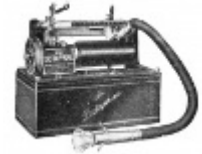

IEEE Global History Network Grows in First Year

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What a year it's been! The IEEE Global History Network (GHN), a wiki-based web site that provides a completely new way of organizing and carrying out IEEE's historical activities, was launched nearly a year ago at the September 2008 Sections Congress. Developed by IEEE History Center staff under the supervision of the History Committee to integrate existing IEEE history resources with Web 2.0 capabilities, the GHN's mission is to become the premier website worldwide for the preservation and dissemination of information about the history of technological innovation.

"The GHN focuses on the history of IEEE, its members, and their professions and technologies," said **John Vardalas**, outreach historian with the History Center. "Though the GHN has a narrower subject range than such prominent wiki sites as [Wikipedia](#), the GHN is broader in the form of the content, offering more ways of collaborating and more multimedia capability. The depth of GHN's content is also much deeper in the areas that it covers."



The GHN is designed to reach the global public and directly engage IEEE members and others with a stake in technological innovation. It allows users to discuss current activities in technology—as well as what will happen in the future—while linking to history.

"We've achieved many of our goals in the first year," said Vardalas, "and we have much more planned for the year ahead as well." Among the GHN's initial successes are:

- Addition of more than 1,300 documents from IEEE's archives;
- Addition of more than 350 oral history interview transcripts to the First-Hand Histories section;
- Enhancement of Milestones program process;
- Addition of social networking features;
- Integration within myIEEE;
- Creation of STARS area.

Following are details about each of these accomplishments from the GHN's first year.

Archives Program

Of considerable significance is the GHN's growing collection of archival documents, many of which serve to preserve IEEE's own heritage and institutional history. The History Center is currently converting IEEE's existing paper archives to an electronic format and making them accessible on the GHN.



Most of these documents are old and fragile, so extreme care is taken in scanning them. To enhance searchability a system of meta-tags used to categorize each archival document has been created specifically for the GHN, enabling electronic searching for many such documents for the very first time.

These documents, many of which come from the archived papers of the past presidents of AIEE, and later, IEEE, are often the personal papers of inventors and engineers past, some dating back to the 1860s. For example, on the GHN is a six-page handwritten letter, dated 1875, from Dr. Ernst Werner von Siemens, the German engineer and founder of the Siemens industrial empire, to Franklin Pope, the second president of AIEE. Unfortunately, History Center staff still cannot ascertain what the letter is about. Written in Old German, even native speakers of German have difficulty understanding it. Hopefully, Franklin Pope was able to translate it. Any IEEE staff who can read Old German are invited by the History Center to send a translation. [View the letter](#) (PDF, 2.3 MB).

First-Hand Histories Program

Another key goal of the GHN is the preservation of first-person accounts of IEEE members' achievements via a variety of vehicles, including oral history interviews, first-hand accounts on the GHN, and other forms. This enables IEEE members and other innovators to explain to the world, directly in their own words, the importance and significance of what they have accomplished for the benefit of humanity."125"



In the past year, many new and fascinating Topics articles and First-Hand Histories have appeared on the GHN, such as:

- [The First Quartz Wrist Watch](#)
- [Abbey Road Studios](#)
- [Edison's First Phonograph](#)
- [Early Electrification of Buffalo: The Beginning of Central Station Service](#)
- [The Foundation of Digital Television](#)

Milestones Program

The Section-based [IEEE Milestones in Electrical Engineering and Computing Program](#) is a program of the IEEE History Committee administered through the IEEE History Center to honor significant achievements in electrical, electronic, and computer engineering and the associated sciences.



Previously, the manual, paper-based process of proposing and nominating Milestones was slowed by the required careful evaluation of all the evidence by the History Committee. In 2009, the process was streamlined by administering the Milestones process exclusively via the GHN. Now, not only can IEEE members propose candidates for Milestones directly on the GHN, but, as a wiki, the GHN allows members to collaborate in preparing and writing the supporting evidence. Furthermore, the GHN now enables IEEE's members to share their views on any nominated Milestone. As a result, the process has been accelerated significantly, and to date, eleven Milestones proposals are on the

GHN, six of which have moved on to the nomination phase.

Social Networking Features

New for 2009, the GHN now incorporates a feature that allows users to share specific articles with others within popular social networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

myIEEE Integration

In cooperation with Member and Geographic Activities, IEEE History Center staff is working to integrate the GHN within members' [myIEEE pages](#). Soon, members will be able to access historical content from the GHN to myIEEE specifically tailored to each member's interests and OU affiliation, whether Section or Society.

STARS Program

The History Committee is piloting in 2009 a new recognition program that arose from the Milestones Enhancement Committee, the STARS program (Significant Technological Achievement Recognition). STARS will recognize technological achievements of major worldwide significance in IEEE's fields of interest by allowing creation and posting of authoritative, peer-reviewed articles on the GHN. It is anticipated that the STARS area on the GHN should become one of the most attractive places for distinguished technologists and technical historians to publish historical accounts.

What's Next?

In June, the IEEE Board of Directors approved a recommendation by the Strategic Program Committee that the History Center should endeavor to become IEEE's "corporate memory," a project in which the Global History Network will likely be leveraged further to help achieve the following goals:

- Reactivate programs to capture IEEE's corporate history and institutional memory;
- Document, preserve, and store IEEE's corporate history from 1984 to present day;
- Capture IEEE's corporate history closer to the actual date of occurrence;
- Move toward capturing information of historical significance as close to the source and time of occurrence as possible.

If you or any of your family or friends has an interest in history, the GHN is definitely worth a look. [Visit the Global History Network.](#)

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