

January 12, 2025 | RAS AdCom Meeting

IEEE Robotics and Automation Society Administrative Committee (AdCom) Meeting

Sunday, 12 January 2025

Schweizerhof Flims Romantik Hotel – Switzerland

Waldraum

9am - 12:30pm

1. Meeting Called to Order and Welcome (J J Chung)

2. Roll Call (J J Chung)

Attendees:

○ **16 Elected Members (Voting Members)**

Class of 2025: Alin Albu-Schaeffer, Sabine Hauert (online), Yasuhisa Hirata (online), Lydia Kavradi, Eiichi Yoshida

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

Class of 2027: Eduardo Bayro-Corrochano, Mariagrazia Dotoli (online), Dongheui Lee, Allison Okamura, Karinne Ramirez Amaro, Jee-Hwan Ryu
Not attending: Hong Zhang, Yu Sun

○ **4 Society Officers (Voting Members):** Aude Billard, Frank Park, Nancy Amato, Helen Wang *Not Attending:* Patrick Wensing, Tony Maciejewski,

○ **8 Non Voting Members:** Darwin Caldwell, Jing Xiao, Andra Keay, Ludovic Righetti, Katja Mombaur, Bram Vanderborght, Kyujin Cho, Jen Jen Chung
Not attending: Chad Jenkins, Seth Hutchinson

○ **RAS Staff and Guests:** Terence Martinez, Amy Reeder, Patrick Hanna, Grace Zhao, Nicholas Milton, Lukrecija Lelong, Kyung Mi Bae, Taraja Arnold

3. Approval of Agenda (J J Chung)

No items in consent agenda.

4. Welcome and Agenda Details (A Billard)

Introduction and welcome of New AdCom members

Full Agenda available at: <https://agd.ieee.org/mpt/Agenda.aspx?eid=19117>

5. Updates on IROS MOU and CoRL (A Billard)

IROS MOU

- Current IROS MOU covers 2024 and 2025
- Data collection on IROS attendees
 - RAS only: IROS 2023 – 91%; IROS 2024 – 95%
 - IES only: IROS 2023 – 4%; IROS 2024 – 5%
- IES still unwilling to reduce or drop percentage ownership of IROS
- Likely will go to IEEE conflict resolution

Discussion

- Near-future of IROS will move ahead for 2026 and 2027, although IEEE will not sign off until there is an MOU in place
- Implications of relationship with IES – RAS has some other co-sponsored conferences (AIM and SII)

CoRL

- CoRL approached for partnership with RAS, initially for T-RL and collocation with Humanoids
- Presentation of CoRL participant survey results

Discussion

- Practical challenges of conference collocation – site selection process, timing and global rotation schedules across two conferences don't always align
- Debate on whether collocation is needed to encourage migration of ideas across fields, i.e. scientific connection across communities as one of the primary drivers for conference collocation
- Having one conference “follow” another implies relative importance between the conferences (may not be appropriate assumption in all circumstances)
- Importance of connecting conference collocation with RAS publication offerings
- **Going forward:** Start a partnership with the Robot Learning Foundation; establish an MOU and state clearly that RAS intentions for partnership are not driven by financial gain

6. Motion to approve IAB Advisory Committee (A Keay)

Motion to formalise the IAB Advisory Committee in the RAS Bylaws.

Committee has been meeting since 2024 and has the role of advising the IAB and RAS on all matters related to RAS interaction with industry.

Discussion

- Selection of committee will be nomination by the VP of Industry Activities according to selection criteria defined in Bylaws, and approval by the President
- Connection to the Science and Technology Watch Board to be determined in future, current motion is to formalise the existence of the committee within RAS and to have its members engage with RAS and AdCom

MOTION: That the RAS Bylaws be amended to include the IAB Advisory Committee

Amendment:

The Industry Activities Board Advisory Committee (IABAC), currently called the Industry Advisory Group is a committee put together by the IAB. Its role is to advise the IAB and IEEE RAS on all matters related to RAS interaction with industry.

The IABAC needs to meet at least twice a year, once being in person at ICRA. The board is composed of at least 10 members. Care is taken that the members represent the three main types of industry (Corporate, SME and startups) and be diverse with at least 2 representatives of the three main geographical areas (Americas, Europe and Asia).

Motion Passes – AdCom Approved

7. Break

8. Creation of Science and Technology Watch Board (STB) (A Billard)

Motion to establish the RAS Science and Technology Watch Board (STB) and include the board in the RAS Bylaws.

The Board's primary duties are to actively monitor and assess knowledge advancements stemming from the vast body of published work. The Board will enable RAS to serve as the reference point for identifying new innovation in science and technology.

Discussion

- Need to formalise science and technology watch as a core activity of RAS
- Financial implications of new Board: will initially have default allocation of Board discretionary funding, which can be achieved in this fiscal year via budget readjustments in upcoming rounds
- Board composition: committee chairs to be senior members of the community, with support from committee members from broad career levels
- Inclusion of VP TAB into board composition; potential to connect with Cluster Chairs in future, when TAB Clusters are formalised

MOTION: To create a Science and Technology Watch Board (STB):

Purpose: The Science and Technology Watch Board (STB) monitors progress in science and technology related to robotics and automation. The STB identifies scientific and technological breakthroughs, and promising areas for future research, and presents these findings to the community. The STB also identifies potential individuals and entities for awards and other recognition from the society.

Composition: The STB is chaired by the past president of the society, or a vice-president for Science and Technology (VP-STB). Members of the board include the president, the president-elect, the awards chair, the VP CAB, VP PAB and VP TAB, the Associate Chair for Science Monitoring (AC-SM) and the Associate Chair for Technology Monitoring (AC-TM), appointed by the Chair of the STB with the approval of the President. At least one member of the board must be an elected member of the AdCom. STB is composed of two committees, the Science Monitoring Committee and the Technology Monitoring Committee, respectively chaired by the AC-SM and AC-TM.

Each committee is composed of at least five 5 members.

Actions: The Science and Technology Monitoring Committees meets at least twice a year. The board meets at least once a year. Other potential activities of the board include:

- Producing regular reports on the state of progress in robotics research and technology;

- Presenting the board's findings and holding open forums at our major conferences;
- Identifying potential plenary and keynote speakers for our major conferences, and candidates for our major awards.

Motion Passes – AdCom Approved

9. Changes to RAS Policies & Procedures Manual (J J Chung)

- Summary of Bylaws status
- Proposed updates on term limits for VPs to remove ambiguity related to changes in role. Candidate language (newly added text in **bold**):

*No Vice President shall serve for more than two consecutive two-year terms **in the same role. Justification must further be provided in any cases where an appointment would extend the nominee beyond two consecutive two-year terms of service on the Society Executive Committee.** For at least one of the Vice President-Elect offices, the nominee shall be a Society member who has never served before on the Society Executive Committee.*

- Proposed updates to VP confirmation timeline to accommodate budgeting and planning across handover years
- Summary of Policies & Procedures status; planned updates for 2025 to introduce guidelines for conference leadership composition to avoid financial COIs, EiC selection process, clean-up of awards section

Discussion

- Suggestion to explicitly mention budgeting role of VP-elect for following fiscal year
- Time frames for VP and AVP nominations need to also be feasible for President-elect. Proposal to shift AVP nomination deadlines back by one quarter may be possible, i.e. AVP nominee list to President-elect by Q3, full list of AVPs presented to AdCom at latest by end of Q4. However, VP nomination schedule should be maintained to allow sufficient time for budgeting and planning
- Suggestion to include term limits for AVPs with extensions available for transition years
- Suggestion to maintain some flexibility in AVP assignments since VPs may sometimes discover a new role is needed in the board at a later point
- Question of whether award categories are defined by RAS, ICRA SC or sponsors. Awards are to follow the direction of the science, therefore awards policy must be written to allow the necessary flexibility

10. Other/New Business

a. Review obligation (N Amato)

LRPC discussion during January planning meeting concluded that a large majority are in favour of imposing a form of author review obligation across RAS publications. Propose to therefore make a formal statement from AdCom to support EiCs who may wish to implement a form of author review obligation.

Discussion

- Debate on whether “obligation” is too strong for volunteers; opted to maintain “obligation” to emphasise importance
- Concerns raised about potential difficulty of implementation and monitoring of author compliance. Ultimately, implementation of a review obligation to be the choice and responsibility of individual editorial boards. Purpose of motion is to state AdCom’s support to empower EiCs wanting to implement an author review obligation to improve efficiency and quality of review process.

MOTION: To state that authors of papers published in RAS publications (journals and conferences) have a responsibility to contribute to the review process.

As such, RAS Journal and Conference editorial boards can put in place author review obligations as a requirement for publication, if they believe it would be beneficial for the efficiency and quality of the review process.

As an example, when submitting a paper to ICRA, authors could be asked to identify one of the authors of their paper who is potentially qualified to review and who commits to provide 3 reviews for ICRA (perhaps via delegation).

Motion passes – AdCom Approved

b. Establishment of RAS Labs (E Bayro-Corrochano)

Suggestion for RAS to create a series of networked labs to facilitate the mobility of researchers, especially to serve underrepresented members in the Global South. The labs could be complementary to ICRA School (satellite events of ICRA). Main question to discuss is whether to even initiate investigation into the feasibility of RAS Labs.

Discussion

- No intention at present to request financial support for initial investigation, therefore, no associated financial motion
- Clarification on envisaged implementation, infrastructure and operation as shared research facilities and labs
- Concerns raised that IEEE (and thereby RAS) in principle does not sponsor research directly
- Clarification on whether an Ad Hoc Committee should be formed to investigate the idea
- **Going forward:** no formation of formal committee to investigate, start with informal discussions among community leaders

c. Rollout of Double Anonymous Submissions (K Ramirez Amaro)

Currently, some confusion on RAS publications regarding policy on double anonymous submissions and how submissions entered prior to 2025, which are still working through the review process, will be handled.

Discussion

- Motion was previously passed for changeover to happen at the start of 2025, PAB now to communicate to EiCs to update website and messaging to authors for clarity and consistency

- No transition period, all submissions (new or otherwise) must be anonymized. However, EiCs may allow some leniency at the beginning

d. Overlength Page Charge (B Vanderborght)

Follow-up from prior AdCom meetings to investigate the possibility of removing overlength page charges on RAS fully sponsored publications. PAB reported that:

- Almost all papers go overlength and for RA-L they tend to go up to the maximum page limit
- Overlength fees no longer the main source of income from publications, now from IEEEExplore downloads (noting that download revenue is also proportional to number of pages)
- Printing costs and other expenses from overlength papers are not significant except for printing in the case of RAM, nevertheless, RAS revenue from publications is very healthy even when considering the removal of overlength page charges
- IEEE at large is looking closely at overlength fees due to the high proportion of revenue it contributes
- Consequence of longer papers include fees (note that RAS pays substantially less to IEEE than it charges from authors: \$27 vs. \$175), reviewer workload, author ability to fully describe the work and address reviewer comments
- Conclusion that RAS should remove overlength page fees and instead enforce a maximum page limit

Discussion

- Clarification on what kinds of “financial incentives” may be appropriate to encourage authors to reduce page length, identified as: reduced conference registration or reduced cost of open access fee
- Concerns that authors will resort to cutting the reference list to remain within page limits to be addressed with additional scrutiny during the reviewing process
- Purpose of motion is to empower EiCs to take action

MOTION: That all RAS fully sponsored conferences and journals are allowed to reduce or terminate the overlength charges, conditional to setting a maximum page limit, and may introduce financial incentives for authors to reduce page length, provided that any of these changes guarantee financial viability that has been approved by PAB, CAB, FAB and AdCom.

Motion Passes – AdCom Approved

11. Meeting Adjourned (J Chung)

12. Next Virtual AdCom Meeting: March 2025 (Date TBD)

Next in-person AdCom Meeting: 24 May 2025, Atlanta (GA), USA