

ly recognized as standards; and second, and perhaps best of all, to put into permanent form for world-wide distribution, the specialized knowledge which our members, experts in their particular line, are so unselfishly furnishing for this purpose. And while the official stamping of generally acknowledged standards is a necessary duty, for myself I have found the most interest in our meetings has come from the valuable papers read and printed, and I don't believe the limited time of our meetings can be spent in a more worth-while manner.

And it is by the printed copies of

these papers that we shall be remembered, for they will doubtless find their way not only into the hands of our members and others of our own industry but into libraries generally. Perhaps nothing is more to be desired or would add more to our prestige or usefulness.

And there is a wonderful collection of data already collated. Do you want to know the percentage of loss of light by reason of the tinting of films — it is in the *Transactions*. Do you want to know the distortion error due to angular projection — it is in the book! Do you want to know the source of loss of

light at various points in the optical system — it is in your own printed copy. Do you want to know the cause of the stroboscopic effect of shutters — it is in the booklet sent our members. Do you want to know the proper current density for carbon arcs — reach for the bound volume. Do you want to know the advantages and disadvantages of various electric current devices — it is in the unselfish report of that Committee.

Gentlemen, I thank you for hearing me through. I have a fatherly feeling for this Society.

---

## SMPTE Membership — Then and Now

By Joyce R. Hurwitz

What makes up the membership of the SMPTE? Let us go back for a brief look at the beginnings of the Society, its plans and growth over the decades. The idea for the Society is credited to C. Francis Jenkins, an inventor living in Washington, D.C. Recognizing the need for standardization in an increasingly chaotic motion-picture industry where each manufacturer was introducing his own design, Jenkins attempted to set up an organization to deal with this problem.

Jenkins met with two of his colleagues, E. K. Gillett and N. J. Brown, in Atlantic City to discuss the situation. In July 1916, a meeting was held in Washington, D.C., with seven additional engineers, and the decision was reached to form a society of engineering specialists. A constitution was worked out, and Jenkins was elected chairman. The Society was officially incorporated on July 24, 1916, with its objective the advancement in the theory and practice of motion-picture engineering and the allied arts and sciences, the standardization of the mechanisms and practices employed therein, and the maintenance of a

high professional standing among its members.

Response to the formation of the Society was enthusiastic, and 26 people attended the first meeting of the SMPE at the Hotel Astor in New York City, October 2-3, 1916. Jenkins was elected President, the constitution ratified, an emblem for the Society was approved, and six committees were established. Jenkins chaired an engineering committee on optics as well as the membership committee. The basic aim of the fledgling organization was set forth by Jenkins in an address to the membership in 1917, when he stated: "The prime purpose of the organization of the Society is to standardize our industry."

From this modest beginning the Society has grown to almost 9500 members living and working in many areas of the globe. From its inception, the membership represented every branch of the motion-picture industry, dealing with both the artistic and scientific aspects of photography processing, distribution, and projection. These early members were also chemists, engineers, and researchers interested in furthering the development of motion pictures. In 1950, the Society acknowledged the growth and importance of the infant television industry by changing its name to the

Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE).

In the early years, through the late 1920s, all members of the Society took an active part in the production of standards, which were published in the *Transactions*, the forerunner of the *Journal*.

As the size and influence of the Society grew, in 1924, members on the West Coast voted to form a Pacific Coast Section. This actually was the first official section, or chapter, since the original New York or East Coast area was not formally designated a section until six years later. Branching out into international territory, the Society formed a Canadian Section in 1928, and in the same year a London Section was established. Unfortunately this first overseas chapter proved unworkable at that time, and the London Section broke away to form what is now the British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society (BKSTS).

The year 1930 was a remarkable period of growth for the Society as a whole; it expanded to the point where various geographical areas needed to have their own chapters. In May the New York Section was formally approved, and the Chicago Section was established. In 1946 the membership was organized into three geographic

---

Joyce Hurwitz is Associate Editor of the *Journal*. Copyright © 1991 by the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, Inc.

areas. The New York Section was renamed the Atlantic Coast Section, including all the states on the eastern seaboard. The Chicago Section became the Central Section, including all the states within the central U.S. and ranging from the borders of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The Pacific Coast Section was divided into the Los Angeles Section (which became the Hollywood Section the following year) and the San Francisco Section.

In the 1950s a large increase in membership prompted some reorganization of the local chapters. The Central Section was broken up into the Dallas, Chicago, and Atlanta Sections; and the Atlantic Coast Section was divided into the New York and Rochester Sections. Outside the continental U.S., the Canadian membership was grouped into the Montreal/Quebec Section in 1957, the Toronto Section in 1963, and the Ottawa Section in 1981.

As the Society continued to grow and expand, new chapters were formed almost every year. Today there are 26 sections, including the newly formed overseas chapters in Italy, Germany, the Nordic countries, the Soviet Union, and the Australia North area. The fastest growth in the Society membership in recent years has been in the international sector. Out of a total membership of close to 9500, the international affiliates now include about 1530 outside the North American continent.

The Society currently has sections in the following areas: Atlanta, Australia North, Australia South, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Florida/Caribbean, Germany, Hollywood, Houston, Italy, Montreal/Quebec, Nashville, New England, New York, the Nordic countries, Ohio, Pacific/Northwest, Philadelphia, Rochester, Rocky Mountain, San Francisco, the Soviet Union, Toronto, and Washington, D.C. To indicate the scope of the Society's growth, in 1928, at the time the Pacific Coast Section was organized, the total membership of the entire Society was less than that reached by the Pacific Section alone in its 25th year. Current membership in the Pacific/Northwest Section is now about 250.

In addition to the sections listed above, the Society has 13 student chapters at the following campuses: Baylor University, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Fitchburg

State College, Institute of Audio Research, Napa Valley College, Ohio University, Pasadena City College, Rochester Institute of Technology, Sam Houston State University, San Jose State University, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, University of California at Los Angeles, and University of Southern California.

Membership in the Society is open to anyone with a clearly defined interest in any phase of motion-picture or television production. There are various grades of membership that correspond to an individual's age and qualifications. These are Active, Associate, Student, and Life Members.

Upon reaching the age of 65 and meeting certain criteria, application can be made to attain a higher grade of membership. Those members who are Fellows at the time of application can be elevated to become Life Fellows, and Active or Associate Members can apply to become Life Members. Fellows are selected from among qualifying members who have attained an outstanding rank among engineers or executives in the motion-picture, television, or related industries.

The present-day membership of the SMPTE draws its ranks from people working in television, film, sound, computers and computer graphics, education, manufacturing, and management. In contrast to the early years of the Society, when membership was drawn exclusively from the motion-picture industry, the bulk of the membership is now involved in television and video. Representative positions include broadcast and cable facility engineers, broadcast or cable technician/operators, post-production facility engineers, post-production technician/operators, manufacturing engineers (design, research, etc.), and maintenance engineers.

Those working with film include facility engineers, manufacturing engineers (design, research, etc.), technician/operators (post-production), production staff, and exhibitors. The sound category includes design engineers, facility engineers, audio technicians (production), and audio technicians (post-production). Members working with computers and computer graphics include manufacturing engineers and operators. The field of education is represented by teachers, students, and researchers. Members from the ranks of manage-

ment include owners (upper management) and supervisors (middle management). The remainder work as independent consultants.

The corporate, or sustaining, members play an important role in the Society. The February 1930 issue of the *Journal of the SMPE* reported that the Solicitations Committee, chaired by E. P. Curtis, was endeavoring to secure sustaining memberships in the amounts of \$100, \$500, or \$1000, which it was hoped would provide the Society with the funds necessary for conducting its business, as its expenses were not covered by the annual dues and entrance fees. The additional funds also covered the cost of publishing a monthly journal headed by an official Secretary/Editor and also facilitated the Society's move to a permanent headquarters. By April 1930, ten firms had agreed to take up sustaining memberships. The following were the first companies to officially support the Society, in the amounts indicated:

*\$100 memberships:* Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc.; Eastman Kodak Co.; Paramount-Famous-Lasky Corp.; and RCA Photophone, Inc.

*\$500 memberships:* Bell & Howell Co.; Consolidated Film Industries; DuPont-Pathé Film Manufacturing Corp.; and Technicolor Motion Picture Corp.

*\$1000 memberships:* Audio-Cinema, Inc., and Case Research Laboratories.

All members of the SMPE were urged to make every effort to persuade their firms to become sustaining members. From this modest start with 10 companies, the current sustaining membership of the Society has grown to include approximately 210 firms representing both motion pictures and television.

As early as 1930, membership in the Society outside the U.S. included people from England, Germany, France, Canada, India, Australia, Russia, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Burma, Argentina, Holland, the Philippine Islands, Japan, and Sweden. Present-day membership is worldwide.

The Society's membership has now stabilized at around the 9500 mark. This would seem to be in keeping with the goals of founder C. F. Jenkins, who advised in 1921, "The aim of the Society should not be the rapid increase of members, but the building up of a membership quality."