

# Message from John Mason

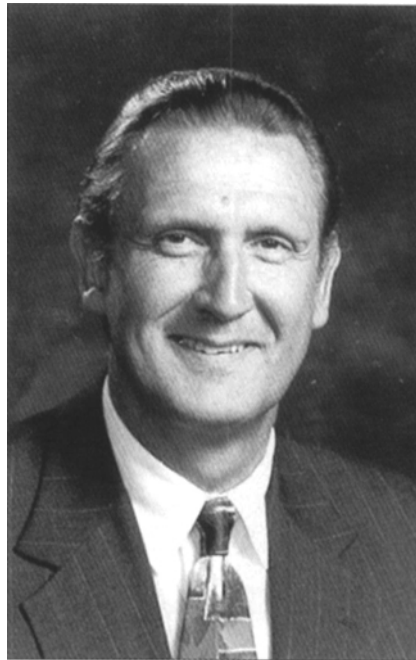
## SMPTE Executive Vice-President

In February 1999, I attempted to list in the *Journal* the top ten events, trends, and activities of 1998 from a SMPTE perspective. Let me try to do so again, this time for 1999.

**1. DTV and HDTV.** When the major broadcasters were asked by the FCC to voluntarily begin digital transmission in November 1998, the massive transition from analog to digital broadcasting officially began. A great deal of SMPTE activity in 1999 at conferences, Sections, and in the *Journal* focused on the change to digital and its step-cousin, HDTV implementation. The trend has continued. The recently completed SMPTE day-long seminar at NAB, "Digital Broadcasting: What are We Doing? Where are We Going?" portends the future in this area.

**2. DC28.** On the film side of the house, what began as earnest conversation and planning at the 33rd Advanced Motion Imaging Conference in Orlando in February 1999, evolved quickly into a Task Force, and by the end of that year had blossomed into a full-fledged Technical Committee. I'm referring, of course, to the Digital Cinema Technology Committee, DC28, and its eight related working groups. Believing strongly that standards and standardization would play a critical role in any eventual implementation of digital cinema systems, SMPTE wanted to take a leadership position in the standards arena, so moved quickly to mobilize standards work. Well over 100 volunteers are now participating in the various study groups here.

**3. The Annual Film Conference.** What began three years ago as a planned annual Spring Film Conference has now moved to the fall, and the September Fall Film Conference, "Screen Shadows: the Technology of Movies," held at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, was an unqualified success. For the first time, the Conference generated a



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profit, and the material presented was of exceptional quality and relevance to the film community. The Hollywood Section deserves major kudos for this one.

**4. SMPTE Membership Survey.** Early in 1999 the Membership and Marketing departments at Headquarters launched a survey of SMPTE membership, the first such comprehensive survey of our worldwide organization in many years. The objectives of the study were to improve communication, services, and the overall value of the Society to its members. Among many findings, the study indicated that the *Journal* is the single most valued offering of the Society, that we need to pay more attention to the film community, and that the Society is growing around the world. Headquarters Staff has already begun putting many of the recommended changes in place for a more effective organization.

**5. Standards Work.** The essential core of SMPTE functioning is its standards and engineering activity, and

never in our Society's history has more been done in these areas than in 1999. SMPTE Engineering Vice-President Bill Miller summarized these accomplishments nicely in the March 2000 *Journal*: 89 engineering documents approved, reaffirmed, or revised in 1999, with "dozens more" in development. The rush to digital in film and television is pushing standards work and leading to enhanced levels of communication to deal with the heavy work load. For the first time, engineering meetings were held off-shore when the Television Technology Committee met in 1999 in Geneva. Headquarters engineering staff, officers, volunteers, and allied companies all deserve a huge amount of credit here for a job very well done!

**6. Strategic Planning.** As reported in the September issue of the *Journal*, a key 1999 initiative was a strategic planning exercise conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers for the Society. The goals, methods, and some preliminary findings of this study were summarized in September. Since then, at the end of the year six, Strategic Working Groups were created to further develop, refine, and focus the findings of this study. The Working Groups will deal with Technical Orientation, Global Strategy, Core/Growth Development, Internal Communications, Marketing and Advertising, and Systems and Process. Each group will be headed by a member of the Executive Committee, with members of the Board of Governors divided up to serve in these six groupings. This is an extremely important activity by the Society to help lay the groundwork and framework for the future.

**7. International Growth.** One of the more visible and persistent issues facing the Society during 1999 was the reality and challenge of international growth. SMPTE has continued its involvement in important international venues such as IBC 99, the Montreux Symposium 99, the SMPTE

99 Conference and Exhibition in Sydney, and the SMPTE 1999 International Conference in Milan, Italy. These involvements have continued to broaden the Society's international message and to provide valuable input into concerns and issues from the international community. There has also been heightened interest in and demand for the creation of new international sections. The Executive Committee and Board of Governors, in committee, have dealt with the possible participation of an international officer at the Executive Committee level and a reorganized Society to better reflect a growing and legitimate international constituency.

**8. Sections Activity.** If one measure of the health and vitality of the Society is its educational mission as reflected through Sections activity, then we are in very good health indeed. All of the Sections officers, managers, volunteers, and friends deserve a collective, loud, round of applause. The diversity, quality, and value of many, many Sections' programs around the globe throughout the year are most impressive. I had the opportunity to attend one of these: the annual New York State Student Film Festival sponsored by the Rochester Section in September. The auditorium at RIT was filled with about 250 enthusiastic film-school students from the area who had entered the competition or just wanted to see some good student works. This event has been a successful centerpiece of the Rochester's programming for years, and it serves to illustrate the quality of Sections' offerings and the dedication of thousands of officers, participants, and supporters.

**9. SMPTE/KODAK Summit Meeting.** In September, representatives from SMPTE and Kodak met in Rochester to review the long-standing relationship between the two organizations and look for ways to build a better future together. SMPTE talked about its past, present, and future and its goals and strategies for the future; Kodak discussed some of its goals in a changing world and its needs for business and organization partnerships; both were looking for ways to build value into a mutual relationship. This meeting could be cited as a

model of how the Society and its sustaining members might attempt to collaborate in the future.

**10. Goals Met.** When in-coming President Charlie Jablonski assumed office in early 1999, he delivered a report to the Executive Committee and Board of Governors outlining his goals for the Society for the year ahead. They included working toward better financial stability, improving conference attendance and performance, enhancing SMPTE's partici-

pation with partnership organizations like the NAB, focusing strongly on international issues, participating in standards activity in a proactive fashion, and strategic planning and focus. Many, if not most, of these and other goals have been met, I believe, in 1999. Mr. Jablonski would be the first to give credit for this where it is due, and that is to the Society and its many dedicated members who made the year the success it was.

—John Mason

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