



# The SMPTE Standards Program—Part 2

By Peter Symes

**The first article in this series discussed the formal accreditation essential to recognition as a Standards Development Organization, and the less formal recognition by other organizations that translates into credibility and acceptance. This article begins to look at the process for creation of standards and other documents and examines the basic committee structure within SMPTE that is the core of the standards program.**

## The Standards Committee

The Standards Committee is responsible to the SMPTE Board of Governors for the conduct of the Society's standards program. It consists of the Engineering Vice President, two Engineering Directors, the Chairs of each of the Technology Committees (see below), and the Director of Standards & Engineering (a member of the SMPTE headquarters staff). Additional members may be appointed to bring particular areas of expertise, and Board members may attend.

The Standards Committee manages the committee structure, and the detailed procedures to be followed. It also conducts a process audit of all documents approved by technology committees prior to final publication, to ensure that all rules have been followed and all steps are properly documented.

## The Technology Committees

The most important elements of the SMPTE standards program are the Technology Committees. A Technology Committee is a due process body (more on this topic in a later article). Each committee covers a specific area of technology and, subject only to the process audit by the Standards Committee, is responsible for approval of standards in that area.

At the time of writing, there are fourteen Technology Committees, four addressing film technologies, nine designated as "television" technologies, and one covering digital cinema. However, this nomenclature and organization has become inappropriate in a number of ways—the most significant being that many of the "television" committees actually create digital infrastructure applicable to content creation and distribution in many areas, not just for delivery by television systems. Digital Cinema, for example, uses many technologies developed in these committees, but is certainly not television.

In mid-2008, SMPTE will transition to a new organization of Technology Committees. One committee will be responsible for Essence—the creation and management of content (images, sound, and data) intended for any one or many of the possible distribution channels. Three committees will address issues related to specific distribution channels—Film, Digital Cinema, and Television (including mobile devices). Finally, three committees will focus on infrastructure applicable to all digital environments. These are Files, Networks & Facilities, and Metadata & Registries. The number and designation of committees does not need to be static—if workload and/or technical innovations dictate, additional committees may be formed, but we believe that the basic structure of essence, distribution, and infrastructure is the correct approach, at least for the next few years.

Every current work item in the existing committees will be allocated to one of the new committees, and members will need to decide which of the new committees it is appropriate to join. The transition will be challenging, and inevitably there will be a "settling down" period! Also, given the smaller number of Technology Committees, the document development and comment resolution work will be conducted in subgroups providing recommendations to the parent committee.

## Subgroups

As today, there will be a network of subgroups. Working Groups are generally long-term committees addressing a particular subset of a Technology Committee's scope. For example, there will likely be an Audio Working Group under the Essence Technology Committee. Ad Hoc Groups may be formed by either Technology Committees or Working Groups for short-term tasks such as drafting a document, resolving a specific issue, etc. A Study Group may be formed to draft a report on a specific topic of widespread interest. Some subgroups will report to a single Technology Committee, others may draw from a number of committees to ensure that the needs of all constituencies are addressed. For example, one group will draw from the essence committee and all of the distribution groups to examine issues such as Safe Action Area and attempt to find a cohesive solution suitable for multi-purpose content.

Of course, committees are nothing without members and participation. The next article will discuss the membership options, and the various ways to be aware of, and contribute to, the ongoing work.

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