

AACC and IFAC: Partners in Control for 60 Years

The American Automatic Control Council (AACC) is a federation of technical professional societies in the United States that have joined together to represent the interests of specialists working in the fields of control and systems engineering across many engineering disciplines. Its member societies include: American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE), Applied Probability Society (APS), American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), International Society of Automation (ISA), Society for Modeling & Simulation International (SCS), and Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM).

All AACC leaders are volunteers; there is no paid staff. At any one time there are about 200 individuals involved in various activities such as governance, conference planning, coordination of manuscript reviews, awards, K-12 outreach, and technical workshops. Including conference authors, participants, reviewers, sponsors, and other support volunteers, AACC activities engage over 4,000 people each year.



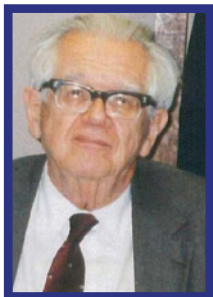
Rufus Oldenburger, Alexander Letov, Harold Chestnut

The impetus for establishing the AACC in 1957 was the creation of the International Federation of Automatic Control (IFAC) with a single member from each country that chose to participate. At that time there was no such organization in the United States. Under the leadership of Rufus Oldenburger of Purdue University and Harold Chestnut of the General Electric Company, AACC was established and immediately became the IFAC National Member Organization (NMO) from the U.S. During each of IFAC's triennial periods, the AACC attempts to have representation at all levels of leadership in IFAC. There is usually at least one expert from the U.S. in each IFAC Technical Committee.

Early leadership of AACC came from the industrial controls community. The first ten Presidents of AACC were from U.S. industries. A common career path for university engineering educators in those days was to come into American universities after decades of experience in industry. After the 1970s, many of the AACC Presidents have been career academics with less industrial experience.

The Board of Directors of AACC, the governing body that consists of society member representatives, elects officers and chairs of various committees in addition to providing overall governance of the federation. The Directors are selected by their member societies and have served as senior executives on their societies' boards.

It was decided early in AACC's existence that the federation would not create a research or industrial development journal that would compete with journals published by the member societies. Instead, AACC would organize an annual technical conference each summer to provide a venue for social and technical discussion among representatives from academe, national labs, and industry. The conference was called the Joint Automatic Control Conference (JACC) and responsibility for its organization was rotated among the member societies with various levels of technical and financial success.



John Zaborszky

In the late 1970s, AACC President John Zaborszky, with the encouragement of the AACC Board of Directors, proposed a major change in the conference operation that put AACC itself in charge of the annual conference and renamed it the American Control Conference (ACC). The ACC is now a major international conference, providing a common platform for multi-disciplinary control groups, with substantial participation from outside the U.S. The ACC steering committee recruits leadership, plans venues for the conferences up to five years in advance, and monitors the management and performance of each conference. The Awards Ceremony at the ACC recognizes leaders who have made seminal contributions to the controls community.

The AACC also supports IFAC activities. It has hosted two IFAC World Congresses (1975 and 1996) and provided three IFAC Presidents during the past 60 years, Harold Chestnut (1st IFAC President, 1957-1958), John Lozier (1972-1975), and Stephen Kahne (1993-1996). In addition, AACC has provided more IFAC technical meeting venues and senior leaders than any other IFAC NMO during these six decades.



1975 IFAC Congress banner



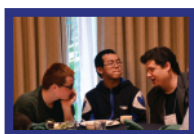
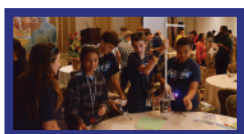
1996 IFAC Congress banner



Bozenna Pasik-Duncan

Since 2000, the AACC has sponsored the "Beauty of Controls" workshops for middle and high school teachers and students. AACC Education Committee Chair Bozenna Pasik-Duncan initiated and developed these workshops, which are held in conjunction with the ACC, IFAC Congresses, and the IEEE CDC. The workshop activities include short and inspirational presentations by experts, informal discussions, hands-on activities, and the opportunity for teachers to meet passionate leaders from academe and industry.

The AACC is a vibrant and healthy institution with a legion of dedicated volunteers who are proud to serve the U.S. controls community, organizing the ACC and supporting IFAC in its global activities and initiatives.



AACC Education Committee "Beauty of Controls" workshop