In September I gave a Distinguished Lecture tour in South America, visiting three Chapters in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.

On September 19 I left Canada at midnight, flying all night to arrive in Buenos Aires late afternoon on the Monday the 20th. That evening I went with Jorge Hedderwick to visit Cisco, where Jorge works, where we met briefly with Sebastian Ballerini, the Regional Manager for Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay. He was aware of Communications Society because of the Industry Leader award presented to John Chambers. Sebastian noted that Cisco grew 70% in South America over the past year. Since I was quite tired after flying all night, and Jorge had to host some other speakers, we decided not to plan any activities. I just got a small dinner on my own and caught up some email.

I had free time early in the day on Tuesday so I took a tour from my hotel to see the Delta. This was very informative, and it was interesting to see the small summer houses near the water, even though this day was somewhat overcast. On the way back I stopped in Recolleta to see the church and the cemetery where Eva Peron is buried. Then I had to get ready to meet the active volunteers from the local Section.

On Tuesday evening I met with people from the local section, Raul Sabio, Jorge Hedderwick, Ricardo Veiga and Luis Remez. We had a wonderful dinner in a restaurant facing the river. The local Chapter is very active, as is the Section, with many active volunteers working to increase the membership, and convince members in other cities to start new Chapters. The economic crisis Argentina experienced a few years ago affected the Section membership. Currently the Section has around 700 members and the Communications Chapter has around 200. This represents about 35% of the total membership Section had before the crisis. They have a large distribution list, which they use to inform people of their meetings and activities. This day was the first day of spring, which is a holiday in Buenos Aires, so there were school children all over the city. We discussed the situation in Argentina. There are still 250 elementary/high schools at this time that do not have electricity. Many people in the country still do not have jobs, and it is difficult for some to get education, even though university education is free to residents.

On Wednesday I attended the show, ExpoComm. This show had about 160 exhibitors – down from a few years ago, but still a good showing. The show floor was very vibrant.
IEEE runs the associated conference, and this year they introduced tutorials. They ran 3-4 tutorials a day for 5 days through the entire week. My 4 hour tutorial on Project Management ran this afternoon. About 100 people attended, and all seemed to be quite interested in the topic. Afterwards, Jorge invited me to his house for a wonderful dinner, and to meet his wife Amelia and his 3 sons.

Thursday I gave my DL, which was the noon keynote for the conference. Again, about 100 people attended and seemed to be quite interested in the topic. After the talk I was requested to give a press interview. The material will be published in an on-line publication. It would be great if we could get more of this type of publicity for ComSoc in general, at all of our conferences.

Immediately after the interview we went to the Buquebus, which took me to Uruguay by boat. At the boat I met Jadeep Srivastava and his colleague Ray Paul. Jadeep is a DL for Computer Society. He gave talks in both Argentina and Uruguay as well. The boat was an extremely pleasant way to travel, with comfortable seats, a table and a cafeteria. Sitting with the Computer Society speakers I enjoyed some good conversation as well.

We were met in Montevideo by Gustavo Giannattasio, the Section Chair and previous ComSoc Chapter Chair, and Rafael Novales the Computer Chapter Chair, who delivered us to the hotel, and returned later to take us to dinner. At dinner we tried local food – mainly beef – which was as good as the food in Argentina.

Friday I gave my DL talk at the Antel location. About 100 people attended, and they seemed to enjoy the talk. Antel is housed in the newest and most expensive building in Montevideo, a beautiful building complex overlooking the harbour on one side and the city on the other side. Before the talk I was asked to give a TV interview, for the news, I had the chance to describe to Channel 12 TV “Teledoce “ of Montevideo, IEEE mission and part of the topics to be covered in the conference.
The first speaker was Jorge Henon, General Manager of Antel. He announced new availability for EDGE as well as new speed rates of ADSL services.

After the talk Broadcaster Magazine asked for another interview. Then Mr. Jorge Henon arranged for a tour of the tower, showing off the wonderful view from the top floor, followed by a visit with the Antel Project Management Office (PMO), since they knew that I was giving a Project Management talk in the afternoon. Then the Chapter Chair, Juan Pechiar, who also has a card giving the English version of his name, John Pechiar, took me to a typical restaurant for lunch. In the afternoon I gave the short talk on Project Management which was hosted by both the IEEE Section and PMI. This talk was in the Catholic University, and beautiful old building, in a room that is obviously also used as a
church. In the evening I had a dinner, at 10 pm, with Gustavo and his wife Susana.

Saturday Gustavo and Susana took me on a trip along some of the over 300 km of beaches that run along the edge of the country. The weather was beautiful and a few people were starting to open their beach homes for the summer season. Then Saturday evening we had dinner with Juan Carlos Miguez and his wife Sylvia. Juan Carlos is a previous Region 9 Director who lives about 500 km from Montevideo, but he happened to be in town on this Saturday.

Sunday Juan Carlos took me for a brief visit to a local shopping center which is built in a building that was once a prison. Later Gustavo left the party for his new granddaughter to take me to the airport.

Sunday evening I was met at the airport by the Chile Chapter Chair, Pedro Aguilera, and his friend Anita. We had an excellent seafood dinner.
Monday morning I gave my talk at the School of Engineering of the University of Chile in Santiago. Approximately 25 people attended, which was a good turnout for this new Chapter that Pedro has brought back to life over the past year.

Afterwards we walked with a small group of IEEE volunteers Eduardo Vera, Nestor Becerra and Pedro Aguilera to a local restaurant to try traditional Chilean sea bass for lunch.

The visit to Chile was extremely short, as I flew home that same afternoon.

Overall the trip was very interesting for me, and as always, it was wonderful to meet so many interesting people. It is rewarding to see the high levels of activity in these countries, and hopefully the talks brought some value to the members there.