

# InfoVis Governance FAQ

- **Q: What is the rationale for this document?**

A: As the leading conference in its field, InfoVis strives to attract strong articles in its core topics, and to expand its scope as appropriate in terms of scientific questions, methods, and application domains. The quality of the conference relies on the quality of its different committees, that in turn relies on transparent policies based on scientific excellence, diversity in representation, and a rigorous selection process. This FAQ explains how the committees and processes work.

- **Q: What is the relationship between VIS and InfoVis?**

A: VIS is an umbrella event sponsored by the Visualization and Graphics Technical Committee (VGTC) of the IEEE Computer Society. VIS has several venues, the main ones being the three conferences InfoVis, VAST, and SciVis. These three conferences are held in parallel tracks during VIS, and they all keep a certain level of scientific independence while appearing as integrated as possible for the VIS participants. Therefore, this FAQ only covers the governance of InfoVis. The other conferences differ in many points.

- **Q: Who makes the decisions that affect InfoVis?**

A: InfoVis is one of the three main conferences under the umbrella of VIS. The other two conferences are VAST and SciVis, and there are also associated symposia and workshops. Each conference reviews papers completely independently from the others, with InfoVis, VAST, and SciVis having separate program committees (PC) to review papers, recruit reviewers and make recommendations and separate papers chairs who use these recommendations to establish the conference programme. Most other aspects of the organization are done through the shared umbrella of VIS, which has an organizing committee (OC) each year headed by the General Chair (GC). Many roles on the OC are shared between three chairs, one each from InfoVis, SciVis, and VAST.

Each conference has an independent Steering Committee (SC), which appoints papers chairs and proposes candidates for many OC roles in addition to long-term planning, policy decisions, and oversight for that conference. The SCs have 7-year term limits as of 2006.

The VIS Executive Committee (VEC) serves that long-term planning, policy, and oversight role for VIS as a whole, starting in 2007. The VEC also decides between bids for who will run the conference in subsequent years (that is, the combination of the location and the general chair). The VEC members include two representatives from each of the three SCs (elected by the SCs). The rest of the membership is determined by the VGTC (see next paragraph). The VGTC Chair and the VGTC Vice-Chair for Conferences are both members. The VGTC Chair also appoints the VEC Chair, a member at large, and up to two VGTC Directors. Membership of the VEC has a 6-year term limit. Who proposes and who has final approval for which OC roles is specified a charter agreed to by the VEC and the VGTC: some by the SCs, many by the GC, and some by the VEC itself (more details below).

The Visualization and Graphics Technical Committee (VGTC) has oversight of all visualization, graphics, and virtual/augmented reality conferences and journals sponsored by the IEEE. The VGTC Chair is elected by this full constituency and serves up to two 2-year terms. The past 7 VGTC Chairs are Directors of the VGTC - effectively its steering committee. The VGTC Directors thus have a term limit between 14 and 28 years, in theory. In practice, one member rotated off after 19 years; two current members have served 18 years.

- **Q: How can people participate in the conference?**

A: Everybody is welcome to attend the conference. All registrants are welcome to attend any session including papers, panels, tutorials, and workshops. The way to become an InfoVis paper author is to submit strong papers that are accepted through the peer review process, where decisions are made by the papers chairs based on detailed reviews from the program committee (PC) and additional external reviewers selected by PC members. The way to participate in other VIS tracks such as panels, workshops, and tutorials is to submit proposals that are reviewed by organizing committee members. VIS is always looking for diligent, well-informed, and punctual reviewers, and you can make yourself available by signing up

through the Precision Conference reviewing system and documenting your expertise and availability - <https://precisionconference.com/~vgtc/>

The most common entry point for further involvement with the conference is to be invited as a PC member. At least a few years of service as a PC member is typical before being considered for an organizing committee (OC) position. The grooming process for InfoVis leadership is that new conference organizers start in roles of lower responsibility so that we can assess their suitability (performance in terms of judgment, reliability, responsiveness, fairmindedness, thoroughness, consistency, clear and effective communication, and initiative) before promoting them to roles of higher responsibility such as papers chair.

- **Q: What are the criteria for new invitations to participate in conference governance and continuing inclusion?**

A: The two major metrics for inclusion are publication record as an author at InfoVis, and track record as both an organizer and a reviewer at InfoVis. Records of both publication and organizing at the other VIS conferences (VAST and SciVis) and other strong visualization-related venues such as CHI, EuroVis, and PacificVis are also relevant.

Moreover, we consider explicitly how to achieve an appropriate and diverse mix of:

- academic lineages
- research topics
- job (academia, industry)
- geography (in rough proportion to the research activity in major regions)
- gender

There is no algorithm, the steering committee deliberates between many possibilities with many factors weighed. These criteria are relevant for all of the five major decisions described below: new program committee, new and continuing organizer roles, "ladder" role of incoming posters chair, third papers chair, and new steering committee.

- **Q: What are the responsibilities of InfoVis Program Committee members?**

A: The PC makes detailed recommendations to the papers chairs about whether to accept or reject submitted papers. Each paper is assigned to two PC members, one primary and one secondary. For each paper assigned to them by the papers chairs, PC members write their own review and also invite an appropriate external reviewer. In the discussion period after reviews are due, all reviewers discuss the reviews, the primary summarizes the reviews in a meta-review, and the secondary indicates whether the recommendations in the meta-review reflect a consensus or not. For many years the assignment load has been stable with around 8 papers as the limit (and sometimes fewer). The size of the PC is driven by the number of submissions.

- **Q: How do people join the InfoVis Program Committee?**

A: Since 2003 the primary responsibility for determining the program committee lies with the papers chairs, who propose additions and deletions to the previous slate of members. This proposal is typically fine-tuned with suggestions from the SC and is then given final approval by the SC before invitations are issued by the papers chairs. The standard path to being invited is to get papers published: new members are typically people who have authored several publications at the conference. The program committee term limit is three years, so every year roughly one-third of the members rotate on and off. People who continue to actively publish at the conference are frequently invited to rejoin the committee after at least one year off. In many cases rotation off is driven by term limits, but performance reasons such as consistently late or inappropriate reviews or assignments of externals are also a factor.

- **Q: Who proposes and who approves Organizing Committee roles?**

A: The VEC proposes the General Chair with final approval from the VGTC Chair. The VEC decides on the multi-year roles of Program, Finance, and Webmaster. The VGTC Chair proposes the Publications chair with final approval by the VEC.

The papers chairs for each conference (two or three) are appointed by their respective SCs.

The major chair roles have one chair from each of the three conferences: Exhibits, Panels, Tutorials, Workshops, Doctoral Colloquium, Publicity, Meetups. These roles are proposed by the SC, with final

approval from the General Chair. Posters has two chairs from each conference, also approved by the GC. Many chairs are appointed directly at the GC's discretion, historically including Fast Forwards, Local Arrangements, additional Exhibits, and other specialty chairs including Art Show, Anniversary Celebrations, and so on. The Student Volunteer chairs are proposed and approved by the previous SV chairs. For most of these roles there should be at least one experienced person continuing from the previous year in the set.

- **Q: How do the Organizing Committee roles get decided?**

A: At the InfoVis level, each year there is a detailed discussion within the SC about who bring on board as new blood and who to continue keeping involved. The SC solicits feedback about how things went the previous year from the previous and continuing InfoVis papers chairs and also other InfoVis members of the OC through a mix of email, the in-person SC+OC meeting during the conference, and through the archival "infodumps" created by OC members to document their work processes over the previous year. The SC typically comes up with a list of people "on deck" for inclusion one year out during their in-person discussions, following up with final decisions about the roster in the fall, before the next conference begins. The SC is typically thinking at the higher level of deciding who should be on the roster for the next year. The SC and in particular its Chair is also doing the more hands-on work to match up which people are a good fit for which roles in terms of preferences and previous experience (who wants to keep on with the same job, who wants to try something new, who wants to take time off temporarily). Some of this information gathering and role matchmaking happens before SC makes decisions, and some after. The SC Chair proposes a full roster with both names and roles to the SC for approval before it is sent to the General Chair (GC). Some general chairs request a pool of additional names for some or all of the conferences for the roles that they directly appoint, others have people in mind already for these roles.

- **Q: What is a good path to future involvement in the Organizing Committee?**

A: Communicating with a member of SC is a good way to express interest in becoming more involved with conference organization in general. The SC does not typically add people immediately, as it already has a small pool of people "on deck" who are being considered for inclusion that next year, but indicating interest is one path to getting into that pool for subsequent years. It can also be useful to communicate with current OC members to learn more about specific roles.

The SC also encourages people to propose new ideas for things to do at the conference, which could result in new organizer jobs; examples of current conference roles that started this way in the past include Compass, Vis in Other Venues, Fast Forwards, Contests, and Posters.

Communicating with the future General Chair is also a possible route to involvement for a specific year.

- **Q: How do people progress to high-responsibility positions on the InfoVis Organizing Committee?**

A: There is a "ladder" of high-responsibility top roles, where posters leads to papers. There is a standard progression through ladder roles, where there are pairs of incoming/outgoing chairs for both posters and papers. Typically, outgoing posters becomes incoming papers. The benefits of this progression include good continuity and institutional memory through the incoming/outgoing pair mechanism and a clear path for who does what next that culminates in papers chairs that have a strong track record of being effective in organizational roles. It supports career progression and grooming of papers chairs so they can make long-term plans to ensure they're well positioned for a high-responsibility job in future years.

The SC decides which of the mid-level organizers to promote up to the ladder slot of incoming posters, meaning that the person will become the new papers chair in three years if all goes well. These roles are necessarily limited in number; it's not possible to accommodate all who take on the organizing committee roles, especially as the community grows, even where they have worked very effectively.

The SC also decides who to invite as a third paper chair for a one or two year term, often a senior researcher who has been active in other conferences and journals rather than from the active set of OC members. The publication agreement between TVCG and VIS requires that at least one of the papers chairs for each conference must have associate editor experience at TVCG or an equivalent-level journal; the third papers chair often meets this requirement.

- **Q: What are the responsibilities of the Steering Committee members?**

A: The SC appoints the papers chairs and posters chairs. The SC is in charge of determining the OC roster before passing it along to the VEC and General Chair for final approval (as specified by the Matrix appendix to the VEC Charter). The SC has final approval over the PC proposed by the papers chairs. The SC also determines long-term policy questions. Two SC members serve as the InfoVis representatives on the VEC. The role of SC Chair was formalized after VIS 2014, when the Conference Chair position was eliminated; the Chair now spearheads the OC roster formation process, and also plays an operational role as a member of the OC. SC members may also serve as mentors to the OC, particularly to orient new members and help them get up to speed.

- **Q: How do people join the InfoVis Steering Committee?**

A: There are seven SC members. Term limits of 7 years for SC members started in 2007. The current SC decides who to invite as the next SC member to replace the person rotating out: each year, one person leaves and one person joins. Frequently, SC members have served as papers chairs, either recently or in the past.

- **Q: Who are the past InfoVis Steering Committee members?**

A: In the list below, the name is italicized the year the person first joins the SC.

2015: Carpendale, *Dykes*, Fekete, Munzner, *S North*, Shneiderman, Wattenberg

2014: *Carpendale*, Fekete, Munzner, Shneiderman, Ward, Wattenberg, van Wijk

2013: Fekete, Hanrahan, Munzner, Shneiderman, *Ward*, Wattenberg, van Wijk

2012: *Fekete*, Hanrahan, Munzner, Shneiderman, Stasko, Wattenberg, van Wijk

2011: Hanrahan, Keim, *Munzner*, Shneiderman, Stasko, Wattenberg, van Wijk

2010: Dill, Hanrahan, Keim, *Shneiderman*, Stasko, Wattenberg, van Wijk

2009: Dill, Hanrahan, Keim, Robertson, Stasko, *Wattenberg*, van Wijk

2008: Card, Dill, Hanrahan, Keim, Robertson, Stasko, *van Wijk*

2007: Card, Dill, Gershon, *Hanrahan*, Keim, Robertson, Stasko

2006: Card, Dill, Eick, Gershon, Keim, Robertson, *Stasko*

2005: Card, Dill, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, Keim, Robertson, Roth

2004: Card, Dill, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, Keim, Robertson, Roth

2003: Card, Dill, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, Keim, Robertson, Roth

2002: Card, Dill, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, Keim, Robertson, Roth

2001: Card, *Dill*, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, *Keim*, Robertson, *Roth*

2000: not listed

1999: Card, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, Robertson

1998: Card, Eick, Feiner, Gershon, Robertson

1995/1996/1997: not listed

- **Q: What meetings happen at VIS?**

A: There's an in-person meeting during InfoVis itself with the OC+SC, for both postmortem of previous year and planning for future year. We're interested in hearing how things are going both within the InfoVis conference track itself and in relation to VIS as a whole. It's typically Thursday lunch.

The SC meets once (currently all three steering committees have synchronized their meetings to the Tuesday breakfast slot).

The VEC meets several times (in the past Monday breakfast and Thursday pre and post dinner, switching to a Wednesday breakfast instead of the Thursday post dinner slot in 2014).

The VGTC Executive Committee meets once (typically Tuesday dinner). The VGTC Directors also meet separately before that (typically Tuesday lunch).

The full set of organizers and steering committees (all OC members, all three SCs, and the VEC) has a dinner meeting Thursday night.

## Definitions

- InfoVis: short name of the IEEE "Information Visualization" conference, one of the 3 conferences organized under the IEEE VIS umbrella, along with VAST and SciVis.
- VAST: Visual Analytics Science and Technology conference, also organized under the IEEE VIS umbrella.
- SciVis: current short name of the IEEE "Scientific Visualization" Conference, also organized under the VIS umbrella. Before 2012, the long name was "Visualization" and the short name was simply "Vis".
- VIS: The umbrella conference, called "VisWeek" before 2013.
- VGTC: Visualization and Graphics Technical Committee, a Technical Committee from the IEEE Computer Society, in charge of computer graphics and visualization as its name implies. See <http://www.computer.org/portal/web/tandc/home> for more information about the organization of IEEE and IEEE CS.
- VEC: Visualization Executive Committee, the steering committee of the VIS conference as a whole.
- SC: Steering Committee of either of the 3 VAST, InfoVis, or SciVis conferences.
- GC: General Chair of the VIS umbrella event.
- OC: Organizing Committee of the VIS umbrella event, in charge of a particular venue (papers, workshops, posters, tutorials, etc.) Most venues have one or two co-chairs assigned from each conference SC.
- PC: Program Committee, primary and secondary reviewers for articles submitted at the conference.