



SECTION MEETINGS



Attendees at the Atlanta Section meeting in February.

Atlanta February 2009

On Saturday February 21, the Atlanta Section sponsored an all-day workshop on

Project Management. This topic was chosen, based on the interest and feedback generated by the June 2008 program on project management that was organized by Jack Linder.

Linder, a SMPTE manager and project manager for CNN coordinated this effort, which culminated in a very successful event. There were 66 attendees and the feedback was universally positive and appreciative. A modest charge of \$30 (\$40 for late registration) was assessed to cover lunch and printing costs. The Section was able to keep costs low through the generosity of Canon, which sponsored the continental breakfast and Grass Valley and ElectroRack, which sponsored the morning and afternoon breaks. USB drives (donated by automation supplier VCI Solutions) with various materials and templates installed were distributed to the attendees.

The workshop, designed to provide attendees with hands-on experience in project management, included presentations by Jack Linder, and Paula Wagner, David Slack, and David Mook of Centergy Group (a project management consulting firm). It also included two breakout sessions, in which attendees were able to practice what they had learned.

Section Chair T. J. Scott opened the program with a brief introduction. Paula Wagner began the presentations with a one-hour overview entitled "An Introduction to Project Management." David Slack followed with discussion on "The Project Charter."

Attendees then separated into small groups for hands-on experience building a charter



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David Mook

for a sample project—"build a detached garage." The breakout session was followed by discussion.

After a box lunch David Mook gave a presentation on "Controlling the Project," followed by a second breakout session in which groups created a task list and schedule for their detached garage. This again, preceded lively discussion and a snack break.

When the workshop resumed, attendees were shown the results of their sessions, which had been entered into Microsoft Project. They were able to see how the tasks interacted with timeline for the project, and whether or not the project could be completed before the deadline. It was determined to be a valid project.

Jack Linder ended the program with a presentation on, logically enough, "Meetings and Closing out the Project." Centergy Group issued a frame-able certificate of attendance to all the attendees.

A lot of positive feedback was received on this workshop. An e-mail received from

Adam Pelz stated: "I would like to say thanks for the SMPTE project management class. Although I am currently taking some PM classes and hope to be sitting for the exam in the next year, this class was fantastic. Having input from so many people already involved in real-world situations was invaluable. I have pages of anecdotal comments to digest! I am not involved with CNN or Turner, as was 80% or more of the participants, but I still found the discussions and examples offered by others as very valuable."

Matthew Rogers wrote: "I left there with no uncertainties of the realities of project management. The presenters provided, in great detail, the importance of preparation and what crucial significance a charter brings to a project...Also emphasized, the critical role that human dynamic contributes in project conveyance. I now understand the skill, experience, and flexibility that is required in trying to keep the project constituents as happy as possible and still complete the project...on time...and on budget."

The Atlanta Section tries to have at least one all-day event each year to explore a technology or some industry-related subject in more

depth. This particular program has been *the* most successful. Although attendance was not as large as past events, the level of participation and professionalism of the presenters was exemplary.

Detroit April 2009

Using the SMPTE PDA web presentation platform, SMPTE Director of Education Brad Fortner and SMPTE Director of Professional Development Joel Welch, spoke from their respective home locations to the SMPTE Detroit Section meeting on April 7. In a departure from the usual “nuts and bolts” technical topics, the focus of this meeting was the **new educational initiatives being undertaken by SMPTE on a national level.**

A number of Detroit Section members are, or have been, serving as instructors or advisors at local educational institutions, both public and private. The Society is aware that there is shortage of people who regard the engineering and technology side of the video and content creation industry as a career path, and also many who are not aware of the standards and practices that make for proper presentation of content.

Fortner, with added commentary from Welch, narrated a visual presentation that outlined SMPTE’s vision for an educational pro-

gram, with its emphasis on participation by local Sections. This includes outreach to schools offering programs in broadcast or communications engineering technology, and also to those offering training in content creation for motion pictures, television, web, and new media. The SMPTE 365 online community and PDA were also reviewed.

A lively discussion followed the presentation, in which attendees expressed great ideas and interest in implementing these programs in the Detroit area. Additionally, some non-members in attendance, applied for Associate Membership to SMPTE. This new member level was discussed earlier in the program.—**Chuck Reti, Section Chair**

New England February 2009

National Boston Studios in Brookline, MA, graciously opened its doors to more than 60 attendees with an interest in **3D Technologies.**

Presenter Rajeev Surati, founder and chairman of Scalable Display Technologies, began with an overview of Scalable’s software, designed to automatically calibrate and edge-blend two or more projectors into one seamless digital display. Surati explained how the company’s product, Easy Blend can edge-blend, color-match, and correct image warping, through geometric distortion correc-

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tion, on screens of any size or geometry by using auto-calibration made possible by its revolutionary camera feedback system. He stated, "Data collected through one or more Canon Rebel XSi digital SLRs or webcams feed our algorithms, which in turn calculate the various corrections required for a perfect display on a dome, cylinder, sphere, toroid or flat screen. We replace precision in alignment of two or more projectors by measuring the problem and moving the pixels on top of each other electronically."

Surati also discussed Scalable3D, an application for creating a bright stereoscopic display using standard projectors. Scalable3D works automatically, by superimposing two projected images onto a silver screen with pixel-perfect registration. It supports source materials from any stereo-ready dual-head graphics card or dual-output VTR and is compatible with both linearly and circularly polarized glasses.

In addressing the question, "Why should we care about 3D?" Surati cited a recent study by the Consumer Electronics As-

sociation (CEA) and the Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) at the University of Southern California (USC), reporting that 16% of the respondents wanted 3D films and 14% wanted 3D video games. The same study reported that more than 26 million households are interested in having a 3D content experience in their home. Currently, more than 28 movies are being filmed in 3D.

The meeting concluded with a demonstration of Scalable's 3D technology utilizing two projectors and a silver screen to view footage of upcoming 3D films.—Kevin Lesard, Section Chair

Rochester February 2009

The Section meeting on February 19 was held at the George Eastman House, in Rochester, NY. Attendees were divided into two groups. One group, led by Dan Wagner, viewed digital software for the Diamont and DaVinci Revival Motion Picture restoration

systems, while the other group was shown the restoration title work by film preservationist Anthony Labbate. After 30 minutes, the two groups switched places. When both groups had seen both demonstrations, attendees joined in the Curtis Theatre, where Ed Stratmann showed three films that had been restored using these digital methods. The films included the *Bottom of the Sea* and *Felix the Cat Trifles with Time*, two early animated shorts. A newsreel from the 20s was also shown; it had two episodes on sound and sound recording of the time, called the *Voice Invisible* and *Making a Record*.—Ed Stratmann, Section Manager

San Francisco February 2009

San Francisco Section members and friends held a roundtable discussion, **Engineering Jobs in a Recession**, on February 26, in Menlo Park, CA. Led by Section Manager Michael Poimboeuf, the group discussed the current recession's impact on engineering employment and how

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SMPTE might help its members. The group considered the following questions:

Are we in Depression 2.0 or is this only a "great recession?" Poimboeuf cited recent press coverage and government statistics that indicate, at least so far, we are far from the unemployment levels of the "Great Depression" of the 1930s. Few doubt the seriousness of our current situation, however, and its potential to worsen.

Which engineering sectors and companies—established ones and start-ups—in hot growth areas can use SMPTE members' engineering and marketing expertise? Section Chair Peter Hammar observed that video over IP still seems to be growing. To save money, an increasing number of customers are cutting cable and satellite and watching online. Energy? (IBM, GE, and others are involved in distributed, dynamic, and interactive electricity grids.) Gaming and other online entertainment, including traditionally TV-centric areas such as sports? Web 2.0-related online apps? (An increasing number rely on advanced imaging to look good and attract eyeballs.) Consumer video to support web apps? (YouTube uploads more than 10 hours of video every second.) Design of non-related electronic products, i.e., "leave the imaging womb?" (One former Bay Area video engineer now heads an R&D team doing point-of-sale electronics for the fast-food industry and says he misses video engineering "not one bit!")

Which media engineering jobs are staying in the U.S. and which are going overseas or going away altogether? Which losing sectors should we avoid? What are "blue-chip," "red-chip," and "white-chip" engineering jobs?

Poimboeuf said engineers assessing the market for new jobs should understand the realities of the following three categories, mixing a poker-chip metaphor with ideas from the self-help book, "What Color is Your Parachute?" by R.N. Bolles:

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Blue-chip jobs: High-level architectural-level design work for “the next big thing.” Architects remain in demand even as lower level jobs get outsourced, although as the highest cost “chips,” architects are vulnerable during downturns.

Red-chip jobs: High-level implementation work, including prototyping, program management, component supply chain management, test and verification planning, software kit development, PCB layout, and other foundations for design. Red-chippers are generally the last to be outsourced or laid off.

White-chip jobs: Design and data entry, schematics, layout routing and Gerber generation, component purchasing, DSP code-performance tuning, and other “plug-and-chug” work. As the most numerous and cheapest, white chip people are often the most expendable and vulnerable to outsourcing.

How is the field of video and imaging doing vs. the general economy? How does the overall employment rate compare to ours? The discussion group saw a notable lack of solid industry information, a problem felt by many across the industry. SMPTE members and associates need to address these questions soon, perhaps in member forums on smpte.org.

Life after corporate work: How difficult is it to make a good living as an independent consultant? A spirited discussion ensued about the demands of self-marketing, self-training, the need to be in several

places at once to service multiple clients, and getting paid. Poimboeuf pointed to the project-oriented nature of independent Hollywood film crews and how they navigate from job to job, similar to the way successful independent engineering consultants should operate. The group discussed the kinds of self-promotion tools and activities that remain key to successful consulting.

What can SMPTE do to help? The discussants felt SMPTE should find a way to offer group health insurance, because so many members are at risk of being laid off or otherwise made “independent,” providing a huge incentive for SMPTE membership and potentially swelling the ranks of the Society, even if membership dues were increased as a result. The roundtable group also expressed the hope that SMPTE will actively help members in job networking and information. A SMPTE consultants database and consultant salary surveys similar to that of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’ (IEEE) would also create an incentive for membership. SMPTE headquarters (HQ) should emulate the IEEE’s with an official SMPTE LinkedIn group outside of smpte.org, but vetted by HQ, similar to the official IEEE LinkedIn group. Currently, there are at least three unofficial SMPTE LinkedIn groups, one of which would like to merge into an officially sanctioned group. Although most engineers use LinkedIn for networking, other services include Facebook, YourMembership, Hive, FastPitch, and Twitter.—Michael Poimboeuf, Section Manager and Peter Hammar, Section Chair

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