Section Meetings

Chicago
January 2003

January's meeting topic was "Integration and Support of NBC Olympic Sports Complex." Ed Shrider, Sony Electronics, presented a slide show of photos, schematics, facility layouts, and equipage details of the International Broadcast Center (IBC) for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. By committing to a multiquadrennial IOC contract, NBC was able to design and fabricate a hardware configuration that is mostly reusable for over a decade of consecutive Olympics. The entire infrastructure is modular; 240 racks are integrated into 20 bays that are bundled onto 12 platforms. These "RIBS" are shipped approximately 100 days before each Olympic, in specially stress-tested containers. In phase 1, 90% of the cabling is completed in about 6 weeks. The 6 weeks prior to the Olympics opening is devoted to finishing and testing.

For domestic Olympics, such as Atlanta and Salt Lake City, signal outputs were all NTSC and mostly live. At the Sydney Olympics, all signals were processed in PAL with Alchemist conversions for satellite feedback to the U.S. NBC was among more than 100 broadcasters, but easily the largest, with a studio over 70,000 sq. ft. The IBC power facilities were 240V; ground-neutral issues did not create major problems. The primary video signal feeds were CCIR601 with imbedded audio, which required coded extractions for mixing. The Olympics intra-network was mostly a ground array of coax and fiber. A 30 m tower distributed RF for other signals such as telco, venue trunks, and IFB. Although some event venues were up to 40 km away, most were within 1 to 2 km.

The problem of display IDs for hundreds of monitors was resolved with the Evertz system of embedding source IDs onto lines 14 and 16. Most of the editing was performed on traditional tape-based systems. Nonlinear and server array configurations will be used more in Athens next year. The meeting concluded with a Q & A session, followed by a tour of the Total Living Network Studios.—*Scott Kieffer, Section Manager*

Chicago
February 2003

Twenty-five attendees participated in February's Section meeting, hosted by Post Effects. In his presentation on "Digital Infrastructures," Jim Farney, SGI, imparted a case for implementing storage area networking (SAN) as the new model for post-production facilities. As the post-production workflow continues to migrate toward the deployment of general computing hardware in a collaborative environment, a network topology becomes more compelling for both efficiency and financial reasons. Putting media assets on a centralized storage platform allows creative operators to gain ready access.

Farney described the key elements of a SAN system: a large storage subsystem, a fast switched fabric network based on 2-Gbyte fibre channel, and an ethernet backbone connecting the distributed workstations and the metadata controller. The FC-SAN provides the means to move large image files between storage and workstation. The metadata controller manages SAN traffic by passing controlling commands via ethernet, and also grants permissions for read/write access to the files.

Farney also discussed a hierarchical storage architecture (HSA), where assets no longer required online can be moved off the SAN to a nearline storage device. An alternative to SAN, networked attached storage (NAS), was also introduced. For operators not requiring realtime playback/recording, NAS uses a slower network connection to the storage, which would appropriate for non-realtime rendering of image files. The presentation was followed by a very interactive Q & A session.—*Steve Robinson, Section Chair*

Russ Berger delivers a presentation on the design and construction of the NFL Films headquarters, at the Dallas/Ft. Worth Section meeting in January.

Dallas/Fort Worth
January 2003

The meeting was held in the presentation room at KERA-TV, the PBS flagship affiliate in Dallas, with over 35 members and guests in attendance. Russ Berger, founder and president of Russ Berger Design Group, presented a well-documented history of the design and construction of NFL Films' new facility in Mt. Laurel, NJ. The PowerPoint presentation contained over 350 slides that included architectural sketches, design plans, 3-D simulated walk-throughs, and a chronicle of the construction history captured with digital still cameras. Berger discussed innovative wire management and HVAC designs, developed specifically for the project.

Design considerations included meeting the challenges of providing an acoustic environment to accommodate an open, well-lit facility that exceeds 200,000 sq. ft. of studios, editing rooms, mixing rooms, film processing and transfer, and videotape archiving. Major challenges included isolating the production and mixing environments from acoustic frequencies generated by electrical generators, power backups, and other devices. Buffering measures included unique methods of "floating" the stage and studio floors and isolating interior walls from external acoustic frequencies.

The large amount of glass and the facility-wide requirement for open visual interaction was another challenge, which required the incorporation of curved surfaces and acoustic absorption and reflection materials to minimize the effect of standing waves in critical workspaces. The meeting concluded with a Q & A session.—*Christopher Noland, Section Manager*

(L-R) Marcus Williams and Wallace Murray at the February Section meeting in Detroit.

Wallace Murray shows HD video of WDIV Thanksgiving Parade remote at the February Section meeting in Detroit.

Detroit
February 2003

Twenty members and guests met in the HD-equipped auditorium at the new Wayne State University Welcome Center in midtown Detroit on February 11.

Marcus Williams, WDIV chief engineer, spoke about the production aspects of "America's Thanksgiving Day Parade," seen locally in SD on WDIV, in HD on WDIV-DT, and syndicated to a nationwide audience in an SD package. With production and transport costs now only marginally higher than an SD-only shoot, the station decided that it was economically and technnically feasible to originate its coverage of this event in HD. Nine 16:9 HD cameras and production trucks from All Mobile Video, plus additional upconverted SD cameras from WDIV, originated video at street level and from an onsite anchors' studio. Twenty-five wireless microphones provided audio, which turned out to be one of the more difficult parts of the project. HD and SD video were transported separately, uncompressed, arriving at WDIV in time to provide optimum quality as well as redundancy.

SMPTE Central Region Governor Wallace Murray, SBC Communications, was responsible for radio and video transport. He discussed the challenges, logistics, and equipment required in providing SMPTE 292M and 259M transport via fiber, from the parade route along Detroit's Woodward Avenue, to the WDIV control room in downtown Detroit.—*Chuck Reti, Section Chair*

Hollywood
January 2003

The January meeting began with the 1938 Warner Bros. musical short subject *Clyde McCoy and Orchestra in Jam Session*, and a trailer for *Singin' in the Rain,* which will be the subject of the next meeting. Approximately 70 members and guests listened to Daniel Rosen, Cinesite, Inc., deliver an illustrated presentation on "Metadata for Creative Intent."

Here is a summary of Rosen's presentation: There is much activity in the media industry regarding metadata. Metadata is described as "data about data," but what does that really mean? Simply put, metadata is a set of attributes, or elements needed to describe the resource in question. It captures important information so future users can understand the details of collection and processing. It also serves as a record in search systems for users to locate data sets of interest. There are three kinds of metadata: descriptive metatada (intellectual) describes the work in general (e.g., title, subject, creator's name, etc.); structural metadata describes the physical attributes of the data (e.g., width and height of an image, color space, number of pages, etc.); and administrative metadata describes management attributes of the data (e.g., rights holder name, owner, access tables, etc.).

(L-R) Guest speaker Daniel Rosen and Section Chair Richard P. May at the Hollywood Section meeting in January.

Although the media industry has put much effort into defining these three categories of metadata and various mechanisms to encapsulate and transmit them (such as MXF, AAF, DPX, etc.), it has not addressed the creation of metadata to describe the creative intent of people who actually brought the work into being. Museums and art institutions worldwide have devoted significant energy to defining the vocabularies necessary to preserve creative intent within metadata. It is vitally important from a creative rights aspect, as well as for the future preservation of our cultural heritage as embodied in moving images, that the media industry (creative guilds and associations, hardware vendors, and software vendors) come together to create such a scheme of creative intent metadata. Without such a scheme, the motion picture, video, and other future moving image works will change in ways the creative visionaries never intended. It has already happened in the past (*The Great Train Robbery*, William S. Porter's groundbreaking one reeler from 1903, exists in equal numbers with the famous red hand-tinted "shooting the audience" scene at the beginning of the film and at the end), it is happening now, and it will happen in the future if a vocabulary and process methodology is not developed, standardized, and implemented.—*Richard P. May, Section Chair*

(L-R) Presenters Ed Shrider and Shaun Strahm at the Ohio Section meeting in January.

Attendees watch attentively at the Rocky Mountain Section meeting in January.

Napa Valley College
February 2003

On February 4, Bill Corona, owner of the San Francisco based acquisition company, Corona Productions, gave a captivating presentation on the rigors of outdoor production. A freelance cameraman, Corona carefully explained the necessity of critical thinking to compensate for lighting a one-camera shoot with no power sources against a darkened cityscape. He divulged the importance of capturing footage that would be of value to the editor. This compilation of quick thinking and insatiable hunger for new projects has made Corona a four-time Emmy winner. Despite these accolades he retains a frank, down-to-earth manner, which is a credit to him in the unpredictable, ware-hawking world of acquisition.

Changing gears from the usually probing Q & A session, Corona expressed interest in the long-term goals of students. In response to the ensuing litany of future professional expectations, he encouraged students to remember that true success is a result of building relationships, having pride in your work, and knowing "you're only as good as the last job done."—*Faye Pilgrim, Secretary*

Ohio
January 2003

The combined SMPTE/SBE meeting at the WCMH-TV/DT studios in Columbus drew over 50 attendees to hear two very interesting and informative guest speakers. The first, Ed Shrider, Sony, gave an overview of NBC's Olympic coverage in Sydney, Australia, which included slides detailing their pioneering modular-designed video transport trailers. The trailers expedite a faster travel and plug-in when moving a large amount of video and audio equipment long distances, reducing setup time.

Shaun Strahm, WCMH-TV/DT, Columbus, then outlined the new NBC regional hub distribution system, which uses a spoke-type approach to regional and national master control distribution to all NBC-owned-and-operated TV stations in the U.S., including WCMH-TV/DT. The meeting concluded with a comprehensive tour of the new WCMH-TV/DT facilities.—*Gene L. Batey, Secretary/Treasurer*

Rocky Mountain
January 2003

Ray Milius, Starz/Encore, gave a presentation explaining the design goals and fulfillment for the Starz Encore Group origination and operations center. The presentation included drawings and photos of the technical facilities, designed and built for originating 12 digital movie channels. Starz was innovative in its use of a "server to air" design for all the channels. Movies arrive on digital betacam and are encoded into a Pinnacle server. The encoded data is then moved to a PetaSite for nearline storage. When the Omnibus automation calls for a particular movie, the data is copied to the Pinnacle playout servers to go to air.

Starz also operates its own uplink facility, as well as an extensive post-production facility. The entire facility is fully redundant and has been operational for more than a year. The complexities of multiple aspect ratios and various audio schemes required in today's premium movie channels were also discussed. Starz is involved in the technology and implementation of subscription pay-per-view and is exploring the possibility of high-definition delivery. A Q & A session was followed by a tour of the facility.—*John Switzer, Board Member*

Twin Cities
January 2003

The meeting was held at Ciprico's airy new headquarters in Plymouth, MN, where Mohan Mysore, Ciprico, gave a one-hour PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Video File Sharing." Mysore began by defining SAN (storage area networks), NAS (network attached storage), and the pros and cons of each. He then segued into a presentation on an NAS technology application, Ciprico's new DiMeda. The audience, which consisted of local station engineers, network engineers, and post-production house owners, had many questions about the technologies that were employed. For the uninitiated, it was a great primer on storage networking.

The presentation concluded with a trip to Ciprico's demo room, where attendees viewed the different NAS configurations used with a variety of nonlinear editing applications.—*James Miller, Section Chair*

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