Through It All, "Society News" Has Been There

When *IEEE Industrial Electronics Magazine* Editor-in-Chief Peter Palensky asked me to write this anniversary "Society News" column, the holiday season was just about to begin, ushering in a traditional time of togetherness. So, I thought it was the perfect occasion to remind ourselves how much our IEEE Industrial Electronics Society (IES) community embraces sharing and friendship and to remember great times at IES events.

Collecting and reporting significant IES events and meetings: such is the purpose of "Society News." The column reflects the IES DNA, which is to be active, deliver the best service to its members, and remain at the forefront of the Society's field of expertise. The IES is a Society whose visibility has steadily increased during the past ten years. The following examples are good illustrations of this.

In 2016, the new rotating scheme for the Society's three main conferences [the Annual Conference of the IEEE Industrial Electronics Society (IECON), IEEE International Symposium on Industrial Electronics (ISIE), and IEEE International Conference on Industrial Technology] was launched, meaning that each year, every one of the three major IEEE geographical areas (North, Central, and South Americas; Europe, Middle East, and Africa; and Asia Pacific) hosts a major IES conference. Interest in these events has grown: IECON 2012, in Montréal, was the first

IES conference to attract more than 1,000 attendees, and the 2017 IECON, in Beijing, surpassed 1,500.

Beyond those three, it is worth mentioning the vitality of all the other IES-sponsored conferences and workshops such as the IES Annual Conference on Emerging Technologies and Factory Automation, IEEE International Conference on Industrial Informatics, IEEE Workshop on Factory Communication Systems, IEEE International Power Electronics and Motion Control Conference, IEEE International Conference on Industrial Cyber-Physical Systems, IEEE International Workshop on Advanced Motion Control, and IEEE International Conference on Industrial Electronics for Sustainable Energy Systems. The first IES Women in Engineering workshop took place in 2017. The Society's link with industry is getting stronger, too; a good illustration is the Standards Technical Committee (TC), which launched in 2018, in conjunction with the IECON Interoperability Plugfest (INTEROP) workshop.

The annual IEEE Bimal Bose Award for Industrial Electronics Applications in Energy Systems was introduced in 2014. Because of the growing popularity of IES transactions, the number of accepted manuscripts has significantly increased, and, as a consequence, more outstanding papers are recognized each year. During the past decade, six new TCs were created, each focusing on a hot topic in industrial electronics, for example, resilience and security for industrial applications, smart grids, transportation

electrification, and technology ethics and society. Finally, the IES membership has grown from 5,200 in 2011 to more than 9,000 in 2020, and important bylaw changes were introduced in 2017 to offer better and more direct Administrative Committee (AdCom) representation.

The "Society News" column in *IEEE Industrial Electronics Magazine* helped launch and promote those changes and initiatives while relaying news from IES conferences, workshops, and Distinguished Lectures (DLs). Looking back, the number of reports is impressive: from 2011 to 2020, 56 conferences and 47 DLs were featured. We can be proud of these figures since they clearly demonstrate the dynamism of the IES community and the commitment of the Society's volunteers.

Reporting on a conference is complicated because it must be done right after the closing ceremony. We can easily imagine the additional involvement this implies for people who have already contributed a lot of time and effort. A conference report usually includes statistics, the names of the speakers who delivered the keynotes and tutorials and the topics they covered, an overview of the technical session organization, award ceremony information, and, of course, photos of the social events. The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of how moments of friendship and sharing are so precious. Reports about the IES flagship conference IECON should be mentioned, too, since the event includes satellite sessions, such as the Student Forum,

the Women in Engineering workshop, and the Interoperability and Standards event. Thanks to the fantastic job the Standards TC members have done, this column has reported on INTEROP Plugfest events for the past three years. The IES Standards and Interoperability Plugfest workshop, held in conjunction with IECON and ISIE, presents and tests new and in-progress IES standards.

Another aspect of this column relates to highlighting members of the IES community. Thus, the column covers DLs, enabling IES Chapters to comment about visits from IES experts. Lecture topics are reported as are key interactions between speakers and attendees, who mostly include regional industry representatives, students, and young professionals. The column features recipients of Society and prestigious external awards and all the new IEEE Fellows who are IES members. It introduces the new IES governance team for the coming year, including officers, editors-in-chief and coeditors-in-chief, new AdCom members, and cluster and TC chairs. Finally, the column pays tribute to distinguished IES members who have passed away, with "In Memoriam" articles.

This anniversary edition provides an opportunity to give readers insight into how "Society News" is prepared. Basically, the work consists of collecting information from IES officers, conferences organizers, Distinguished Lecturers and Chapter chairs who arrange DLs, and other sources. Collecting the material is not a complicated task, as all these people are committed volunteers and most of the reports are ready to be sent to the publisher when they are received. No, the main challenge relates to deadlines and the difficulty of enforcing and meeting them. The window between IES events and column deadlines is brief and critical. The first column of the year is an example. It includes a report on IECON, which will have just concluded; the new governance team; and the new IEEE Fellows. IEEE headquarters usually sends the Fellows list around 20

November, and as soon as the names are received, the race begins. The column editor has to find contact details for more than 20 colleagues and industry leaders around the world, ask those people for photos and biographies, and sometimes send a couple of reminders. All this must be finished in fewer than 10 days. The rest of the work involves revising collected material, rearranging it to meet the publisher's expectations, and correcting page proofs, the latter task also being subject to difficult deadlines. But time pressure is universal for anyone who works for a publication, and the stress goes away when the magazine is printed and the final results are in hand.

In 2012, the results of a readership survey were published in *IEEE Industrial Electronics Magazine*. According to the poll, 27% of the readers considered "Society News" the most important nontechnical column, the others being "Historical" (32%), "Book News" (30%), and "Chapter News" (11%); at that time, "Women in IES News" and "Students and Young Professionals News" did not exist. The same survey reported that, overall, a majority of the readers (69%) found the nontechnical columns interesting. I wonder what the results would be if such a survey were conducted again. Maybe additional questions could be introduced, such as, "What do you expect from each of the nontechnical columns?" Or, "In each column, which information interests you the most?"

I can share my feelings about my expectations as a "Society News" reader. They evolved through time. As a doctoral student and a young professional, I was very excited to read the column. At that time, there was no *IEEE Industrial Electronics Magazine*, and the column appeared in the *IEEE Industrial Electronics Society Newsletter*. I was particularly interested in IES activities and conferences: their statistics (the rejection rate was my first concern!), who organized them, who delivered the tutorials and about what topics, and so on. Reading the column, I was projecting myself into what I considered to be one of the

best places to present research work in electrical engineering, i.e., conferences sponsored by one or more IEEE technical Societies, and those of the IES, in particular, caught my attention because of my own area of interest (field-programmable gate array-based controllers for electrical systems). The information gathered within "Society News" helped me to connect with reputable colleagues and people my age and to begin fruitful technical collaborations.

Now, when reading conference reports, and based on my own experiences, I am more inclined to appreciate the organizers' tremendous dedication. I appreciate details and nuances more, and I really like when new experiences are initiated, such as, few years ago, oral interactive sessions. I also have great interest in learning about the new IES award recipients and Fellows. Reading their biographies makes me appreciate ever more the great human potential in our Society, which includes so many talented people in so many fields, ranging from artificial noses to smart grids. Industrial electronics are at the crossroads of countless technological advances, and the IES is the place to develop and promote them.

Looking ahead, the recently introduced *IES Member e-Newsletter* has helped reduce the time it takes to inform Society members about the news. As such, it is a good complement to the "Society News" column, which is naturally subject to an approximately three-month delay. But being published in the third-ranked electrical and electronics engineering periodical by impact factor (according to the 2020 Journal Citation Reports) is invaluable. All *IEEE Industrial Electronics Magazine* volunteers are proud of the publication, including myself. As the "Society News" editor, I am strongly committed to maintaining the magazine's high level of quality, and, as such, I sincerely thank the volunteers who, through their reports, contribute to this column. I would also be very happy to receive comments from readers, and suggestions for improving the column are welcome.