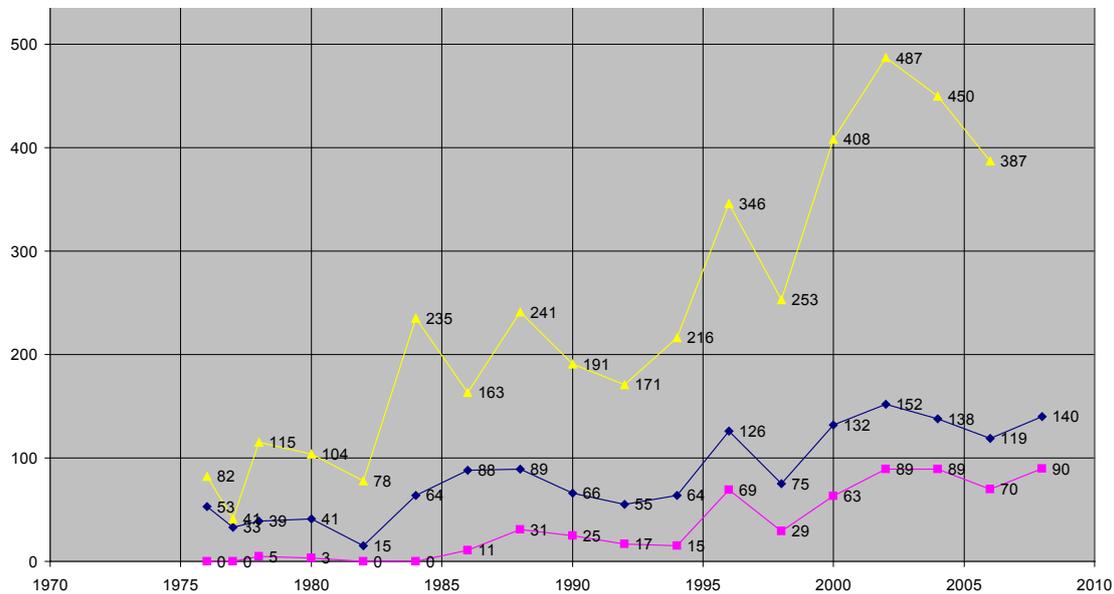


A jubilee word to the reader

It seems unbelievable that the BIOSIGNAL conference is being run as a biennial (initially annual) series of meetings already for thirty four years, since 1976 – so that it reaches its jubilee twentieth continuation this year. It perhaps deserves a brief historic summary - see the plot, where the total number of papers (middle curve) is presented along with the numbers of presentations from abroad (lower) and pages of proceedings (upper curve, except 2008 CD).



The history started in 1976 by a national conference with 53 contributions of only local (Czechoslovak) attendees. The total number of papers went even down in some next years but there was an important difference, rather exceptional in this region at that time: since 1978, the conferences became “with international participation”-type – the only possibility then for inviting participants from the “hostile imperialistic” world. Younger people would nowadays see it as a fairy tale that each individual foreign participant had to be agreed on by high-level state and party authorities, and that the institutions like a Ministry or Rector office had to undertake responsibility for every foreigner’s political acceptability. If such a guaranty was not explicitly available, the visit could not be realised; unfortunately, it really happened once that we had invited a recognised scientist who was willing to arrive but his visit had to be cancelled in the last moment. There was still another problem: many foreign colleagues were afraid to travel to a “communist” country being worried of possible political problems. In fact, when they were not politically active (which was naturally the case), they were not endangered, as many verified. The conference organisers might have been more impacted, as it was revealed after the revolution in 1989. Fortunately, we never had any real difficulties of this kind; only the feeling was sometimes shaky. In spite of all that, the international participation was increasing and reached tens of participants already before 1989. This represented – besides the obvious professional benefits – an important general profit provided by the conference: an open window to the free academic world not known locally then.

Starting from the year 1990, the organisers aimed at converting the conference into a standard scientific meeting, which was undoubtedly enhanced by the moral support of international academic institutions, particularly of EURASIP. The positive influence of being a EURASIP conference since 1995 can be clearly detected when looking at the above numbers. In 2000, BIOSIGNAL was also supported by an EC grant, which was reflected in the “Euroconference” label. The BIOSIGNAL enjoyed also important support by the internationally recognised personalities – e.g. EURASIP presidents, high IEEE-EMBS representatives and also by many highly recognised scientists who were regularly attending it. No less important

was recognition by local authorities, as demonstrated via regularly opening the conferences by the Rector of the University, the Dean of the Faculty and the President of the Czech Society for Biomedical Engineering. During the years, the excellent International Program Committee was build up and, besides influencing the conference scope, the credit of its members was a sign of quality attracting the potential attendees. This was reflected in numbers of attending scientists – in the peak years, the total numbers of participants exceeded 300, and the attendance became really international – around two thirds of participants were from abroad, many overseas, and from all the continents during years.

The scientific level of the conference is to be evaluated by others but the attendance seems to speak positively for it, as well as the reject rate of submitted contributions that used to be around 20% after initial stabilisation. The conferences were and still are intended to be a forum for exchange of ideas in the interdisciplinary field at the border of technology and biomedicine, and contributions from both sides were and are welcome. If the conference eased formulating some common language, it fulfilled a part of its intentions. Regionally taken, the conference was undoubtedly a gate for many so far inexperienced scientists from the countries previously “behind the iron curtain” to the international scientific community and helped or even enabled them to start publishing their work on this standard forum.

As for its style, BIOSIGNAL started as a modest university based and volunteer organised meeting, enabling informal, working and friendly atmosphere, and remained in this style for more than a half of its existence. The volunteer efforts enabled then also the rather unusual social program still memorable for many traditional participants: starry nights on ships on Brno lake, in wine cellars or in historical monasteries preceded by chamber or organ concerts, informal meetings with walking trips and evening fires in open nature etc. With the developing extent of attendance, and thanks to gradually younger organising committee, the conferences acquired increasingly more standard international style, leaving the university grounds and utilising professional congress facilities. However, the organisers were all the time trying to maintain the academic working atmosphere, and to avoid influence of the otherwise ever-present commercialisation.

Allow me a closing personal note, related to the first sentence of this text. After serving as the Chair of the conference and of the International Programme Committee for all those long years, I am going to resign now from these functions – the vision of the conference future and its concepts should be already formulated by younger generation. I would like to utilise this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all who contributed to the long term success of the conference, primarily to all members of the BIOSIGNAL International Programme Committee. Their willingness to support the conference by their scientific credit and concrete ideas was and still is of invaluable importance. Of crucial value was also the enthusiastic support by my colleagues at the Department of Biomedical Engineering, Brno UT, who formed the organising committees during the years. It should be emphasised that the conference was always organised by the Department, thus in an academic non-commercial manner; this would not be possible without a substantial support by the University authorities. Last but not least, real gratitude belongs to the international institutions – primarily to the EURASIP and also to the EFMBE and the IEEE-EMBS that supported BIOSIGNAL conference since the revolution in 1989, bestowing it the international character and guaranteeing the scientific level that attracted the participants literally from the whole world.

The basic trend, as visible from the presented curves for the first batch of twenty conferences, is clearly positive. Let us wish that the starting second twenty under the new leadership will be similarly successful and that the long tradition of BIOSIGNAL international meetings in Brno will thus continue.

Brno, June 2010

Jiří Jan, Conference Chair