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ICAPS 2015 Council Meeting Minutes
June 6th, 2015
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Attendees:
  - Carmel Domshlak
  - Ronen Brafman
  - Joerg Hofmann
  - Brian Williams
  - Malte Helmert
  - Chris Beck
  - Patrik Haslum
  - Daniel Borrajo
  - Wheeler Ruml
  - Maria Fox
  - Angelo Oddi (remotely)
  - Blai Bonet (remotely)

For part of the meeting regarding ICAPS 2016: Dan Magazenni, Scott Sanner;
and ICAPS 2017: Steve Smith (remotely).

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Agenda

Time: 11:00 - 17:30, June 6, 2015
Location: Room 403 in Beit-Shmuel (the conference venue)
          6 Eliyahi Shema St., Jerusalem, Israel

11:00 Meeting Begins

11:00 - 11:15
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Item 1: Formalities

1.1 Review and approve minutes of the 2014 Council Meeting
1.2 Election of new Council Members: Alan Fern, Patrik Haslum
1.3 Election of new Officer: Wheeler Ruml, Treasurer

11:15 - 12:20
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Item 2: Strategic Issues, Part 1

2.1 Report on outreach
2.2 10-year submission/acceptance rates
2.3 Standard reviewing model: SPC or no SPC, breadth of PC
2.4 Relation between tutorials/workshops and conference

12:50 - 13:45
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Item 3: Strategic Issues, Part 2

3.1 Update on video archive
3.2 Proposal for a more formal awards committee process
3.3 Proposal for two Council meetings per year
3.4 Other strategic issues

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13:45 - 14:00
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Item 4: Treasurer's Report

14:05 - 15:30
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Item 5: ICAPS 2014 and 2015

5.1 ICAPS 2014 report and survey results
5.2 ICAPS 2015 report [program, participation, financials]
5.3 ICAPS 2016 preparation [logistics, budget, sponsorship]

15:45 - 17:00
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Item 6: ICAPS 2017 Discussion and Vote

6.1 Proposal pre-discussion
6.2 Presentation, questions
6.3 Debate and vote

Item 7: ICAPS 2018 and Beyond

17:00 - 17:30
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Item 8: Other business

8.1 Community meeting preparation
8.2 Thanking departing members: Adele Howe and Daniel Borrajo
8.3 2016 ICAPS Council Meeting
8.4 Other business

17:30: Meeting ends


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Minutes

11:20 Start

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Item 1: Formalities
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1.1 2014 Minutes accepted.

1.2 and 1.3 Elections:
Accepted:
  * Alan Fern, Patrik Haslum (Council)
  * Wheeler Ruml (Treasurer)

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Item 2: Strategic Issues
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2.1 Report on Outreach:
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Brief presentation of:

1. Planning and CP, Search and Optimization Workshop at AAAI 2015.
2. Planning AI and OR cluster to be held at Informs INFORMS 2015.
See distributed hand out.

Lessons: We are early in the process of outreach.  A lot of AI attendees at
both outreach activities.  Hope to grow beyond AI attendees in the future.

Proposal: Call for Proposals for Outreach Activities to distribute to the
ICAPS community.

Question: Do we need a budget and process in place?
Wheeler: Proposers need "ball park" dollar amount to focus their proposals.
Carmel: Proposed three types of outreach activities.
Chris: Purpose is to engage the community on potential ideas.
Wheeler and Chris: Say in CFP that we want a broad set of ideas.
Carmel: Breadth is essential.

Summary:
No dollar amount listed.
Make explicit we want a broad set of ideas.
No internal budget set, decide as we go.

*ACTION-01* Chris: Revise proposal and submit.

2.2 10-year submission rates.

Data:
- CP and CPAIOR sees decline.
- AAAI/IJCAI sees rise.
- ICAPS is flat.

Question: Should we do anything?

Ronen: Rise of autonomous systems is a growing opportunity for the field.
Williams: Need to be proactive to capitalize.
Carmel: It comes down to outreach, people will do what they do.
Fox et al.: We can be proactive about where we focus outreach.
Carmel and Chris: Outreach includes invited speakers and cross over tutorials.
Williams: Masters class summer school is a third vehicle.
Carmel: Summer schools are higher cost, and distinct from cross over tutorials.
Wheeler: There is grumbling from robotics about integrated systems papers being
   rejected from ICAPS, since they don't benchmark competitive planners. Need to
   educate participants from other communities on the standards for having
   papers accepted to ICAPS.

*ACTION-02* Carmel and Blai: Will pursue invited speaker bridge with RSS.
*ACTION-03* Maria: will pursue cross over planning and scheduling tutorials to
            complementary conferences, such as ICRA.  This is distinct from
summer
            schools.

2.3 SPC vs no SPC. Breadth of PC.

Patrik: Not having an SPC did not pose any issues.  Issue was the expertise of
  the PC.  A similar issue arose during 2014, and the PC from 2014 and 2015
  had high overlap.
Malte: Having SPC helped in terms of fairness across papers.  Discussions were
  not as effective when there was no SPC.  Having a single individual both as
  a Moderator and a reviewer created a conflict.
Carmel: Having fewer reviewers review more papers focuses expertise and gives
  a broader view.
Ronen: Do we want to require or recommend an SPC?
Maria: Recent years she has seen increasing comments about poor reviews.
  Reviewer pool has broadened.  New reviewers do not appear to understand the
  standards of the field.  Broadening is not necessarily bad, but new PC
  members need to be educated.
Patrik: Having reviewers self-select papers does not ensure that the reviewers
  are expert to review the papers they select.
Chris: We can have a narrowed SPC with a broadened PC, where each SPC member is
  viewed as a chair for a sub segment of the conference. This is like an area
  chair.
Maria: There is a conflict we need to resolve, between preserving quality and
  broadening the field.  Narrowing to preserve quality does not achieve
  broadening.
Chris: Need to make recommendations to future program chairs.  More care needs
  to be taken in assigning papers to reviewers.  Invitations to SPC need to be
  people who are expert in the field focus, understand the standards of ICAPS,
  and do not review outside of area of expertise.
Ronen: Area chair is the right concept here.

*ACTION-04*  Malte: Recommendation to 2016 program chairs:
                (1) Use SPC.
                (2) More carefully review reviewer assignments.
                (3) Do not over rely on algorithms.

2.4: Relation between Tutorials and Workshops:

2.4a: Scheduling conflicts are high.

Patrik: Are the two days of tutorials and workshops over packed?
Chris and Carmel: Expand to three days to decompress.
Wheeler: Don't want to expand to six days, need make more effective use
  of existing time.  For example, should we have tutorials during meals?
Carmel: Integrate tutorials to the workshops they support.  Experimented
  with this year.
Ronen: Not a lot of optimization that can be done in the existing framework.
Chris: Proposals should be explicit joint tutorial / workshop proposals.
Carmel: Tutorials shouldn't be force to be connected to workshops, and
  vice-versa.
Chris: Where they are linked, they should be thought through in advance.
  Should be encouraged, not required.

*ACTION-05* Malte: Encourage workshop and tutorial chairs to work together.
           In call for proposals, explicit ask to propose joint workshop/
           tutorials.

2.5a: Paper Pipeline:

Maria: Idea 1: Have high quality workshop papers be presented in the main

track of the same conference.  Surveyed workshop chairs did
not receive this idea well.

Idea 2: From survey, idea is to facilitate papers from workshop at
year N to N+1.  Issues include a) papers become or of suitable
quality for main track, b) don't have the right reviewers in
the main track PC.

Carmel: Focused objective.  Coaching is vague, need to make crisp.
Could propose two rounds of fast review.
Maria: Goal is not to loose papers to other venues.  JAIR/AIJ try to avoid
losing papers to other conference.
Williams: Workshop reviews for fast track papers should include explicit
feedback on how to improve a paper, in order to bring it to ICAPs quality.
Malte: We need to make sure there is no assumption that the paper will be
accepted to ICAPS if the paper addresses all fast track reviewer concerns.
This is advice.

Revised Proposal:

a) Workshop chairs identify small set of papers that are fast track.
Recommend 1 to 2 best papers.
b) Chairs (or designees) write meta-reviews that summarize what is worthy
about the paper, and what to improve,
c) Submit to the ICAPS president to 1) send out invites to fast track papers,
and 2) forward to year N+1 Program Chairs including meta review and
workshop designee as year N+1 reviewer.

*ACTION-06* Brian, Chris and Malte: Implement.

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Item 3: Strategic Issues, Part 2
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3.1 Update on video archive.

See attached slides.

- Established video recording setup and accompanying guidelines (Gabi).
- Establshed ICAPS video collection archive and guidelines to ICAPs
  organizers (Minh and Malte).
- Establish mirrored archive.  May need one more mirror.
- Data on YouTube (o909;12-14)and VideoLecture.net (10-11).
- ICAPS related videos identified.  Processes need to be developed for these.

Malte: YouTube is more accessible, more robust and more cost effective,
relative to VideoLecture.net.
Joerg: Should be linked from ICAPS site.
Wheeler: Do not do anything too elaborate or complex.  Else it's not
maintainable by others.
Carmel: We have tried numerous strategies in the past.  Gabi's approach in
2014 worked well.  Worked to transfer process to ICAPS 2015.  This was the
most difficult part of 2015.  Bottom line: Equipment breaks and needs to
be replaced.  Didn't work well with sound equipment of existing venue.
Software was very shaky.  Process and tools still need to be matured.
Malte: Believe the approach is the right one.  Has desirable machine

independence.  Still shakey.  Tried at SOCS last year, and wasn't mature.
Maria: Worked well during 2009.  Only issue was that two sets of hardware
   needed for two parallel tracks.  What is the difficulty?
Carmel: Two issues: 1) software is shakey, and 2) plug and play, e.g., with
   VGA splitter, didn't work.  3) Post processing was expensive.

*ACTION-07* Malte: Recommend to chairs that this is a challenging task.
            They should give this attention, and should bring on board
            expertise to subsequent conferences.

Question: Do we stick with the current system or change?

*ACTION-08* Malte: Assess at end of conference through discussion with
            Conference and Video Chairs.

3.2 Proposal for formal awards process.

See attached document.

Joerg: Does this address getting better nominations?
Chris: Nominations worked better in the past when there was continuity.
   This year a new chair was brought in late.
Carmel: Acquiring a set of PhD nominations is never an issue.  Acquiring
   a set of paper nominations is a systemic issue.
Joerg: Self-nomination would increase numbers.
Chris: Self-nomination should be okay.
Chris: Council should not be responsible for nominating papers.
Carmel: Perhaps the experiment of having an influential paper has failed.
Malte: Similar issue arises for JAIR.  Shifted to most cited papers.
   Committee identified eligible papers.  This was a pain.
Chris: The nomination list is the ten most cited papers, plus all nominations.
   The committee picks one paper from this list.

Revised Proposal:

- Proposal as presented, with the following additions:
- Paper nominations solicited, and top ten most cited papers added to list.
  Selection by committee.
- Need to develop process for extracting ten most cited papers (Malte).

*ACTION-09* Brian, Chris and Malte: Implement process.

3.3: Two council meetings per year.

Wheeler: Need to speed up the lessons learned and solutions between successive
   conferences.
Chris: Do all councilors need to be there, or just the successive conference
   chairs?
Wheeler: It's an essential role of the community.
Maria: would not support a second face-to-face, international meeting.
   Virtual meeting is workable.
Maria: Should virtual SPC occur as well?
Malte: Virtual SPC/Area chair meeting has been effective.
Maria: Strongly support second meeting as a virtual meeting.
Chris: Supports. Don't want to cancel existing meeting unless it is shown
   to be obsolete.

Proposal 1:

- Meeting around September-October.
- Attendance: by Council, and two conference chairs.
- Focus: on conference lessons learned and improving successor conference.
- Meeting of length 2-3 hours.

*ACTION-10* Chris: Will schedule meeting.

Proposal 2:

*ACTION-11* Malte: Recommend to next year program chairs that they evaluate
           the option of having a Virtual PC, seeking experience from related
           conferences.

3.4 Other strategic issues.

Issue 1 - Ronen: Creating the conference program was painful.

Malte: Don't print a conference brochure; online apps are fine.
Ronen: Paper is important.  Need sufficient details.
Ronen: Should outsource to a skilled organization, such as AAAI.
  Should apply money.
Malte: This is about transfer of knowledge.  Pass feedback to next year's
  conference chairs.  Council should not make specific recommendations.

*ACTION-12* Ronen:  Will communicate knowledge to next year chairs.  Will check
           with AAAI whether they would support the creation of the conference
           brochure, and at what cost.

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Item 4: Treasurer Report
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See attached report.

Chris: What should we tell the next chairs in terms of budget?
  Be more conservative?  Less?
Ronen: Excess in 2015 is about 8k.  Could reduce registration fee a little,
  but wouldn't make a difference.  Could be more lavish, such as T-shirts.
Chris: Have we accumulated too much money over the years?
Maria: We should spend our accumulation on students.  They are the future.
Chris: We need an amount of money for insurance.  What should we apply money
  above the insurance money beyond this amount.
Ronen: It would help for the conference chairs to have backup funds to support
  students, in case sufficient funds do not come through.
Chris: If ICAPS is only providing insurance, this won't encourage the
  conference chairs to increase number of sponsored students.  They need
  assistance from ICAPS to take some of the load of providing student
  financial support.
Maria: Use money to bring in students from other fields.
Carmel: This will burn down funds very quickly.
Ronen: Not sure additional funds from ICAPS would change.
Brian and Maria: Use funds for Masters classes to both educate our students
  about other disciplines, and to bring students in from other areas.

Carmel: We need to evaluate return on investment.  Be careful.
Ronen and Chris: What is this year's registration fee?  ~400.
   Would reducing this to 200 help?
Carmel: Registration fee has less strings attached in terms of what they can
   be paid for.  Sponsor funds are encumbered.

Summary:

– Excess funds should go to students.
– We don't have a proposal on how to spend.

Chris:

Proposal. Do we want to tell the conference chairs they have an extra 10K
         per year for students?

Maria: Prefer events that bring in members of other communities.
Ronen: How do we implement?
Maria: Need analogue to workshop chair.

*ACTION–13* Malte: Communicate with the chairs the goal of increasing the number
             of students supported.  To avoid increasing the amount of sponsorship
             funds the conference chairs need to solicit, ICAPS will provide $10K
             of additional funds, but the conference chairs need to recruit
             sponsorship funds for students similar to past years.

*ACTION–14* Wheeler: Develop analysis of how much funds needs to be in the bank
             to ensure insure the ability to deal with uncertainty.

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Item 5: Past, Present & Future.
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5.1 ICAPS 2014 report and survey results

See attachment.

Wheeler:

   – Student volunteer program was a mixed result.
   – Didn't distribute USB drive.  This wasn't a major issue.
   – Survey right after conference and using Google forms was effective.
   – Volunteer program good, but needs careful assignment.

*ACTION–15* Wheeler: Analyze feedback on volunteer program by volunteer subset.

Wheeler: To Improve

   – Didn't predict hotel demand well.  Too many later comers.
   – Volunteer program needed greater oversight.
   – Advertise registration to submitters early.
   – Video postproduction was enormously difficult.  Significant manual work.
     Need to hire professional labor.

Wheeler: Issues

- Getting journal track papers into the proceedings.  Solve this year by submitting abstracts.
- Is AAAI providing value?  ICAPS pays fee to AAAI, and holds ICAPS money without offering interest.
- AAAI costs 4k for affiliation, not a big cost.
- Should use conference services.  Shouldn't try to do everything without conference services.

Maria and Ronen: Using AAAI for conference services is well worth it.

5.2 ICAPS 2015 report

see attachment.

Carmel: Workshop and tutorial chairs did well. All chairs great. Dan was outstanding.
Ronen: No workshops on new directions this year.  This is a thread.
Chris: Are workshops generating new things?
Chris: Do we want to be more aggressive about reviewing workshops?
Brian & Chris: Workshop chairs need to get the message that they need to put in the effort to improve quality.
Ronen: Small number of demos.
Ronen: Submission on par with previous years, small percentage down from US.
Joerg: Significant reduction in application track.  What is the issue?
Maria: Steve Chien recommends increased visibility of applications through invited speakers.
Maria: Rejection of application papers is a long-standing issue.  It's hard to extract the science from the papers.  Complex systems require long discussions.
Ronen: The acceptance rate is on par with others.
Maria: This may be that application authors are no longer submitting.
Carmel: The number of people doing applications may be reduced.
Ronen: Application papers may be going to the robotics community.  These are more focused, and may be appropriate.
Chris: Should we check that the robotics track is thriving?
Ronen: Lets wait another year, and evaluate.  May be influenced by this year's conference location.

*ACTION-16* Ronen: Talk with application chair about the reason for the decline in application track, and follow up with Chris and Brian.

Ronen: Issues:

- Easy Chair isn't the easiest to run multiple tracks, but not a major issue. Tracks should continue.  Robotics track strong; Application weak.
- Shlomo recommends chair track chairs not submit their own papers.  But Ronen considers this unfair to affected students.  Reviewing these special cases outside the system worked fine.
- Large number of poster sessions.  Need to monitor and assess how it works.

*ACTION-17* Ronen:  Evaluate success of multiple poster sessions and report.

5.3 ICAPS 2016 preparation

See attachment.

Carmel: 120+85 is low attendance estimate.  Should expect at last 200 + X.
Ronen: A major expense for solicited funds is the cost of subsidizing
  students.  Around 30K is required for students. Will need a total of ~50K
  of solicited funds.
Malte: Should look at estimates for larger attendance numbers.  Current
  estimates are too conservative.

Dan: Open issues:
  - Public events.
    Ronen: Have public lectures, such as speakers from NASA.
  - SPC vs Lead Reviewers:
  - New special tracks?
  - Competitions?
  - Printed proceedings?

Ronen: Look at this year, with multiple poster sessions, and see how it works.
Chris: Malte can talk to Dan about SPC vs Lead Reviewers.
Chris: Do you have ideas for new special tracks?
Scott: Potential tracks: Hybrid Learning or Optimization.
Maria: Worth nurturinge hybrid systems and controls, as well as learning.
Brian: This is a good year to move forward hybrid, given London's central
  location between US and Europe.
Scott: Should robotics and applications be the special tracks, while learning
  and hybrid are part of the main conference?
Brian: Existing tracks shouldn't be a roadblock to new tracks that PCs are
  passionate about.
Chris: Mathematical programming is better as a workshop than a special track.
   Its already well represented, for example, in best paper.
Maria: Existing special tracks are too early to ditch.
Chris: Recommend small SPC, like area chairs, and careful evaluation of
  reviewer selection.  See notes above, and talk with Malte.
Scott: Wrt invited talks, would like to bring in someone from deep mind.

*ACTION-18* Carmel and Blai: Will talk with Scott about candidate robotics
            invited speakers, and invited speaker exchange.


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Item 6: ICAPS 2017 Discussion
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6.1 pre-discussion.

Malte: Concern about responsiveness of organizers.  Engaging AAAI as
  conference management would help.
Council: Strengthen sponsorship chairs, particularly in the US.
Joerg: What about sequential decision-making track?

6.2 Presentation and questions.

Malte: Need additional US sponsorship chair.  Special track on sequential
  decision-making might link up to ICAPS 16 special tracks.  This is good.
  Remember to coordinate.  Council believes it should leverage professional
  conference support staff.
Brian: Consider a split role.  Use CMU for local arrangements.  Use AAAI for
  registration, web site, and proceedings.
Malte: Council is fond of tele-presence robots, as long as student volunteers

don't take the brunt of baby-sitting.
Blai: Should we co-locate a robotics event, such as RSS, at CMU?

6.3:  Debate and vote.

Carmel: Funding is an issue.  Need at least three sponsorship chairs.
Brian: Get them thinking about fund raising right away.  In addition to
    identifying added sponsorship chairs, 1) have them submit list of new
    candidate sponsors, 2) schedule for soliciting sponsors.
Wheeler: Didn't come across with attractions and transport.
Maria: Location, hotels, museum are similar to CMU AIPS, and it worked
    brilliantly.
Malte and Ronen: Need to grow US participation; strong US participation
    in chairs is not a major issue.

Vote:  No one opposed. Unanimously accepted


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Item 7: ICAPS 2018 and Beyond
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Malte: Options are Federated IJCAI (in Stockholm), and nascent proposals by
    community.  Federated IJCAI has had limited discussion.  10 conferences
    indicated some degree of potential interest.  Patrick Doherty, in charge
    of IJCAI-18 solicited an information form to be filled out.
    Give conferences provided data:  ICAPS, ICMS, AAMAS and SOCS.
Wheeler: It's an interesting experiment, and an interesting set of conferences
    to co-locate.
Malte: Would mainly be shared venue, cross over talks and sessions, and
    potentially shared registration.
Wheeler: Would there be a single paper deadline and schedule?  Would we lose
    participants?  Are there driving questions that we should ask of IJCAI?
Malte: Consider the alternative options.  Mausam has the strongest interest
    proposing, with India the venue.  Roman has potential interest of proposing
    in Prague.  Should not encourage if IJCAI is likely to displace.
    The federated conference could be an insertion, rather than the selection for
    the European rotation.
Brian and Chris:  Contact Manuela, Francesca and Patrick now.  Have Blai follow
    up at IJCAI in July.
Brian: We should identify the conferences we want to federate with most, and
    contact their executive councils, to see if the federation can be pushed.
Joerg: In favor of federated conference, if this can be implemented with
    confidence.
Chris: At the community meeting, will let the community know about the potential
    of IJCAI federation, and that we are in principle interested.  Can help avoid
    AI splinter, and address the issue that our submissions are flat, while AAAI
    and IJCAI are growing.
Joerg: Concerned about co-location with IJCAI in particular.  Will IJCAI occur
    during the federation?

*ACTION-19* Malte: Clarify with federation organizers whether IJCAI will occur
            during the federation. Contact Manuela, Francesca and Patrick now to
            express our interest but also the need for some decisions to be made
            to reduce our uncertainty.

*ACTION-20* Blai: Follow-up with Federated proposers in person at IJCAI.

Carmel: The federation in Australia between KR, CP and ICAPS was quite
  beneficial.

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Item 8: Other business
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8.2 Thanking departing members: Adele Howe and Daniel Borrajo

8.3 Council Meeting prep.

Chris:  Will follow template from last year.

  - Ronen and Carmel present 2015, Dan and Scott present 2016;
    Wheeler present 2017.
  - Chris will present IJCAI federated conference concept.
  - Chris will discuss outreach and request for proposals.
  - Williams will lead community discussion.
  - Introduce Christian about insolvability competition and software tools.
  - Don't announce Workshop fast track until workshop chairs know and the
    experiment has been tried out