

## **Six Wonderful, Challenging, Exciting, Demanding Years as EIC of IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics: Systems - A Personal Perspective**

**by Robert Kozma, EIC Transactions SMC-Systems (2020-2025)**

I had the great honor to serve as Editor-In-Chief of the *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics: Systems (TSMC-Systems)* (2020 - 2025). TSMC-Systems has demonstrated significant progress during these years, concerning both quantity and quality measures. It is listed among the top journals in systems science and cybernetics with engineering applications. Together with our sister journals, *Transactions on Cybernetics*, *Transactions on Human-Machine Systems*, and *Transactions on Computational Social Systems*, we publish high-quality papers, which represent a crucial contribution to and attraction of the IEEE SMC Society.

Following the great traditions of the Transactions of Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, established in 1971 and developed under the leadership of Andrew P. Sage as EIC for decades, the Transactions underwent multiple changes in consequent decades. The present format of the Transactions of Systems, Man, and Cybernetics: Systems has been launched in 2013 with EIC Witold Pedrycz, followed by Philip Chen as EIC. I took over the journal from Philip in 2020, who established an explosively growing trajectory during his tenure. As incoming EIC, I have built on those successes with a goal of solidifying and expanding them further in the highly competitive scientific publications arena. I served as EIC for 6 years as the max specified by our regulations. My heartfelt congratulation to the incoming Editor-In-Chief, Huijun Gao. His outstanding research and editorial experience will undoubtedly lead our Transactions to new heights.

The past six years produced several key advances for the TSMC-Systems. Without trying to be comprehensive, let me summarize here a few key aspects:

- The number of submissions grew from 3,000 manuscripts in 2020, to close to 6,000 in 2025. The size of TSMC-Systems increased from 3,000 pages prior to 2020, to 5,000 pages in 2020, and to 10,000 pages in 2025, which is expected to be maintained in 2026. The increase of the size of the journal starting from 2020 was necessitated by the significant backlog we had at that time: papers had to wait over 2 years before publication on the journal pages. To resolve this problem, we had a two-pronged approach.
- With the concentrated efforts of the Associated Editors, we implemented a highly selective evaluation process. To eliminate the backlog, only about 10-12% of the submitted papers were accepted, which is still at the level of 14-15%. In addition, we published the backlog on extra pages supported by SMC Society BOG, so the size of the journal increased. As the result, the backlog has been reduced step-by-step during 2021-2022, and practically eliminated by 2023. By now, we reached a healthy, low level of backlog, and papers can be assigned to journal volumes/pages within 2-3 months after acceptance.
- We were able to implement a drastic increase of the journal volume, at the same time maintaining quality. The impact factor of TSMC-Systems, following some high spikes and oscillations in 2020-2022, has a stable and respectable level of 8.6-8.7 in recent years. Overall, according to SJR metrics, TSMC-Systems is among the leading journals, top 2-3% worldwide, including areas: Control Systems & Engineering (#10, Q1, 10/369), Human Computer Interaction (#5, Q1, 5/187); Software (#12, Q1, 12/510).
- These achievements are based on the hard work of our Associate Editors. We increased the number of our Associate Editors, reaching an Editorial Board size of about 150 AEs now. As we receive more and more manuscripts, the AEs load is getting higher and higher. The devoted

work of the AEs is highly appreciated. In response to the increasing submissions, we introduced the level of Senior Editors with 15 SEs. This has been an important step in maintaining the high quality and efficiency of the evaluation process.

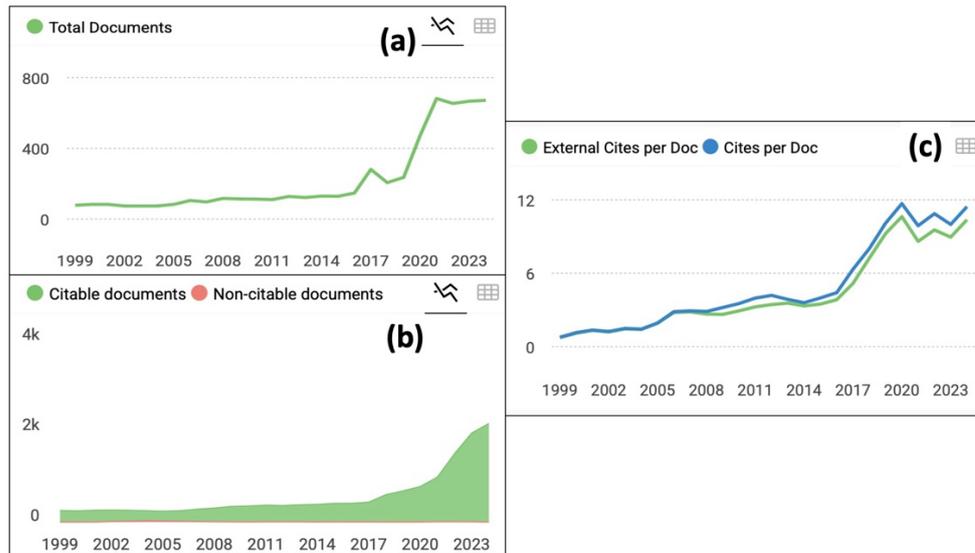


Figure 1. SCImago source data and displays on TSMC-Systems publication quantity and quality measures, during the time period 1999 to 2024; please note that the last data point stands for 2024. (a) The total number of published papers approx. doubled in the past 6 years. (b) Citable documents (a cumulative measure) almost tripled during the same period (585 in 2019, 1928 in 2024). (c) Cites per document is SCImago measure of impact, has maintained the level about 10-12, depending on the observation window. Sustaining a stable high citation level is very remarkable, considering the 2-3 times increase of publication volume during the same period.



Figure: According to our traditions, we have a face-to-face meeting of AEs at the annual flagship Conference of our Society. Typically, only a small fraction of the AEs can attend; we would like to improve on this by encouraging AEs to participate in various activities of the conference, and the SMC Society work overall. Here is a snapshot of the almost two dozen participants, both active and past Editors of our journal, who attended of the AE meeting during SMC2024, October 5, 2024, Kuching, Malaysia.

The support of the SMCS leadership has been instrumental in the dynamic development and successes of the journal. This included the crucial role of previous Presidents Imre Rudas, Sam Kwong, and Adrian Stoica, our President in the recent 2 years. During my years of service, I worked closely with the VPs for Publications, Enrique Viedma-Herrera, Shi Peng, and presently Shun-Feng Su, who were always there to help and provided their advice. Overall, the SMCS Board of Governors' continued support was key to accomplish my EIC work.

It has been an exciting and rewarding experience for me as EIC of TSMC-Systems to witness and reflect upon the explosion of our research field. I look forward to support our society and the field in future challenges.

*Boston, December, 2025.*

*Post Script: Robert Kozma received the "IEEE SMCS Outstanding Contribution Award" for his outstanding service as EIC of the IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics: Systems, which has been announced at the SMC2025 Awards Ceremony, October 7, 2025, Vienna, Austria.*