

## IEEE Milestone Utah Section for Computer Graphics

I learned that I had been elected to serve as Chair of the IEEE Utah Section 2020-2021 on November 10, 2019. As I had served on the IEEE-USA Board 2016-2017 and completed a statistical membership review of US members, I had insight into membership challenges. Preparing to assume this section office, I found that the section's chapter of the largest of IEEE's technical societies had gone inactive (i.e., "sunk"), the Computer Society. As the Utah business community considers computing its strong point, I struggled with leadership ploys that might raise this sunken (computer) ship. Luckily, I attended the Region 6 OpCom in Los Angeles in early February of 2020. I knew Brian Berg from the Santa Clara Section when I served in SCV/EPS chapter roles up to chair in 2007, and I knew Brian had been deeply immersed in several meaningful IEEE Milestones. I proposed a Utah Milestone for early computer graphics work in Utah, and Brian vigorously agreed. But I had no idea of the arduous process laying in wait. I should have known, because I do recall SCV's Dick Ahrons once so commenting at a section meeting.

Members may not be aware of the IEEE organizational structure, but, in a nutshell, it consists of a Board and six major subordinate boards and a group of Board committees. Sections are part of the large Member and Geographic Activities (MGA). EPS is part of the large Technical Activities Board (TAB). Each of these entities performs functions key to IEEE's success. As a case in point, the IEEE Milestone Program was created by the IEEE Board in 1983 for the upcoming Centennial Celebration. The History Committee administers the program through the IEEE History Center. The unique feature of this program is recognizing technological advances at least twenty-five years old while not focusing on individuals or organizations themselves (although names can be used if commonly used for a technology or firm). Any organizational unit in IEEE can propose a milestone in this process. A handsome commemorative bronze plaque is presented to be mounted at an appropriate location.

As you know, my term of office in the Utah Section was complicated by the scourge of COVID-19 and related shutdowns in early 2020. Nevertheless, I completed a lengthy Milestone proposal with Brian's urgings. My effort was pivotally supported by permission to access the University of Utah Library's Special Collections by Dean Alberta Comer to whom I'm indebted. Once the application was submitted, Brian took on the role of "advocate" pushing the application through the committee's long processes.

Once notified of a positive outcome, Dean Rich Brown of the John and Marcia Price College of Engineering at the University of Utah combined the 50th anniversary of the Computer Science Department (managed by Chair of the Kahlert School of Computing Mary Hall) with the Milestone Dedication in back-to-back days. The events were held on March 23 and 24, 2023. Many luminaires attended including, but not limited to, ACM Turing Awardees Ed Catmull, Alan Kay and Ivan Sutherland. Brian served as Master of Ceremonies, and Alvy Ray Smith contributed greatly (co-founder of Pixar and author of a wonderful new book on computer graphics). A large audience of several hundred souls appeared despite a major snowstorm (even Alta Resort ordered shelter in buildings). These events were not only technically insightful but also stirring emotionally.

Daniel Donahoe  
Past Chair IEEE Utah Section and Milestone proposer

The IEEE Milestone Dedication Event can be viewed on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzEaM6QAY-4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ui3R1Dlmsk0>



The IEEE Milestone commemorative plaque