

The First Year of TC Haptics

The Technical Committee on Haptics (TCH) was born in Oct. 2006 under *IEEE Robotics & Automation Society*, and is co-sponsored by *IEEE Computer Society*. We have since become the home for the international interdisciplinary haptics research community. Among our many accomplishments, we received the *RAS Most Active Technical Committee of the Year Award* in 2007 and have successfully launched the *IEEE Transactions on Haptics* for 2008.

Antonio Bicchi proposed the idea of TCH when he and I met in Brussels, Belgium in Oct. 2005. By that time, **Antonio** and **Massimo Bergamasco** had successfully hosted the first World Haptics Conference (WHC) in Pisa, Italy that brought together almost 400 haptics researchers from all over the world. The TCH would leverage the momentum generated by the first WHC.

Discussions with top haptics researchers ensued over email and the pros and cons of being associated with the IEEE were debated. Two town hall meetings were held during the Haptics Symposium (Mar. 2006, Alexandria, Virginia, USA) and the EuroHaptics Conference (July 2006, Paris, France). A group dinner was organized during ICRA 2006 in Orlando, Florida, USA. A common theme at these discussions was the need for TCH to be inclusive to reflect the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of haptics research. It is fair to say that the birth of TCH had truly been an international affair from the very beginning.

Many individuals, notably **Maydayam Srinivasan** and **Mark Cutkosky**, strongly advocated continuing our association with the Computer Society, which had sponsored the Haptics Symposium since 2002. As far as I am aware, our TC was the first to seek joint sponsorship from two IEEE societies. **Dick Volz** (then President of RAS) and **Stephanie White** (then VP of Technical Activities, Computer Society) embraced the idea with enthusiasm and have since guided us with great openness.

The establishment of a flagship journal for haptics research was a major goal from the start. By early 2006, **Blake Hannaford** was discussing the future of *haptics-e* with RAS and the initial work of convincing IEEE of the importance of a new haptics journal was done. In May 2006, I met with then IEEE President Elect **Leah Jamieson** to seek her advice on the joint sponsorship of TCH and on the new haptics journal. **Leah** lent her support by providing contact names at top levels of the IEEE. Actions for a transactions started in earnest at the EuroHaptics cruise banquet along Seine in July 2006. At the table were **Abderrahmane Kheddar**, **Vincent Hayward**, **William Harwin**, **Matthias Harders**, **Mark Wright**, **Charlotte Magnusson** and myself. We decided to contact several major publishers and then pick one to pursue. I volunteered to contact **Laura Creighton** at IEEE as suggested by **Leah**. The rest, as they say, was history. **William Harwin**, later assisted by **Karon MacLean**, led the efforts

of drafting the journal proposal and overseeing it through the many approval stages at IEEE. **Bill Hamel**, **Angela Burgess** (then Publisher of Computer Society) and **Jon Rokne** (VP of Publications, Computer Society) championed the new transactions with a lightning speed that pleasantly surprised us all. **Bobby Klatzky** and **Karon MacLean** chaired the Editor in Chief (EIC) search committee with great efficiency: the call for nomination was announced on June 19, 2007 and the search committee's report was submitted to IEEE on Sept. 14, 2007. We are excited to have **Ed Colgate** as the inaugural EIC. He has already demonstrated a great commitment to the success of our new journal.

The birth of TCH has been a group effort. I have been ably assisted by my co-chairs **Matthias Harders** and **Hiroyuki Kajimoto**. Our Executive Committee consists of **Gunter Niemeyer** who coordinates the three major haptics conferences, **Allison Okamura** who manages our finances, **Antonio Frisoli** who created and maintains our website, **Karon MacLean** who is in charge of our publications, **Domenico Prattichizzo** who coordinates special journal issues and conference workshops/tutorials on haptics, and **Anatole Lecuyer** who is our secretary. Special thanks go to our Senior Advisors who took the time to share their wisdom with us. Of the RAS leadership, **Dick Volz** has been a great President who has often made the impossible happen and who should be hailed for his common-sense approach to problem solving. We are also thrilled to be working with **Bruno Siciliano** (the new President of RAS), who has been very supportive of TCH, in the coming years. Personally, I am indebted to **Antonio Bicchi** who has generously supported me with advice and encouragement. Grazie, **Antonio!**

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January 2008
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P.S. This article was originally prepared for RAM as part of the new "TC Spotlight" column. Ken Goldberg wanted a more technical version, which will appear in the 2008 March issue. I've decided to post this original article on the TCH website to preserve a little bit of TCH history.