

Foreword

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"To every complex problem, there exists a solution that is simple, inexpensive, and wrong"—H.L. Mencken

From its initial demonstration in the United States almost seventeen years ago at SMPTE's 1981 Winter Television Conference, high-definition television (HDTV) has inspired more words, discussions, seminars, papers, and statements than almost any topic the Society has helped develop over the years. It is worth noting that at the time of the presentation of HDTV, a series of demonstrations and tests were held setting the foundation for the standards for digital television. These standards provide the basis for all the advanced television services, video compression, and digital broadcasting, as well as the common means of television production and program exchange today. It is the latter that has proven to be the enabler for the process now reaching its climax in North America.

Perhaps volume does not portend impact.....

In the intervening decade and a half, the Society has witnessed the proselytization of Universal Tape Formats, World Production Standards, Advanced Television Systems, and various other detours on the road to what has proved to be the ultimate end game, the incorporation of digital technology into every aspect of the video, media, and creative environment. Even today's discussions (equally passionate and consuming) in the areas of scanning formats, display attributes, and transmission parameters will prove to be a brief ripple in the evolving canvas of technology. (Ask someone at the 45th Motion Imaging Conference their impression of Table 3 and they will probably ask you if it



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is near the kitchen.) The Society will continue to provide a forum for these discussions, demonstrations, and standardization efforts.

Your Society continues to grow and evolve into technological areas and applications too numerous and fast paced to predict. The 1997 Progress Reports by SMPTE officers and directors reinforces the strength and vitality of the organization. The breadth of the engineering activities described in the reports by William C. Miller, Engineering Vice-President and Robert Seidel, Editorial Television Director, stands as a measure of the Society's impact and relevance to the constantly changing word, technology.

Despite several decades of predictions of a decrease in impact, film technology remains as vibrant as ever. The Annual SMPTE Film Conference, started in 1997, has been an exiting event highlighting the latest and best in film. The motion picture area is well covered by Alan Masson, Motion Pictures Editorial Director, in his report. It is also appropriate to mention that virtually all the initial

HDTV/digital broadcasts that will inaugurate the service in 1998, will rely on film as the originating media. Not bad for a medium which was pronounced mature, a fate worse than death, 15 years ago in these same *Journal* pages.

The Sections continue to be the lifeblood of the Society. Fung Lam's report highlights the tremendous variety and diversity the Section Activities have brought to SMPTE in 1997. The Sections programs represent the breadth and diversity of the Society with presentations ranging from advances in film technology through digital and high-definition, and the ultimate grail of convergence and media applications. Education has undergone a resurgence with tremendous growth in the Student Chapters, seminars, and the inauguration of the Massachusetts Mashpee section. International activities continue to be the consistent force of growth.

SMPTE also re-instituted its annual Fall Conference and Exhibit in New York. Breaking attendance records, the conference provided further means of dissecting the various digital television issues faced by the industry. The Society continues its presentation of a single topic seminar at the Spring NAB Conference.

Unfortunately, the year also marked the passing of some of the greatest individual lights in our industry, reminding us of the importance a single individual or idea can have on the change and growth of technology. Although a natural evolution, their inspiration and guidance will be missed.

The members and officers of the Society continue to see patterns of growth, opportunity, and involvement at an increasing pace throughout the year as we proceed into the digital universe.

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