

David George, in his message, "SMPTE Engineering," speaks of SMPTE Engineering and Standards Development. Complementing that, I would like to excerpt from previous messages from Past President Stanley Baron, describing the process of standards creation.

Eight Decades of Standards

"SMPTE was founded in 1916 as a professional society to develop voluntary standards, and for almost eight decades it has fulfilled this role, evolving from film to include analog television, electronic digital imaging, and now digital distribution. The standards the Society produces have maintained their quality and relevance, taking a proactive approach to the changing environment and widening participation. Its work is recognized globally and across many industries for its competence and accuracy."¹

Stages of Development

"There are six stages in the development of a standard, recommended practice, or engineering guideline, as follows.

1. *Determination of a need and assignment of work.* A request for standards development is made to the Engineering Vice-President. The request should have the support of multiple parties, which usually include multiple providers and multiple users. Multiple users indicate a possibility of a market for the standard, and multiple providers verify the need for interchange.

2. *The discovery stage, in which information necessary to the development of a standard is acquired.* Work is assigned to Technology Committees that are organized according to areas of expertise (e.g. recording technology, film laboratory technology, etc.). There is public notification in the *Journal* that work has begun, inviting participation. The Technology Committee prepares a plan of work that stipulates the work to be done, a time line, testing that may be required, and the form of the results including reporting requirements. Information is gathered and the documentation requirements are set forth.

3. *The standards document is developed.* On standards developed wholly within SMPTE, the work may be assigned to a group of individuals with expertise in the area. SMPTE also provides a mechanism for review of standards developed by provider consortia to allow user input prior to the final approval of the standards document. Where the body of knowledge pertaining to a specific request is not sufficient to begin work, a Study Group may be assigned to develop a report on the state of the art, note requirements for further development of

the technology, and point to areas where documentation may begin.

4. *The SMPTE review process.* The Technology Committees meet at regular intervals and between meetings communicate by electronic means to develop consensus on standards, recommended practices, or engineering guidelines. Once consensus is reported, the document is forwarded to the Society's Standards Committee for administrative approval.

5. *Determination of consensus, which includes resolution of any objections of problems raised during the process.* The Standards Committee reviews the work and verifies that the request for work was fulfilled and any objections were properly handled. The document is then published in the Society's *Journal* for public comment.

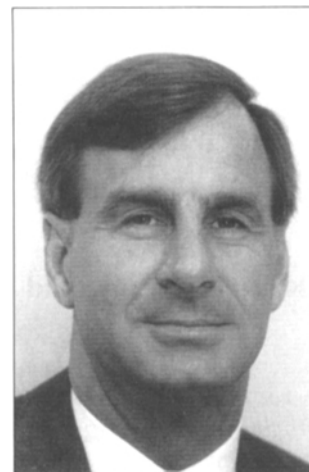
6. *Publication and distribution for public use.* Upon the resolution of any questions raised during the public comment period, the standard is declared finalized and published. Of course, our fund of knowledge on any technology is always changing, and the SMPTE process requires that all documents be reviewed every five years to keep them current.

The process has been helped in recent years by the use of electronic communication. This allows individuals who have an interest in specific areas but do not have the resources to travel to meetings to participate in the development of the standards. Melding electronic communications media with desktop publishing technology has helped the Society to shorten what was more than a two year minimum processing time to less than six months, and to reduce the documentation development costs substantially."²

Conclusion

SMPTE is proud of its record as a standards developing organization and of the people who work so hard in the background. Give it some thought, find out more, consider becoming involved.

—Frederick C. Motts



Frederick C. Motts

1. June 1995 *SMPTE Journal*; 2. July 1995 *SMPTE Journal*