

## The IEEE Control Systems Society: An Inclusive Ecosystem for Volunteers

Welcome to 2021, the 67th anniversary of the IEEE Control Systems Society (CSS). I feel thrilled, honored, and privileged to serve as president of our Society for the first two-year term, per the constitutional changes approved in July 2020 at the meeting of the CSS Board of Governors (BoG). An exciting journey has started for me!

Serving for two years instead of one gives the president a great opportunity to be more effective in enabling the implementation of strategies already in place and consolidating the long-term initiatives of our Society. This is particularly welcome in 2021, a busy year (our publications and our Society as a whole will be reviewed by IEEE, as happens every five years). The CSS has a longstanding tradition of excellence, and we have always performed extremely well at these review exercises. We shall do so this time as well! Why? Because the CSS is a volunteer-based professional society. This is our value, our richness, and, let me also say, our safeguard during these challenging times.

Many of my predecessors focused their inaugural message on our volunteers (see, for instance, [1]–[3]), and I am very glad to be upholding this tradition. *CSS institutional memory* (I am quoting this term from 2018 CSS President Francesco Bullo's inaugural message) is a distinctive feature of our professional ecosystem, which is made up of volunteers who serve our volunteers and community of scholars, students, and practitioners. Indeed,

**Nearly 25,000 reviews submitted in one year for our journal and conference publications make for an extraordinarily remarkable contribution.**

the title of my message contains the word *inclusive*. This is what the CSS already is; however, a lot more must be achieved. This goal will be the main driving force during my term.

To quantify the magnitude of volunteers' contributions to the CSS, let me offer some numbers. In just 2019, our volunteers submitted 4604 reviews for the American Control Conference (ACC), 689 reviews for the IEEE Conference on Control Technology and Applications (CCTA), and 7553 reviews for the IEEE Conference on Decision and Control (CDC). Furthermore, 6585 reviews for *IEEE Transac-*

*tions on Automatic Control (TAC)*, 2470 reviews for *IEEE Transactions on Control Systems Technology (TCST)*, 1263 reviews for *IEEE Transactions on Control of Network Systems*, and 1687 reviews for *IEEE Control Systems Letters* were collected. Nearly 25,000 reviews submitted in one year for our journal and conference publications make for an extraordinarily remarkable contribution. As beautifully spelled out in the August 2019 "President's Message," [4] by Bob Bitmead (2019 CSS president), a key added value in scientific publishing reposes upon the certification of content that our volunteers provide



(From left): Mihailo Jovanovic, Thomas Parisini, and Francesco Bullo after the second CDC Soccer Cup at the 2019 CDC in Nice, France.

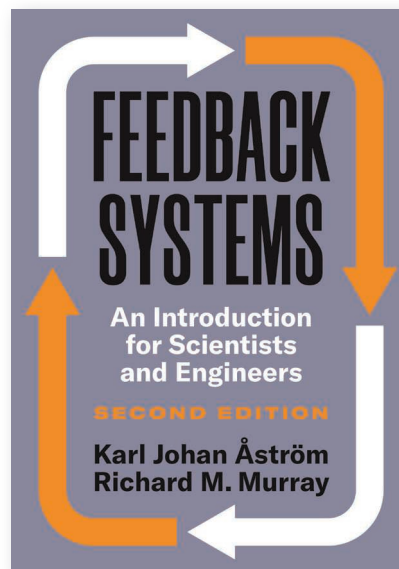
for free. To quote Bob, "That is where the CSS finds itself as a central player in the scholarly publishing business for control."

Getting involved with the CSS is easy, and I strongly suggest our readers go through the informative editorial [5] that sheds light on the broad and comprehensive structure of the CSS by over-viewing the many possible ways to contribute.

Let me touch upon the way I initially became involved with the CSS, which eventually led to my taking on the role of president—a kind of real-life example. I have been an IEEE CSS member since 1986, when I enrolled as a fourth-year undergraduate student—already excited about control engineering. As a graduate student (and later a postdoctoral researcher) at the University of Genova, I soon began volunteering as a reviewer for the CDC and TAC. At the time, the reviewing exercise was completed on hard copies of papers received by mail. My Ph.D. supervisor taught me that I was expected to review three articles for each one that I would submit for review. That was the golden rule that I am still trying my best to follow. Our volunteers apparently also do so, according to the figures on reviews provided earlier and despite the difficulties they face with working from home during these challenging times.

However, even when I started my academic career as an assistant professor at the University of Trieste, I could not imagine other ways to get involved with the CSS. In 1996, I received an unexpected email from Prof. Frank Lewis—whom I did not personally know at the time—asking about the possibility of organizing the 1998 IEEE Conference on Control Applications in Italy. "Yes, of course," I replied, and I was eventually invited by Frank to take on the role of local arrangement chair. My journey in a more involved role as a CSS volunteer had begun! My feeling at the time was one of a kid among some of the giants of our field. That was also, however, a first lesson on how inclusive and open our CSS community is for young volunteers who are willing to contribute.

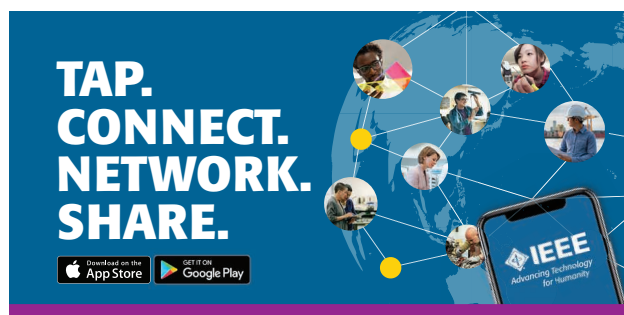
During those exciting times, I was encouraged by 1997 CSS President Panos Antsaklis to become involved with the CSS Conference Editorial Board (CEB). In that capacity, I learned how to work with reviewers for articles submitted to the ACC and CDC and manage publication recommendations to the International Program Committees of those conferences. Contributing to shaping the programs of our major conferences has been an extremely instructive and rewarding experience. I encourage our young colleagues to become active in the CEB and the recently established the CSS Technology









"Åström and Murray have prepared a very well-written introductory work for scientific and engineering audiences.... In summary, this work is a valuable addition to the important area of control and feedback systems."

—M.G. Prasad, *Choice*

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(From left): Frank Doyle, Tariq Samad, and Thomas Parisini enjoying a glass of wine at a CSS awards ceremony.

CEB (TCEB), which addresses the review process of articles submitted to the CCTA. These are the ideal entry points to become more engaged with the CSS. To learn more about the process, contact CEB Chair Amir Agdam or TCEB Chair Stefano Di Cairano.

After five years of service as a CEB member, I was invited to become the CEB chair. This was the second turning point in my volunteer service to our CSS. At the time, the CSS decided to adopt the electronic management system PaperPlaza. It was very exciting to be a part of the launch of a revolutionary way of handling CSS conference articles. I had the opportunity to work with Huibert Kwakernaak and Pradeep Misra in shaping this system to suit the community's needs. I hope that all the mistakes I made in using PaperPlaza helped Huibert and Pradeep make this system the invaluable tool for our publications that it is now; all of our conferences and journals are using a customized version of it. In 2020, *TCST* joined the family of CSS journals using PaperPlaza.

From 2000 to 2003, I served as chair of the CSS Technical Committee (TC) on Intelligent Control. TCs are a fundamental backbone of the CSS, providing a wide spectrum of technical activities permeating our conferences and journal publications as well as providing links with local Chapters and activities. I encourage

you to contact Jing Sun (CSS vice-president for Technical Activities) to learn more about and how to participate in our TCs.

I have served the CSS in several other roles, including general cochair of the 2013 CDC, program chair of the 2008 CDC, associate editor of *TAC*, editor-in-chief of *TCST*, and vice-president of Publication Activities. In all of these roles, I had the privilege to work with many extraordinary volunteers. Without them, our conferences and journal publications would not have the excellent standing and impact they currently hold.

I was elected to the CSS BoG for the 2007–2010 term. The BoG is the CSS's governing body, meeting twice a year during the ACC and CDC in sessions open to all Society members. The majority of its members is elected by all the IEEE CSS constituency. The BoG discusses and approves all motions prepared and endorsed by the CSS Executive Committee, including the CSS roster that lists all Society positions held by our volunteers. I encourage you to visit <http://ieeecs.org/about/governance> to find out all the details on CSS governance.

For my predecessors, the tradition has been that of writing a column in every issue of the magazine during their one-year term. In view of the transition to the two-year presidential term, I decided to change this tra-

dition a bit by alternating a column from myself with one written by an invited guest from the industry or a world-renowned scholar bearing an outstanding impact on other academic communities. The next column will be written by Dr. Peter Terwiesch, president of Industrial Automation and member of the Group Executive Committee at ABB (<https://global.abb/group/en/about/corporate-governance/executive-committee/peter-terwiesch>). He will provide exciting perspectives on the impact of systems and control technology on future industrial automation.

I strongly believe that the CSS, thanks to the tireless efforts of its volunteers, will be a more diverse and inclusive professional organization that plays a key role in "advancing technology for the benefit of humanity" [quoting the main scope of IEEE (<https://www.ieee.org/about/index.html>)].

Years ago, I had a conversation with Len Shaw (2002 CSS president) and asked him "What is the best thing you have found in serving the CSS?" Len answered, "Working with and learning from great people." Nothing to add!

In closing, thank you for reading this. I look forward to working with you over the next two years. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at [t.parisini@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:t.parisini@imperial.ac.uk).

**Thomas Parisini**

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