

## Foreword

### John L. Mason Executive Vice-President

The beginning of the New Year is a traditional and appropriate occasion to reflect on the past and prepare for the future. Many people like to formalize this process in the form of New Years resolutions, so in the spirit of this endeavor, and the Progress Report to follow, I would like to offer my list of top 10 SMPTE achievements for 1998. There is no independent confirmation or even any consensus on the items below, as many will surely point to horrible omissions and disagree strongly with those on the list, and what follows are in no rank order of importance.

**1. The New SMPTE Logo.** Formally unveiled at a press conference on November 22, 1997 at the 139th Technical Conference and Exhibit in New York, 1998 saw the full introduction and acceptance of this impressive and historic symbol. Much more than just a logo was introduced; an identity was changed and a bold, new strategic direction was announced. President David George said it well by commenting, "It reflects the various technologies SMPTE represents, which have grown and changed since the Society was formed in 1916. SMPTE is no longer limited to film and television; today the Society is associated with computers, digital technology, and the related arts and sciences." Thus, a new symbol was created to herald these changes.

**2. O, Canada.** Hats off to the Toronto Section for sponsoring a successful and notable 32nd Advanced Imaging Conference in Toronto on February 5-7, 1998. Program Chair Peter Laidlaw, General Arrangements Chair Colin Davis, and their staffs delivered an efficient and entirely professional conference and experience



John L. Mason

that attracted well over 400 people from North America and abroad. In addition to the excellent content of the program and the quality of the presentations, a special social event was the hosting of a reception at Queens Park by The Honorable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor, representing Queen Elizabeth II for the Province of Ontario. This conference was significant for several reasons: it certainly could be taken as a model for conference planning and execution. Also, in a more general sense it expresses the high level of performance of SMPTE Sections from all over the globe. As anyone who has followed Sections activities in the *Journal* realizes, we should all be proud of and grateful for the truly impressive level of work and contributions to the goals of the Society by the Sections throughout the year.

**3. The SMPTE Registration Authority, LLC.** By mid-year, as reported in the August issue of the *Journal*, the SMPTE Registration Authority (RA) was up and running. This entity is a new, non-profit organization overseen by the Society that will add substantial value to the mem-

bers it serves in the years to come. The creation of the RA is a classic example of how SMPTE can respond positively and constructively to the changing needs of its members and the rapidly changing technological landscape.

Standards of both the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) and Advanced Television (digital video broadcasting) are based on MPEG-2. With the ever expanding universe of channel proliferation and program growth, programs and the data streams they contain need separate program identifiers to allow for efficient and meaningful program exchange. Because of its standards work on an international level and its international membership, SMPTE was asked to become the RA to provide service in this area.

The Authority is now active, thanks to a federal grant and a lot of work by SMPTE staff and Engineering Vice-President Bill Miller. Past-President David George deserves credit, too, for his leadership role in this initiative, and we must not overlook the critical contributions of Stan Baron, who first took hold of this project.

**4. Now on CD-ROM.** In 1997, the Engineering and Standards groups set new records for productivity, and 1998 was a record shattering year as well. In February, ANSI-approved SMPTE Standards, Recommended Practices, and Engineering Guidelines for Television appeared on CD-ROM, followed in March by the Motion Picture standards version. These offerings have been accepted in the marketplace beyond everyone's expectations and have added significantly to revenue from engineering activity. The sets now will be updated and published twice annually; a great example of synergies between engineering, editorial, and marketing, and of a success born out of capitalizing on member needs.

---

John L. Mason, Executive Vice-President, is with Eastman Kodak Co., Hollywood, CA 90038.

## PROGRESS REPORT

**5. Iceberg.** Jon Landau, producer of the mega box-office smash and multiple Oscar-winning film *Titanic*, addressed the audience at the 2nd Annual Spring Film Conference in Los Angeles in June. He gave a fascinating tour of the making of the movie and the use and creation of special effects and compositing techniques performed during the production of this great film. Many behind-the-scenes clips were shown that revealed how complex scenes and sequences were built up and layered from numerous effects disciplines. Many thanks to Jon, Price Pethel, and Digital Domain for this unique tutorial.

**6. ASC.** An exuberant and highly educational all-day seminar was another feature of the Spring Film Conference. The program included several gifted members of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC): John Alonzo, Woody Omens, Robert Primes, Haskell Wexler, and 1998 Academy Award-winner for *Titanic*, Russell Carpenter. In practical demonstrations, these talented cinematographers showed how and why various pieces of camera, lens, and lighting gear are used for different creative and thematic effects. Special thanks to John Hora, ASC, for coordinating this special event. Like the relationship the SMPTE enjoys with many leading industry organizations and partners, SMPTE's relationship with the ASC has proven to be extremely beneficial to our members over the years.

**7. Geek-to-Geek.** This was the rather playful phrase our usually reserved Engineering Vice-President Bill Miller used to describe the historic meeting between SMPTE engineering committee members and Bill Gates, chief executive officer and chairman of the board of Microsoft Corp. This event occurred on June 11 at Microsoft's corporate offices in Redmond, Wash. Miller described the meeting as nonpolitical, with a lot of good old basic engineering conversation and Q & A. Gates, a cause celebre in most of the fields he participates in—technology, business innovation, politics, etc., should most definitely be a part of our highlight reel for the year. His comments about the role and value

of standards in and to the computer field were most reassuring apropos some of the points made in #1 above.

**8. Bit Streams.** In 1996, a joint task force of the SMPTE and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) was formed to look into the challenges, roadblocks, and standards development opportunities available in the looming shift in worldwide broadcasting from analog to digital. Thus was born the EBU/SMPTE Task Force for Harmonized Standards for the Exchange of Program Material as Bit Streams.

An advanced summary of findings was given at NAB in April 1998, with a fully finalized report delivered to an enthusiastic audience of well over 300 at IBC in Amsterdam in September. The final report was published in the September *Journal*, one of the largest and most widely distributed issues ever.

This was truly a Herculean effort involving the time and energy of literally hundreds of volunteers and staff who met 17 times since the project was begun two years earlier. As Engineering Vice-President Bill Miller wrote in the *Journal* introduction to the report, "This joint effort of SMPTE and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is, we believe, one of the most significant achievements in the history of the two organizations." Miller pointed to the significant role played by the Co-chairmen of the Task Force, S. Merrill Weiss and Horst Schachlbauer, and the indispensable contributions of Roger Miles of the EBU, who serves as the secretariat. This accomplishment represents SMPTE at its finest.

**9. Discovery.** Proving, in fact, that SMPTE is really where the action is, more than 400 attendees at the 140th Technical Conference and Exhibit in Pasadena in October watched a live digital broadcast of the historic John Glenn/Discovery space launch displayed on large-screen HDTV. KTLA in Los Angeles provided the excitement. As Program Co-chair Al Hart said, "When 400 people gathered to see this live digital broadcast on HDTV, it proved that digital television and the theme of the conference, DTV—Reality Check, The First Year, are for real."

**10. Marketing.** If "plastics" defined the 1960s, then "marketing" must be the term for the '90s. SMPTE's core activities are and will remain standards, publication, sections, and education; but it is also accurate to note that our Society, to function at its maximum potential, must operate and attain high visibility in a very competitive environment where technology is packaged, delivered, and marketed by many other organizations. We all face the ever-growing problem of schedules with no blank spaces, of having too many conferences and meetings to attend, and of more complex workloads at home base.

I believe that 1998 marked the beginning of plans and strategies to market SMPTE more dynamically to both new and current constituencies. SMPTE Executive Director Fred Motts and his staff are to be congratulated for being proactive in the areas of conference enhancement, communications and advertising, campaigns to reduce membership "churn." A strong effort is also being made to develop or renew relationships with key trade and industry organizations such as the Television Academy, the National Association of Television Program-ming Executives (NATPE), the Independent Feature Project, the ASC, and the ACVL.

Well, that's the top 10 list for 1998. It's not David Letterman, and I apologize in advance if I've left off some obvious choices or one or two of your personal favorites. Let me know what you think.

Lastly, I would be very remiss if I did not, on behalf of the entire Executive Committee, thank each and every one of you—staff, volunteer, member, sustaining sponsor, friend—for your most appreciated support of the SMPTE. My very best wishes for a successful 1999.

Please note: The Engineering Progress Report for 1998 by Engineering Director William C. Miller will appear in a future issue of the *Journal*.