
Symposium Report: The 2009 IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory, Seoul, Korea

*Jong-Seon No and H. Vincent Poor
General Co-chairs*

The 2009 IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory (ISIT 2009) was held at the COEX conference center in Seoul, Korea, from June 28 through July 3, 2009. This is the fourth occasion on which ISIT has been held in Asia, with ISIT 1973 in Ashkelon, Israel, ISIT 1988 in Kobe, Japan, and ISIT 2003 in Yokohama, Japan. Thus, this is the first time that the ISIT has returned to the Asian mainland since 1973, a year in which Claude Shannon himself delivered the first Shannon Lecture.

Korea was a natural setting for the ISIT, as it has one of the world's most rapidly developing information technology industries, with a strong focus on mobile communications, semiconductors and displays. Along with the success of the Korean information technology industry, the corresponding academic community in Korea has grown rapidly. Moreover, Korea has a more than 5,000-year history, with a very diverse and colorful culture distinguishable from those of other Asian countries. Seoul has been the capital city of Korea for 600 years; it is a center of economy, culture, and education, with a population over ten million.

September 2009

The Symposium attracted 841 registrants, including 36 tutorial-only registrants and 392 student registrants (46%). The attendees came from 37 countries, with a geographical distribution as follows: United States (272), Korea (167), Japan (49), Switzerland (37), Canada (34), Israel (24), Germany (23), China (22), Sweden (20), India (19), France (19), Taiwan (18), Australia (16), Hong Kong (13), Singapore (12), Norway (11), Italy (9), Iran (9), etc.

Events began on Sunday, June 28, with four pre-Symposium tutorials, organized by Tutorials Co-Chairs Sae-Young Chung, Michael Gastpar, and Young-Han Kim. The tutorials were quite successful, attracting 375 registrants. The tutorial speakers and titles were:

- Emmanuel J. Candes (Caltech); Recovering the Unseen: Old and New
- Amin Shokrollahi (EPFL); Fountain Codes
- Balaji Prabhakar (Stanford University); Writing on a Clean Slate

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At the Awards Luncheon: Tracey Ho, Muriel Medard & Michelle Effros (second from left to fourth from left) accept the Joint Communications and Information Theory Society Paper Award from Andrea Goldsmith (left), Frank R. Kschischang and Giuseppe Caire (on right).



Waiting for the banquet.

- David Tse (UC Berkeley); Interference Management; An Information Theoretic View.

After the tutorials, a welcome reception in the COEX Grand Ballroom opened the Symposium with 500 participants.

The TPC Co-chairs of the Symposium were Robert Calderbank of Princeton University, Habong Chung of Hongik University, and Alon Orlitsky of the University of California at San Diego. The TPC Co-chairs selected four outstanding plenary speakers and topics:

- Richard Baraniuk (Rice University); Randomized Dimensionality Reduction: A New Framework for Signal Processing and Communications
- David Tse (UC Berkeley); It's Easier to Approximate
- Raymond Yeung (Chinese University of Hong Kong); Facets of Entropy



At the Banquet: ISIT Co-chairs Jong-Seon No and H. Vincent Poor, and IT Society President Andrea Goldsmith (from left to right).

- Noga Alon (Tel Aviv University); Combinatorial Reasoning in Information Theory.

The Technical Program Committee conducted the review of 955 paper submissions from 47 countries, from which 589 papers from 41 countries were selected for presentation.

A highlight of the Symposium was the 2009 Claude E. Shannon Award Lecture, "Optimal Estimation," delivered on Thursday morning by Jorma Rissanen, Professor Emeritus of the Technical University of Tampere.

Under the leadership of Aylin Yener, the Student Committee of the IEEE Information Theory Society hosted two events at the Symposium: the first was a Lunchtime Panel Discussion and Meeting that took place on Monday, and the second was a Lunchtime Round Table Research Discussion that took place on Thursday.

A panel discussion on "Women in Information Theory: A Perspective from the Industry" took place on Wednesday. Panelists Andrea

Goldsmith, Robert Calderbank, Soonja Choe, Sulyun Sung, and Christine Pepin shared their perspectives on this topic.

A Recent Results Session, organized this year by Habong Chung, was presented in the form of a poster session, which took place immediately following the plenary talk on Wednesday morning, in the lobby of the COEX Auditorium.

Attendees enjoyed several tours during the Symposium week: a night tour of Han River and market on Tuesday evening, half-day Seoul City tours including Gyeongbokgung Palace on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, and a full-day Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) tour on Wednesday.

The IEEE Information Theory Society Awards Luncheon took place on Tuesday, and the Conference Banquet took place on Thursday evening, both in the COEX Grand Ballroom. After dinner at the banquet, the recipient of the 2010 Shannon Award, Prof. Te Sun Han, was announced. The banquet was concluded with a Korean traditional performance. During the evening, ISIT 2010 TPC Co-chair Michael Gastpar invited the attendees to ISIT 2010, which will be held in Austin, TX, during June 13–18, 2010.

In spite of the global economic crisis, generous financial support was received from several Korean government agencies, Samsung in Korea, and Hewlett-Packard in the US, which made it possible to support 78 student travel grants.



Shannon lecturer, Jorma Rissanen.

As the General Co-chairs of ISIT 2009, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the three TPC Co-chairs, the TPC members, the Organizing Committee members, and the professional conference organizers, JC International, for their efforts in making a very successful ISIT 2009. It was a wonderful opportunity for the exchange of new research ideas with colleagues, and to experience the unique Korean culture.