

Fellows Luncheon Address

David George, SMPTE Past-President

Good Afternoon, fellow Fellows, and an especially good afternoon to the fairer Fellows among us.

We will soon come to the more serious part of the proceedings of the 142nd SMPTE Technical Conference and Exhibit here in Pasadena, in which I will have the honor to introduce to this august body the new peers who will attain the grade of Fellow of the Society today.

Speaking for Charlie Jablonski, your President, I want to offer a warm welcome to all the new Fellows as well as the more "established" Fellows who could join us. Charlie had planned to speak with you himself, today, I guess to tell you all about startup "dot com" companies. Instead he has had to leave on an emergency mission to Silicon Valley. That, I suggest, in itself, may tell you a lot about startup dot com companies.

About SMPTE and its Fellows

In an era where, instead of calling out, your wife might send you an e-mail telling you to come to dinner, you could be forgiven for asking what relevance SMPTE has and what does it mean to be a SMPTE Fellow?

To address the first question first, we have only to look outside this very room. This immediate area supports many of the leading media, special effects, and motion imaging production and post-production companies in the world and the largest SMPTE Section anywhere. The many engineers,



Guest speaker David L. George at the Fellows Luncheon.

technicians, specialists, designers, creators, and artists within an hour's drive from here exercise an enormous influence over the norms, ideals, values, and expectations of contemporary society, worldwide.

You can argue whether that influence is good or bad, and many have, but you can't argue that it exists. It exists because the motion-imaging medium that is generally employed can be so powerful. And why is it so powerful? Well, many of the people who developed the technologies and techniques that gave it the power to educate and inform, to provoke and persuade, to touch the very hearts of people are in this room today.

SMPTE's Importance

For many of us involved in the technical or operations side of the media production industry, SMPTE is the primary technical and professional organization to which to belong. This Society is dedicated to supporting the needs of the industry and its

many professionals by providing an effective mechanism for standardization, information, and educational activities, as well as opportunities for professional support and personal growth and networking. Within SMPTE, individual members can and do find many of the tools they need to maintain technical proficiency, immediacy, and contacts. This very event provides such opportunities for some of the leading lights of the industry: Fellows just like you.

The Importance of our Conferences

Recent conferences have reflected renewed excitement and energy in our industry and in this Society. Designed around the needs of motion imaging professionals, they address current problems, share contemporary information, and provide an opportunity to discuss the future in groups, or one on one, with other industry professionals, specialists and leaders.

SMPTE's Membership

The professionals involved in motion imaging, by and large, thrive on individual initiative and, as individuals, rely on SMPTE to provide the knowledge, support, and social fabric from which they knit their professional lives. Corporate members also benefit from this process, and the more enlightened ones, through their sustaining membership and sponsorship support, help SMPTE provide these services to their individual employees and to the industry as a whole.

As for SMPTE Fellows, you represent the visionaries, industry leaders, and pioneers who blazed

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the technological trail into this new Millennium. While there may have been the occasional portage enroute, and we all know that there was, what worthwhile journey is without such digressions?

Not content with that legacy, however, many among you continue to lead the way and all of you influence it. You are among the few who invent, develop, deploy, and control the tools of motion imaging, or have recently done so. Thus you control the keys that gain us all access into the Digital Media World. People with more friends on the Internet than in real-life are still discovering the power of the medium we know so well: they call it rich media; and it is. For them it combines pictures and sound and motion; for us it always has. It's now exciting for them and has always been exciting for us.

SMPTE's Mission

SMPTE is not only about people who save power cords from broken appliances. SMPTE is about standardization, shared knowledge, and continuing education on motion imaging. We are continuously expanding the technological underpinnings of our industry. Critical as these technologies are to the future, a talented and knowledgeable human resource to harness and apply

them will be even more critical to the industry's growth and success in the long run. Our industry is being fundamentally transformed by these new technologies, and new challenges and opportunities will develop as we learn to first appreciate then harness and finally master the results.

The development process is usually one of small but continuous events in a number of allied areas. Only occasionally do we see the sort of discontinuity that the digital transition represents. We saw it once before with the introduction of television. Only occasionally are we, as professionals in an industry rooted in technology, challenged as thoroughly as we have been over the past decade by fundamental changes at the very foundations of our profession.

These have been technical, yes, but also economic and structural. In a biblical sense, digital begat compression, compression begat bandwidth, and bandwidth begat new services. Spectrum scarcity, which rooted regulation, became spectrum abundance and regulation was relaxed. New services, less regulation, more choice—sounds like a recipe for success doesn't it? It would be, except for fragmentation of a market that used to spend about 30 hours a week

experiencing a limited range of choices and now, still needing some time to work, sleep and eat, distributes about the same amount of time over many more.

Established media concerns, in particular, must control and contain both the economic and operational consequences of what they perceive as a dramatic mutation of their established operations and significant erosion of their successful business models. But they must also recognize that new media opportunities abound. An explosion in bandwidth, bringing with it the ability to actually deliver new, different, or improved services, is accelerating the transition that digital production and processing makes possible.

There is no escaping, and no turning back; but we are learning that Pandora's Digital Box still holds many mysteries. Mysteries that I'm confident people like you, the Fellows of SMPTE, will solve.

Conclusion

I don't know what Charlie would have said to you today. It would probably have been more interesting and I apologize for that. But I do know that he would feel as humble as I do in this room full of talent and in the presence of so many SMPTE Fellows and friends.

