



IEEE

Buffalo Section Electrifying News

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If you would like to contribute thoughts or articles please send them to

sec.buffalo@ieee.org

Editor: J. L. Zirnheld

Associate Editor: Jason L. Cieri

HELP WANTED:

The IEEE Buffalo Section is searching out new members to assist with executive duties on the board. Last month's appeal has generated several members stepping forward, but we are still in need of more help. So if there are any members interested in becoming officers or assisting please send an e-mail to:

sec.buffalo@IEEE.org

Hold These Dates:

March 20, 2008

- Joint with Technical Societies Council

IEEE-USA Commends President for Asking Congress to Double Federal Support For Critical Basic Research

IEEE-USA President Russ Lefevre commends President George W. Bush for asking Congress to double federal support for critical basic research in the physical sciences in his State of the Union address.

We appreciate the president reminding Congress how paramount funding into basic research is to keeping the United States the world's technology leader, IEEE-USA President Russ Lefevre said. "Much of our nation's economic growth over the past 50 years can be attributed to the fruits of research by scientists and engineers.

President Bush also referred to the America Competes Act authorization bill that he signed into law last August, but was not fully funded by Congress. The bill supports many of the same initiatives he outlined in his January 2006 American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI). See

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/aci/>.

Here are some of President Bush's remarks:

To keep America competitive into the future, we must trust in the skill of our scientists and engineers and empower them to pursue the breakthroughs of tomorrow. Last year, Congress passed legislation supporting the American Competitiveness Initiative, but never followed through with the funding. This funding is essential to keeping our scientific edge.

So I ask Congress to double federal support for critical basic research in the physical sciences and ensure America remains the most dynamic nation on earth. Both the ACI and the America Competes Act call for a doubling of federal funding at the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy Office of Science and the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs.

The America Competes Act also includes significant funding increases for NSF's Math and Science Partnership Program and the Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program. The former is designed to make significant improvement in K-12 math and science education, while the latter strives to encourage science, technology, engineering and math majors and professionals to become K-12 science and math teachers.

While serving a 2001 IEEE-USA congressional fellowship as Sen. Jay Rockefeller's (D-W.Va.) science adviser, Lefevre led the Senate effort to establish the Math and Science Partnership Program and was personally responsible for inclusion of the Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program. The America Competes Act has the potential to play a critical role in our nation's economic and technological future, Lefevre said. We will continue to lobby Congress to provide full funding for this important legislation.

IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of more than 215,000 engineers, scientists and allied professionals who are U.S. members of the IEEE. IEEE-USA is part of the IEEE, the world's largest technical professional society with 370,000 members in 160 countries. See <http://www.ieeeusa.org>.

Stop Making Resolutions

Not as effective as you'd like to be? A Fast Company article says it's probably because you're making resolutions instead of setting goals. What's the difference? A resolution is simply a grand statement about what you want to accomplish. ("I want to get fit," one of the more commonly broken New Year's resolutions, is a good example.) Add a deadline for achieving it, make it more concrete by visualizing how you're going to carry it out, and announce it to others so you're held accountable for getting it done, and you've got yourself a proper goal. Read on at: <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/122/make-goals-not-resolutions.html>

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The Virtues of Virtual Assessment

More and more companies are sorting top candidates from the pretenders with assessment tests that add an audition component to the interview process. Virtual candidate assessment programs that go beyond the usual pencil-and-paper exam with multiple choice questions such as, "What would you do if you witnessed a colleague stealing company property?" are becoming increasingly popular. The interactive programs give employers a better gauge on a candidate's soft skills and whether a person with experience in another industry has transferable skills. And because they're customizable, they give candidates a sense of what it's like to work for a particular company. Read on at: <http://www.workforce.com/section/06/feature/25/31/79/index.html>

MIT PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTE - 2008 Short Courses

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is currently accepting registrations for over 40 intensive short courses designed especially for professionals. Courses taught on campus by MIT faculty from June through August. Earn a certificate and CEUs. Some offerings to include programs such as biotechnology, computing/networks/communications, data modeling & analysis, energy/transportation, nano & micro

technology/tribology, systems engineering, and other topics of vital interest to today's engineers and scientists. Visit our website to register and view course descriptions.

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10667/03022118>

Members in the News: Innovators in Biotechnology

IEEE members are making advances in biotechnology, and several of their efforts garnered recent media attention. Read about their work on prosthetic arms, digital contact lenses, and more at: <http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10668/03022118>

Marketplace of Ideas: What's Your Ideal Gadget?

The International Consumer Electronics Show last month in Las Vegas showcased the latest and greatest electronic devices, including handheld imaging, audio, and game systems. Also on display were laptops smaller and lighter than ever before, a digital photo frame combining an LCD screen with built-in MP3 player and speaker, and cars outfitted with smart new video and computer technology. What's the gadget of your dreams, or does it already exist? Let us know at: <mailto:institute@ieee.org>

Aart de Geus: At the Heart of High-Tech

Turning a start-up into a billion-dollar business is no easy feat, but keeping it going for 22 years is an even greater challenge. Just ask Aart de Geus, cofounder, chairman, and chief executive officer of Synopsys, a company headquartered in Mountain View, Calif., that offers software for semiconductor design and manufacture. Read about de Geus's career at: <http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10669/03022118>

New PCI Express Oscilloscopes Have Deep Memories

More than 40 Digitizer / Oscilloscope PCI Express cards are now available from Strategic Test, Woburn, MA. These have maximum sampling rates from 100 kS/s to 200 MS/s per second, resolutions of 8, 12, 14 or 16 bits, up to 16 simultaneous channels and an on-board memory that is expandable to 4 GBytes for long signal capture.

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10670/03022118>

Spain's Industrial Control Seminar Draws Worldwide Attention

For its second time out, the Seminar for Advanced Industrial Control Applications proved a hit. Its 95 attendees from 14 countries were more than triple the

attendance at the first seminar, held in 2005. Find out how it became such a success at;

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10671/03022118>

Video Games Unite Students, Boost Interest in the IEEE

What can be more fun for IEEE members than kicking back, relaxing with friends, and playing video games? Perhaps it's holding video game tournaments that boost membership. At least that's what a couple of IEEE student branches have found. Read on at;

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10672/03022118>

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Take the Risk Management Course for Professional Engineers.

Learn how to apply the concept of Risk Management to prevent your exposure to risks of loss. Plus, earn a 10% Risk Management Credit when you complete the course and purchase coverage through the IEEE-sponsored Professional Liability Insurance Plan. For details, read the Jan-Feb 2008 issue of FYI at

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10675/03022118>

Online Course Offers Insight Into Pre-University Community

IEEE Educational Activities has developed an online tutorial for those who want to get involved in outreach programs to pre-university schools. For more information, visit

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10676/03022118>

Help for Would-be Patent Agents

With their technical backgrounds, engineers and other scientific professionals are uniquely qualified to become patent agents. To help those interested, the IEEE has worked with the Practicing Law Institute to offer a 10 percent discount on its patent agent bar review course. To learn more, visit

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10677/03022118>

Coming in April: The IEEE's Second RFID Conference

Until last year, IEEE papers on RFID had been hard to track down because they were sprinkled throughout conferences on other topics. But RFID now has a technical conference of its own. The second annual IEEE International Conference on RFID is scheduled for 16 and 17 April in Las Vegas. Read on at

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10678/03022118>

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IEEE Foundation Funds Six Projects

Finding technical solutions to humanitarian challenges, encouraging students to consider careers in engineering, and research in the history of communications are among the six projects that received grants from the IEEE Foundation. Find out more at

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10680/03022118>

Embedded Systems Conference Offers Discount to Members

IEEE members can receive a 15 percent discount at this year's Embedded Systems Conference Silicon Valley, taking place from 14 to 17 April, in San Jose, Calif. And you can stop by the IEEE Spectrum booth, staffed by the Consultants Network of Silicon Valley, to exchange ideas about electrical, electronic, and software engineering. When registering, use the code UXIE10 at

<http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/10682/03022118>

Pay Per View Comes to Recruiting

How much is your time worth? People with highly sought after skills can now put a price tag on it when they sign up with a recruiting site called NotchUp.com. When candidates create their online profiles they are also asked to set their interview price. If a prospective employer is interested and requests an interview, NotchUp collects the interview fee. If the interview goes off without a hitch--meaning the candidate shows up on time, is prepared, and actually has the skills listed on his or her profile--the recruiting site passes the funds along to the candidate, whether they eventually get the job or not. If this setup becomes widespread, say observers, it may end employers' practice of holding "cattle calls" where sometimes dozens of people are brought in before leading candidates are identified. Read on at:

http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9059901&intsrc=hm_list

Ireland to Pay for High Tech Mashups

Science Foundation Ireland is offering grants as large as \$1.5 million to fund interdisciplinary research projects that it hopes will give a boost to Ireland's tech companies and help to create new ones. The initiative, called Strategic Research Clusters 2008, will link scientists and engineers working in research areas that might improve the standing of Irish firms within the IT and biotech industries.

<http://www.siliconrepublic.com/news/news.nv?storyid=single10124>

Directions to the Top

How do some people seem to move up through the corporate ranks as naturally as cream rising to the top while others languish on the lower rungs? Cathie Black, publisher of Hearst Magazines and author of the book "Basic Black" points out a few of the things most high achievers have in common that anyone can incorporate into their work lives. Among them is taking stock early on of what kind of legacy you want to leave behind. "Start thinking in those terms now," says Black. "You'll accomplish more, with greater satisfaction, than you thought possible." Seven other tips from Black for becoming a superstar at work are at:

<http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/career-articles-eight-ways-to-be-a-superstar-at-work-288>

How to Pull Yourself Out of a Career Rut (Or Avoid It Altogether)

There are a surprising number of ways to paint yourself into a corner careerwise. A California Job Journal article offers some tips to help you avoid that fate. Though it's important to be aware of shifts in the job market, the article advises against choosing a career because it is the hot trend. It also urges professionals to remain in learning mode by attending seminars, reading newsletters, joining professional associations, and

scanning the Internet. This will likely enhance their value within their companies and their marketability should they go looking for greener pastures elsewhere. For more career advancement do's and don't's, see:

http://www.jobjournal.com/article_full_text.asp?artid=2190

Don't Lose Control When You Lose Your Job

After a layoff, it's natural for someone to feel as though they have no control of what's happening around them. But a Wall Street Journal article notes that the period right after someone has been shown the door is an important career management moment. Shock and embarrassment notwithstanding, it is in your best interest to negotiate the terms of your departure. You might end up with a better severance package and even walk away with a strong letter of reference from your boss or their supervisor. That's why it is important to have a plan. Know in advance what your first steps will be and who you would contact, including a financial advisor and contacts both inside and outside your company, in the event you are shown the door. Read on at:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120041453201091595.html?mod=CarJMain_topmiddle

When Silence is Golden

Want to make \$1000 a minute? Who doesn't? A Yahoo HotJobs article shows job seekers how. During salary negotiations, the article notes, the person who gives the first number sets the starting point. And you don't want to be that person. Why? If you're too high, then you have to display weakness by giving ground. If you're too low, the interviewer will say nothing, willing to let you sign up for less than what was budgeted for someone with your skills and experience. The article provides pointers on how to hold out against the pressure to say what you're expecting to make and leave thousands of dollars on the table. Read on at:

<http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/career-experts-negotiating-salary-earn-1-000-a-minute-52>

Re-think the Meaning of Work

Too many engineers see work as the stuff you do to fill up the time between college and retirement. It need not be. Just ask the 10 technologists IEEE Spectrum has profiled in its Dream Jobs 2008 special report. Read more at:

<http://spectrum.ieee.org/feb08/5922>

Job Hunting?

The IEEE Job Site, available exclusively to IEEE members, can help you locate career opportunities easily and confidentially. Just complete a profile of your qualifications and requirements, and you'll be notified via email when a suitable job becomes available. IEEE Job

Site was named one of the top online recruitment sites by Weddle's Guide to Employment Web Sites. And top employers know that IEEE members are the most qualified electro technology and information-technology professionals in the world. Take a few minutes to register with the IEEE Job Site and check out your career options today! <http://www.ieee.org/jobs>

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When It Pays to Take a Buyout

We ever more frequently read about companies keeping their ledgers in balance by enticing well-paid employees to leave in exchange for lump sum payments and/or retirement packages called buyouts. They thus avoid the negative PR of a round of layoffs. If you're offered a buyout should you take it? A Wall Street Journal that discusses the pros and cons of accepting such a package notes that you can, in fact, turn it down. But you should take a good hard look at the company's financial situation, advises the article, because a firm offering buyouts now may ultimately start jettisoning employees--possibly you--with no incentives attached. Read on at:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120345763105377981.html?mod=CarJMain_topright

Grace Is Sufficient

Have you ever seen someone get castigated for doing something you know wouldn't raise an eyebrow if another person had done it? Sometimes the disparate response is the result of one of the all too familiar isms. But it's just as often due to the fact that one person has so-called saving graces on their side while another may not. Saving graces, says a Business Week article, "can compensate for mistakes, smooth out the rough edges, and can help smooth over rough situations." Among the graces evident in the seemingly unflappable is the ability to understand others. The article notes that if you develop a facility for knowing what makes one group different from another and why, you can more easily engender trust, which translates to the benefit of the doubt when things go awry. Read on at:

http://www.businessweek.com/managing/content/feb2008/ca20080214_897929.htm?chan=careers_managing+index+page_top+stories

A Many One?

One of the downsides of telecommuting or freelancing is feeling disconnected from the world, with only your computer screen for company. But a few enterprising professionals have retained the freedom and independence of working from home while adding the sense of community that many office workers enjoy by doing something called coworking. Internet wikis promote groups whose members have teamed up to rent workspace or companies that offer unused space to people who want to drop in with their Wi-Fi-enabled laptops. "Even people who are antisocial feel a need to be around other people for at least part of the day while they're working," said Laura Forlano, a Yale Law School researcher studying the behavior of people working in communal offices and cafes. Citizen Agency, a San Francisco Internet consulting firm, is among a growing cadre of companies that rents space to coworkers. The company, which charges \$350 for 24-hour access to the office, offers seven desks, a large table for drop-ins, a private conference room, whiteboards and other office amenities. Read on at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/20/business/businessspecial/20cowork.html>

Money In Search of Good Ideas

National Digital Research Centre (NDRC), the successor to Media Lab Europe (which was a casualty of the dot-com downturn in 2002), has announced that it has between 5 million and 7 million euros to invest in about a half dozen application-driven R&D projects that lead to new digital technologies. "We want to become experts at translational research and that means taking applied research and putting it right into industry, in the hands of small and medium enterprises, public sector

organizations, and multinationals," says Ben Hurley, who heads the NDRC. The deadline to apply for funding under the program is 29 February. Read on at:

<http://www.siliconrepublic.com/news/news.nv?storyid=single10295>

The Erasable Holographic Display

Holographic motion, as featured in the "Star Wars" movies, has long been confined to the realm of science fiction. Now researchers are using a material known as a photorefractive polymer composite to make holograms that can persist for hours or be erased and written over. Read more at:

<http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/feb08/5995>

Brake-By-Wire Comes To Freight Trains

Train brakes haven't changed much since George Westinghouse made his first fortune designing a better brake in 1869. But its replacement has finally arrived in electronically controlled pneumatic (ECP) brakes, which offer the advantages of improved control, greater safety, and higher efficiency, offering the rail industry substantial savings as a result. Read more at:

<http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/feb08/5945>

Webinar: Developing Large-Scale Wimax Networks: An Update

With more mobile WiMAX trials being converted into commercial contracts, IEEE 802.16e could exceed 80 million mobile subscribers globally by the end of 2012. While the emphasis in this IEEE Spectrum Tech Insiders Webinar will be on mobile WiMAX, much of the technical discussion by WiMAX experts will focus on network infrastructure and the development and implementation of WiMAX networks worldwide. Register now at:

<http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/webcast/6018>

Video: Ride Along With The World Solar Challenge

IEEE Spectrum's Sandra Upson puts you in the driver's seat as solar cars take on the Australian outback in the world's most grueling ecorace. View this exclusive video now at:

<http://spectrum.ieee.org/video?id=240>

International Students, Have skills, will travel: foreign students hope for work in the United States

First, the overwhelming majority of U.S. employers do not "have to prove that they could not find any better qualified domestic workers" before turning to an H-1B visa holder. It is only "H-1B-dependent" employers – generally those whose workforce is 15 percent or more H-1B – who have to attest (just attest, not prove) that they could not find a U.S. worker before applying for an H-1B. This amounts to no more than 5% of the companies who use H-1B visas. Companies that

are not "H-1B Dependent" are not required to look for American workers first.

Second, the annual H-1B visa quota for new hires is 65,000, not 45,000 – plus an additional 20,000 for graduate students from U.S. colleges and universities that raises the cap to 85,000. And, as the article correctly pointed out, there is no quota on the number of H-1Bs issued to institutions of higher learning and numerous research organizations. Thus, the total number of new H-1B visas issued averages about 131,000 per year.

The quote from a Chinese student who said that, "Companies are very welcoming to international students because they can pay them less money than the local workers, even if their ability is equal" was telling.

Employers are supposed to pay H-1B visa holders the same wages they pay a similarly qualified American citizen. But "prevailing wage" protection is easily gamed by U.S. employer so that, as studies by UCLA, Cornell and the Programmers Guild have found, many H-1B workers are routinely paid less than their U.S. counterparts.

This helps to suppress the wages of American citizen scientists and engineers must compete for work with guest workers from overseas. Plus, it allows H-1B holders to be exploited by unscrupulous companies. Neither of these are desirable outcomes.

A better way to strengthen the U.S. high-tech workforce was offered by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers – USA and the Semiconductor Industry Association in October of 2007. The organizations recommended: "Raising the employment-based immigrant visa cap, including an exemption for foreign professionals with advanced degrees in STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] fields from U.S. universities."

In other words, give skilled foreign students green cards, not temporary work permits.

Why should the United States offer our most talented students only temporary access to our economy? In a global market, where skills and talent are always in short supply, the United States needs to the best minds produced by our universities for life, not just a few years. This can only be done with a green card, not an H-1B.

Paul J. Kostek
Vice President, Communications and Public Awareness
IEEE-USA
Washington, D.C.

Singularity/Artificial Intelligence Survey

Some scientists and technologists believe that within the next 30 years, artificial intelligence and bionics will advance to the point where humans will be superseded by their own inventions in an instant known as the singularity, a point beyond which humans will no longer be in control of their destiny. As the moment of reckoning draws nigh, these singularitarians, including Ray Kurzweil, Hans Moravec, and Vernor Vinge, are increasingly vocal—as are their critics. What do you think? Take our short survey now at:

http://www.magnetmail.net/Forms/display_form.cfm?fid=14571&mid=440136&rid=127867559&rtype=mm

Tech Talk: How Would It Be Like To Live On Mars? Two MIT Students Find Out -- In Utah

Two MIT students are living inside a Mars simulator in Utah, pretending they are on Mars. To go outside their simulator where they are spending a two-week-long "mission," they get into spacesuits and exit via an airlock. They introduce a 20-minute delay into any e-mail they send and receive, as if the e-mail were actually traveling as radio waves from Mars. Read more and comment at:

http://blogs.spectrum.ieee.org/tech_talk/2008/02/how_would_it_be_like_to_live_o.html

The Sandbox: Commodore 64 Games Coming to the Wii

How sweet is this? Nintendo just announced that games for the pioneering Commodore 64 system will be available for play and download via the Wii's Virtual Console service. The Virtual Console has already been serving up retro Sega and Nintendo games for players, but the C64 titles marks the first serving of classic computer titles. Read more and comment at:

http://blogs.spectrum.ieee.org/gizmos/2008/02/commodore_64_games_coming_to_t.htm

Automaton: Crusher Robotic Vehicle Drives Itself, Obliterates Cars but not Our Reporter

During field trials last week, DARPA's 6.5-ton unmanned, autonomous off-road vehicle, Crusher, proved true to its name by obliterating old cars like a monster truck. But it's also smart enough to avoid certain obstacles in its path--obstacles like our intrepid reporter. Read more and watch the video coverage at:

http://blogs.spectrum.ieee.org/automaton/2008/02/22/crusher_robotic_vehicle.html

The Risk Factor: Never Too Young To Protect Your Identity

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recently warned a seven-year-old boy from the northwestern Chicago suburb of Carpentersville that he owed back taxes on \$60,000 of income and

unemployment benefits. This happened when the mother tried to claim the boy as a dependent on her 2007 income tax return, but the IRS told the mother that her son's Social Security number was being used by someone else. Read more and comment at:

http://blogs.spectrum.ieee.org/riskfactor/2008/02/never_too_young_to_protect_you.html

Many Canadian CIOs Avoid IT Offshoring

Globalization's most vocal detractors have been North Americans and Western Europeans who once held jobs that have since been shifted to nations where the combination of a highly skilled population and low prevailing wages have been hard for companies to resist. But a recent survey of 270 Canadian CIOs conducted by IT staffing firm Robert Half Technology revealed that 12 percent of companies there offshore IT functions. Why so few? According to Igor Abramovitch, division director with Robert Half, companies are more likely to offshore IT operations if they have a tried and true process that is portable and they feel certain of getting a good return on the investment. Abramovitch also noted that "because an offshore outsourcing operation won't reap immediate cost savings, companies that are just getting off the ground or are part of an industry undergoing change will likely not outsource." Read on at:

<http://www.itworldcanada.com/Pages/Docbase/ViewArticle.aspx?id=idgml-4727f244-7b12-48b0&sub=1519461>

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