



THE SMPTE STANDARDS PROGRAM PART 4

New Directions

The second article in this series described the reorganization of the SMPTE Technology Committees. This new structure is now in place and operating, but recently we have added a new Task Force and a new Technology Committee, both in response to opportunities to contribute to interoperability in the future.



By Peter Symes

SMPTE TASK FORCE ON 3-D TO THE HOME

Recently the deployment of Digital Cinema projectors allowed the reintroduction of the 3-D experience in theaters. The viewer experience with this technology far exceeds that of earlier techniques, and a number of major 3-D movie releases have been well received. Now there are companies interested in bringing 3-D to the home. In fact there are already a number of competing display technologies, and a number of competing systems for coding the stereoscopic image for transmission or for delivery on media such as Blu-ray DVDs. It became apparent that there was a need to create a format definition for content producers to provide a standardized “package” that could be used as input by any of the competing delivery systems.

3-D technology involves a large number of disciplines and companies, many of which are not traditional SMPTE participants. Engineering Vice President Wendy Aylsworth decided to create a Task Force, a relatively informal body, charged with examining all of the issues surrounding 3-D to the home. The job of the Task Force is to determine what standards are necessary, then pass the work to the appropriate due-process Technology Committees for standards drafting and approval.

The response to the Task Force formation was overwhelming—the first meeting was held in Los Angeles in August 2008 and within days of its announcement it became obvious that we needed a larger venue than anticipated! Eventually some 160 people attended the first meeting (about 130 in person, the rest by phone). The Task Force now has over 140 members, so Chair Bill Zou created four drafting groups to study the various aspects of the subject, and these are hard at work creating initial reports.

The Task Force held a second meeting at the European Broadcasting Union in Geneva, immediately after IBC. The next meeting will be at Harris Corporation in Melbourne, Florida in December (see the SMPTE website for details), and the Task Force plans to finalize its report in the first quarter of 2009.

NEW TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE 23B ON THE APPLICATION OF BROADBAND

More and more audiovisual content is being delivered by some broadband mechanism, for consumption on a wide range of consumer devices. Today, there are few standards in this area, and no way for content producers to produce a package that can be used for multiple distribution mechanisms and multiple devices. Several companies asked SMPTE to address this issue and to contribute towards the rapid adoption of these new business models.

In this instance the Standards Committee chose to create a new Technology Committee, “23B Broadband.” The Technology Committee can start immediately on the development of standards, and it is expected that the rapid development of broadband services will create new work for this committee for some years.

The new Committee addresses the need for interoperable content mastering and packaging standards, and will address compression, encryption, wrapping, marking, packaging, tracking/control, presentation, reproduction, and related topics. For purposes of the initial work, broadband distribution is considered to be interactively requested and may include both download and streaming delivery models. The distribution may occur over wired or wireless transports and may include large, medium, and small packages dependent upon the target receiving devices.

TC 23B's inaugural meeting was held in conjunction with the SMPTE 2008 Annual Tech Conference & Expo in Hollywood in October. Subsequent meetings will be held in conjunction with the block meetings of the other Technology Committees, the first Harris Corporation in Melbourne, Florida in December.