

Region 8 News

Zhijia Huang, Roland Saam, Bojan Nikolic

Goals

IEEE Region 8 News is the member newsletter for those in Region 8, reporting on member activities around the Region, including meetings, conferences and events, plus important milestones and key initiatives by Committees and Affinity Groups. The newsletter is produced by volunteers from contributions by members. It is distributed to IEEE members in Region 8 with IEEE Spectrum and The Institute. PDFs of current and back-issues are available on the Region 8 website.

The editorial team changed in January 2018 and our immediate goal is to bring the quarterly publishing cycle back on track, having encountered slippage during 2017. It is intended that re-establishing a regular publishing cycle should help the newsletter regain recognition among members.

This year we plan to introduce a digital edition that is more readily discoverable and easier to read on small screens.

The new editors will build on previous efforts to foster relationships with members and volunteers, with a view to making the newsletter content more timely and keeping readers up to date with ongoing projects and initiatives in the Region. This will involve more forward planning of issue content and commissioning of articles in advance.

Status

After the September 2017 issue, severe pressures on volunteer time prevented the production of a second issue of the newsletter before the end of the year. A re-organisation of the volunteer team was proposed by the editors and accepted by Region 8 OpCom. Bojan Nikolic has been joined by new editor Alistair Dabbs, who previously worked on IEEE Region 8 News in a supplier role. The first issue of 2018 will be distributed at the beginning of March, with the PDF edition available for download from mid-February. Subsequent issues are planned for June, September and December.

The newsletter has its own pages on the Region 8 website and has nominal social media presence on Facebook.

Outlook

The bookmarked and hyperlinked PDF edition of IEEE Region 8 News, available at the Region 8 website, solves a basic requirement for a downloadable version of each print issue but is limited in scope for incorporating media content or accommodating different screen sizes. The PDFs are not easily discoverable in their current form and location, and there is no means of notifying members when new PDF issues become available.

A priority for the editors in 2018, then, is to better serve members who do not receive the printed newsletter by post. This includes those whose discounted membership fees cover electronic magazine subscriptions only and those who signed up for the electronic edition of IEEE Spectrum for environmental, logistical or other reasons.

Several approaches are being tested, from enhanced PDF to responsive digital content in an app for smartphones and tablets. Embracing the opportunities of digital publishing would also allow us to support rich media content such as video, audio and picture galleries. Within the constraints of volunteer availability, it could allow IEEE Region 8 News to publish more frequently and visibly.

The editor is attending the Region 8 Committee Meeting in March and will have demos to share with those interested.

Points of Concern

Although the newsletter is free to members, the printing and mailing costs are significant and are funded by Region 8. Producing four issues in 2018 compared with just the one in 2017 will be notable in the Region's expenditure this year. It is hoped that the newsletter's budget can stretch to fund a modest digital publishing project.

The newsletter lacks a social media strategy. In its current format and publishing frequency, IEEE Region 8 News cannot realistically support dedicated channels of its own. Instead, we might be advised to try and engage with members better by taking advantage of ? and contributing more to ? the existing Region 8 branded presence on key social media platforms.

It became apparent at the end of 2017 that the editorial team needs shared access to content earlier in the editing process leading up to publication, in case one of the team is called away for work, falls ill, etc. We are developing a cloud-based workflow that takes advantage of the free tools available to us as IEEE members ? Google Apps and Collabratec ? which should be ready by the Region 8 Committee Meeting in March.

Other Issues to report