

# Region 10 IEEE GOLD Arrears Recovery Report



## WHY WE STAYED... OR NOT

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Prepared for Helene Fung, Region 10 GOLD Coordinator

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**Future updates of this document will be made. This document is written in International English.**

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## Contents

Region 10 IEEE GOLD Arrears Recovery Report .....	i
About The Author .....	1
1. Introduction .....	2
2. Results of arrears email survey .....	3
2.1. Explanation of Categories .....	3
3. Analysis of Results .....	4
3.1. Financial reasons .....	4
3.2. No Longer need IEEE services .....	5
3.3. Lack of value.....	6
3.4. Problem renewing/Account Problems .....	6
3.5. Miscellaneous.....	6
4. Recommendations .....	8
4.1. Improve the link between IEEE GOLD and Student Branches .....	8
4.2. Local representative to assist with new memberships, renewals and questions ..	8
4.3. Grievance resolution procedure for memberships.....	8
4.4. Increase local presence .....	9
4.5. Alternative facilities for payment.....	9
4.6. Improved publicity about the Minimum Income Provision .....	9
5. Appendix A: Summary of Responses.....	10
6. Appendix B: Email sent to IEEE GOLD members in Arrears.....	19

## About The Author



Timothy Wong currently acts in the capacity of the Region 10 IEEE GOLD Summit Leader, Assistant to Region 10 GOLD Coordinator, IEEE GOLD Western Australia Affinity Group Chairperson, IEEE Western Australia Power and Energy Society Committee members, IEEE Student Networking Forum Committee Chairperson (S-PAC) and The University of Western Australia IEEE Student Branch Mentor.

In 2006, Timothy spent one semester studying abroad at Purdue University and liaised and competed for the Purdue University team in the Region 4 ethics competition held at Valparaiso University. During his term as Chairperson in 2007 his student Branch won the IEEE Australia Council most outstanding student branch award, 3<sup>rd</sup> place Region 10 IEEE Student Branch website contest and 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the worldwide IEEE Student Branch website contest.

His current Involvement continues to provide him with a broad exposure to the IEEE organisation. This includes:

- Region 10 GOLD Summit Leader
- IEEE GOLD Western Australia Affinity Group Chairperson
- Assistant to Region 10 GOLD Coordinator
- IEEE GOLDRUSH Newsletter Editorial Assistant
- IEEE Student Networking Forum Organising Committee Chairperson
- Western Australia Power and Energy Society Committee Member
- The University of Western Australia IEEE Student Branch Mentor
- IEEE GOLD Liaison on Western Australia IEEE Section Committee

## 1. Introduction

There has been a recent focus on arrears recovery for IEEE GOLD members in Region 10. A member is considered to be in arrears membership status when they fail to renew their membership. It is believed that the most effective way to retain IEEE members whose membership has been allowed to lapse is through arrears recovery.

An email was sent out by the Region 10 GOLD Coordinator, Helene Fung to all IEEE GOLD members in Region 10 who were in arrears status. This has resulted in a large number of responses which have provided useful feedback and a foundation for action to be taken to prevent future IEEE GOLD memberships moving into arrears. The return address was set to be carbon copied to Timothy Wong as the Region 10 GOLD Coordinator's assistant and an effort has been made to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. The wording of this email is shown in Appendix B. This report provides an analysis of these responses and provides recommendations on how to address the issues arising from this.

## 2. Results of arrears email survey

A total of 34 responses were received through the arrears recovery. The responses can be viewed in Appendix A.

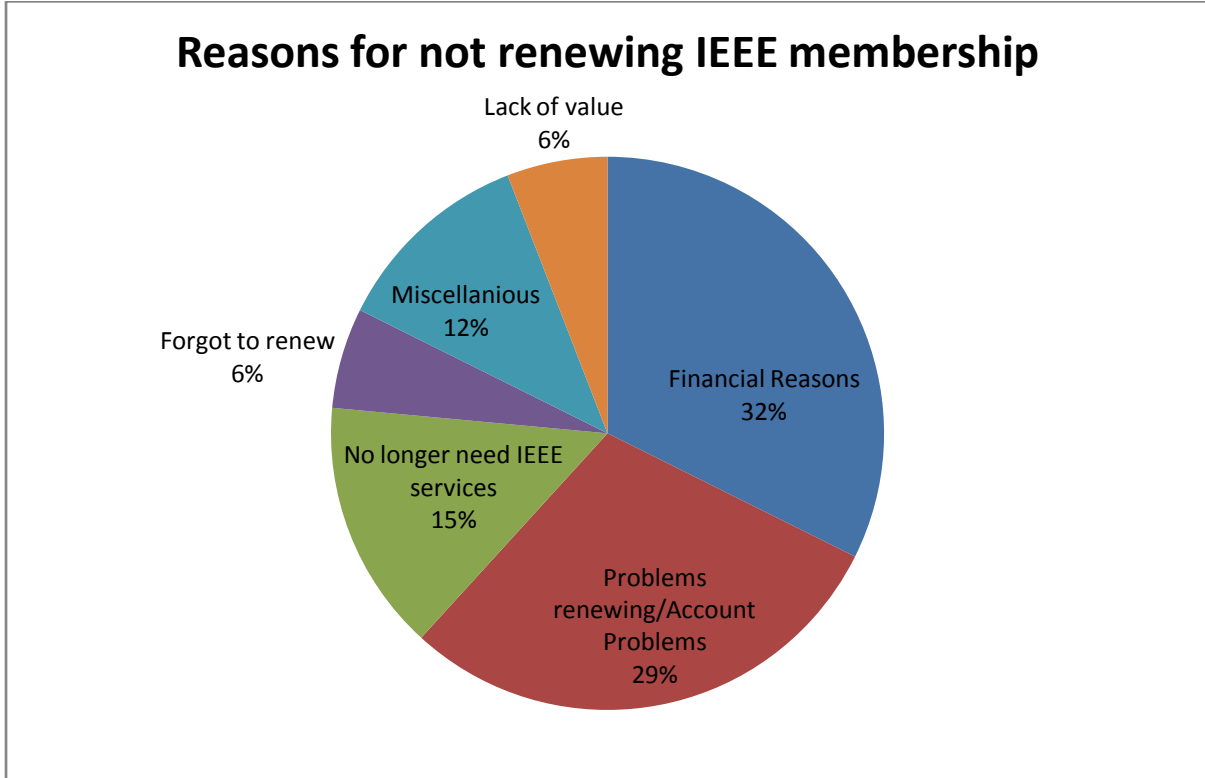


Figure 1 Breakdown of response types

### 2.1.Explanation of Categories

This section explains the categories represented in Figure 1. An analysis of these results is provided in the next section.

**No longer need IEEE services:** Respondents who either directly stated they did not need the IEEE services anymore without further explanation and past members who can now access the IEEE resources through a company subscription.

**Lack of value:** Respondents who did not find any value in the organization and have chosen to discontinue their membership.

**Financial Reasons:** Respondents who can no longer afford the cost of an IEEE membership. Some of the reasons stated included: House mortgages, rising cost of living or high proportion of salary being spent on IEEE membership dues.

**Problem renewing/Account Problems:** Respondents trying renew who experience problems with the online renewal system or had other account queries which were not resolved.

**Miscellaneous:** Includes other reasons for not renewing membership.

### 3. Analysis of Results

Region 10 is one of the most geographically diverse IEEE regions in the world spanning both the southern and northern hemisphere. There is a mixture of developing and developed nations and widespread differences in Gross Domestic Product and personal incomes between countries. This resulted in a pattern of responses specific to each particular country in region 10.

The feedback responses received from the arrears recovery email highlights some consistent issues which needs to be addressed:

#### 3.1. Financial reasons

Respondents stated that they were unable to renew due to other financial commitments of their financial positions. It should be noted that responses of this type were received from both developed and developing countries from within Region 10.

**The Minimum Income Provision** is provided by IEEE for applicants who certify that their prior year's income did not exceed US \$12,300 or equivalent are granted a 50% reduction in IEEE membership dues. This information might not be well known and as a result members who fall under this category may not be aware of such a provision. A potential solution to this problem is mentioned in Recommendation 4.6.

The minimum income provision clause is mentioned on the IEEE membership dues pricing webpage which is where pricing information relating to IEEE memberships can be obtained. This might not have been sufficiently noticeable to the people who fall under this category. One respondent responded to the arrears recovery email by asking what process they should undertake to be provided with the minimum income provision.

It is more likely that IEEE members from developing countries will meet the criteria for the Minimum Income Provision compared to developed countries. The problem may be that members are unaware of this provision and if they do meet the provision, they may not be familiar with the process of certification and approval.

**Not all members who cannot afford an IEEE membership will meet the IEEE minimum income provision.** Despite the minimum income provision, the cost of living and debt are affecting the ability of IEEE members to renew their dues. For example, a respondent from Australia stated:

“I'm just a postdoc working for a government research organization and I can't currently afford the membership (I have a family and mortgage to feed). “

It is possible that this respondent will not meet the IEEE minimum income provision. The economic environment in Australia has resulted in high costs of living which have affected the affordability of the IEEE membership. This highlights that members from economically wealthier nations cannot necessarily afford an IEEE membership.

### **3.2.No Longer need IEEE services**

Some respondents mentioned that they held an IEEE membership for the online resources such as books 24x7 and IEEE Xplore access. One respondent quit their IEEE membership because they believe that IEEE removed the books 24x7 benefit and as a result no longer gains any value in continuing their membership. Several respondents stated that their company started subscribing to online IEEE resources and as a result they no longer required their IEEE membership to access this feature.

### **3.3.Lack of value**

The issue of lack of value arising from the IEEE membership was raised by some respondents. Some sample responses included:

“membership too expensive for the benefits, the Australian chapter of IEEE seldom has any program/get together anyway,”

“The main reason for not renewing my IEEE membership is that I have shifted my job from India to Muscat (Oman). There is no IEEE chapter in Muscat and I personally believe if I cannot contribute strongly to IEEE then there is no point in having the membership.”

“The only reason I am not renewing is that the IEEE membership fee is steep and does not really give any benefits apart from access to journals which one needs to pay separately for. I was a student member. The fees for a full member is really steep without any benefits as a member.”

The lack of value experienced by members is sometimes worsened by the lack of local activities and presence. Some members may also not use IEEE membership benefits. It is noted that some IEEE benefits such as IEEE travel services are only relevant to members residing in the USA and cannot be taken advantage of by other worldwide members.

The lack of perceived value is one of the reasons why IEEE members have chosen to discontinue their membership.

### **3.4.Problem renewing/Account Problems**

This includes past members trying to renew who experienced problems with the online renewal system or had other account queries which were not resolved.

One respondent expressed frustration at the process of obtaining senior member status and as a result discontinued their membership.

There are several members that have informed the author that they have forgotten their web account username and/or password. They have emailed IEEE member services to reset this with no reply or a reply that did not address the issue. This is an unfortunate situation because IEEE members who wish to renew but have forgotten their web account username or password are unable to do so. There have been reports of the member services team not replying to other membership issues (other than forgotten passwords and usernames) within IEEE. This has had the unfortunate consequence of members not renewing either by intention and dissatisfaction or because they could not resolve the membership issues in order to renew. This is an issue which can be resolved by the IEEE and subsequently reduce the number of members going into arrears.

### **3.5.Miscellaneous**

Two respondents mentioned not receiving the IEEE spectrum and then placing in a web application to correct this. They started receiving IEEE spectrum issues for a few editions

after lodging an online request and then stopped receiving them again. This incident has ruined their confidence in the professional membership.

One sample response:

“last year when I subscribed for Nanotechnology magazines, I did not receive even a single copy of the magazine. I made many calls to IEEE and complaints via email, but I was always told that there is a technical issue for which the magazine could not reach me and I would get it in sometime. The whole year went and I did not receive a single copy even though I had paid for it.

“

One respondent mentioned that IEEE was too **“American Centric”**. Quoting their response

“Finally, it is apparent that IEEE is specifically America-centric, all the people we are asked to vote for are Americans (never heard of them, don't care), most of the conferences etc are in America etc, etc.”

## **4. Recommendations**

This section outlines some possible recommendations to address the issues raised in sections 2 and 3. This section does not make reference to any specific current or future initiatives which are or will be implemented for IEEE GOLD. This is not an exhaustive list of remedies or possible future recommendations.

### **4.1.Improve the link between IEEE GOLD and Student Branches**

In some parts of Region 10, the link and transition between being a member of a Student Branch to GOLD is not well known or understood by students. Events which raise awareness through effective marketing and joint events between Student Branches and GOLD should be implemented and reviewed at least quarterly to measure its success. Before the implementation of such events careful consideration should be given to the logistics and availability of resources for running such events. There must be measurable outcomes which are realistic and relevant in order to gauge the success of the event. These performance indicators should be determined in the planning stage.

### **4.2.Local representative to assist with new memberships, renewals and questions**

Some respondents mentioned that despite their problems with their memberships followed by the lack of response from IEEE member services. In some cases this has prevented people who wished to renew their membership from doing so. For example, there are several people who have forgotten either their web account username or password including the answer to their security challenge question. Their only alternative is to seek the assistance of IEEE member services to reactivate their account in order for them to renew.

A local representative could be appointed to assist with specific problems. The local representative should be delegated a contact person within IEEE member services that is reachable to deal with legitimate enquiries in the event that a member directly contacting IEEE member services fails to reach a resolution.

### **4.3.Grievance resolution procedure for memberships**

Occasionally members have problems with their IEEE membership that are unresolved. One respondent discontinued their IEEE membership out of frustration of applying for Senior membership and not making any progress while other respondents stated problems with not receiving IEEE spectrum and other subscribed magazine issues throughout the year. Despite lodging an online request or making a complaint, this only resulted in a few issues of the spectrum/magazine being delivered followed by non-delivery of the magazine.

Such issues and other membership issues should be resolved through a grievance resolution procedure. This procedure should be made known to the members so their grievances can be addressed where reasonable.

#### **4.4. Increase local presence**

A respondent stated “shifted my job from india to Muscat (Oman)., no local IEEE branch in Muscat” . This particular respondent discontinued their IEEE membership because of the lack of local presence. This comment highlights the importance of having a local and active IEEE GOLD presence to continue adding value to memberships.

#### **4.5. Alternative facilities for payment**

Not all members have credit cards or cheques and as a result may be only able to pay in cash. This is the same problem facing IEEE Student Branches as many students either are not eligible or cannot afford to have a credit card and cheque book. From the feedback, it has been suggested that the lack of cash payment options have acted as a barrier for some members signing up or renewing.

#### **4.6. Improved publicity about the Minimum Income Provision**

As discussed in section Financial reasons Financial reasons, IEEE members who are eligible under the minimum income provision may not be aware of this, or necessarily be familiar with the process on how to go about applying for this. It is recommended that this provision be better publicised to reduce the number of people, particularly in areas and countries where economic conditions may be difficult, to lapse into arrears.

## 5. Appendix A: Summary of Responses

Note that all personally identifying information has been removed. These responses are unedited.

### Financial Reasons

Dear Mr. Fung,

I was an IEEE member for nearly 3,4 years and I gained a lot from it. But the membership fee is becoming a burden to me [this happens because of the prevailing situation in the country, Sri Lanka]. To be honest, my salary is not capable of feeding the IEEE membership fee.

I am looking forward to renew membership as soon as I get a good monthly wage. I feel so sad to discontinue it. But I have to do it.

That is my story.

Hello Helene,

Due to certain personal priorities I could not renew my membership this year. I will do so at the first available chance. Under all conditions, I strongly feel that the IEEE is a good society to be associated with, but it might help if the renewal charges are reduced a little more for developing nations.

Sir

The only reason I am not renewing is that the IEEE membership fee is steep and does not really give any benefits apart from access to journals which one needs to pay separately for. I was a student member. The fees for a full member is really steep without any benefits as a member.

Hello Sir/madam,

hope you are fine. Sorry that i didnt renew my membership. i want to tell you that i did this intentionally. I remained member of IEEE for about 2 years, i worked for different IEEE events in my chapter and also hold the post of Executive Member of my chapter.

The IEEE services are good and are beneficial for most of the members but i unfortunately never used most of them. The main reason for not becoming a member is that i cant spare enough money to pay for the membership and also i dont have any credit card to pay online as you always ask to pay online.

Secondly, i am not using IEEE services very oftenly , i loved one incentive, Free Spectrum Magazine but unfortunately i never received my free spectrum magazine on time. Every time i had to put a reminder to IEEE services and then after six months i got all the 6 magazines. this happened twice and still i didnt got my issues from july 07 to dec '07. This is also a factor.

i know that ieee is a great asset and i will try to gain back my membership again in coming years but for now i am very sorry. i hope you understand.

best regards

Hi Helene,

The reason why I did not renew my membership is because of other financial commitments.

I would like to cancel the membership because of economic reason.  
Could you tell me how to cancel the membership?

Reasons of not renewing the membership.

- 1: The membership was cheap when I was a student, round about 25\$.
- 2: I cannot pay more than that to renew my membership.
- 3: I have started my professional career but my expenses have increased as well.
- 4: I did not have good net connectivity when I was a student. Thus I availed none of the services provided by IEEE.
- 5: I fear that it may happen again and I will lose money without availing anything appreciable.

Thanks.

Thanks for your email. I regret to advise that my non-renewal was deliberate.

At the time of renewal, I was not able to afford the cost of renewing and have since decided that membership is not really beneficial to me. I thoroughly enjoyed receiving the Spectrum magazine, but that alone was not enough for the cost.

I tried a couple of societies, but found they either were not relevant, or aimed at people with 20 PHDs working in a specific field of interest (not mine).

Finally, it is apparrent that IEEE is specifically America-centric, all the people we are asked to vote for are Americans (never heard of them, don't care), most of the conferences etc are in America etc, etc.

In summary, I feel that the IEEE is aimed at people with IQs in the thousands or in dedicated, specific fields, and not really for the average lowly engineer, (which I am). Perhaps my circumstances will change in the future at which point I will reconsider and re-join, until then, I will miss the Spectrum.

Dear Helene,

Thanks for your email regarding my IEEE membership. The only reason I haven't renewed is that I'm just a postpoc working for a government research organization and I can't currently afford the membership (I have a family and mortgage to feed). I regard the IEEE very highly and will renew as soon as I can.

Hi Helena

Much appreciated for your reminder email.

I wish to put a pause to my membership as I am currently financial unavailable to pay the membership fee. I will re apply again once my financial status clears up.

Dear Helene,

My family and I were in a financial difficulties. So, I decided not to renew the membership at the moment.

I agree that becoming IEEE would give me some benefits. So, I will definitely join back when we are in better situation. Hopefully, next year.

### Problems with membership renewal/Account Problems

Hi,

I wanted to do renewal, but I have some problem. Last time I did registration in Pakistan (I gave dues to university staff & they did rest of the work). But now I have shifted to Iran & now I don't know how to pay dues (since I have no credit card). Please tell me how I can pay it. Is there any bank account for this purpose?

Dear IEEE staff,

I actually emailed your helpdesk about method of renewing my membership around Dec last year, but never received a response.

I am located in Sydney. What are the methods that I can pay for my membership renewal?

I don't have a credit card, but I have an Australian dollars bank account that I can issue cheque.

Please assist.

Dear Helene Fung,

Thank you for your reminder. I was actually noted about this issue before, but I have some difficulty that prevents me from processing it. I joined the IEEE when I was in USA for my education. After completed my master program I came back to Vietnam and currently working in Cambodia. The issue is that my credit cards have been expired I am not able to pay for the membership online. I wonder if the system has some assistance on purchasing the membership again. I am applying for another credit card and hopefully I could get it by next month then I shall purchase the membership again.

Dear Sir,

As I was bit busy with the job, I could not renew in time.

While renewing online (through credit card) today, I got the following error after confirming the order.

Error

Generic processor error: 98-General system error

I would like to know the status for the same.

Dear Ms. Fung,

Thanks for the kind reminder.

I was trying to renew online and noticed that the online information of my first name and middle name is incorrect. And it seems that I couldn't update them through the web pages.

Would you please help me on this? Thanks!

Dear Helene,

Sorry for the late subscription. I need some help to continue my membership with IEEE. As per the due payments listed in the site, I have to pay \$131.00 per annum. But previously we had the option of getting 50% discount on this amount under the "minimum Income Provision" scheme.

But now I'm having a difficulty of applying for this scheme. In the help, it's given as submit a written application. Please let me know how to find this application and what documents should I attach.

Please advice me how to proceed.

Dear Sir

I have renewed my profile but can't find the link for on-line payment. I live in Bangladesh and the time for cash payment is over at the very beginning of this year. So I need the link for on-line payment. Will you please send me **the link for on-line payment? How much** I have to pay for membership as a professional?

Dear Helene Fung,

I already renewed my membership but I'm afraid that there is some problems in my account. When I log to my account it seems that every thing is fine, but in the sametime I receive a renew notification emails.

I would be glad if you can help me to find where is the matter.

Dear Helen,

Reason is two fold:

1. I've been busy.
2. When I attempted to renew I received an error. Please refer to attachment. I've just logged in again and renewed.

## No longer requires membership

Hi

my company have access to IEEE journal, so i don't need to renew my membership to enjoy that

Hi,

I am working for a different organisation now and I can access a Corporate IEEE account. Apart from being busy, this is the reason I didnt renew my membership. Could my Individual membership be put in abeyance till I want to renew it?

Please suggest.

Thanks

Dear Ms. Fung,

I decided to terminate my membership because I don't need the service anymore.

Dear Helena,

I did not renew it because I was not wanted to renew it. Please cancel it.

I have decided to not renew my membership because I don't need it right now. Please stop sending me any emails in the future.  
Thanks

**Forgot to renew**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your courtesy in reminding the membership renewal. In fact I was about to contact the IEEE regarding the same, as I want to keep my membership.

I checked the amount payable from my IEEE Web Account, and found that a total sum of \$25.00 is due as 'IEEE Membership' (Cart Name: 1-4TUWYV, Date: 13-Mar-2008, Type: Renewal ). May I please know whether that is the total amount due at the moment in order to renew my membership.

At the sametime, I would like to bring to your kind notice that presently I am following a full-time Masters Degree Program. Please let me know whether any discount applies in my case, though my Membership Grade is "MEMBER".

Thanking for your cooperation

I have been traveling for a few months, and haven't been receiving any correspondence. I will renew my membership immediately.

## Lack of Value

Hi,

In the past period, the IEEE Online Books 24x7 was a very valuable resource to me. But now it has been removed from the normal user membership. Due to this I am no longer interested renewing the membership.

hi,  
membership too expensive for the benefits,  
the australain chapter of ieee seldom has any program/get together anyway  
rgds

## Miscellaneous

Hi,

If there is discount for the membership fee, then I will renew it.

Thanks

Dear Helene Fung

I am afraid to write these lines about my status in such a "World Leading Professional Organization". Please accept my apologies for the situation.

I don't find my growth in IEEE, I would like to mention one example:  
I received an email from IEEE for up-gradation of my membership as "Senior Member" through a process. I forwarded my case to Islamabad chapter head and my former boss (who convinced me to be a member of IEEE) for the process but I even did not receive acknowledgement of my email. I tried many times but the situation remained same. I am forwarding you as below the case with necessary filled form for your reference. After this situation I disappointed and decided to keep me away for all these. I feel this is not the solution and I should try some other alternate way for my growth but, I am sorry.

I would be waiting for your comments on this situation.

I appreciate the convincing way of IEEE to retain its member.

Hi Helene Fung;

Hope you are doing well.

The main reason for not renewing my IEEE membership is that i have shifted my job from india to Muscat (Oman).

there is no IEEE chapter in Muscat and i personally believe if i cannot contribute strongly to IEEE then there is no point in having the membership.

Hope you understand my problem.

Hi Helene,

I am glad that someone is taking a feedback why I have discontinued my membership. The reason is bad service. I have been a member for a long time now, and last year when I subscribed for Nanotechnology magazines, I did not receive even a single copy of the magazine. I made many calls to IEEE and complaints via email, but I was always told that there is a technical issue for which the magazine could not reach me and I would get it in sometime. The whole year went and I did not receive a single copy even though I had paid for it.

This has really been a bad incident which is of no standards from IEEE.

Hi Helene,

I am completing my master degree in NTU and going to start my PhD in another university in August. My "IEEE student membership" expired a few months ago. May I know whether I can renew my "IEEE student membership" after I start my PhD in August? Thank you

i am highly dissatisfied with the mailing policy of IEEE. i was supposed to get 12 spectrum issues with this membership for one year. i did not receive them in time and after i applied through ur web i received spectrums for a few month only and the delivery service discontinued after that. this is why i am not sure whether or not to continue this membership since one of the main reasons for being a member was to receive the spectrum magazines which i find very informative.

## 6. Appendix B: Email sent to IEEE GOLD members in Arrears

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have been informed by IEEE administrative staff that you missed to renew your 2008 IEEE membership. All members who did not renew until March have been put into arrear status, and all services to them terminated. Unless you have renewed in the meantime, this has happened to you as well. I would like to make you aware of this situation and possibly help you to retain your membership.

In order to improve the services and benefits to our members, I would like to understand why you did not renew your membership:

- In case you were so busy in your job and you just forgot to renew, please do it immediately using your dues bill or directly online. As you may know, the easiest way to renew is online with your IEEE Web account at [www.ieee.org/renew](http://www.ieee.org/renew). If you need any assistance contact IEEE Member Services under [www.ieee.org/memberservices](http://www.ieee.org/memberservices).
- In case you did not renew by intention, I would like to know the reason in order to solve any potential problems, which may exist.
  - \* Do you believe the IEEE services are not worth the amount of dues?
  - \* Do you feel you do not need IEEE services any more?
  - \* Was there any inconvenience or problem with IEEE, which caused you to terminate the membership?
  - \* Or any other good reason?

IEEE membership is a valuable asset, especially at an early stage of your professional career. Just to name a few of our many benefits as a remainder: You can take advantage of the access to all technical publications and from cheaper rates for IEEE conference fees. You may have worldwide contacts with colleagues in your technical field and may exchange experiences and in particular young colleagues will benefit from our Professional Activities Programs and Seminars as well as from the new Jobsite for their professional careers.

I hope you will make up your mind and decide for a life-long membership with IEEE. Again, in case of any questions or problems, please respond to me ([r10gold@ieee.org](mailto:r10gold@ieee.org)) and indicate the reason for non-renewing. Alternatively you may also contact IEEE Member Services ([member-services@ieee.org](mailto:member-services@ieee.org)).

Yours sincerely,

Helene Fung  
Region 10 GOLD Coordinator