SMPTE ALMANAC

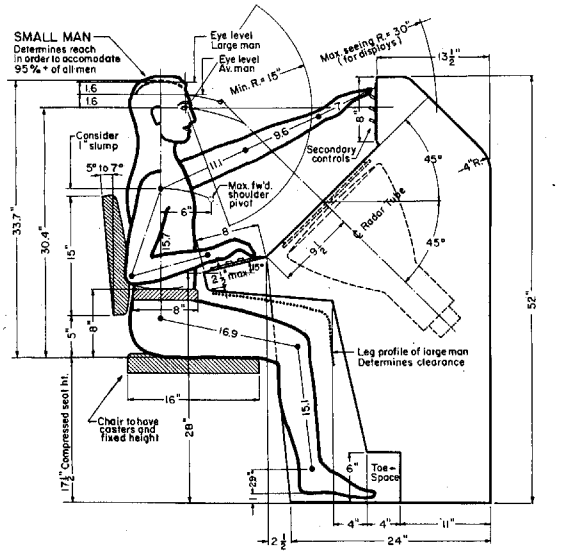
IN THIS COLUMN WE PROVIDE INTERESTING HISTORICAL briefs from the *Journal* articles of days past. The purpose of this column is primarily entertainment, but we hope it will also stimulate your thinking and reflection on the Society's history, how far we have come in the industry, and (sometimes) how some things never change. This is not meant to be an authoritative reference, and no attempt is made to correct any past errors or omissions of the *Journal*. We simply hope you enjoy the material. This column is sponsored by Television Broadcast Technology, Inc.

25 YEARS AGO IN THE *JOURNAL*

The October 1983 *Journal* published in "Filming from the Shuttle Spacecraft" by Keith Maas: "Photographic materials have been aboard every U.S. manned space mission since the first suborbital flight in May 1961. Much of the responsibility for the cameras, film selection, and film processing for these flights has rested with NASA. With the arrival of the operational shuttle program, making cargo space available to a wide variety of users, a new level of interest is being shown in filming from space…Theatrical producers have viewed this as an opportunity to acquire totally unique motion-picture coverage…they would like to see various types of professional motion-picture equipment used to take motion pictures during a mission which would then become the proprietary material of the producer. One can imagine all sorts of scenarios following from this, from prepared scripts, to use of actors, to stimulated events…On launch, the spacecraft vibrates and is subjected to high linear acceleration. In orbit, some things that require gravity to operate will not work very well, sometimes not at all." In a related article, it was reported that SMPTE contracted with NASA to author Engineering Guidelines and Recommended Practices to inform non-NASA producers on the use of the shuttle as an all-purpose camera platform. A Film Working Group was established."

50 YEARS AGO IN THE *JOURNAL*

The October 1958 *Journal* published in "Television Control Room Human Engineering Problems" by Edwin B. Pores: "In the commercial operation of network television broadcasting, certain human factors place a premium on "real" time. If, for example, a sponsor pays for a commercial broadcast by a local station during a station break from 8:29:20 P.M. E.S.T. to 8:29:30 P.M., the 10 sec can be worth $4000. In the case of a network commercial sponsoring a "spectacular," as much as $4000 a second may be involved. The network facilities engineer must, therefore, employ every available technique to protect not only life and limb, but he must also protect "real" time. The design of the console and its control room environment, described in this paper, encompasses monochrome and color vision and high-quality audio monitoring. Facilities are provided for communication with a crew of technicians while switching video sources on a verbal or script cue, or on a prearranged time schedule…Sight lines from the operator to the TV monitors, oscilloscopes and meters were considered first…Since color is perceived by the human eye with a narrower vertical limit than is the case with monochrome, the 70° limit of color discrimination could not be exceeded."



Average anthropometric measurements of man seated at an electronic console. (Courtesy, Henry Dreyfuss)

75 YEARS AGO IN THE *JOURNAL*

The October 1933 *Journal* reported in "Military Training and Historical Films" by F.W. Hoorn: "The termination of the World War left us with approximately six hundred thousand feet of negative made in France. This film includes action at the front and in the rest and training areas, activities at supply depots, and debarkation centers… [This] constitutes a valuable record that will be of increasing interest as time goes on. That every means should be taken to preserve this film, or the most valuable part of it, is self evident. A step in this direction was taken when the advice of a technical committee was obtained in order to provide the best possible conditions in a film storage vault of the Archives Building at Washington, D. C., where it is contemplated placing this film for indefinite storage. At the present time the World War film is used principally for loan to the American Legion and other service organizations, patriotic societies, and educational institutions. Our laboratory makes approximately a thousand loans a year to meet this demand."

Michael A. Dolan is founder and president of Television Broadcast Technology. He has been involved in digital television engineering for the past eight years. He currently chairs the ATSC Data Broadcasting Specialist Group (TSG/S13), co-chairs the SMPTE Committee on Television Applications, and is active in CEA and SCTE.