

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014

2014 has been an incredibly exciting year for the South African Council for Automation and Control. For the first half of the year our efforts were concentrated on the organisation of the 19th world congress of the International Federation of Automatic Control (IFAC). This event took place from the 24th to the 29th August in Cape Town, and was a resounding success.

Some highlights from the event include:

- Opened by the Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor
- Over 2000 delegates from 63 countries (250 PRC, 70 SA)
- 1 999 papers accepted, with 6 420 individual authors
- Up to 25 parallel tracks

I could provide more statistics; but this should give you an idea of the scale of this event.

Events like this do not arrange themselves and we owe a great debt of gratitude to Fernando Camisani, and all the members of the National Organising Committee, the PCO African Agenda and Ed Boje and Xiaohua Xia, co-chairs of the International Programme Committee. Additionally, we need to acknowledge our sponsors, the Technology Innovation Agency, Uni Basel, Elsevier, Anglo American, Exxaro, International Journal of Automation and Computing, and MathWorks.

Breath-taking demonstrations of the technology available in our field were provided by Festo and ETH. The quadcopter demonstration by Mark Muller of ETH was conducted as a public demonstration with enthusiastic participation.

These events are also about personal contact and networking. For me, it was thrilling to meet people like Manfred Morari and Sigurd Skogestad who, before the event, were names in textbooks!

We were also able to raise the awareness of the profession amongst the public. Both Professor Craig and I appeared on television and radio; hopefully we inspired some mathematically minded scholars to take up this exciting field.

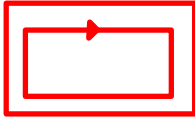
Our relationship with, and knowledge of the work of, IFAC have been vastly enhanced by the fact that Professor Craig was president of IFAC. Our role in facilitating contact between researchers, practitioners, vendors and suppliers in the automation and control domains remains strong. We retain cordial relationships with other professional bodies such as: the SAIEE, SAIMC, SAIMM and SAICHE. More can be done to arrange joint events with these organisations in the future.

SACAC has maintained its presence as the foremost South African body fulfilling member' organisation's needs in the automation and control fields.

OTHER EVENTS

Several SACAC activities took place in 2014/2105:

In April, SACAC facilitated a workshop entitled "Optimisation for Engineering Applications – A Hands-On Introduction for Beginners". The workshop was presented by our colleagues from Wits, and involved hands on use of the GAMS software. The workshop was well received, and it has been agreed that an intermediate level workshop be held in 2015.



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In November SACAC hosted a workshop for recent graduates working in control and automation. The aim of this gathering was to provide a networking platform for new graduates working in our field. A further aim was to identify possible future events and platforms that will further the control and automation community in South Africa. Thanks again go to our colleagues at Wits for this initiative, which has generated ideas for future events that are relevant to less experienced members of the control community.

Also held in November was a seminar entitled "Measurement, Modelling and Control for Coal Processing". This was held at UP and was very well attended. Ten presentations were made. Thanks to Jonathan Meyer and Derik le Roux for putting this together.

Earlier this week an event was held at Exxaro at which, the plenaries for the 19th World Congress were shown. 10 people attended and enjoyed the presentations, with good discussions held.

OPERATIONS

Together with these events, we have continued to consolidate the organisation, based on our primary objectives:

- Strengthening SACAC's relationship with IFAC;
- Improving co-operation between industry and institutions;
- Developing capacity within the automation industry;
- Providing value for our members.

In support of these objectives, a number of continual actions have been undertaken, and include:

- Updating of the membership information database;
- Revision of the SACAC website and addition of a google words facility;
- use of the LinkedIn group, which is used to inform members of events
- the workshops which aimed at providing both educational and practical value to the attendees, and which received positive feedback;
- extending effort to broaden our relationships with fellow associations.

RELATIONSHIP WITH IFAC

We are currently enjoying a strong relationship with IFAC, as several of our members are participating in various IFAC committees; either as members or chairs.

FINANCES

It is my great pleasure to announce that SACAC made an impressive profit of some **R 2.5 million** from the 19th World Congress. For this we need to thank our Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary, Kobus Oosthuizen, for holding a firm hand of control over the budgeting for this event. Kobus will present his report later, but a round of applause at this stage is certainly warranted.

OUTLOOK FOR 2015

Having this amount of money in the bank changes the playing field for SACAC. Some of the actions Exco has discussed include:

- that a specific amount to be put aside in order to pay the IFAC annual fees in perpetuity;
- monies could be allocated to start either a bursary fund for postgraduate studies, or sponsorship of the best student on a control course, or a competition for the best control project



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- funds could also be allocated to upgrade the workshops run by SACAC during the course of a year – i.e. take these to a more professional level; pay a fee to speakers; pay to have material produced etc.
- attendance at Exco meetings by members outside Gauteng
- to upgrade the SACAC branding along the lines of the exercise that IFAC have recently completed. This would, of necessity, include the upgrading of websites and social media platforms.

Several ideas for workshops to be held during 2015 have been generated. As mentioned, an intermediate level workshop on optimisation is planned. Other workshop ideas for the year include: “Dynamic Modelling for Control System Design”, an update on MPC technology. Automation in hazardous industries was another topic mooted, and I would certainly like to see a continuation of the workshops for new graduates.

We encourage members to both support these events; as well as provide suggestions for topics that are of specific interest to them..

SACAC would like to thank all the current executive committee members for their continued support during the year, and to Jean McKenzie, Riana Oranje, Otis Nyandoro and Kobus Oosthuizen for their dedicated, and sometimes less visible, “behind the scenes”, secretarial, administration and financial management support. I would like to thank all the Exco members with whom I have worked , over the last two years – I have learnt a tremendous amount and the experience has been personally rewarding for me.

To all the members of SACAC: thank you all for your ongoing support of the organisation. I look forward to seeing a rejuvenated SACAC continue to grow and sustain this most important link between the members of the control community.

Kevin Brooks
13th March 2015