

## **SACAC President's Annual Report 1997/1998**

### **Presented at the Annual General Meeting – 1 December 1998**

1998 has been a good year for SACAC. Internationally, SACAC has maintained its presence within IFAC as a one of its active and dependable National Member Organisations. Locally, SACAC hosted 2 events which contributed handsomely to our coffers. It has also been a year in which we have carefully looked at how we can improve what we offer our members, and in which we scrutinized the way we do things. These and other highlight are covered in what follows.

### **Liaison with Professional Institutions**

#### ***Workshop with the Presidents of invited Institutions and Associations***

At the last AGM, SACAC committed itself to:

- Re-focus itself as the primary vehicle for international technology transfer, with IFAC as main sponsor; and to
- Serve the automation and control community mainly via the relevant technical societies

With this aim in mind SACAC started the year with a workshop to stimulate closer co-operation with various Institutions and Associations. It was attended by SACAC members and high level representatives of six organizations, the SAIEE, SAIMC, SA Institute of Aerospace Engineering, SA Institute of Mechanical Engineering, Association for Professional Managers in SA, and the Bio Engineering Society of SA.

The main aim of the workshop was to start a unifying effort between the members of the automation and control community in South Africa by exchanging information, and by co-operating together on workshops and IFAC events. The opportunity also exists to nominate members of these organisations to serve on the relevant IFAC Technical Committees.

Other than raising the profile of SACAC and IFAC in the local professional community, the goal of SACAC to serve the automation and control community mainly via the relevant technical societies, still remains largely unachieved. Achieving this goal remains a challenge for the new executive. The next concrete step that SACAC should take is to ask for nominees from these organisations to serve on IFAC Technical Committees. Such nominations will be requested by IFAC in a few months time.

#### ***SAIEE and SAIMC***

During the year I had the pleasure of attending the SAIMC AGM, and the banquets of the SAIEE and the SAIMC. Such events provide good networking opportunities and ideas for improving what we do. I would like to express my thanks to the respective Presidents for the invitations and their hospitality. SACAC has had a long-standing mutually beneficial relationship with these two organisations, and my wish is that in the years to follow our ties will become even stronger.

## **IFAC**

SACAC has managed to retain the prominence it obtained in the eyes of the IFAC community through MMM95. In 1997 our intention to host the 2011 World Congress was officially noted by the IFAC President Dr. Yong-Zai Lu. In February of this year SACAC nominated three of its executive members to serve as IFAC officials for the triennium starting in 1999.

In July I attended the IFAC Council and related meetings in Nantes, France, as a DECOM TC member and as SACAC President. I was struck by the goodwill IFAC officials have for South Africa and the high regard in which they hold our control and automation community. South Africa has many friends on the IFAC Council who still have fond memories of the 1995 Council Meeting held at Sun City.

In September, a large delegation of South Africans attended the MMM98 in Cologne, Germany. At this occasion Dr. Ian Barker and myself attended the MMM TC meeting, after having reviewed many MMM papers for the IFAC World Congress in 1999. Delegates repeatedly made the comment that our MMM95 was much better organized. So congratulations to Don Stepto and his team for outperforming the Germans!

In October we were informed that IFAC had officially awarded a Conference on "Technology Transfer in Developing Countries: Automation in Infrastructure Creation", to South Africa. It will be held from 5-7 July 2000 at The University of Pretoria. I would like to appeal that you give this event your full support. We have high standards to maintain!

SACAC members continue to be active in various IFAC Technical Committees for which they deserve a word of thanks. In particular I want to express our gratitude to Prof. Ian MacLeod for his tireless efforts as Chairman of the TC on Distributed Computer Systems, and for Dr. Naude van Wyk for his active participation as vice-chair of the DECOM TC.

SACAC will be sponsoring a party for IFAC officials and South African delegates at the World Congress in Beijing in July 1999. Many thanks to Dr. Irvy Gledhill and Prof. Xiaohua Xia who have agreed to organize this event.

Preparations are under way to submit a Cape Town bid in 2000 for the IFAC World Congress in 2011. Thanks to Don Stepto for his efforts in this regard.

## **SACAC workshops**

During 1998 each executive committee member was tasked with organizing a workshop. Two workshops were held during the year, whilst various others are in the planning stage. The two workshops were both comfortably profitable, partly because they were held at subsidized venues.

### ***Workshop on Evaluation of Control and Automation Systems***

This workshop dealt with the technical and economic evaluation of control and automation systems, including the measurement and evaluation of improvements. Different approaches to evaluation, i.e. technical, accounting and productivity were highlighted using case studies of plant upgrades, new installations and process enhancements.

This workshop, which was held at the University of Pretoria, was attended by 21 paying delegates.

### ***Workshop on Trends and Issues in the Integration of Automation Systems and Management Information Systems***

This workshop dealt with the real-time conversion of information from the automated shop floor directly into management information. It was attended by 20 paying delegates and was held at the Rand Water head office. Thanks very much to Les Lange for making this event a great success.

### ***Future workshop topics***

Various workshops are planned for 1999.

- Control Education (April 1999 at UCT)
- Automation vs. job creation
- Knowledge elicitation
- Research on Fieldbusses
- IEC standards

## **Finance**

The Honorary Treasurer of SACAC, Gordon Broadley, left South Africa during the year to take up a position in the Middle East. Gordon deserves a big thank you for his dedication to this portfolio over many years. My thanks also to Les Lange who agreed to take up this position during the middle of this year and for the contribution he has already made in this regard.

The finances of SACAC are in a healthy state and at the financial year-end we had some R135 000 in a 32-day notice deposit account. Our major expenses continue to be the IFAC subscription fees and our secretarial fees, with our major sources of income being events, interest, and membership subscriptions.

One of our main benefits to members is the sponsorship that we offer for attending IFAC events. During 1998 a post-graduate student from the University of Pretoria, Fernando Camisani-Calzolari, was sponsored with R5000 to present a paper at the MMM98 in Cologne.

## **The SACAC Website**

Our website at [www.ee.up.ac.za/sacac/](http://www.ee.up.ac.za/sacac/) has become a source of information for the local control community with some 460 hits since 1 April 1998. We even had our first web membership subscription 2 weeks ago! Thanks very much to Fernando Camisani-Calzolari for creating and maintaining this site.

## **Membership**

We have managed to grow the number of active members during the past year due to the efforts of the members of the executive committee. Some problems do however remain in keeping our membership list current, which impact negatively on our ability to collect membership dues. Thanks very much to Dr. Gunter Metzner and Jean McKenzie for their efforts in this regard.

## **Secretariat**

During the year, the executive has reviewed what it requires from a secretariat, in particular as regards our finances. The current paper based bookkeeping system has been found to be inadequate. Les Lange, our honorary treasurer, has made various recommendations as to how it can be improved. We are awaiting a formal written response from JCCI.

## **General**

During the year, many of the executive committee members had the opportunity to host a 6-weekly SACAC executive meeting at their place of work. This system works very well and I would encourage future executives to continue with this practice.

On behalf of our members and the SACAC executive, I would like to wish Prof. Ian MacLeod a speedy recovery. Our best wishes goes to him and his family during this difficult time.

Congratulations to Dr. Gunter Metzner and his wife Linda on the birth of their son.

Finally, I would like to thank the Executive Committee and Jean McKenzie of JCCI for making this a successful year for SACAC. I wish you and your family peace and happiness through the festive season and a prosperous 1999.

Ian K Craig  
1 December 1998