

I

Prof Tony Davies, R8 History Activities Coordinator

Activity Report

IEEE History Committee: I was a member for 2012, and attended the two face-to-face meetings, one in Newark airport, New Jersey, USA and one near Milan, Italy. I also participated in their teleconferences and visited the IEEE History Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA, on the Rutgers University campus.



The IEEE History Center building, Rutgers University

The contract between IEEE and Rutgers University is due for renewal, and there has been some discussion about moving the Center to another university.

I also chaired an ad-hoc subcommittee of the History Committee with the task of making recommendations for improvements to the ease of use and effectiveness of the IEEE Global History Network (GHN). The ease of searching has been dramatically improved and the Milestone approval process streamlined to make it easier, but there is more to be done to improve ease of use and to attract more users. An idea that the Milestone Plaques could also have, nearby, a QR code, which would give immediate access to more information or even to a recorded MP3 audio commentary has been mentioned, but for now is no more than an idea.

I retain my connections with the IEEE History Committee as a Corresponding Member. I have also been involved with UKRI Section history activities through the UKRI Life Members Activity Group.

Oral Histories of Past R8 Directors: Audio recordings of the interviews are made, and digitally edited and enhanced, with the interviewee having the opportunity to make corrections. A typed transcript is then made and after approval by all involved is put on the GHN website:

Those of Reginald Russell, Rolf Remshardt, Baldomir Zajc, Basil Osborne and Jean Lebel have been completed, with typed transcripts now on the GHN website.

See

I

http://www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/Oral-History:Jean_Lebel

http://www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/Oral-History:Reginald_Russell

http://www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/Oral-History:Basil_Osborne

http://www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/Oral-History:Rolf_Remshardt

http://www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/Oral-History:Baldomir_Zajc

The audio recordings are available on request. Plans for some more interviews are in hand.



Photos taken at the time of Oral History Interviews
with Reg Russell and Jean Lebel

HISTELCON 2012 took place in Pavia, Italy, in September. I presented two papers, one related to the History of Region 8.

It was an excellent conference in nice surrounding at the University of Pavia, where Alessandro Volta was a professor. Most sessions were in the impressive Aula Magna, and one day was held at the Museum of Electrical Technology of the University of Pavia. The papers will be in IEEE Xplore. Unfortunately, attendance numbers were rather low. It seems that IEEE may not be very successful in publicizing such conferences among the professional historians working in science and technology, and of course many mid-career engineers cannot get employer-support to attend conferences about history.



IEEE Historic Milestone plaques: Several for locations in Region 8 have been approved recently and others are 'in progress'. One for the invention of holography by Dennis Gabor is to be unveiled at Imperial College London on 12th June 2013, and some others in the UKRI Section are going through the proposal development stages. A Milestone in Croatia is expected to be approved shortly.

There are many opportunities for Milestones in the Sections of R8, and Section Chairs are asked to encourage volunteers in their Section to take an interest in preparing proposals. Typically, it takes about two years from start to final approval and installation. It is notable that even some large Sections in R8 have no or very few milestones, and considering the many inventions and achievements in the scope of IEEE that took place in the territory of R8, the creation of many more Milestones would be very appropriate.

Cooperation between IEEE History Center and the IET Archives: I am chairing an informal subcommittee to advise on the development of mutually beneficial cooperation and to make some constructive proposals. Links between the historical material on the IET website and the GHN are being discussed. In the IET archives there are valuable collections of historic documents, whereas the GHN is entirely an on-line system with no collection of actual items. Independently of this, there are plans in both IET and IEEE to develop collaborative links with the history-activities of other engineering societies. It is important to ensure that all these initiatives are not seen as ways of spending less money rather than achieving more. IET is about to embark on a two-year 30 million pound construction project to upgrade its building in London. During and after this, accessibility to the library collections and archives is subject to considerable uncertainties.

Section Histories: The R8 Jubilee celebrations provide a focus for the production of histories of the Sections (including their Chapters). A number have already done this, but many are not yet completed or are very limited. The best destination for such histories is the GHN, and a link to and from Section web pages can then be provided. Links to two examples are given below:

[http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland Section History](http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE_United_Kingdom_and_Republic_of_Ireland_Section_History)

[http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE Russia %28Northwest%29 Section History](http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE_Russia_%28Northwest%29_Section_History)

I will be glad to try to advise or help any Sections who feel a need for it in order to create such histories.

Society and Chapter histories are also to be found on the GHN, and links for two examples for which I am mainly responsible are below:

[http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE Circuits and Systems Society History](http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE_Circuits_and_Systems_Society_History)

[http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE UKRI Circuits and Systems Chapter History](http://www.ieeeghn.org/wiki/index.php/IEEE_UKRI_Circuits_and_Systems_Chapter_History)

I

By means of 'First-Hand Histories' the GHN also provides an on-line repository for individual engineers to preserve their personal achievements, memoirs and experiences from past times. For example, to test out this process, I was persuaded to add some of my 'memories' as a past Region Director:

http://www.ieeeahn.org/wiki/index.php/First-Hand:Recollections_of_a_Region_8_Director

There is also the opportunity to include in the GHN short life histories of well known past IEEE members, and once there, these can be linked to other entries where the same person is referred to. Among senior Section volunteers, there are often some who have detailed memories of important past members from their Section, and who could take part in the preservation of information about such members.

Tony Davies



2013 March 16th