

Recognition by Peers, Society Business, and Various Thoughts on Culture and Writing

In this issue, I would like to draw your attention to various issues related to our IEEE Control Systems Society (CSS).

SOCIETY AWARDS

Let's first start with our Society awards. Peer recognition always gives a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment and leads to further motivation for moving forward. Let us take a look at our Web site (<http://www.ieeecss.org/awards/awards-program>).

I would recommend that you take a look at this page if you have not done so recently. For each award, there is a brief explanation of the nomination process and the award criteria. While the deadline for this year's nomination has passed (May 15, except for the Control Systems Award and Fellow and Senior Member elevations), this is a good time to start thinking about next year's nominations. No award can be given without a nomination, and it is always desirable to have enough nominations to make a fair and meaningful selection.

There are many people who do good work in our field, and they should be honored and recognized as they deserve. It is undeniable that publicity plays a big role in the modern world. The right recognition of worthy recipients will, in turn, enhance the value and reputation of our Society. Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized for such an honor? Then nominate her/him or even a group.

I would like to call your attention particularly to our two technology-oriented awards, namely the Control Systems Technology Award and the CSS Transition to Practice Award.

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(From left) Maria Prandini, Yutaka Yamamoto, Edwin Chong, Yannis Paschalidis, Christos Cassandras, Kirsten Morris, Jay Farrell, Warren Dixon, Magnus Egerstedt, and Masayuki Fujita in front of the Centennial Hall of Kyoto University on May 9, 2013.

FELLOW AND SENIOR MEMBER RECOGNITION

This subject is related to the topic of my message in the February issue, "A Renewed Thought on Professional Societies" [1]. I wrote that the value of our Society is in belonging to a community. Recently, I received an e-mail from a reader saying that he had not been convinced of the value of belonging to the CSS, or even the IEEE, for exactly the reason I had described, but he said that he was convinced of the value of belonging to the CSS after reading my February message. Wow! One aspect that I did not write about is the peer recognition at the Senior Member and Fellow grades. If you are an IEEE Member and have shown "significant performance over a period of at least five years" (including ten years in professional practice), then you are eligible to apply for the upgrade to the Senior Member grade. You need references from three IEEE Members of Senior Member grade or higher. You can complete an application through the Web. Details can be found at http://www.ieee.org/membership_services/membership/senior/senior_requirements.html.

IEEE Fellow is the highest grade of IEEE membership and less than

0.1% of the IEEE membership can be upgraded to Fellow each year. For upgrade to Fellow, you must be a Senior Member, be nominated by someone, and obtain at least five but no more than eight references from IEEE Fellows. Details can be found at http://www.ieee.org/membership_services/membership/fellows/steps.html.

Both of these grades are valued highly in our profession, and everyone should aspire to reach these grades. Once you obtain Senior Member status, at your request, the IEEE will write a letter to your supervisor(s) that you have been upgraded. On average, about ten CSS members per year are promoted to the Fellow grade. The CSS and IEEE Fellow Committees evaluate the CSS nominees based on accomplishments and reference letters. It is best that you are evaluated by the Society in which you are most active, so this gives more motivation for belonging to a Society. Join CSS!

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AND THE IEEE

As of writing this column, I have just finished hosting our Executive Committee (ExCom) meeting in Kyoto.



Prior to the start of the Executive Committee Meeting on May 10, 2013 at Kyoto University.

We hold a series of such meetings four times a year, two of which are done at the American Control Conference and the IEEE Conference on Decision and Control, wherever they happen to be.

Aside from these meetings, we need two more meetings that are longer and more extensive. We discuss Society business such as our initiatives, plans, location of future conferences, publication status of CSS journals, budget and finance matters, technical and member activities, governance, and many other important issues. When we need to make important changes or wish to start new initiatives, approval is usually required from the Board of Governors (BoG), so the ExCom has to prepare a motion and present it to the BoG. At the Kyoto meeting, we discussed, for example, several budget issues relating to our new journal *IEEE Transactions on Control of Network Systems (TCNS)* that are subject to approval by IEEE headquarters in Piscataway, New Jersey.

Some readers may not know the relationship between the Societies and IEEE headquarters. I imagine that, for some readers, “the IEEE” means the CSS, at least technically speaking. However, there are many administrative matters for which the ExCom has to deal with IEEE headquarters (hereafter just “IEEE”). Let me try to describe via an example.

As has been announced on several occasions, we are launching the new journal *TCNS* in 2014. The

CSS ExCom has to present a 2014 budget for *TCNS* to IEEE. The CSS does not have its own bank account, hence, we do not have direct access to CSS funds. Financial transactions must be executed on our behalf by IEEE. IEEE is like any large corporation. There are more than 40 sections (Societies), and any financial transaction has to be processed by the financial section of IEEE. The Societies otherwise perform more-or-less autonomously, publish journals, run conferences, and promote various initiatives. You can see examples of such activities and initiatives on the CSS Web site. Still, as part of IEEE, the Societies are obligated to report to, and get the approval of, IEEE in making important decisions. The IEEE Technical Activities Board (TAB) handles virtually all technical matters. All Societies, Councils, and Divisions are members of TAB, and all technical decisions made by Societies have to be finalized by the approval of TAB.

This is roughly how Society business works with IEEE, and as you can see, working with IEEE and the TAB can sometimes be a complex process.

A REMARK ABOUT WRITING A FELLOW NOMINATION AND SOME THOUGHTS ON CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

Let us return to the topic of Fellow nomination. For a nomination to be successful, it is necessary that the nomination itself is well prepared and convincing. Sometimes I have the opportunity to review or help someone else’s Fellow nomination. On the form, the nominator is asked to describe the nominee’s distinctive contributions. A rather common mistake is for the nominator to give a rather lengthy argument before explicitly stating why the nominee deserves recognition. For example, instead of giving a very clear statement that the nominee has done this and that, nominators sometimes give supporting evidence first. But this does not sit well with evaluators who are busy and have many nomination forms and reference letters to read.

I have encountered a fair number of nominations of this sort prepared

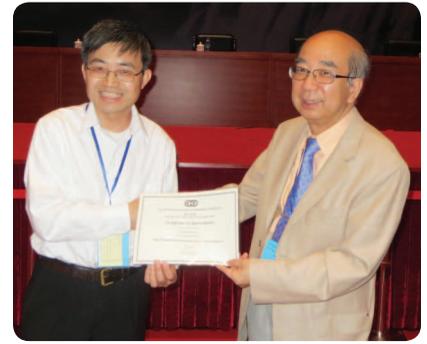
by Japanese individuals. I suspect this might be influenced by our culture. For example, there is a word, "Omoiyari," that refers to consideration or a social manner where a person considers others and intuitively their needs without an explicit signal from them. At a party, when someone's glass is empty, you should naturally notice and fill his/her glass before being asked. This roundabout approach is more natural to us than being very direct and explicit in our communities. Likewise, we Japanese often have the tendency to write lengthy preliminaries before getting to the point, perhaps due to this "Omoiyari" culture. This approach can result in a lack of clarity or impact, which is not always an optimal way of convincing the reader.

Does this generalization go too far? Perhaps. But if you are inclined

to a roundabout exposition, it may be worthwhile to consider how your writing is rooted in your own culture. I believe that our style of writing is dictated, often unconsciously or subconsciously, by our own native language and culture.

We can translate and be comprehensible or understood, but not everything is translatable. We inherit much of our cultural background, often buried in our subconscious self, that nevertheless manifests in our writing and behavior. This issue is primarily for authors to resolve, but sometimes the gap may be too large to bridge. So if you are a native English user, please take a moment, and if possible, give a helping hand to non-English authors.

As usual, I welcome your feedback and can be reached at yy@i.kyoto-u.ac.jp.



Zhong-Ping Jiang (left) presenting a certificate to Yutaka Yamamoto for a keynote speech at the 25th Chinese Control and Decision Conference, in Guiyang, China, on May 26, 2013.

REFERENCE

[1] Y. Yamamoto, "A renewed thought on professional societies," *IEEE Control Syst. Mag.*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 10–11, Feb. 2013.

Yutaka Yamamoto

