

First Round of 2007 SMPTE Engineering Standards Meetings

The first round of the 2007 engineering standards meetings, hosted by ARIB (Association of Radio Industries and Businesses) and supported by a number of Japanese broadcasters and manufacturers, were held in Tokyo, Japan, March 5-9.

ARIB Secretary General Masayoshi Wakao and SMPTE Engineering Vice-President Gavin Schutz signed a memorandum of understanding that recognizes the continuing efforts of both organizations, and exchange of documentation in the field of broadcast television.

Over 85 representatives of manufacturers and users attended numerous technology committee and subgroup meetings held during the week.

The Digital Cinema (DC28) committee reviewed the status of numerous documents and subgroup activities that relate to mastering, distribution, and exhibition of digital cinema. Recently completed documents include a series of SMPTE 429 documents on D-Cinema Packaging. The committee on Data Essence (D27) reviewed a number of draft documents relating to caption distribution definitions, closed caption server interfaces, and separate drafts on vertical ancillary data mapping of caption data and SCTE 104 messages. The Television Compression (C24) committee continues work on VC-1 compression including a document on bit-stream storage in an ISO-based media file format. There is also ongoing work on a VC-3 picture compression and data-stream format and decoder conformance.

The committee on File Management and Networks (N26) has a number of ongoing document revisions, including revision of SMPTE 125M—Component Video Signal Coding and SMPTE 294M-720x483—Active Line 59.94-Hz Progressive Scan Production Bit-Serial Interface. New drafts include work on forward error correction for realtime video/audio transport over IP networks.

The committees on Registration and Identification Technology (R30), Television Image Technology (I23), Television Recording and Reproduction Technology (V16), Wrappers and Metadata (W25), Television Systems Technology (S22), and Television Audio Technology (A29) also met and discussed numerous topics.

The next round of meetings to be hosted by Turner Entertainment Networks in Atlanta, GA, will be held June 4-8.

Information on SMPTE engineering standards committees and how to participate can be found at www.smpte.org/standards.

—Mark S. Hyman



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ISO TC36 Cinematography Secretariat Appointment

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), based in Geneva, Switzerland, has appointed Mark Hyman as Secretariat of ISO TC36—Cinematography.

Hyman's appointment recognizes the importance of SMPTE in the role of standardization for the motion-picture-related industries internationally.

Current National Committee (P) participating membership includes Belgium, Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, the U.K., and the U.S.

TC36—Cinematography has a number of active working groups that address film cinematography, projection, audio, laboratory technology, and evolving digital cinema standardization. Groups also review existing ISO documents that are used internationally.

IEC, ISO, and ITU Agree on Common Patent Policy

The world's leading international standards organizations have adopted a harmonized approach to address the inclusion of patented technology in standards. IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission), ISO (International Organization for Standardization), and ITU (International Telecommunication Union), under the banner of the World Standards Cooperation (WSC), have aligned their policies, which allow commercial entities to contribute the fruits of their research and development (R&D) activity safe in the knowledge that their intellectual property rights are respected.

The policy adopted by the three organizations strongly encourages the disclosure of patented technology, which is necessary for the implementation of a standard before the standardization process has been completed. It allows for companies' innovative technologies to be included in standards as long as such intellectual property is made available under reasonable and nondiscriminatory terms and conditions. In addition, IEC, ISO, and ITU have jointly adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the Common Patent Policy and a Patent Statement and License Declaration Form.

ATSC to Develop Standard for Mobile and Handheld Services

The Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) has launched the process to develop a standard that will enable broadcasters to deliver television content and data to mobile and handheld devices via their DTV broadcast signal.

ATSC-M/H will be developed to support a variety of services including free (advertiser-supported) television and interactive services delivered in realtime, subscription-based TV, and nonrealtime content download for playback at a later time. It may also be used for transmission of new data broadcasting services such as realtime navigation data for in-vehicle use.

Dolby Unveils 3-D Digital Cinema

Dolby Laboratories, Inc., has unveiled details of its new Dolby 3-D Digital Cinema technology, designed to provide consumers with an enhanced 3-D experience.

The Dolby 3-D solution uses the white screens installed in most theaters today as well as standard digital cinema projectors, eliminating the need for a dedicated 3-D auditorium. The solution simply adds a retractable color filter wheel accessory to the digital projector. Furthermore, the filter wheel automatically moves away from the light path when switching from 3-D to 2-D digital cinema presentations. Leveraging Dolby Digital Cinema technology, exhibitors can easily transfer movies down to a smaller auditorium later in the movie's run. The solution works with comfortable and lightweight passive viewing glasses that require no batteries or charging. Initially, 3-D glasses will be reusable, eliminating the need to reorder glasses and minimizing environmental impact. In the future, Dolby expects to offer the option of disposable glasses that the moviegoer can keep as a souvenir.

Unique to the Dolby 3-D solution, the technology also simplifies the process of creating and distributing 3-D movies. There is no need for extra color correction or other compensation processes in post-production, because all processing is performed in the server.

CableLabs to Create Specifications for Receiving Off-Air Digital Broadcasts

CableLabs announced that it is working on an initiative to develop cable interface specifications for receipt of off-air digital broadcast signals. The interface specifications would enable devices to receive digital off-air television signals and would deliver these digital signals seamlessly through a cable set-top box. This technology would allow consumers to receive broadcast television signals as an integrated viewing experience. The concept combines over-the-air digital television transmission with television programming carried by the cable provider.

UPCOMING SMPTE EVENTS

HD Masters 2007
June 25-26, 2007 • RIBA, London

SMPTE 2007 Australia Conference
July 17-20, 2007 • Darling Harbour, Sydney, Australia

SMPTE at IBC
September 6-10, 2007 • RAI, The Netherlands

SMPTE Technical Conference & Exhibition
October 24-27, 2007 • Marriott Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn, NY

SMPTE Digital Content Connection and VSF VidTrans 2008 Joint Conference
February 10-13, 2008 • Intercontinental Houston Hotel, Houston, TX

Broadcast Microwave Services, Inc., Acquires Tandberg Television AVS GmbH

Broadcast Microwave Services, Inc., (BMS) announced that it has purchased Tandberg Television AVS GmbH. BMS designs, manufactures and sells digital and analog microwave communication systems. Tandberg Television AVS, located outside of Frankfurt Germany, has been renamed BMS-Europe. Specializing in the manufacture of COFDM transmitters and receivers, Tandberg's high-definition (HD) COFDM transmission products will complement the BMS product portfolio. The combined product line of both companies is immediately available to customers worldwide.

Tandberg Television and Broadcast Microwave Services have also established a business partner relationship ensuring their customers continue to benefit from their respective encoding products and microwave systems.

Harris Partners with Marquis Medway for Greater Workflow Productivity

Harris Corp. has signed an OEM agreement with Marquis Broadcast to help boost broadcasters' workflow productivity by enabling them to seamlessly transfer digital information between their archives and third-party workstations and video servers. The agreement enables Harris to integrate the Marquis Medway Media Highway software within the Harris H-Class Intelligent Media Mover and Invenio H-Class Digital Asset Management systems. Medway allows media files to flow freely between disparate, third-party nonlinear editing (NLE) platforms, all from a single user interface. By integrating Marquis' Medway within the H-Class Intelligent Media Mover and H-Class Digital Asset Management systems, the Harris software now enables the seamless transfer of digital media and metadata assets between its own archives and third-party systems such as NLE workstations and video servers.