

Recap of a Two-Year Journey — Continuing the New Beginnings

The Society's Role

In my first address to you, published in the January 1995 *Journal*, I took the opportunity to describe the journey that I hoped we would take together over the next two years. At that time, I believed: "The members of the Society and the industries that they serve are experiencing a time of change. Advances in the technology we use and the convergence of various communications media brought about by the implementation of digital technology have impacted the creation of motion picture and television programming, the means of distribution, and the ways that the marketplace is viewed.

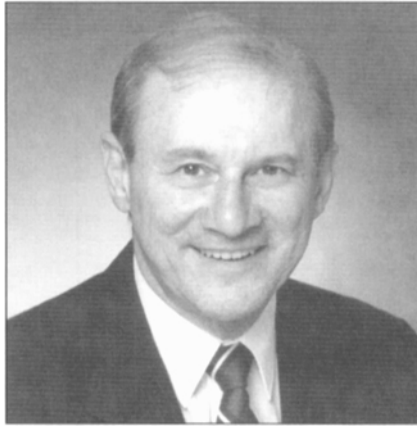
"The Society's role is to help both its individual members and sustaining members to understand and cope with the fast-paced evolving environment in which we work and to provide the tools necessary to conduct their activities. The Society must adjust to the new environment in its educational services, in the production of standards that define the new technologies, and the way it provides services to members."

During the past two years, the members of the Executive Committee, the Board of Governors, and the Society's professional staff have focused our activities on a reassessment of the value of services provided to members and to the motion imaging arts and sciences. This month's message is a report on what we have achieved.

SMPTE President Willard B. Cook said, in an address to the Society on April 11, 1928: "The best speeches are by politicians; they are prolific in promises before election but sometimes fail in performance afterward. The engineers as a rule work the other way; they are not great promisers but fairly consistent performers." Being an engineering society, we have not been prolific on promises but have performed on your behalf.

Measurement of Performance

We began the two-year review by conducting membership surveys at conferences. The survey results offered two



Stanley N. Baron

interesting conclusions. The good news was the data showed that an overwhelming number of members agreed that the Society had produced more technologically current sessions and had addressed industry issues in a more timely manner than ever before. The bad news was that many people in industry had no idea how SMPTE contributed to their well-being on a daily basis.

We have taken steps to correct this problem. Along with improving the content of the conferences and the

content of the *Journal*, we initiated an outreach program to help our colleagues in the motion picture, television, and other communities involved in motion imaging understand how SMPTE served their needs. Our efforts to improve the way the Society provides services to its members and to industry is not complete, but the results of the effort are already evident, and the success is measured in the numbers.

Since January 1995, individual membership has increased by over 15%, with approximately two-thirds of the growth occurring since January 1, 1996 (Fig. 1). In the last nine months, the number of Sustaining Members has increased by over 33% (Fig. 2). The Society has 28 active Sections; the newest added in 1995, in Hong Kong. SMPTE members reside in 82 countries around the world.

Old Challenges and New Solutions

The Society has not taken its 80 years of commitment to the film community for granted. The interests of the Society and the motion picture community as a whole are intertwined, and we have a shared history of successful accomplishment.

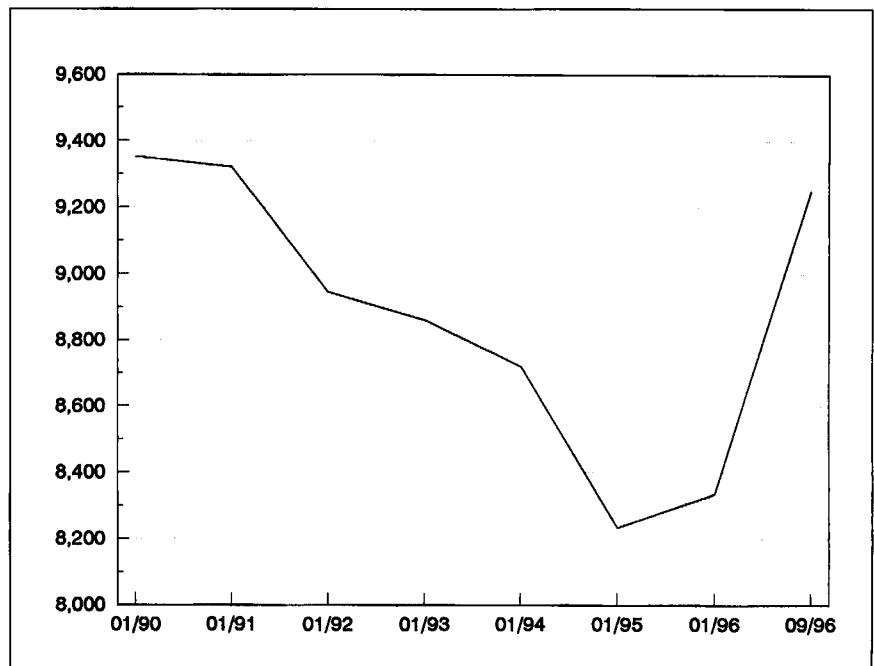


Figure 1. SMPTE membership.

SMPTE President Stanley N. Baron is with NBC, Inc., New York, NY 10012.

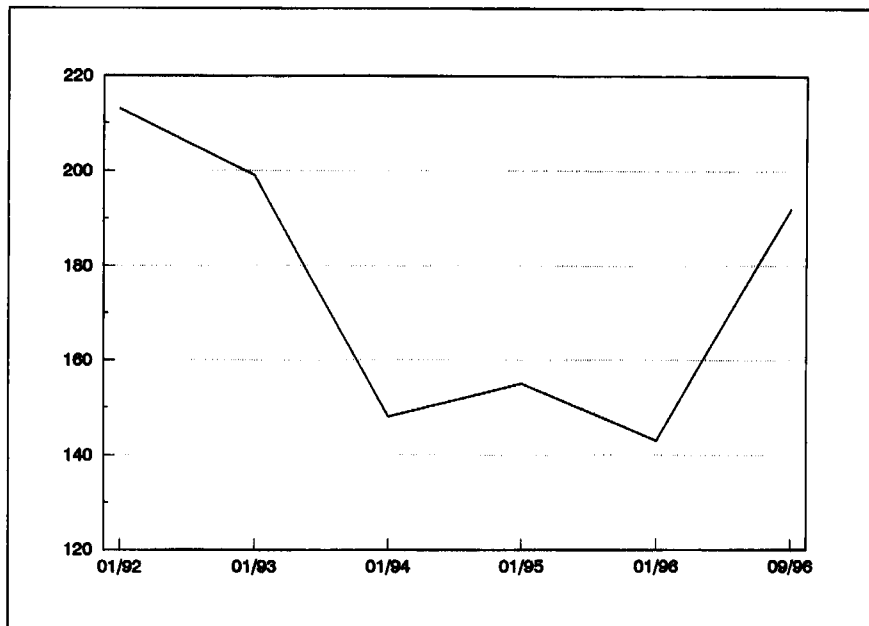


Figure 2. SMPTE Sustaining Members.

SMPTE standards have allowed the motion picture industry to address a global audience and have demonstrated the effectiveness of standards that are universal in their application. Approximately 60% of the standards, recommended practices, and guidelines the Society processes each year relate to film. We continue to strive to better serve the motion picture community.

The Society's Hollywood Section has long provided a strong voice for the needs of the film community and has organized many successful educational events. The Hollywood Section suggested that the Society provide an annual conference focused on issues that are of interest to the motion picture community. The Society, with a dedicated effort from the Hollywood Section, has committed to an annual film conference to be held in Hollywood. The first of these events will occur in the spring of 1997.

New Challenges and New Solutions

In Education

In the May 1996 President's Message, I discussed the Society's role in educating future generations so that the growth and economic health of the industries we support is assured. As members of the Society, each of us should be involved in contributing to strengthening the foundation of our profession and educating the coming generations of

technologists. Putting into practice what we preach, this year the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers inaugurated a new student chapter in Mashpee, Mass., and began a new experiment in education. What makes this group different from others is that the students who formed the Mashpee Student Chapter are high school and middle school students. In approving this new venture, the Society recognized that as the technical complexity of our industry increases with each passing year, those individuals who wish to succeed as professionals need to start learning about their craft at an earlier age.

In New Services

Your Society recognizes that as the environment in which we work changes, the Society must adapt, providing new services for its members. SMPTE, working with the Advanced Television System Committee (ATSC) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), is implementing a means of uniquely defining film or television program productions, providing for separate identification of each episode and version of the production. A unique identification system requires someone to keep track of the assignment of identifiers so that there is no duplication of usage. SMPTE recognized the importance of this standard to the industries we serve, offered its services in support of the

standard, and has been selected as the registration authority for the product identifier system. The Society will begin supplying registration services in support of the standard after January 1, 1997.

In Cooperation with Others

The Society has actively pursued stronger ties with other groups committed to promoting excellence in the motion picture and television arts and sciences. We have held discussions with such diverse groups as the ACVL, BKSTS, EBU, IBC, Interactive Multimedia Association (IMA), ITS, the Montreux Symposium, and the MPAA. Progress towards cooperative efforts has been made in many areas and is already apparent in our standards work and in co-sponsoring of educational events.

A Few Final Words of Thanks

This has not been a journey traveled alone. The number of individuals who contributed to the Society's success over the past two years can be measured in the hundreds. Each of them deserves recognition. However, I am limited to two pages for this report, and so while thanking them all, I can only thank a small group individually by name for their support and guidance, and for their devotion to moving the Society forward. These include David George and Charles Jablonski, who will serve as the Society's President and Executive Vice-President, respectively, starting in January; the members of the Executive Committee; past Presidents who have been kind enough to give of their time and knowledge, including Irwin Young, Bob Smith, and Blaine Baker; our former and current Executive Directors, Lynette Robinson and Fred Motts; the members of the Board of Governors, who have been generous in their support; and the Society's professional staff in White Plains, which has responded to new demands and ways of serving our members.

My participation would not have been possible without the understanding and support of Michael Sherlock and my colleagues at NBC, who helped with the tackling of this assignment. And finally, I must express my appreciation to the members of the Society for the honor of allowing me to serve these past two years as your President.

— Stanley N. Baron