



Branislav M. Notaroš ^{ID}
AP-S President

APS/URSI 2024 Conference and 75th AP-S Anniversary Celebration in Florence

Welcome to the October issue of the *IEEE Antennas and Propagation Magazine* and the fifth “President’s Message” column of the year! My entire message (written two months after the previous one) is devoted to just one week: the seven days from 13 to 19 July 2024. Of course, I am talking about our flagship conference, IEEE APS/URSI 2024 (Figure 1), and the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society (AP-S) [1] in Florence, Italy.

I will start with a disclaimer that this Florence week was so incredibly rich in technical, professional, and social events and activities all essential to AP-S and our members, that this article must be considered as my own personal, imperfect, and nonoptimal selection of things to include, describe, or emphasize. I am fully aware that there were many important facts, contributions, and happenings in Florence that I will not be able to even mention here, and I do apologize for that.

The conference was cosponsored by the AP-S and the Italian and U.S. National Committees for the International Union of Radio Science (URSI). It provided a leading international forum for the exchange of research ideas and professional practice and dissemination of results in the fields of antennas, propagation, electromagnetic engineering, and radio science. It was

exciting to have our flagship conference in Europe, for the first time ever, and only the second time (first time as an in-person event) outside of North America. In short, our 2024 Florence

edition coupled with the 75 Years Celebration was a truly memorable and most technically productive, professionally rewarding, and socially enjoyable event (Figure 2).



FIGURE 1. Princess Elettra Marconi, daughter of Guglielmo Marconi, greeted the attendees of the IEEE APS/URSI 2024 Florence Conference and wished them good work and enjoyable interactions.



FIGURE 2. (right to left) Agostino Monorchio, APS/URSI 2024 General Chair, and Roberto Graglia and Giuliano Manara, Conference Co-Chairs, welcomed the conference attendees to the cradle of the Renaissance, and were dressed accordingly.

The week started with the Mid-Year Meeting of the AP-S Administrative Committee (AdCom), the governing body of our Society [2], on Saturday–Sunday, 13–14 July, at the Grand Hotel Baglioni in Florence. We had a record number of AdCom at Large Members (voting AdCom Members, Officers, Standing Committee Chairs, Editors in Chief (EiCs), and Support Staff) [2] attend in person in Florence (Figure 3). Our AdCom meeting discussed and approved a record number of 53 motions.

The largest group of motions were 28 motions on structural changes for the Society and the associated changes in our documents, namely, amendments to our Constitution, Bylaws, and Operating Manual [2] to finalize and formalize forward-looking developments and fundamental changes for the AP-S brought about at the first AP-S AdCom Meeting in Orlando, FL [3]. The AdCom also approved 10 motions on awards changes, proposed by the newly established Ad Hoc Committee on AP-S Awards Changes; six motions on changes of our flagship conferences, as a result of the work of the Ad Hoc

Committee on Recommendations to Advance Flagship Conferences (RAFC) [3]; and nine motions on publications, budgets, initiatives, etc., as well as many important reports by our Standing Committees [2].

Agostino Monorchio, APS/URSI 2024 general chair, and the entire Florence Steering and Organizing Committee, did a phenomenal job with organizing and running the conference, from technical program to professional meetings to social events, with many great innovations, record numbers of papers and registered conference attendees (in excess of 2,000), and almost 40% student attendees. Many conference participants brought their family and friends for a great combination of work and play in the cradle of the Renaissance (see Figure 2). Our first in-person flagship conference outside of North America was an astounding success by all means and measures. I have heard so many superlative comments from conference authors and attendees, especially students. All of our external guests, the IEEE President and Vice Presidents, Presidents of other IEEE Societies and internation-

al organizations, congratulated us on a superb conference and organization in all aspects. As I said many times in my speeches during the conference, I would like to express my strongest appreciation, on behalf of the Society, to Agostino and his team for such a fantastic outcome and success of the conference.

The first plenary event for the conference, with all attendees having a great time together, and the largest gathering of the week was the Welcome Reception, on Monday, 15 July, at Fortezza da Basso, with some speeches (Figure 4) and a lot of music and interactions, culminating in a magnificent APS fireworks on the grounds of this historic fortress (Figure 5). This was followed by the Students and Young Professionals' Dinner and Networking Event at the Stellar on Tuesday, 16 July. This event included a treasure hunt through some of the most historic parts of the city and across the Arno river (Figure 6). The APS/URSI 2024 Plenary Session, on Wednesday, 17 July, featured a very interesting journey through Italian excellence in electromagnetic technologies: "From Marconi to Future" (Figure 7).



FIGURE 3. AP-S AdCom at Large Members during the AdCom meeting held on 13–14 July, 2024 in the Michelangelo Room of the Grand Hotel Baglioni in Florence, Italy, which discussed and approved a record number of 53 motions.

Wednesday evening was reserved for the main AP-S Awards Ceremony, which highlighted two IEEE-level awards, the 2024 IEEE Electromagnetics Award and 2023 IEEE Young Professional Hall of Fame Award, presented by the IEEE President Thomas Coughlin, and many 2024 AP-S Field, Industry, Paper, and

Service Awards [2], presented by AP-S President Branislav Notaroš. For the first time, we organized two more AP-S Awards Ceremonies during the lunch breaks on 16 and 17 July, respectively, in the Exhibit and Demo Area at Fortezza da Basso, where the 2024 AP-S Chapter Awards, Travel Grants, AP-S Student

Paper Competition Awards, AP-S Student Design Contest Awards, and some other awards are recognitions were presented. This was followed by the APS/URSI 2024 Conference Banquet–Social Dinner, at Stazione Leopolda, another historical landmark of Florence (Figure 8), which celebrated the



FIGURE 4. Welcome Reception (Monday, 15 July) at Fortezza da Basso, in Florence, where APS/URSI 2024 attendees and their family members first enjoyed some entertaining speeches and then engaged in fun activities and interactions. As a result, new friendships and networks were created, many of which were further enhanced at subsequent technical, professional, and social events of the conference.



FIGURE 5. Conference attendees watched a spectacular APS fireworks on the grounds of the historic fortress, as a culmination of the Welcome Reception and Opening Ceremony of the conference (Figure 4).



FIGURE 6. Branislav Notaroš, AP-S President (on the right), and Thomas Coughlin, IEEE President, announced the three winning teams of the Young Professionals historic-Florence treasure hunt during the Students and Young Professionals' Dinner and Networking Event (Tuesday, 16 July) at the Stellar Ristorante, a very interesting mixture of past, present, and future, "themed on digital, technology and future" in a 1695 Medici building.



FIGURE 7. APS/URSI 2024 Plenary Session (Wednesday, 17 July), themed around Italian excellence in antennas, propagation, and electromagnetic technologies, with a motto “From Marconi to Future.”

conference, awardees, authors, members, and attendees.

Thursday, 18 July, was the day of the Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society [1]. As the main anniversary event, the 75 Years AP-S Plenary Session, “Celebrat-

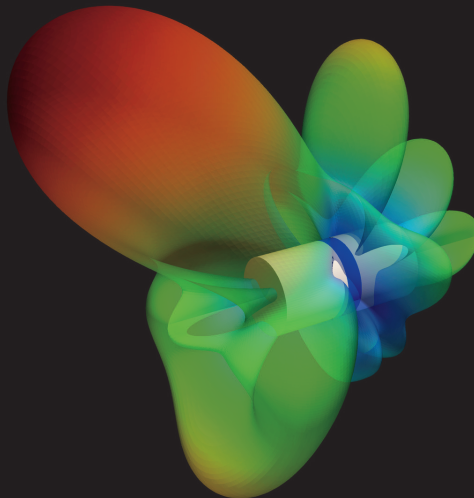
ing 75 Years of the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society, Looking Forward to the Next 75 Years,” at the Cavaniglia Hall of the Fortezza da Basso, featured a set of very relevant plenary talks.

Branislav Notaroš, AP-S President, gave an introduction to the event and

an overview of the 75th Anniversary of AP-S and its Accomplishments. Thomas Coughlin, IEEE President and CEO, presented “The IEEE: Driving Innovation for 140 Years.” Then the AP-S President introduced Presidents of Sister IEEE Societies and International Organizations as our guests for the celebration. Trevor Bird, AP-S History Committee Chair, talked about 75 years of AP-S, which was followed by technical talks on the 75 Years of IEEE AP-S Research and Applications. These talks focused on Antennas, presented by Constantine Balanis; Computational Electromagnetics, by Raj Mittra; Electromagnetics Design, by Yahya Rahmat-Samii; Materials and Devices, by Stefano Maci; Propagation and Scattering, by Mahta Moghaddam; and Communications, Defense, and Medicine, by Christophe Fumeaux. As always, the most important part was discussion at the end of the session, with a lot of interesting questions and comments (Figure 9).

Accuracy and Speed. Together at last.

 NULLSPACE™



www.nullspaceinc.com





FIGURE 8. AP-S President (left) and APS/URSI 2024 General Chair greeted the attendees of the Conference Banquet–Social Dinner, at Stazione Leopolda, a beautiful and unique space evolved from an early 19th century Florence train station. This was followed by a delicious Tuscan dinner and fantastic live music entertainment, with a packed dancing floor.

The 75 Years Plenary Session was preceded by the very successful AP-S Past Presidents Panel on “IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society Past, Present, and Future: Technical and Professional Activities,” where we had as many as 23 Past Presidents as panelists (Figure 10), which is absolutely fantastic. This was a very unusual and extraordinary event, with an unprecedented number of 23 presentations—by Past Presidents—in a half-session time. The following Presidents provided highlights of their terms in the chronological order: Raj Mittra, Yahya Rahmat-Samii, Stuart Long, Piergiorgio Uslenghi, Magdy Iskander, John Volakis, Richard Ziolkowski, Andrew Peterson, Jennifer Bernhard, Makoto Ando, Magdalena Salazar Palma, Trevor Bird, Roberto Graglia, Michael Jensen, Ahmed Kishk, Weng Chew, Koichi Ito, Mahta Moghaddam, Yahia Antar, Gianluca Lazzi, Stefano Maci, Branislav Notaroš,



FIGURE 9. A lively discussion during the 75 Years AP-S Plenary Session (Thursday, 18 July), which featured an AP-S overview (by the AP-S President), IEEE overview (by the IEEE President), AP-S history (by the AP-S History Committee Chair), and six technical talks on the 75 Years of AP-S Research and Applications, given by AP-S technical leaders in the respective areas.

and Christophe Fumeaux. They shared words of wisdom based on their experiences and vision and guidance

for the future of the Society and the profession. Many talks included invaluable personal memories, pictures, and

moments. The panel was well attended (by nonpresidents) and the feedback from attendees was very positive.

For the Intersociety Collaboration Panel on Thursday afternoon, we had as many as 17 leaders of the IEEE, sister IEEE Societies and Councils, and sister international organizations as panelists and presenters, which again is absolutely fantastic. This again was pretty challenging to organize and run, with 17 presentations in a half-session time. We also had many other Presidents and Vice Presidents who were not giving presentations but were participating in the panel and other events in Florence.

We had presentations by the following colleagues: Thomas Coughlin, IEEE President and CEO; Dalma Novak, IEEE Technical Activities Vice President-Elect, IEEE Technical Activities Board (TAB) Vice Chair; Alaa Abunjaileh, IEEE TAB Treasurer, TAB Finance Committee Chair; Branislav Notaroš, IEEE AP-S President; Maurizio Bozzi, IEEE Microwave Theory and Technology Society President; John La Salle, IEEE Electromagnetic Compatibility Society President; Saibun Tjuatja, IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society President Elect; Marta Fernández, IEEE Broadcast Technology Society AdCom Member; Vesna Sossi, IEEE Nuclear and Plasma Sciences Society President; Anna Grazia Mignani,

IEEE Sensors Council Representative; Luca Catarinucci, IEEE Radio-Frequency Identification Council President Elect; Ari Sihvola, URSI President; Michael Newkirk, URSI U.S. National Committee Immediate Past Chair; Carlo Carobbi, URSI Italian National Committee President; Stefania Monni, European Association on Antennas and Propagation (EurAPP) President; Jeffrey Fordham, Antenna Measurement Techniques Association (AMTA) President; and Andrew Peterson, Applied Computational Electromagnetics Society (ACES) President.

The Celebratory Lunch at Fortezza da Basso involved all guests, AP-S members, and conference attendees, with a cake-cutting ceremony of one gigantic and delicious anniversary cake with the AP-S celebratory logo (Figures 11 and 12), and several other equally delicious cakes served throughout the Exhibit and Demo Area at Fortezza da Basso, and champagne (Italian Prosecco) to toast the Society's birthday.

The Celebratory Gala Dinner on the evening of 18 July took place in the Salone dei Cinquecento ("Hall of the Five Hundred") at Palazzo Vecchio, the most historic and artistic building and hall in Florence and the largest hall by volume in Italy (Figure 13). I personally am a huge fan of history and art and Palazzo Vecchio is my favorite venue

and destination; I really wanted to have our celebratory dinner in the Salone dei Cinquecento and am very glad that this actually happened. Although it was built in 1494 to seat the Grand Council of the Florentine Republic consisting of 500 members, and hence its name, by the regulations of the City of Florence today, as this is the Town Hall of Florence, the maximum allowed number of guests for a dinner in the Salone was much smaller than that, and unfortunately this had to be organized as a "by invitation only" event for a small number of external and internal guests of the Society. The celebration was truly enhanced by fantastic soprano and tenor opera singers and a trio of classical musicians [plus one "illegal" singer (Figure 14)]. For all of the attendees, Palazzo Vecchio was "once in a lifetime" experience.

Friday, 19 July, was marked by many excellent Special Sessions, as well as regular paper sessions and interactive forums (poster sessions). We also conducted many important Society business and professional meetings, including a Chapter Chairs and COPE Meeting and SIGHT/MGA Committee Meeting (see [2] for descriptions of AP-S committees). This made the last day of the conference more engaged and vibrant and more in line with the other days of the week, a very important change for the members, the authors (particularly 20% of authors, including students presenting on Friday), and the conference, and a break with our decades-old practice of no meetings on Friday ever. The Closing Ceremony on Friday evening summarized the conference and a full week of papers, presentations, panels, courses, demos, technical discussions, professional meetings, and social activities, and truly memorable experiences in Florence.

AP-S had a fantastic seven days in Florence. What an intense week! For me personally, this was one of the busiest weeks of my career, with many months of preparation for it. It was also one of the most pleasurable and rewarding weeks of my career. I truly enjoyed interacting with so many AP-S volunteers, members, and conference attendees. I also enjoyed hosting so many of our guests for our 75 Years Celebration in



FIGURE 10. A group of AP-S Past Presidents after the AP-S Past Presidents Panel (Thursday, 18 July), which featured chronological presentations by as many as 23 Past Presidents (not all are shown in this picture), with highlights of their presidential terms.



FIGURE 11. Cake-cutting ceremony at the 75 Years AP-S Celebratory Lunch (Thursday, 18 July). This was followed by the IEEE President serving cake to our students and attendees and by the AP-S President opening and serving champagne (Italian Prosecco) with a toast for the Society's 75th birthday.



FIGURE 12. Students and other attendees enjoyed the cake-cutting ceremony in the Exhibit and Demo Area at Fortezza da Basso (Figure 11).



FIGURE 13. 75th AP-S Anniversary Celebratory Gala Dinner (Thursday, 18 July) in the magnificent Salone dei Cinquecento (“Hall of the Five Hundred”) at Palazzo Vecchio, the most historic and artistic building and hall in Florence. Due to the space limitation, this unfortunately had to be a “by invitation only” event for a small number of external and internal guests of the Society. Interestingly, the building is so historic that all of the food, supplies, and even musical instruments needed to be brought in by an aerial ladder through the window (the one seen at the bottom left of the hall) at a roughly third-floor level from the square (Piazza della Signoria). We are grateful to the City of Florence for making this event in their Town Hall possible and rather affordable to us.



FIGURE 14. The highlight of the 75 Years Gala Dinner at Palazzo Vecchio (Figure 13) were fantastic performances by tenor and soprano singers and violin, cello, and piano players throughout the evening. The biggest surprise of the evening (and the entire conference as many said) was the AP-S President’s singing of Schubert’s “Ave Maria” (shown in the picture), where after the first few verses in Latin, per the original, I finished with English and AP-S 75 Years Celebration language. After the first shock, as everybody, including the musicians, thought that I was going to give yet another speech, many cheered this unplanned piece of entertainment and fun.

Florence. Our external guests were truly impressed with our Society, as well as our organization and hospitality.

Congratulations to All on a phenomenal APS/URSI 2024 Conference and 75th AP-S Anniversary Celebration this past July in Florence!

Until next time, with very best wishes,
Branislav

REFERENCES

- [1] B. M. Notaroš, “Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society [President’s Message],” *IEEE Antennas Propag. Mag.*, vol. 66, no. 3, pp. 8–9, Jun. 2024, doi: [10.1109/MAP.2024.3399352](https://doi.org/10.1109/MAP.2024.3399352).
- [2] B. M. Notaroš, “State of the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society: An overview of operation, activities, accomplishments, and impacts,” *IEEE Antennas Propag. Mag.*, vol. 66, no. 3, pp. 16–27, Jun. 2024, doi: [10.1109/MAP.2024.33993891](https://doi.org/10.1109/MAP.2024.33993891).
- [3] B. M. Notaroš, “Fundamental changes and major actions of the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society [President’s Message],” *IEEE Antennas Propag. Mag.*, vol. 66, no. 2, pp. 6–11, Apr. 2024, doi: [10.1109/MAP.2024.3371768](https://doi.org/10.1109/MAP.2024.3371768).

