committee over past 3 years
 - Discussed intentional work at icra
 - Discussed that committee doesn't have oversight or authority but come in as needed to promote
- **Motion:** To transition the Ad Hoc Committee to Explore Synergies in Automation and Robotics (CESAR) to a standing committee under the president
 Motion passes

23. Awards Committee (S Hutchinson)

- Seth presented current and past President's pins to Aude and Frank

24. Break

25. ICRA@40 Updates (F Park)

- See slides for full presentation details
- Purpose of ICRA 40 is to celebrate RAS 40th birthday
- Detailed program and events created by Tamim Asfour and Stefano Stramagioli
- Challenges: Perception is that it is just another conference but it is celebration
- Conclusion
 - Organization is challenge but under control
 - Any advertisement help is welcome to assist with capacity
 - Any help with involving industry is welcome
- Discussion
 - Concerns raised from a sustainability aspect in terms of this additional event
 - Emphasis placed on the robotics history project, recording talks and discussions
 - Discussed Intellectual sustainability - we should document the ideas of the past and the present that will shape the future
 - Discussed the use of surplus to bring younger members to the celebration and to advance DEI
 - Discussed the submission procedure and format
 - Concern raised that we need PR assistance if we have so much surplus and are having this celebration

26. Long Range Planning Committee (N Amato)

- See slides for full presentation details
- Discussed historical past in RAS

- Emergency operations last several years
- 10+ years had great ideas and finances, but not enough staff to execute ideas
- RAS is (finally) positioned to plan for the future
 - Scaling challenges- stressed publications models, conference growth/hybrid options (not everyone can travel, sustainability issues)
 - Opportunities because of interest in Gen AI, learning
 - Execute ideas that are in initial stages and evolving
 - RAS U, career services, DEI
- Proposed Goal: RAS should be Career Services Central for Roboticians
- More Topics
 - Geographic diversity done well
 - How to make gender and other aspects as routine
 - Awards, invited speakers, RAS leadership
 - Consideration of Ethical and Social Implications
 - Expansion of RAS topics (AI, learning), alone or partnering
 - Sustainable Conferences
- Discussion on Stressed Conference Publication Model
 - Many agree that current practice is not sustainable and cannot scale more
 - Discussion about how RA-L to conference became more complicated when multiple journals wanted part of the journal->conference model
- Stressed Conference Publication Model: Options
 - Status Quo: ICRA CEB, IROS CEB, CASE CEB, etc.
 - Pros: familiar
 - Cons: poor review quality, overload, hard to manage
 - Abstract Only Conferences (AdCom in January 2024)- no published papers with conferences
 - Pros: fewer papers, fewer reviewers, higher quality papers
 - Cons: fewer papers, fewer opportunities for people to publish, RA-L /T-RO as only option makes bar too high for students (conferences good training for students), challenge to justify attending conference/funding
 - New Journal- (RA-L Conference, RAS Proceedings, ...) No review/resubmit cycle, higher bar
 - Pros: All papers are journal papers, one review board for multiple conferences (special issue for each?) fewer papers reviewed in total (no evolutionary option)
 - Cons: no evolutionary publication option
 - Discussion:
 - Noted that the root cause of the issues is that we are growing

- Some disagreement with critiques against the status quo, unsure if proposals here addresses all the points causing stress
 - Discussed mostly reviewer recruiting issues and how OpenReview my address some of those
 - Some discussion about abstract-only conferences, but then critiques raised about the high bar for direct journal submission (e.g., for student training)
 - Multiple concerns raised that abstract only will lower impact factors, which has negative effect on junior members.
 - Point raised that reviewing conference papers provides training for later reviewing journal papers.
- Need community feedback, year away from decision

27. AdCom Discussion Topics

- *Motion from the floor: (J Xiao)*

Motion: To nullify, effective in 2025, the following past financial motions (2024-Jan-2, 2023-Jun-1, 2022-Oct-5, 2022-S-May-8, 2021-S-4, 2021-S-3, 2015-S-7, 2014-F-4, 2014-S-9.9, 2011-S-04) pertaining to travel-related board spending.

Expenses previously covered under these motions are now to be covered via the yearly budgets for the RAS Boards. Individual travel reimbursements for board members other than ExCom and AdCom members via discretionary spending may include travel, conference registration, and lodging for the nights before and after required meetings, not to exceed \$3,000 in total.

Discussion:

- Discussed whether the reimbursement amount level should match AdCom reimbursement. Concern was raised that \$3K isn't enough to support international travel.
- Clarified that with the current proposed motion, you are only eligible for reimbursement for night before and after
- Question raised as to why the motion matters if all motions are canceled EOY as part of the new budget model.

Motion withdrawn

- *Motion from the floor: (P Wensing)*

Motion: remove page charges, effective Aug 1, 2024 for all RAS fully sponsored conferences and journals, pending administrative clearance form IEEE

Discussion

- Discussed how extra page charges help make manuscripts shorter. Discussed how setting page limits accomplishes the same.
 - Discussed how any publication can impose their own page limit.
 - Suggestion was raised to move this issue to PAB
 - Noted that historically told we should not get rid of page charges because it is the only way to make money, but now we have the finances to get rid of them..
 - Concern raised that this change could lead to bankruptcy.
 - Concern raised that IEEE may not allow this chance.
 - Multiple suggested/agreed to instead lower the page fees, since this would be a drastic change. Analyze more before deciding
 - Concern raised that shorter papers are better.
 - Concern raised that this would increase reviewer workload
 - Administrative note that IEEE pays for the pages no matter what, so this would need our journals to have page limits.
 - **Motion:** Lay the main motion on the table.
 - Motion passes - The main motion is on the table for further consideration at July 2024 AdCom Meeting.

- **Discussion:** Workshop Style at ICRA
 - Proposal: one half-day workshop on last day to avoid low attendance
 - Discussed need to consolidate workshops with similar topics
 - **Verdict:** make a list of pros and cons for routes toward improving workshops

- **Discussion:** Membership Program
 - Discussed having two pillars
 - Fee reduction to everyone
 - Travel support program
 - Open Review - working on conference payment system

- **Pitch:** Science and Technology Watch Board
 - Long Range Planning Committee should be reviewing trends of science and technology and recommending changes
 - Not spending time looking at progress in science and technology at our conferences
 - Proposal: Create board composed of 10 faculty members distributed across main scientific areas
 - Follow RAS publications and technical sessions at ICRA
 - Identify trends
 - Spot areas that need attention
 - Advise CAB on selection of themes
 - Identify areas with high TRL and liaise with IAV
 - Single out promising young scholars for individual awards

- **Discussion:**
 - Concern raised that 10 people isn't enough
 - There is an opportunity to collaborate with EAB and TAB
 - There was feedback that the members could be from industry too
 - Suggestion that travel support be provided to these members

28. New Business

No new business raised

29. Announcement: Next in person Adcom Meeting: 27 September 2024, Rotterdam, Netherlands

30. Meeting Adjourned