IEEE

AURUM

The Canadian Newsletter for IEEE GOLD
http://gold.ieee.ca

In this issue . . .

From the Editor

Hello

This is the 4th and last issue of Aurum for 2005 ending yet another successful year for the Canadian GOLD.

We had a number of changes in the GOLD leadership. Some of the highlights of the year include Gerry Dorvius of Montreal taking over as Montreal GOLD chair and Aurum's French editor from Peter Guy. Tonia Culham replaced me as the Southern Saskatchewan GOLD Chair after I moved to Calgary and became the Southern Alberta GOLD Chair. Nick Stranges left the Peterborough GOLD. Please email Verona if you are interested in taking over this vacant position.

Start of a new year is the right time to start planning your events. You don't need to know every detail of each event, but you should decide on the number and type of events you wish to hold. You also need to make your budget forecast for the year to present to your section along with your plan. This will ensure that you get your section's backing for your activities throughout the year. Have a safe and prosperous 2006!

Cheers,

**Ahsan Upal, P.Eng.
Publisher, Aurum**

GOLD Canada Chairs

Hamilton:
  Deborah Messina, deborah@ieee.org
Kitchener:
  Kevin Ma, kevin.ma@ieee.org
Montréal:
Gerry Dorvius, gerry.dorvius@polymtl.ca
Northern Canada:
  Shyam Chadha, shyam.chadha@adc.com
Northern Saskatchewan:
  Dan Coode, dac337@mail.usask.ca
Ottawa:
  Mark Van Delst, mvandelst@ieee.org
Southern Alberta:
  Ahsan Upal, ahsan@ieee.org
South Saskatchewan:
  Tonia Culham, tdculham@ieee.org
St. Maurice:
  Alexis Bilodeau, alexis.bilodeau@ieee.org
Toronto:
  Aleksandra Jeremic, aleksandra@ieee.org
Vancouver:
  Jin Ng, jin_ng@ieee.org
Victoria:
  Subhasis Nandi, snandi@ece.uvic.ca
Winnipeg:
  Stephen Dueck, sdueck@ee.umanitoba.ca

GOLD Canada Chair
  Verona Wong, vwong@ieee.org

About Aurum

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Aurum Contacts

Publisher:
  Ahsan Upal, P.Eng. ahsan@ieee.org
English Editor:
  Ahsan Upal, P.Eng. ahsan@ieee.org
French Editor:
  Gerry Dorvius, gerry.dorvius@polymtl.ca

Southern Alberta GOLD Activities

Ahsan Upal, Gold Chair, Southern Alberta

2005 was a successful year for Southern Alberta (SA) GOLD. Four events were held: 2 social get togethers, a substation tour and a pool night.

The last event, a pool night, was held on November 30th, 2005. The event was attended by 15 members and turned out to be an enjoyable fun evening. For most members it was first time attending a Gold event. They appreciated this opportunity to hang out, meet new local young professionals and make friends.

The Southern Alberta Gold Committee that plans and organizes these activities consists of five members – Ahsan Upal, Eva Kelemen, Carley Duerr, Ryan Carnahan and Kathy Tse. The committee has plans for additional activities in 2006. For a calendar of activities please visit the website, www.ieee.org/sasgold/ . SA GOLD events are open to all members and the cost of attending is usually free for IEEE members. GOLD offers many opportunities for volunteering to help organize events and bring new life to the electrical, electronics and computer engineering community. If you are SA Gold membes and are interested in volunteering please send email to ahsan@ieee.org.

Don't Fall Behind – Renew Your Membership Now!

Verona Wong, IEEE Canada Gold Coordinator

It's time to renew your IEEE Membership! Have you done it yet?

What if you don't renew?
- You will lose access to IEEE Job Site
- You will lose your IEEE alias email address
- You will not get the future Aurum newsletter e-Notices
- You will not be notified of your favorite technical talks
- You will not receive the Potentials magazines
- You will not receive the bilingual IEEE Canada newsletter
- You will lose eligibility to buy insurance through IEEE
- You will lose your discounts to IEEE conferences

These are just a few of the member benefits you would enjoy as an IEEE member. So what are you waiting for? Renew your membership now! Join us:
http://www.ieee.org/join/

Gaining Credibility in the Marketplace: A Local Entrepreneur's Journey With His Company…

Natalie Raffoul, Ottawa GOLD

I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Alfred Jay, CEO of Ramius Corporation, to learn more about their unique CommunityZero® products.

Ramius Corporation is an enterprise software company, based in Ottawa, focused on the development of online community systems for facilitating group collaboration and knowledge management.

Natalie: Alfred, how did you first conceive of the idea to create an on-line community based enterprise collaboration technology? Was the development of CommunityZero® inspired by a particular void you saw in on-line communities?

Alfred: When I started Ramius Corporation in 1998, my idea was not to create collaboration technologies, but rather to create an Internet-based marketplace for digital products authored by individuals. I have always been fascinated by the empowerment that the Internet brings to individuals, and it seemed obvious to me that many would have created writings, images, videos, software, and other digital assets that they would sell if they could - if it was easy to do so. I believed that the market would be very receptive to a website where these content creators could post and price their 'assets' for sale, and where the delivery of these products could be fulfilled by the site as well. At the same time, I believed that in this unquantifiable library of assets, there would be a substantial number of very valuable assets that could benefit various audiences very significantly. Examples of this might be unpublished medical hypotheses or research, works of previously unpublished authors and artists, and much more.

Unfortunately, being a relatively young entrepreneur, the execution of this business plan was not as straightforward as I had originally thought. A prototype was largely built and ready to launch when I, somewhat late, started to plan the launch of the new web service. It was during this time, that I started to realize that what was lacking was what Ramius did not have, and was unlikely to be able to acquire on our limited budget: trust and credibility with the general public. With no history and even less brand equity, Ramius had no chance of attracting vendors or buyers. As I analyzed this problem, I determined that third-party validation was a necessary factor in driving e-commerce success. In 1998, e-commerce websites were relatively new, and the excitement level was high. We all remember how the products being peddled included books, pet supplies and everything in between. So, while there were many vendors, many were small operations with very low budgets and the same trust and credibility problem that Ramius had. So, it was at this time, that I researched this problem and came to the conclusion that systems that could facilitate sharing of experiences by customers would be very valuable to every small and medium sized e-commerce vendor. After a few iterations, Ramius became focused on online communities.

Initially, these communities were meant strictly to complement e-commerce websites, but we very quickly saw in our technology the opportunity to facilitate very easy sharing of many different types of content, and to do so in an instantly-created private setting. By this time, eighteen months had passed since Ramius was founded, and we had finally found our way.

Ramius' CommunityZero® service was initially built as a free web-based service aimed at consumers, distinguished by its ease-of-use, professionalism, performance, and applicability. By 2001, CommunityZero.com had attracted over 1.5 million individually-registered users worldwide, and was attracting new users at a rate of 10% per month – all with a cumulative marketing budget of less than $5000.

N: You mentioned two services, CommunityZero.com and CommunityZero®. Can you elaborate on the differences between CommunityZero.com and the CommunityZero® services offered to enterprise and other commercial customers?

A: CommunityZero.com is the service that we originally launched as a free service in 1999. Since 2001, it has no longer been offered free of charge, however, the fee structure is intended to be highly affordable for consumers.

Ramius also offers CommunityZero® Advantage for our enterprise clients. A newer generation and much expanded evolution of the software on which our consumer service is based, CZ Advantage offers clients many additional features of relevance to enterprise clients, including segregated sites, additional community tools for administrators and members, sophisticated permissions-based access, site and community wide search capabilities, security options, integration options, multilingual support, a web services API, section 508 compliance, automated e-mail subscriptions and reminders, and much more. The pricing model is also tailored to meet enterprise requirements. Our clients for this hosted service include SAP, Juniper Networks, IEEE, Dreamworks, Nortel Networks, the World Bank, and hundreds of others. We also offer clients the option of licensing our software for installation on their servers in their datacenters. NASA is one client that has opted for this.

N: On the subject of options, your Corporate Overview mentions "flexible design supports for varied applications and populations". That suggests to me that CommunityZero® can be customized to the needs of the client. Is that the case, or are there standard products for various user groups?

A: Yes, to a very effective degree, CommunityZero® can be customized to the client. Certainly, as a hosted service, it is important that the login and other public areas of each implementation be able to be customized to closely, if not entirely identically, resemble the client's existing web presence. Many of our clients integrate their websites with their CommunityZero® communities using single sign-on. This, combined with the customizable presentation, results in a situation in which most users never realize that they have actually moved off the original website. Once users enter the communities themselves, there is a certain template-like rigidity to the design that cannot be changed beyond removing,

renaming, or reordering tools, changing colors or graphics. The reason for this is that our interface is designed to be easy for users to use without any training. We've tried to offer clients as much flexibility as possible without risking this usability.

Beyond the visual, CommunityZero® is highly configurable to meet each specific client's needs for their communities. The software was designed to be generally applicable, yet highly configurable so that it could meet most clients needs. We have a services group within the company that can be engaged as a part of any implementation, to assist clients to understand their objectives and ensure that the design of their community architecture is optimal. This group can be engaged to handle everything from initial implementation planning to ongoing day-to-day management.

N: Can you highlight some of the product features of which many of us may be unaware?

A: CommunityZero® is designed to be easy-to-use, yet powerful. To achieve this, we have tried very hard to make sure that users are not intimidated by the interface from the first visit onward. It was our intention that as users became more familiar navigating their communities, they would gradually discover more of the depth of each of the basic functions. Generally, this has been successful, but, unfortunately, there remain some functions that people frequently overlook. While the activation of some tools is at the discretion of the community or site administrators, most tools are usually activated. Amongst the more commonly requested functionalities that people are unaware are already supported by CommunityZero® are site-wide search capabilities, threaded discussion views, e-mail supported submission of discussion entries, versioning in files and articles, affiliation of communities, custom registration fields, support for unlimited user groups, and configurable permissions on specific content items.

In the very near future, users will be able to benefit from the ability to fully search within files, view HTML previews of files, RSS feeds, user-driven content rating systems, and much more.

Thanks Alfred.

As IEEE is a CommunityZero® client, Debra Schiff with IEEE Corporate Strategy and Communications provided me with some feedback on CommunityZero®.

N: Debra, how is IEEE leveraging CommunityZero® within IEEE?
Debra: IEEE is using Ramius' CommunityZero® platform in a variety of ways to communicate and collaborate with Members and potential Members. We have more than 100 active online communities with approximately 19,000 registered users. We average 26 new users a day. There are technically focused communities as well as regionally focused sites. Additionally, we have staff and volunteer communities. The technical sites are usually sponsored by one of the IEEE Societies, while the regional sites are sponsored by a Region, Section, Student Branch and/or Chapter.

The staff and volunteer communities are typically used for project management within smaller constituencies.

N: Is CommunityZero® for internal use only, or is it accessible to the larger member base?

D: Right now, anyone may apply for membership to a community. All he or she would need is either an IEEE Web Account (for Members) or an IEEE Guest Web Account (for non-Members). The guest account is the same as the one used to purchase documents from IEEE Xplore.

N: What features attracted IEEE to this product?

D: It seems that the longer we stay with Ramius, the more items they add from our wish list. Originally, the file sharing, discussion area, and calendar functions were the top functions, but the tight security the platform offers was also a primary consideration.

I would like to thank both Alfred and Debra for the interview. For more information about Ramius Corporation, please visit their website:
http://www.ramius.net/index.cfm

New GOLD Affinity Groups Formed in 2005

You only need six GOLD members (not student members) to form an IEEE GOLD Affinity Group by petition. Setting up your officers comes next and then organize activities and invite your peers in IEEE membership! Congratulations to the latest group of IEEE GOLD Affinity Groups formed in the following IEEE Sections:

- IEEE Costa Rica Section, Region 9
- IEEE Finland Section, Region 8
- IEEE Victorian Section, Region 10

For more information on forming an IEEE subunit, please review the details on the web at http://www.ieee.org/organizations/rab/scs/Affinity_Groups/index.html

My Sections Congress 2005 Experience

Verona Wong, IEEE Canada Gold Coordinator

Dear GOLD Member:

Sections Congress is a conference where IEEE volunteers are trained on Sections Operations; it takes place every 3 years. I have been of service to IEEE for 9 years and it was a great pleasure to finally have an opportunity to attend the Sections Congress in October. I would like to share with you insights and excitement from my experience at this conference.

Why is it important for us to understand how Sections work?
- Our local Section is where IEEE activities truly take place and benefit us. In order for us, GOLD members, to get IEEE to stand on our side and to serve our professional needs, we should understand how Sections operate; working closely with Sections can work in our favor.

What is my greatest accomplishment at Sections Congress?
- To participate in making recommendations that IEEE should devise a program of relevance to members with less industrial experience (That's us, the GOLD members)

In the democratic system of IEEE, I do not get to vote for any recommendation. That is the responsibility of Sections delegates. Now, it certainly comes back to how important it is that we work with Sections hand-in-hand. I am confident that one day IEEE will provide more services suitable for us.

New Year's greetings from Your IEEE Canada GOLD Coordinator
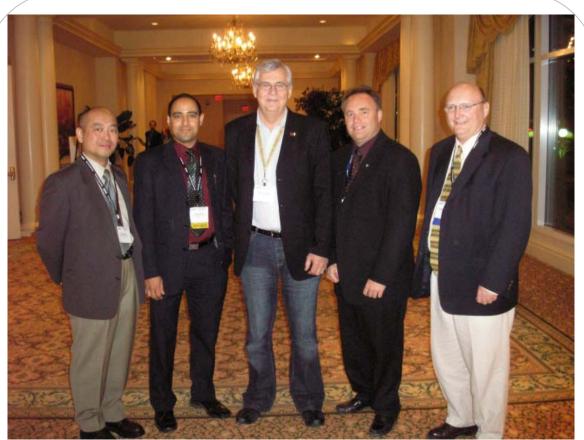
Pictures from Section Congress 2005 in Tampa

I had the privilege of attending the IEEE Section's Congress in Tampa, Florida and present on the topic of "Planning and Marketing Successful Events" in the Section Operations track. I also participated in the GOLD Focus Group that took place before the Congress to discuss how young IEEE members work and communicate with their peers.

The Congress proved to be a great educational experience on the workings of IEEE and an excellent opportunity to meet leadership from other sections. The Congress involved more than 900 delegates from 269 sections from around the world. Fourteen GOLD members attended from Region 7 (Canada). In the following pages I am sharing some Congress pictures from my camera for your enjoyment.

Region 7 GOLD Members

Ahsan Upal presenting in the Section Operations Track

Representatives from the Southern Alberta Section

Region 7 Group Picture

Verona Wong and Ahsan Upal

Region 7 Dinner