

# IMS2021 General Chairs' Welcome

*Steve Kenney and John Papapolymerou*

As we write this in late December 2020, one thing we can guarantee you is that the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S) International Microwave Symposium (IMS) and Microwave Week 2021 (<https://ims-ieee.org/ims2021>) will be like no other in history! We say this with some trepidation for reasons obvious to all. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world unlike any event in recent history. New cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities continue to rise in the



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United States and in many corners of the world.

On the positive side, however, vaccines are now being administered to first responders and high-risk populations. New vaccines are being approved, and aggressive inoculation schedules for the general public are now being planned in many affected countries.

Our theme, "Connecting for a Smarter, Safer World," could not be more appropriate. Given all of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, the IMS2021 Steering Committee has planned an exceedingly flexible program. The format will be hybrid. This

means that we expect to have a virtual event in addition to the traditional live event. The live conference will be held at the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC), the same venue as the last time IMS was in Atlanta in 2008.

For those able to attend the live event, it is business as usual, ex-

cept for an abundance of caution and safety measures that will be in place to minimize the risk of exposure. We are planning six parallel technical sessions, 35 workshops, and three Technical Lectures as well as Micro-Apps and Industry workshops. Session rooms will be limited to about one-quarter capacity, and we have been working with Horizon House to lay out the exhibition floorplan to allow wide, one-way aisles for proper social distancing (see <https://ims-ieee.org/exhibition>).

We will follow all State of Georgia and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for facemasks

and social distancing. The room layout will accommodate social distancing and be sanitized between sessions. All social events will be held at either the Omni Hotel (headquarters) or GWCC to avoid transportation on crowded buses. Hand-sanitizing stations will be in all rooms and distributed throughout the GWCC as well as the Omni and other hotels.

A new attraction at this year's exhibition is the Automotive Pavilion. The Pavilion will showcase the latest developments in technologies for autonomous, connected, and smart vehicles and provide an area where IMS attendees can learn about these technologies by interacting with specialists from industry as well as exchange ideas with them and other attendees.

For those authors and others who are unable to attend person, please plan to join the virtual event. Except for the plenary session and select other sessions to be livestreamed, the virtual presentation will follow the live conference by about two weeks. This is done out of the logistical necessity of managing the two events separately, but it allows attendees from all over

the world to have on-demand access to any Microwave Week programs for which they are registered. Attendees at the live conference are also eligible to register for the virtual presentations for a small additional fee to see all of the sessions and workshops they might have missed.

In planning the virtual presentations, we have certainly benefited from the knowledge gained by the IMS2020 virtual meeting and the heroic efforts of that year's Steering Committee, led by Tim Lee. However, we are expanding our investment in the virtual event experience by contracting with Vfairs and will use their virtual platform, which is tailored for large programs. The Vfairs platform will not only enable virtual attendees to view and hear prerecorded papers but will also allow interaction with the authors via chat rooms as well as networking among individu-

als and small groups via chat and video conferencing. Exhibition attendees will be able to enter a virtual booth and interact live with exhibitors

to hear about the latest microwave products and technologies.

The MTT-S has also recognized that things will not go back to "normal" after the COVID-19 situation is under control. It is expected that the "new normal" will include a virtual component for future symposiums, and this is already under planning within an MTT-S ad hoc committee chaired by Nuno

Borges Carvalho. In a way, IMS2021 serves as a pilot for future Microwave Week events that will include a virtual component.

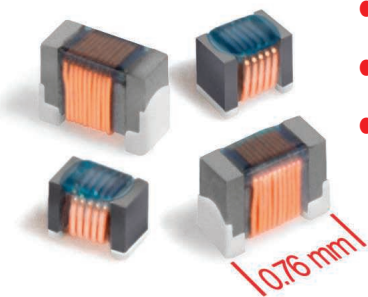
We hope to see many of you here in Atlanta for IMS2021. For those not able to travel, we hope to see you at the IMS2021 virtual conference following the live event. Stay safe!



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