

by M.E. El-Hawary

IEEE *Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Magazine (SMCM)* is in its fourth year of publication, which, by all accounts, means that it is in its growing phase, and there is much to learn and many challenges to meet. Among the earliest complexities for the magazine was becoming part of the Society's culture and walking the path differentiating the magazine from other Society periodicals such as the transactions, letters, and newsletters.

The transactions are the most visible as credible archival publications. In 1973, The IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics (SMC) Group published the first issue of *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics*. While the transactions ceased production in 1995, three retitled publications (*IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics: Systems*; *IEEE Transactions on Cybernetics*; and *IEEE Transactions on Human-Machine Systems*) were launched. *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems* was launched in 2014 as the fourth archival Society publication. Over the past 45 years, the transactions have become the premier peer-reviewed periodicals in the Society's areas of interest.

The first issue of *IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Newsletter* was published in 2003. Its mandate evolved from being the vehicle to share urgent events with the SMC Society (SMCS) community to including highlights celebrating the achievements of colleagues as well as activities and coverage of the areas of interest of its technical committees. Presently, the Society's website (<http://www.ieeesmc.org/>) supplements the newsletter as a favored tool to communicate urgent matters and news to the SMCS community.

Taking Stock

The SMCS transactions continue to attract phenomenal numbers of submissions. In areas often covered by the SMCS, theoretical or practical ideas emerge. The faster an idea of potentially great value is published, the sooner it will be applied and benefit the community. With this motivation, in May 2017, the SMCS Board unanimously approved a proposal to launch a new SMCS publication, *IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Letters (SMC Letters)*, for the fast publication of short articles. *SMC Letters* seeks to publish peer-reviewed articles to offer a timely and concise account of innovative research ideas and application results and report significant theoretical findings and application case studies in areas of interest to the SMCS. The phase-one proposal was presented to the IEEE Technical Activities Board (TAB) Periodicals Committee (TAB PC) and approved at the time of preparing this editorial. This publication provides a separate processing queue for short, urgent papers, a queue in which reviewing remains as thorough as it is in the transactions but it will be much faster because the submissions will be much shorter.

TAB has a multitude of periodicals, and the TAB PC, along with its TAB Periodicals Review and Advisory Committee, is responsible for overseeing all of them. The TAB PC is a volunteer-driven body that, according to the chair's report of June 2017, is responsible for

- ◆ providing guidance and support to Societies and Councils (S/Cs) in developing new periodicals for the IEEE

- ◆ developing key metrics for existing periodicals to guide the TAB PC in the approval of all new periodicals
- ◆ enabling S/Cs to efficiently and realistically propose and launch new journals
- ◆ providing a process to identify weak periodicals and then engage with the sponsoring S/Cs to either revitalize or terminate
- ◆ socializing clear publication-related rules for the successful performance of a publication.

The TAB PC identifies publications with publishing challenges (such as few paper submissions, severely late publications, and nonadherence to the IEEE's publishing operations) and assigns members of its team to focus on a publication's situation.

In November 2017, the TAB PC directed staff from technical activities and publications operations to monitor the mailing dates of publications. If a periodical misses two consecutive issues (when issue n is not ready by the end of the month during which issue $n + 1$ was due to mail), it triggers a communication from the staff to the editor-in-chief (EiC), Society leadership, and the TAB PC.

In 2016, the TAB PC started monitoring proposed (i.e., forecasted) versus actual article counts for new launches. At the beginning of this article, I suggested that a prime challenge for the magazine was to become part of the SMCS's culture and differentiating it from other Society periodicals. I look for your feedback and suggestions.