

2014 VGTC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Minutes taken by: Huamin Qu (VGTC secretary)

Date: Tuesday November 11, 2014

Time: 7pm – 10:40pm

Venue: Loft G on Level 3 of Marriott Rive-Gauche, Paris, France

Attendees: Klaus Mueller (VGTC chair), Rachael Brady, Arie Kaufman, Hanspeter Pfister, William Ribarsky, Robert Moorhead, Larry Rosenblum, Amitabh Varshney, Loretta Auvil, Hans Hagen, Tobias Isenberg, Christopher Collins, Jörn Kohlhammer, Daniel Acevedo-Feliz, Huamin Qu, David Ebert, Eduard Gröller, Christopher Johnson, John Stasko, Ming Lin, Meghan Haley, Kwan-Liu Ma, Pak Chung Wong, Michael E. Papka, Maxine Brown, Jean-Daniel Fekete, Tamara Munzner, Laura Wolf, Bernd Fröhlich.

Agenda:

- Around the table introduction
- Sponsored conferences
- Executive committee composition and term structure
- Charter update
- Departments report
- Initiatives
- Budget
- Outlook

Around the table introduction

Klaus introduced 4 new members: Penny Rheingans as the Ethics Officer, Tobias Isenberg as the Publications Chair, Jörn Kohlhammer as the Industrial Relations Chair, and Leila De Florian as the incoming IEEE EIC TVCG; and thanks 3 retiring/outgoing members: Kelly Gaither (member at large), Simon Julier (Ethics Officer), and Ming Lin (EIC of TVCG).

Achievements: A Great Year for IEEE VGTC:

Klaus introduced the achievements of VGTC at 2014:

- VGTC was named one of the top 18 TCs in terms of vitality. It received an “Excellent” rating for its clear commitment to service of their technical community and members.
- It has 6 fabulous sponsored/joint conference/symposia: VIS, VR, ISMAR, 3DUI, Pacific Vis, EuroVis.
- New website vgtc.org is launched
- VIS goes to Europe for the first time. 25 years of VIS (in Paris)

- Six new IEEE/ACM Fellows: Chandra Bajaj, David Laidlaw, John Stasko, Ross Whitaker, Chris Johnson, and David Kasik.

Sponsored conferences

Klaus recognized the VGTC sponsored conferences, including financially sponsored conferences / symposia (VIS, VR/3DUI, ISMAR, Pacific Vis), joint conference (EuroVis), and technically co-sponsored conferences (ICAT-EGVE, Visigrapp, VS Games, INTETAIN).

VGTC Executive Committee Composition

Klaus noted the current executive committee composition includes 1 chair, 2 vice-chairs, 7 directors, 8 appointed officers, and 4 members-at-large.

Klaus proposed that the steering committee chairs or their representatives of the 5 sponsored/joint conferences (VR, VIS, EuroVis, ISMAR, PacificVis) be on the VGTC executive committee.

The committee members debated whether they should be voting members or non-voting members, whether the chairs for each conference should be invited (e.g., for VIS steering committee, 1 chair or 4 chairs), and whether ISMAR and PacificVis which are currently symposia (and not conferences) should be invited. The conclusion was that the representatives should be voting members. Otherwise they might not be interested in serving on the committee. The attendance of PacificVis is less than 100, so Pacific Vis might be invited in the future. ISMAR has around 400 attendees and should apply as a conference (>300 attendees are needed) next time after which the steering committee chair can be invited to serve on the VGTC executive committee.

The motion by Klaus: add the steering committee chairs of VIS, VR, EuroVis and ISMAR (after becoming a conference) or their representatives as the voting members of VGTC.

The motion was seconded and put up for a vote. The voting result: 14 yes; 1 against, and 2 abstain.

Executive committee composition term structure

Klaus introduced the current term structure according to VGTC charter: "Members of the Executive Committee, other than the Chair and Directors, are nominated by the chair and approved by the Directors. Each will serve a term of 3 years, except that the terms will be staggered so that there is not a turnover of more than 1/3 of the Executive Committee during any calendar year. Members can run and hold a position for multiple terms." However, this charter mandate has not been observed very much in the past and there are numerous requests to enforce term structure. Klaus proposes to change that. The proposed strategy is to divide 14 members into 3 groups depending on years of service and assign an official term to each group.

The committee members debated this and also discussed whether each term should be 2 years or 3 years. Some members support the fixed terms for all members: Chris Johnson suggested that as we run a modern organization, all members should have a fixed term to allow young people to join us. David Ebert pointed out that even the president of IEEE is elected every year. IEEE CS requires that the TC chairs should be elected every two years.

Some members believed we should have more flexibility. Klaus believed that some committee members are valuable human capital and are hard to replace, like the Finance Chair. Amitabh Varshney believed that it is a terrible idea to elect the VGTC chair every two years. It took him one year just to figure out what is going on. Ming Lin also agreed. It was also suggested that we can also elect a vice-chair to maintain the stability of the committee. Hanspeter suggested that these critical positions could be tuned into staff positions.

VGTC Charter Update:

Klaus pointed out that the current charter dates from 1999 and that an overhaul is long overdue. Klaus has prepared a first draft of update over the course of 2014 and that the draft is now being reviewed and finalized by a senior committee.

The committee members agree that the charter should be updated. More transparency is needed. It is suggested that a committee is formed to update the charter. The draft should be available to all the VGTC executive committee members for comments. For example, google docs could be used so other people can edit and put on comments. Also a deadline should be set for this task.

It is agreed that the following people will be the committee members to update the VGTC charter: Robert Moorhead, Hanspeter Pfister, and Klaus Mueller.

A draft should be ready by Jan. 2015 such that the committee members can vote on it.

New Initiatives:

Klaus introduced some new initiatives including the TVCG special issue, VGTC Visualization Pioneers Group (VPG), VGTC Best dissertation award to VR and ISMAR, video recording for VGTC sponsored conferences, and the overhauled organization website, vgtc.org.

Pak Cong Wong discussed some activities organized by the VPG. It hosted the VGTC Best Dissertation Award (second time). Last year there were 11 nominations. This year the VPG received 13 nominations and the quality was very high. The nominations were evaluated by 5 committee members chosen by VPG and this year's best dissertation award was given to Cheuk Horace Ip, University of Maryland, who is Amitabh's former PhD student. The committee members discuss the name for this award (e.g., VGTC best dissertation award, VGTC VPG best dissertation award).

VPG initiated two new awards: the VGTC Best Visualization Award, and the VGTC Software System Award. The VGTC Best Visualization Award received 19 submissions. They were evaluated by 5 judges chosen by the VPG. Some committee members feel that the VGTC Best Visualization Award comes late as NSF already has a very comprehensive annual best visualization competition. We might team with them. But at the same time it was also felt that having our own award will provide some uniqueness and better targets our community. The Software System Award was given to Matthew O. Ward (who passed away shortly after) for developing XmdvTool. It was decided that the VPG will make this an award that is only given out sporadically, and not on a regular basis.

VGTC now sponsors multiple technical achievement awards. The committee members debated on whether the committee members for those award committees should be made public. Chris Johnson suggested that the past members of the award committee should be made public 1 year after they are rotated out from the award committee. The award committee members usually rotate out after 3 years. DOE and NIH all publish their panel members. Larry Rosenblum disagreed and pointed out that the panelists of NSF are not made public. Other committee members also had divided opinions on this. No concrete decision was made.

VGTC has acquired videos of all talks at VIS, VR, ISMAR, Pacific Vis, EuroVis. As of 11/5/14, there are 941 videos and 28 collections. Tableau partially sponsored this by donating US\$8000 last year. The videos are now hosted on Vimeo under VGTC Community. It is a smashing success and there are about 7,000-8,000 plays/month in recent months. Amitabh suggested that the committee give a big applause for Klaus and Meghan for making this happen. Chris suggested that we should ask authors to give links to these videos.

Some committee members complained that the audio quality of VIS'14 was not satisfactory. The MIC did not work on several occasions.

The new website vgtc.org has been officially launched 11/5 just in time for VIS 14. It looks much more modern and has many new features. Work continues to populate all of its features, such as the paper archives for all conferences.

VisAsia:

Arie Kaufman briefed the committee about the VisAsia initiative. This year Siggraph Asia will be held in Shenzhen China. There is a visualization session which will be chaired by Klaus Mueller. The Visualization community in Asia grows fast. This year there are 44 attendees from China and more than 100 from Asia.

Ming Lin raised the issue that the visualization researchers in Asia are not well represented in the VIS committees. For example, there is only 1 member from Asia in the VAST'14 IPC and there are only 2 from Asia in the InfoVis'14 IPC.

The committee members discussed various issues related to VisAsia, including the relationship between VisAsia and PacificVis, whether there are enough high quality submissions, and the conference dates and deadline. The current plan is that the first VisAsia will be held in Beijing in 2016. Xiaoru Yuan from Peking University will work on a proposal.

Other issues discussed were:

Budget: It is very important to close the conferences on time.

VIS'15 will be held at Chicago. For the conference dates in the future, it is better not to be too close to the IEEE Supercomputing conferences.

Three conferences or 1 conference:

Amitabh pointed out that VIS now has 3 conferences and it is quite confusing. We might merge them into 1 conference with 3 tracks. We might do a poll and ask the audience to vote whether they prefer 3 conferences or 1 conference with 3 tracks. Hanspeter agreed. It is quite difficult to explain to the search committees about the top conferences in the vis field when doing the hiring. Ming Lin also points out that papers submitted to VIS might be rejected due to submitting them to the wrong conferences. Having one conference but different tracks could solve this problem.

Other committee members raised several issues. Chris pointed out we do not provide the context for the audience to answer the question. Many attendees attend the conference first time and they cannot tell the difference between these two options. Tamara suggests that people might not understand the context of the poll and that we need to give them something to read before the vote. It is also suggested we should provide more options such as splitting the conference into separate conferences. Also when to do the poll is an issue.

After discussions, Amitabh made a motion: Can we have a non-binding vote from VIS attendees on whether they want 3 conferences or 1 conference?

The motion was seconded and put to a vote. The result: 10 yes; 1 no; 4 abstain.

The meeting was adjourned.