the Beacon

Enjoy the Spring!

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Chair's Note
by Dan Martin, Section Chair

We are now well into 2003, with a new slate of officers in the Chapters and the Section. Our Chapters have been active, particularly the combined Computer Society/Electron Device Society, which has hosted two technical meetings so far this year. The charter and goals of the technical chapters are clear – they serve the technical interests of our members in Maine. On the other hand, I think it is reasonable for someone to wonder: What is the charter and what are the goals of the Maine Section?

The Section is responsible for a certain amount of administrative oversight for the Chapters, but the technical chapters also report to and receive support from their associated technical society. A technical chapter has two views of the larger IEEE – that of the technical society to which it belongs, and the perspective of the regional chapter to which it belongs.

One of the most important duties of the Maine Section is to inform members of Chapter and Section activities such as the Section's annual meeting, the chapter meetings, and professional development activities. This is an area we hope to improve on in the coming year by better utilization of electronic mail, coupled with continued service via traditional mail.

Another function of the Section is to support the Student Chapters – here in Maine we have two – the University of Maine student chapter and the University if Southern Maine student chapter. Sections also support affinity groups for members with common (non-technical) interests. One of these is Graduates of the Last Decade (GOLD). Maine does not currently have an active affinity group, but if you are interested in participating in one, please drop me a line.

The section also supports the professional interests of members through the Professional Activities Committee for Engineers (PACE.)

Yet another pair of activities for the Section are community outreach and industry outreach. We'd like your employer to be aware that IEEE members are professionals that are committed to developing and maintaining their skills, and that the IEEE supports you in this. We'd also like to let the larger community know about the rewards of a career in engineering.

For the past several years as a community outreach activity, the Section has supported the National Engineers Week celebration in Maine. Last year it was in Orono and this year it was held in Gorham. I've been personally involved in this, and I can attest that it is quite rewarding. I hope to get more of our members involved in supporting this worthwhile activity. You can learn more about it under "E-Week" at:
www.engineeringme.com.

As for the coming activities of the Section for this year, I have three goals in mind: First, as mentioned above, I'd like to improve communications with the membership, and begin using electronic mail as a tool to do this. In order to help us with this, please take the time to get an IEEE Web account, and update your membership information with an email address for IEEE announcements.

Secondly, I'd like to see the Section organize professional development classes in conjunction with the Chapters. I've been in touch with the Power Engineering/Industry Applications Society on this topic and hope to arrange at least one short course of interest to members. Finally, I'd like to continue the effort that Dave Potts initiated last year to promote Senior Membership in the IEEE.

I'm looking forward to my association with the Section in the coming year – and I hope to see you all at the Annual Meeting!

The H-1B Visa Legislation - The End in Sight?

by William B. Glendinning
Student Activities Chairman

The Beacon has previously (issues April/May 1999, Vol. 8, No. 7, and November 1998, Vol. 8, No. 3) focused attention on the controversy over the H-1B visa immigration laws. Senate bill S.1723 (1998) allowed H-1B visa quotas to increase from the 1998 level of 65,000 to 115,000 in 1999 and 2000, and was set to 107,500 for 2001. The 1998 level of 65,000 would then become effective again in 2002. The IEEE-USA objected strongly to this congressional action claiming many IT worker jobs in the USA would be lost by US workers and given instead to immigrants receiving H-1B visas. In the same time frame, opposing and independent congressional bills offered alternatives such as bolstering industry-driven training programs. Nevertheless, S.1723 became law.

The IT job market availability for US workers was heavily and unexpectedly adversely impacted in 2000 when S. 2045 was enacted into law. This bill increased the H-1B quotas to a staggering 195,000 for the years 2001, 2002, and 2002 before dropping back to the 1998 level of 65,000. In summary, for the 1999 to 2003 years a total of 815,000 H-1B visas would drain as many jobs from the US job market. Computer related occupations accounted for nearly 54 percent of the H-1B visas in recent years. In 2000, nearly 43 percent of the H-1B visas issued were awarded to Indian-born individuals as against China with 10 percent as the nearest rival.

IEEE-USA remains deeply concerned that dependence on foreign workers may distort the US engineering labor market, adversely affecting educational opportunities for US citizens and jeopardizing future economic growth.
IEEE-USA's recent policy statement , "Ensuring a Strong High-Tech Workforce in the 21st Century," recommends that the United States reduce its growing dependence on temporary foreign technology workers by educating, training, or retaining more US workers. IEEE-USA supports the Technology Talent Act of 2001 (HR 3130) currently being considered in Congress. The bill will establish a program at the US National Science Foundation to reward educational institutions that increase the number of technical degrees granted to US citizens. (See "The Institute," July 2002, Vol. 26, No. 7, p.8). An initial funding of $25 million was specified for 2002. At least 10 grants per year were to be issued with renewal grants possible up to three years. Cited are the fields of science, mathematics, engineering, and technology. Bill HR. 3130 recognizes the nation's critical dependence upon the high technology workforce and further denotes the increasing requirements related to national security.

A very detailed discussion of the H-1B issues appears on the URL: <http://heather.cs.ucdavis.edu/itaa.html>. Professor Norman Matloff of UC Davis, CA, creator and publisher of the web site, presents a plethora of accumulated recordings of documented events, issues, and facts about H-1B visas. The abuses of the powerful US industrial manufacturing lobbies and congressional system weaknesses are found here. Suggested actions for Congress, Universities, Industrial Companies, and workers, including graduate and undergraduate students, that could bring a fairness into a jeopardized but ever so valuable high-tech job market are discussed.

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http://shop.ieee.org/store/login.asp

New Senior Members

The following Maine Section members have recently been elevated to Senior Member status:

Mauricio Pereira da Cunha
Ronald B. Hulfachor

Congratulations!

Update your Member Record Online!

You can now update your member record online, including your name, address, email, and telephone. Next time you get an IEEE mailing with your name or street spelled incorrectly, you can hop onto the web page and fix it right up. You will need an IEEE web account in order to take advantage of this service. The site address for updating your member record online is:

http://www.ieee.org/membership/coa.html

Don't forget to checkout **TODAY'S ENGINEER**, IEEE-USA's monthly, career-oriented webzine which has articles and commentary on the topics that are shaping legislation, the technology workplace, and the engineering world. TODAY'S ENGINEER can be viewed at: ***www. todaysengineer.org***

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The IEEE Maine Section
is pleased to announce the
Maine Annual Meeting
Friday, May 9, 2003

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The meeting will be held at the Tugboat Inn in scenic Boothbay Harbor. A block of rooms has been reserved until May 9, 2003 at a reduced rate of $65.00/night. Go to www.tugboatinn.com for facility information and directions. The meeting agenda is as follows:

12:30 – 1:00 PM   **Registration**

1:00 – 1:45 PM   *Adam Violette*, **Cianbro Corporation: Violette will discuss the new Amethyst project in Portland, Maine. This innovative project involves the development of two, semi-submersible, oil research platforms that will be deployed in Brazil**

2:00 – 2:45 PM   *Dr. Bruce Segee*, **University of Maine: Dr. Segee will discuss the Information Technology Incubator in Orono, Maine. Dr. Segee is the Supervisor for the Supercomputer at their facility and will discuss current applications of the system and future possibilities.**

3:00 – 4:00 PM   **Boat Cruise of Boothbay Harbor or sightseeing**

4:00 – 6:00 PM   **Dinner and Speaker:** *Dr. William Ward*, **MIT – Lincoln Laboratories. Dr. Ward is recognized as a Distinguished Speaker for IEEE. He will discuss recent research and development toward the goal of Manned Planetary Exploration.**

Annual Meeting Registration:

Please return the coupon below along with a check payable to IEEE-Maine Section to:

> **Dr. Scott Dunning**
> **University of Maine**
> **5708 Barrows Hall, Room 7**
> **Orono, Maine 04469**

The meeting cost is $36.00/person, which includes dinner, boat ride and snacks, or $26/person without the boat ride. ***Early registration is encouraged since attendance is limited to 35 people!*** Questions about the meeting can be directed to Scott Dunning at (207)581-2349 or Scott_Dunning@umit.maine.edu.

Name: _____
No. of registrations @ $36 _____ (includes boat ride)
No. of registrations @ $26 _____
Phone number: _____   E-mail _____

Beacon Publishing

The Beacon is published on a monthly schedule based upon the need to advertise upcoming meetings. All material submitted for the Beacon must be received by the editor no later than the 15th of the month preceding the issue in which it should be included. Sorry, NO EXCEPTIONS!!

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The Beacon

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