News

Inter-Society Elects Mark Hyman as Secretary/Treasurer

Mark Hyman, SMPTE's current delegate to the Inter-Society, has assumed a new role as secretary/treasurer.

The decision was made at the January 2006 Board of Directors meeting of the Inter-Society, where delegates voted to alter the By Laws of the organization to allow for a third officer level.

Since its inception, the Inter-Society has been governed by a president and secretary-treasurer, each serving two-year terms and the latter automatically succeeding to the presidency thereafter. A new position of vice-president was inserted between these two positions.

Officers Ted Costas, president, and David Tuckerman, secretary/treasurer, drafted a proposal for the Board's consideration that a third officer be incorporated for the purpose of getting more members actively involved, as well as to provide for a vice-presidential capacity in the absence of the president. David Tuckerman has moved into the new vice-president role until he becomes president in 2007. Hyman will serve a single term and then ascend to the position of vice-president.

The Inter-Society for the Enhancement of Cinema Presentation, Inc., was founded in 1978 by Eastman Kodak VP and former SMPTE President Ken Mason. The goals of the organization are to foster interactive dialogue and joint projects among distribution, exhibition, and trade organizations. Membership is composed of trade organizations, corporations involved in the motion picture industry, studios, exhibitors, technical consultants, and non-affiliated industry persons. The groups—ACVL, ITEA, MPAA, NATO, and SMPTE—remain active and each has designated a voting delegate to the newly formed Board of Directors.

SMPTE Releases VC-1 Standard

SMPTE has announced the release of its much anticipated Standard for Compressed Video Bitstreams. Release of the VC-1 document, along with supporting Recommended Practices, will guide companies in building interoperable solutions using advanced compression technology.

"Standardization of VC-1 represents over two years of work by more than 120 individuals representing over 75 media and entertainment companies," said Ingo Höntsch, Chair of SMPTE's Video Compression Technology Committee, which oversaw development of the VC-1 standard, "and many companies throughout the industry have been promoting VC-1 integration for some time now," Höntsch said.

Formal standardization was proposed by Microsoft Corporation, which contributed decoder source code and other resources towards development of the process.

SMPTE's Compression Technology Committee has also formed a new Working Group dedicated to providing maintenance of the test materials and documents, as well as the administration of a bitstream exchange program. Microsoft has contributed source code for an example encoder that is available to committee members participating in this program.

The VC-1 documents are SMPTE 421M-2006, "VC-1 Compressed Video Bitstream Format and Decoding Process"—the Standard itself, as well as two supporting Recommended Practices, SMPTE RP 227-2006 "VC-1 Bitstream Transport Encodings," and SMPTE RP 228-2006 "VC-1 Decoder and Bitstream Conformance." All three documents can be purchased on the SMPTE website at www.smpte.org.

Tandberg Launches World's First Professional Multiformat MPEG-2/MPEG-4 AVC Decoder

Tandberg Television announced that it is bringing the benefits of MPEG-4 AVC advanced video compression to players in the video contribution arena. The launch of the world's first professional multiformat MPEG-2/MPEG-4 AVC SD/HD decoder will enable network operators and broadcasters to deliver both standard-definition (SD) and high-definition (HD) content from studio to studio and across networks to regional head-ends and affiliates. The leading-edge professional receiver, named the RX1290, is also ideal for use in digital satellite newsgathering and digital electronic newsgathering applications. Being capable of decoding both MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 AVC, HD or SD, the RX1290 offers the ultimate receive device to help the migration from today's SD broadcast environment to tomorrow's HD-capable networks.

Thomson Unveils World's Largest Digital Cinema Test Center

Reinforcing its global leadership in digital cinema, Thomson announced that its Technicolor Digital Cinema business, part of the Services division of Thomson, has opened the world's largest digital cinema research and equipment testing facility at the Technicolor campus in Burbank, CA.

In preparation for the company's North American digital cinema deployment, the Technicolor Digital Cinema Test Center was established to evaluate the performance, reliability, and functionality of digital projectors, servers, and related hardware from major original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). The results of the comprehensive testing and analysis conducted in the state-of-the-art facility will determine the projector and server configurations to be deployed during Technicolor Digital Cinema's widely anticipated commercial beta test, scheduled to begin this year in 200-250 screens across North America.

Avid Acquires Sundance Digital, Inc.

Avid Technology, Inc., announced that it has acquired Sundance Digital, Inc., for approximately $12 million in cash. Sundance, which is based in the Dallas, TX, area, is a leading developer of automation and device control software for broadcast video servers, tape transports, graphics systems, and other broadcast station equipment. The acquisition further widens Avid's worldwide leadership position as a provider of digital systems that produce, manage, control, and playback television programming.

IPTV Given Global Standards Boost at ITU

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) will take the lead in international standardization for IPTV with the creation of a Focus Group on IPTV (IPTV FG). This announcement follows an agreement reached at a public consultation meeting held in April where around 120 experts from the world's leading ICT companies backed up ITU's role in the coordination of global IPTV standards. The decision was made because of the benefits of worldwide standards for all players in the IPTV value chain and the need to achieve rapid progress to avoid market fragmentation. The first meeting of this group will be held in early June 2006.

The announcement, while acknowledging that standards work is ongoing in many different places, including ITU, is a reaction to an industry call for ITU to push forward and coordinate global standardization effort in the field.

IPTV is a system where a digital television service is delivered to consumers using internet protocol over a broadband connection. It will help pave the way for players, many of whom are already moving to IP-based NGN infrastructure, to offer a triple-play of video, voice, and data. Standards are necessary in order to give service providers, whether traditional broadcasters, ISPs, or telecommunication service providers, control over their platforms and their offerings.

Geneva to Host ITU Telecom World 2009

Geneva, Switzerland, will host ITU Telecom World in 2009, according to an announcement by ITU Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi. The decision was reached following an evaluation of all bids received and based on a recommendation of the ITU Telecom board made in mid-March.

ITU Telecom events are renowned as major meeting places for the global information and communication technology community and bring considerable economic benefits to host cities. Six countries had originally applied to host the World event, but two withdrew their offer during the process. The four finalists were Birmingham (National Exhibition Centre), Dubai (Jebel Ali Exhibition City), Geneva (Palexpo), and Paris Nord (le Parc des Expositions).

The next ITU Telecom World event will be held in Hong Kong, China, from December 4-8, 2006. It is expected to bring together 800 to 900 exhibitors representing 50 different countries and 2,500 participants at the Forum.

Kodak Announces Final Processing Dates for Kodachrome Super 8 Film

Eastman Kodak Company announced that Kodak-certified processing of Kodachrome Super 8 film will no longer be available after August 1, 2006.

The move follows Kodak's announcement on May 6, 2005 that it would exit the manufacture of Kodachrome Super 8 film. At that time, the company alerted customers that they would have approximately one year to process their Super 8 film with Kodak.

According to Kim Snyder, general manager and vice-president for Image Capture products, Entertainment Imaging at Kodak, the decision was driven by marketplace dynamics.

Kodak Ektachrome Film is now an alternative for Kodachrome users.