

Challenges, Involvement, and Commitment

In my first message, in January of this year, I pointed to the fact that the members of the Society and the industries they serve are experiencing a time of change. We all recognize that the creation of motion-picture and television programming content, the means of distribution, and the ways in which the marketplace is viewed are undergoing dynamic change, brought about in part by advances in the application of digital technology.

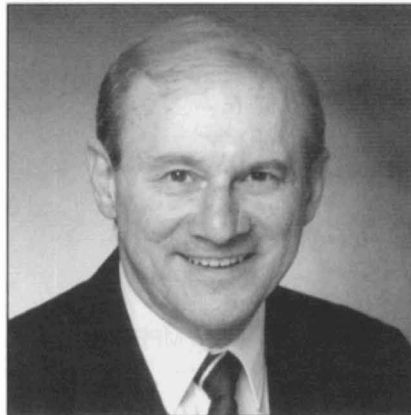
Addressing New Technologies

One of the fastest growing areas of interest involves new mechanisms for content distribution to the consumer, such as CD-ROMs and other forms of digital videodisks. These new mechanisms tend to lack adequate standardization of tools for program content creation and interchange, both at the professional and consumer levels of distribution. The new tools available to the creative artists require standards that will allow transport across media boundaries. The existence of such standards will help reduce both the cost of program creation and distribution and help create consumer markets that drive the whole process.

SMPTE has a long tradition of establishing standards that provide for interchange. The traditional role of the Society has been to provide a forum for the providers of new technologies and the creative users of those technologies to construct meaningful mechanisms for programming creation and distribution. SMPTE members include most of the major programming content providers. However, while some of the providers of these new technologies are SMPTE members, many consider their home in computer-based organizations such as the Interactive Multimedia Association (IMA), a 350-plus member trade organization dedicated to advancing the new distribution mechanisms.

Progress on the Multimedia Standards Challenge

To solve the multimedia interchange standards problem, the IMA and SMPTE have formed a joint working group on multimedia disciplines. The group is charged with defining and developing engineering documents, including standards, recommended practices, and engineering guidelines in the areas of authoring, production, and distribution of multi-



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media content. The IMA and SMPTE bring together the major providers of digital distribution technology and the major content providers in a forum that offers an opportunity to meet consumers' expectations for interchange and interoperability.

We recognize that the Society's role is to help both its individual members and Sustaining Members to understand and cope with the fast-paced evolving environment in which we work and to provide the tools necessary to conduct their activities. This strategic alliance with the IMA is an important step in meeting that commitment.

Sharing the Benefits/Sharing the Burden

While the SMPTE is a member organization, many of its activities provide benefits to the businesses that employ the members. SMPTE is about information, education, and training, as well as standards. Tutorials regularly accompany SMPTE conferences and are but one example of the kind of educational service the Society provides. Locally, SMPTE has a large number of active sections that hold monthly meetings and arrange special events to explore new technologies and applications. Sections programs are tailored to the needs of their immediate area, and a tremendous amount of mutual support and information exchange takes place within local sections. The knowledge and information shared through these activities is the essence of the organization. Better informed owners, managers, and employees make better decisions. In my view, active membership in SMPTE is not only important to the industries we serve, it is also good value.

SMPTE looks to the businesses and

industries it serves to support its significant efforts in setting worldwide motion-picture and video standards and in supporting its educational and local member services. Corporate members support those activities by becoming Sustaining Members.

During this past year, the Society has mounted an effort to contact and inform the leaders of the businesses and industries it serves about our role in their affairs. I believe that the burden of providing the benefits to industry should not be borne by the individual members alone. Where would the film and television industries be without 35mm film, or SMPTE time code, or the D-format tape standards that provide for economical interchange? With sustaining, or corporate, membership available for as little as \$750, the Society has invited those corporations that derive benefit from our activities to join as Sustaining Members and to be a part of maintaining the vital core of our industry.

The response to date has been very positive, resulting in a 10% increase in the number of Sustaining Members since the beginning of the year. By increasing the number of Sustaining Members and individual members, the Society can continue to provide services to its membership. By sharing the burden, everyone benefits and no one need carry a heavy burden.

I invite each individual member and each Sustaining Member to assist in this process by identifying businesses that are not Sustaining Members but benefit from SMPTE activities, and by forwarding their names to me. (The list of Sustaining Members can usually be found on the inside back cover of the *Journal*.) The business can be a local post-production house, duplication facility, or computer company entering the multimedia market, as well as individual consulting firms that provide services for our industries. Just provide me with a contact name, address, and telephone number via fax (212-664-5219) or e-mail (baron@oepandd, nbc.com), with a note saying "Sustaining Member candidate," and I will take it from there.

As an organization we want to continue to support and inform our membership, to better equip them to deal with the rapid, and often structural changes that are impacting the way we work and do business. A strong SMPTE can not only keep its members on top of changes in technology and its application but also provides them with a voice in how that technology will develop.

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