

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### John L. Mason

A year ago in this column, I challenged the Society “to foster, carry on, and advance.” These lofty goals, taken from our Constitution, were intended to be our rallying cry for the future. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on this country in September, these words of inspiration and courage could not have been more sadly ironic, but appropriate, for the times we face today.



In my column last year, I focused on several near-term goals. One was the work being done in strategic planning. Study groups made up of our Board of Governors were actively engaged in dealing with the various issues we had identified for taking the Society soundly into the future, and I was hopeful that we would have important things to say later on. I also talked about expectations for growth in membership, both individual and sustaining, due to the worldwide expansion of media imaging, and the increasing relevance of standards in this area. Education and educational outreach was a third area highlighted for attention, with the expectation that there would be additions to our student sections roster, and the rollout, generally, of broad-based educational initiatives for the entire Society.

I have to say that when measured against these criteria our scorecard is mixed. We have not been as aggressive as we should in implementing strategic planning measures and programs, although this important work continues. In spite of a broad-based membership growth program, “Member Get a Member,” launched at the February Advanced Imaging Conference in

Washington, DC, our individual membership levels have actually remained flat. There has been positive growth, however, in sustaining membership and in revenue from that area. On the educational front, we have added a student section in the Russian Republic in St. Petersburg, and we are in the final stages of adding student sections at USC in Los Angeles (actually a reinvigorated section here), Los Angeles City College, and Chapman University in Orange, CA. Very importantly, we have put into place admin-

istrative practices guidelines for SMPTE scholarships and will soon launch a scholarship named for long-time SMPTE friend and colleague Lou Wolfe.

The terrorist tragedy that struck in September in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania has had an extremely negative impact on our Society and the annual conference and exhibit, as it has on many others around the world—IBC for example. Attendance was about half what was anticipated for our conference and exhibit in New York in early November, the shortfall due to the obvious concerns about air travel and a slowing economic and business climate. This situation had a significantly adverse impact on revenue projections for the conference. Low attendance led to lack of revenue and penalties assessed by the hotel hosts when we were unable to meet contractual minimums.

The Executive Committee and the Board of Governors took decisive and appropriate action to address this bleak situation at their meetings in

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New York after the conference. Going into the end of the year, our balance sheet is in order, but we have had to draw from our reserves in order to meet various financial obligations.

By now, many of you reading this message will be aware of the actions we have taken, some of them painful and probably unpopular, in order to get our financial house in order and in sharper alignment with current realities facing the Society. In January 2002, we will implement an across-the-board dues increase of \$10 per year for all classes of membership, including students, but excluding Sustaining and Life Members. Taking a hard look at all areas of operation, we have directed appropriate officers, heads of departments, our administrative office, and committees to bring their revenue and spending budget projections more in line with current economic conditions.

The bottom line on all this is that for various reasons, we as a Society find ourselves in a very uncomfortable financial position that we are attempting to address by looking at our spending and revenue positions across all operations. For instance, in 2002, we will print two combined issues of the *SMPTE Journal*—a February-March and July-August issue. At the same time we are resolute in maintaining high levels of service and value to our members worldwide.

One of the brighter undertakings this year has been the web site; we will look for additional ways to enhance its value and capitalize on its inherent information and distribution efficiencies. For instance, in early 2002, we will no longer charge the administrative fee for access to the on-line *Journal*.

Upon reflection, a great deal of SMPTE activity last year was positive and commendable. All of the conferences, from a programming and content point of view, were excellent. Our bi-annual

conference in Australia continues to grow in importance and attendance, and, though IBC suffered because of 9-11 fallout, there have been several very exciting SMPTE themed events in Europe this year, including conferences in Athens, Greece, and Milan, Italy. We have added three new sustaining members in Europe, and are close to establishing student sections in Switzerland and Milan. These will be "firsts" for us. Our engineering and standards work has continued unabated and the work of DC.28, especially, continues its impressive mission for standards development in uncharted waters. Our *Journal* won a prestigious award, reflecting the high quality and standards demanded by readers.

A significant development of the Society has been to create the SMPTE Foundation, a strategic, long-range structure to advance Society goals and create a mechanism for raising foundation funds to offset operational needs. The legal building blocks of the Foundation have been created; it is a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity whose mission is to advance basic SMPTE educational, technological, and standards work in the motion imaging fields. The Foundation will be able to approach individuals, companies, organizations, and other foundations to raise moneys for these purposes. In February, a slate of Foundation Directors will be presented to the Board of Governors so operations can commence. A set of By-Laws will also be presented to the BOG in February in Dallas.

The year 2001 was a year of extremes, a roller coaster of highs and lows. The effects of the horrific tragedy that engulfed the United States in September are still being felt as we wage war to stabilize the world. In our own way, SMPTE has been challenged as perhaps never before; much will be required and demanded from all of us, as we go forward in 2002 to a hopeful, brighter, and more peaceful future.