Enhancements to Society’s Products and Services: Report of Progress Made in 2008

Rangachar Kasturi
IEEE Computer Society 2008 President

At the beginning of this year, I presented a plan to shape 2008 as the year of revitalization of our Society (Computer, Jan. 2008, pp. 8-9). As I conclude my term as president, I am pleased to report much progress on all fronts laid out in that plan. Here is a summary of our progress this year.

REL AUNCH OF COMPUTER.ORG

A prime focus of our IT department this year has been a complete redesign of our computer.org website. The new site is built on an open source stack, including a Liferay portal server. This gives us new capabilities including blogs, message boards, wikis, and other interactive features.

The site includes a new Computing Now portal, a new interface for our Computer Society Digital Library, a new Build Your Career area, a set of subject pages where users can find information and resources based on areas of interest, and much more. Our new jobs listing site, careers.computer.org, was launched a few months ago. We expect the relaunch to be completed by the end of the year.

Please visit our new website and check it out. I congratulate Lee Wadsworth, interim director of information technology and services, for leading his team through this large task. Volunteer leadership is provided by George Cybenko, first vice president and chair of the Electronic Products and Services Board.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER CERTIFICATION

This year we celebrated the worldwide launch of a new credential, Certified Software Development Associate, along with its accompanying learning materials. This product was designed specifically to bridge the knowledge gap that typically exists with recent college graduates and limits their ability to effectively contribute in their first few years as software professionals.

More than 200 volunteers from around the world took the beta test to validate the exam earlier this year. Several educational institutions and companies in China, India, and the US have already signed up to make CSDA a part of their education and training program.

CSDA, along with the Certified Software Development Professional credential (which is appropriate for software professionals with some five years of experience), are just two of the products the Computer Society offers for advancing software engineering as a profession. The foundation for these products is the Software Engineering Body of Knowledge. I am also pleased to report that we plan to refresh the contents of SWEBOK and CSDP during the next two years. We welcome participation from experts in these efforts.

Our certification and SWEBOK activities are under the direction of our Professional Practices Committee, chaired by James Moore. Training and learning materials for our certification products are under the purview of our Educational Activities Board, chaired by vice president Stephen Seidman. Ann Vu, business and products development director, is responsible for its marketing. I thank them all for their outstanding contributions.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS

As a part of our focus on enhancing products and services for our practitioners, we have developed several webinars and podcasts, organized a technology summit with seminars in several topics from leading experts, and launched a jobs
site. A set of four e-mail newsletters, each with a specific purpose, has been launched since September.

A particularly significant event that occurred this year was the formation of the IEEE Computer Society Advanced Technology Executive Forum comprising senior executives from industry. ATEF provides thought leadership and helps us shape the future of computing technology. I thank Stephen Huffman for agreeing to lead this group and Carl Chang for taking the initiative to form this forum.

I would like to acknowledge the key role played by Dick Price, director for sales and marketing, and his team in many of these efforts.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Our transition to a one-stop conference service program is now complete. All conference-related services are now provided from our Los Alamitos location, including Conference Publishing Services. On the basis of our success in the past five years, our parent organization, IEEE, requested us to allow other IEEE Societies to use CPS. I am pleased to report that nine societies have chosen CPS to publish their conference proceedings. The new team, under the leadership of Thomas Baldwin, senior manager for conference services, is also building its workflow and service infrastructure to serve our conferences more effectively. Joseph Bumblis, vice president for technical and conference activities, has provided volunteer leadership for our conferences and technical committees and councils.

IEEE COMPUTING LIBRARY

A new product available on the IEEE Xplore platform is the IEEE Computing Library, which gives subscribers unlimited online access to all IEEE Computer Society periodicals, along with access to 1,000 articles from any other IEEE journal, magazine, or conference proceeding. This product is targeted to smaller companies and educational or research institutions with a primary interest in Computer Society products but that also have an occasional need to access articles published by other IEEE societies. Georgann Carter, product manager for online sales, has been instrumental in the successful launch of this product.

COMPUTING NOW AND PERIODICAL LAUNCHES

The new Web platform has made it possible to experiment with new ways of delivering our high-quality content. The most visible effort has been Computing Now, a website that both aggregates magazine content and adds new content, including blogs and podcasts. Computing Now is an exciting new testbed for delivering content, but we have also continued to develop our traditional product lines.

For 2009, we have reduced our affiliate membership dues to $99.

We launched three new transactions in 2008—IEEE Transactions on Haptics, IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies, and IEEE Transactions on Services Computing. Our Publications Board, under the direction of vice president Sorel Reisman, guided our volunteers and staff through these successful launches. All of our products and services are under the direction of Evan Butterfield, director of products and services.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Much progress has been made during 2008 under the direction of Violet Doan, director of membership development, in providing improved services to our members. Our electronic newsletters provide timely information of interest to members. Our podcasts and webinars complement our print and digital periodicals. Our chapters have been very active, and new chapters began operations during 2008. Effective this month, all of our members, including students, have access to a selection of online books from Safari’s Tech and Business Library. The titles were chosen by a team of Computer Society members, with the goal of selecting books that correspond to the informational needs and interests of our community.

For 2009, we have reduced our affiliate membership dues to $99. Chapters Activities Board vice president Antonio Doria and Membership Committee chairs Michael Williams and Oscar Garcia have worked closely with IEEE’s Membership and Geographic Activities Board to significantly increase the awareness of our society and its products among IEEE members worldwide.

I would like to congratulate the IEEE’s 2009 class of Fellows that includes 51 candidates whose nominations were reviewed by the Computer Society Fellows Committee. This is a significant honor that is limited by IEEE bylaws to one-tenth of one percent of its membership in a given year. I thank our Fellows Committee chair Andre Ivanov, vice-chair Chita Das, and members of the committee for their careful review that resulted in the largest batch of Fellows in our Society’s history.

STANDARDS ACTIVITIES

Our Standards Activities Board, chaired by vice president John Walz, has focused its efforts on increasing the value of standards to our membership and offering more opportunities for our members to participate in standards study groups, work groups, and balloting groups for both current and emerging technologies.

Standards activities are supported by approximately 5,000 volunteers working on the development of more than 300 standards. The board continues to work to strengthen our internal and international relationships with other standards developing organizations. Specifically, it is
working to upgrade our current ISO, IEC, and JTC1 relationships with the new ISO/IEC Partner Standards Development Organization. The PSDO will ensure that the Computer Society is represented as a vital and vigorous player within the international standards arena.

GOVERNANCE REORGANIZATION

We have made further progress in our governance structure reorganization, including a reduction in the number of program boards to five. We reduced the number of in-person program board meetings to one, but added facilities for remote participation through Web conferencing. Our staff restructuring is also complete. These changes are part of our goal to establish a clearer division of responsibility among staff and volunteer leadership. We have also developed a new strategic plan to guide us through the next few years.

All of these activities are under the direction of 2009 president Kathy Land and 2010 president James Isaak. Corresponding changes to our governing documents are being made under the direction of Constitution and Bylaws Committee chair Murali Varanasi. Staff support has been provided by our governance team under the leadership of Anne Marie Kelly, director of governance and associate executive director.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

The progress outlined above and other operational changes have contributed significantly to our financial recovery. As of this writing, we have cut our budget deficit by more than half, and our financial projections are looking much brighter. We are also pleased with the trends we have observed in our new products’ acceptance in the marketplace.

Society treasurer Don Shafer and director of finance and accounting John Miller have provided excellent guidance and direction for our financial recovery. I expect that these efforts will pave the way for the reemergence of the IEEE Computer Society as a vibrant professional society providing products and services of the highest quality to computing professionals worldwide.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE IEEE

Throughout this year, we had outstanding support and encouragement for our activities from the leaders of our parent organization, the IEEE. Division directors Thomas Williams and Deborah Cooper, as well as director-elect Stephen Diamond, effectively presented our positions in various IEEE forums. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the financial support that has been approved by the IEEE Board of Directors to help us provide new and better products and services to our members and improve our abilities to compete effectively in the marketplace.

All this progress is made possible by the countless hours of service and immense contributions of thousands of volunteers. On behalf of our membership, I thank our volunteers for their selfless service to the profession. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of volunteer leaders such as editors, conference organizers, chairs of standing committees, chapters, technical councils and committees, standards groups, and members of various program boards and committees. I am particularly thankful for the advice and friendship of the members of our Executive Committee and Board of Governors.

VOLUNTEER-STAFF PARTNERSHIP

Volunteer-staff partnership is truly the hallmark of the IEEE Computer Society’s success. Our staff in Washington, D.C., Los Alamitos, Calif., and Tokyo are the backbone of our products and services. I thank the members of our staff for their dedication and our outstanding professionalism as we went through a major reorganization.

Angela Burgess, our executive director, is truly an extraordinary intellect with a clear vision and strategy to achieve the goals set by our board. She has established well-defined and realistic targets for our growth as a means to our success. Above all, she is a very caring individual who is well-liked by both her staff and volunteers. I have had the pleasure of working with Angela for some 10 years in various roles, and I have no doubt that much of what we have accomplished is a direct result of her leadership.

I thank the University of South Florida and its administration for much encouragement and support for participation in professional society activities. In particular, I thank John Wiencek, Dean of Engineering, and Lawrence Hall, Chair of Computer Science and Engineering, for providing substantial release from my academic duties so that I could devote pretty much this entire year to serving the Computer Society.

I thank you all for giving me this opportunity to serve as your president. It has been a wonderful journey together.

Rangachar Kasturi is the Douglas W. Hood Professor, Computer Science and Engineering, at the University of South Florida. Contact him at president@computer.org.