

Giving Birth to the International Society for Geometry and Graphics – a Documentation of the Years 1988–1994

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Abstract. This is a short history of the years when the idea of a union of all educators and researchers in the world, who work in graphics and graphics-related geometry, became a reality.

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1988–1990: Brainstorming

During the closing ceremony of the *3rd International Conference on Engineering Graphics and Descriptive Geometry*, July 11–16, 1988 in Vienna, the idea came up to establish an international committee which should help with the organization of future activities.

Roland JENISON, Iowa State University, was the first to start an initiative. In a letter from July 29, 1988 he offered his support and reflected about areas in which such a committee should become active: finding hosts and locations for international conferences, establish a funding basis to pursue appropriate activities, promoting sabbaticals and exchanges between nations, and developing standards to computer graphics in engineering and technology. In a letter, dated with October 19 and submitted to several colleagues from all over the world, the author posed and commented a few questions: what should be the primary goals of an international committee, how should be its organisational structure, what should be its name, who should be incorporated, and how and where should it be formally initialized. Fortunately, at that time existed already several very active national organizations like those in Japan, P.R. China, USA, Brazil, USSR or Austria.

The following months brought a series of positive reactions and further proposals about the goals. Among them was Steve SLABY (1922–2008) from Princeton University, without any doubt *‘the father’* of our society: he was the driving force behind the first international conferences and he was the first to ‘kick the ball’ towards an international community. In a letter from January 11, 1989 he proposed to arrange an ad-hoc committee at the coming international conference in Miami in order to discuss the details. Furthermore, he added a list

of potential members and encouraged to invite others. DAO-NING YING, Zhejiang University, proposed in a letter from August 1, 1989, that the committee should provide more chances for its members by setting up joint research projects between nations and establishing relationships with industries. In view of the organisational structure, he proposed one president, three vice-presidents and an advisory board, and he preferred the name '*International Geometry and Computer Graphics Society*'.

On August 18, Walter RODRIGUEZ from Georgia Institute of Technology proposed to create an International Association of Graphics Societies and defined tasks for the coming meeting in Miami, among them: vote on the underlying proposals, define a mission statement, compile a list of institutions, identify sources of funding, provide leadership to increase the level of research funding for graphics and geometry, and define areas of research interest.

In an comprehensive letter from August 22, 1989, Kenjiro SUZUKI, The University of Tokyo, reported about a related discussion in the council of the Japan Society for Graphic Science. And he laid down the ideas about what should be done at the beginning in order to establish an international committee. The main aim should be the management of international conferences, in order to exchange informations about graphics and geometry like journals, new books, new software or teaching curricula. Other activities can wait. Concerning name, he proposed that the name of the committee should correlate with the name of the conferences. He agreed with the structure, consisting of one president and three vice-presidents together with an advisory board. However, in his eyes the question of financial support was not that urgent. Due to the existence of local journals like the '*Engineering Design Graphics Journal*' in USA, the '*Journal of Engineering Design Graphics of China*' and the '*Journal of Graphic Science of Japan*' he questioned the necessity of international newsletters, as proposed by Walter RODRIGUEZ. Based on some statistics, he made a proposal about which countries should be represented in the committee, and he recommended continuous efforts to increase the participating countries and participants.

Other consenting letters arrived (handwritten) from ZHAO QINGHUAN, Beijing Normal University, from Yehuda CHARIT, Israel Institute of Technology, from Aldo VENTRE, Università degli studi di Napoli, from Vladimir VOLKOV, The Siberian Automobile and Highway Academy in Omsk, and from Harold P. SANTO, Technical University of Lisbon. In a letter, dated with December 29, 1989, the author communicated a summary about what should be done in Miami in June 1990 and what compromises seem to be possible. Among them were proposals for the name (*International Society for Geometry and Graphic Science*), for a mission statement ('*to foster international collaborations and to stimulate the scientific research in the fields of geometry and graphics*'), and for the organisational structure. The great national societies should be invited to name their representatives on the advisory board. This letter, to be taken as a basis for further discussions in Miami, found a general consent by all addressees.

1990–1994: Decisions

The *4th International Conference on Engineering Computer Graphics and Descriptive Geometry* was held June 11–15, 1990 and hosted by Florida International University in Miami. One important element of this conference was a meeting on June 13, where a ‘Steering Committee’ was established with the declared goal to organize the activities of the ‘International Society for Geometry and Graphics’. This was the first mention of the new society.

Members of the Steering Committee were Vera ANAND, Clemson University/USA, Gary BERTOLINE, Purdue University/USA, Chen JIANNAN, Beijing University of Aeronautics & Astronautics/P.R. China, Wagih N. HANNA, Ain Shams University Cairo/Egypt, Mehmet PALAMUTOGLU, University of Erziyes, Kayseri/Turkey, Walter E. RODRIGUEZ, Georgia Institute of Technology/USA, Steve M. SLABY, Princeton University/USA, the author, Kenjiro SUZUKI, The University of Tokyo/Japan, V.O. THOMAS, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology/Australia and YING DAO-NING, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou/P.R. China (note Figs. 8 and 9 in [1]).

According to the decisions of this meeting, the Steering Committee will act as an advisory board until elections are called. By the next conference to be held 1992 in Melbourne, the committee headquarters will mail ballots to select the president and three vice-presidents (North & South America, Asia & Australia, and Europe & Africa). The advisory board will be constituted of 10 members from different countries.

Among the decisions made at this meeting, a mission statement was approved and adopted in the form ‘*Foster international collaboration and stimulate the scientific research and teaching methodology in the fields of geometry and graphics*’. Steve SLABY and the author will act as co-chairs of the board with headquarters at the Vienna University of Technology. The headquarters will be in-charge of all the administrative functions of the society. Walter RODRIGUEZ as secretary-treasurer will be in charge of developing bylaws and establishing a funding mechanism. The ISGG will sponsor the ‘*Journal of Theoretical Graphics and Computing*’,¹ at that time being published by the Society for Theoretical and Computational Graphics at Georgia Tech. Finally, the committee was seeking entries of the society’s logo.

During the following two years Walter RODRIGUEZ prepared the initial version of the ISGG Bylaws. At the *5th International Conference on Engineering Computer Graphics and Descriptive Geometry*, August 17–21, 1992 Melbourne, the delegates voted to establish the International Society for Geometry and Graphics (ISGG) to serve the international community, to foster education and research in geometry and graphics, and to promote interchange of ideas via conferences and publications. An interim slate of officers was designated in Melbourne to arrange the election of the Charter Officers. The author became the interim president, Roland JENISON the interim vice-president, and Walter RODRIGUEZ the interim secretary-treasurer.

¹ This journal ended around 1995.

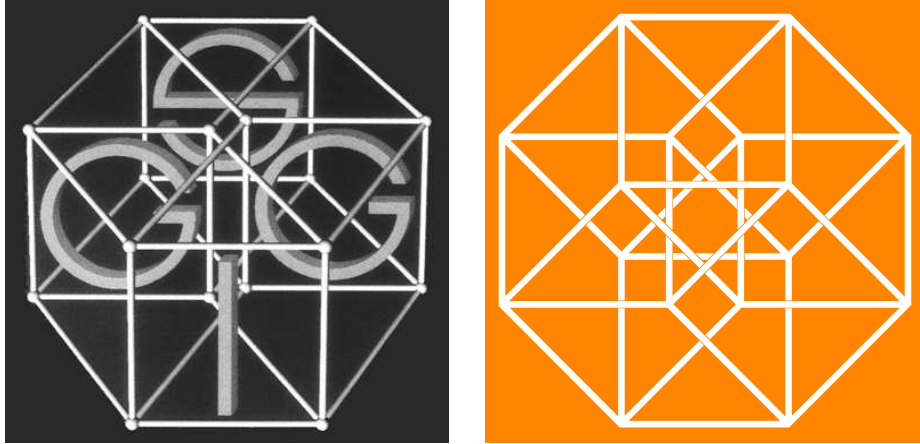


Fig. 1. Logo of ISGG – left: one of the original designs of Eric and Harriet E. BRISSON and Steve SLABY, and right: the recent form, as depicted on the title page of the Journal for Geometry and Graphics

The first election of Charter Officers, as called out in the initial bylaws approved by the attendees at the 5th Conference, was organized by Roland JENISON in the years 1993/94. The newly elected officers under the presidency of Walter RODRIGUEZ assumed their responsibilities at the *6th International Conference on Engineering Computer Graphics and Descriptive Geometry in Tokyo*, August 19–23, 1994.

Three years later the first issue of the society’s scientific journal appeared, the ‘*Journal for Geometry and Graphics*’, published by Heldermann Verlag in Germany. The title page of the journal shows the ISGG logo, according to a design created by Eric and Harriet BRISSON and Steve SLABY, in honor of Eric’s father and Harriet’s husband David BRISSON.

Let us conclude by citing Frank M. CROFT, The Ohio State University, [1, p. 261]: ‘*Although it took several years to become a reality, the ISGG and the ICGG have been significant factors in the growth of interest and knowledge in the fields of geometry, graphics, and computer graphics on a world-wide basis*’.

References

1. Croft, F.M.: The History of the International Conference on Geometry and Graphics – One Person’s Reflection. *J. Geom. Graphics* 20(2), 253–262 (2016).