

History Activities Coordinator

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The Past

A milestone dedicated for the Heinrich Hertz demonstration of electromagnetic waves has been unveiled at Karlsruhe on 5th December 2014. In the past, there was an IEEE award named after Hertz, but it is now discontinued, no awards having been made after 2001. Funds for this award were from Region 8, and it seems that discontinuation was because company financial support became difficult to obtain.

Outlook

- Arrangements are underway for the dedication of a milestone at Abbey Road Studios in London to recognize the stereo sound recording and reproduction inventions of Alan Dower Blumlein in the early 1930s. A major event is being planned for 1st April 2015.
- A milestone has been approved for the L-band 3D pulsed radar developed in Kharkiv, Ukraine in 1938. Progress with installation is uncertain because of the military activities in Ukraine. Several other prospective milestones in Ukraine are in the proposal development stages.
- Enrico Fermi's major contribution to semiconductor statistics, Florence, Italy, 1926 is awaiting a decision by the IEEE History Committee.
- Several Milestone proposal plans are well under way in the UK and Ireland Section.
- The HISTELCON 2015 Conference will be held in Israel August 16-21, and the significance of this event is recognized by the IEEE History Committee with plans to change HISTELCON to a worldwide conference, rather than just a Region 8 event.

Best Practices

There is no shortage of good suggestions for History Milestones in various locations in Region 8, but in many cases, champions to carry them through from idea to accepted proposal cannot be found. The IEEE History Center and the IEEE History Committee is keen to see more successful proposals from Region 8 and can offer advice and help.

Points of concern / Topics for future discussion

- Changes in the IEEE Global History Network (GHN): IEEE is collaborating with six other engineering Societies in the new Engineering and Technology History Wiki (ETHW). These include the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) as well as the Society of Women Engineers. Clearly there is an overlap in interests between IEEE and all of these. Collaboration with the IET (former IEE) has been proposed and various suggestions made, but no progress has occurred so far. The IET Archives are now re-housed in a more special environment and in the process of becoming available to visitors who make reservations in advance.
- ASME and ASCE both have Landmarks which correspond to the IEEE Milestones and the IEEE Milestones data has been moved to the ETHW website. For the time being, there is automatic re-direction from the GHN website, but it is recommended that the ETHW site be used from now onwards. The ASME website lists 275 landmarks generally these are preserved objects such as engines, etc. The ASCE landmarks are civil engineering projects: bridges, viaducts, etc. For example, Brunel's Thames Tunnel in London, completed 1843 and still in continuous use, is one of them. It was the first shield-driven tunnel and the first underwater railway tunnel. ASCE has some 260 landmarks. Compare with about 150 for IEEE.
- The ETHW website (www.ethw.org) has an innovation map which shows the locations of all the milestones and landmarks: 222 are shown for the eastern USA area, and 49 for the Western Europe area, which illustrates the unbalanced recognition of technology progress, and the need for more milestones in Region 8.
- The ASME and ASCE landmarks may be found at the following locations: www.asme.org/about-asme/who-e-are/engineering-history/landmarks and <http://www.asce.org/Landmark-Program>
- Since some in IEEE are not much interested in History of Technology and might wish to reduce the financial support for it, it may be that in due course, the GHN could be phased out and replaced completely by having all the material in ETHW. Although IEEE seems to be the strongest partner in ETHW, such a change might not be favorable for IEEE, so a careful watch on these plans is recommended!