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Vice President of Membership

100 Years of Growth

In 1916, as SMPE was being formed, its main purpose was to establish standards in this new industry of motion pictures. In order to do that, the most knowledgeable people needed to come together to discuss and debate the issues at hand. From the earliest stages, the new Society encouraged these people to join the Society to form this network of informed experts.

In the early days, membership was determined by invitation and recommendation only. This was a common method for professional associations. The practice persisted through at least the 1970s; I recall that when I applied for Active membership, my application had to be countersigned by two other members. Today, we have departed from this practice; we encourage anyone who wishes to join to do so. The objective of the Society was, and still is, the advancement in theory and practice of the motion picture engineering and allied arts and sciences, the standardization of the mechanisms and practices employed therein, and the maintenance of the high professional standing of its members. Active members were engaged in designing, developing, or manufacturing materials, mechanisms, or processes used in this or allied arts. The Society was open to anyone who embodied these qualities.

Today, while the notions of invitation and recommendations have long

been dismissed, the general characteristics of membership have not changed.

To give context, when the Society was formed in 1916, there were two types of membership: Active and Associate. Active members paid \$10, and Associate members paid \$5. In today's dollars, that \$10 dues payment would equate to more than \$229. The leadership realized that it needed these rates as the Society was forming as an investment in its growth. This level of dues was determined to be too high and was moderated once the Society reached a level of financial stability. In 2016, SMPTE membership is \$145 for Active members and only \$45 for Associate members, a bargain compared to the early days.

It was also clear to the early leaders that, in order to grow the Society, it needed to expand its boundaries and become an international organization. As early as 1927, the Society was already accepting members from the following countries: Argentina, Austria, Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Holland, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russia, and South Africa. Today, the Society is pleased to have members represented in all these countries, plus about 50 more.

In 1916, the Society had 26 members. In 1927, after 11 years, it had a

membership of only over 220 (**Fig. 1**). Today's membership of nearly 7000 individuals reaches across the globe. From engineers to creatives and from television to digital media and still to film, SMPTE's membership is

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broad and vast. The broad range of expertise and diversity of perspective our members possess is truly the greatest source of our strength, as will be apparent to anyone who has attended an SMPTE Section meeting, conference, or standards committee.

As the membership grows, groups of members are encouraged to form Sections where they can conduct monthly meetings to educate the local audience on the latest in standards and industry technology. The first to be formed was the Pacific Coast Section in 1924 (now the Hollywood, San Francisco, Sacramento, and Pacific Northwest Sections). Today, SMPTE has 29 Sections from New York to Hollywood to Australia and the U.K. Across the globe, an SMPTE member could attend a Section meeting on nearly every continent.

Our Student Members represent the future of our Society. In recent years, it became apparent that the annual dues we charged students, while modest compared to what we ask of working professionals, was becoming a barrier to entry. We now ask only \$10 a year of students, with

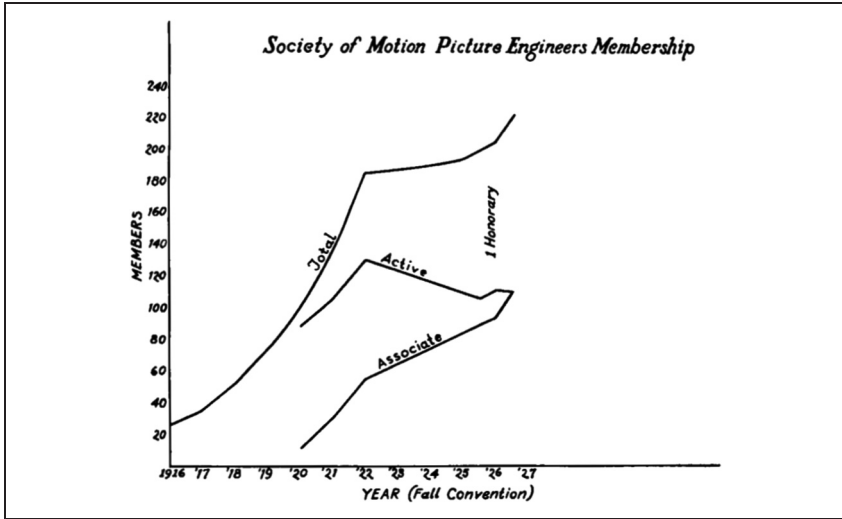


FIGURE 1. SMPE membership trends.

the first year of membership being free to them. The result has been an explosive growth in the number of Student Members and, thanks to the hard work of our Section Officers and Managers and the commitment of our Faculty Advisors, an equally explosive growth in the number of student chapters to 24.

The Society has been supported over the years by many corporations through sustaining membership. This category of membership was established in 1930 with ten companies, four of which (Kodak, Paramount, Technicolor, and Sarnoff Laboratories [successor to RCA]) continue as Sustaining Members today. The So-

ciety currently includes no film-only companies, but our more than 250 Sustaining Members span the full field of motion imaging, from studios to television networks to internet-streaming companies, as well as the vast array of manufacturers who support the industry.

A crucial aspect of membership is as a source of leadership for the Society. From within the membership, the Sections and the Society have produced inspiring leaders who have given their own time and talents to manage this marvelous organization. From the local Section Managers to the Regional Governors to the Society President, each of these leaders started out with that first membership application, many of them, like myself, as Student Members.

While SMPTE was founded principally to set industry standards, it is its people—in the form of a global membership—who keep the Society alive and thriving into its second century.

SMPTE

SMPTe Celebrates Founder's Day!

In honor of Founders' Day, Executive Director Barbara Lange rang the Closing Bell for Nasdaq at MarketSite on Friday, 22 June, surrounded by many members, volunteers, and staff.



MarketSite is located in Times Square, which is often referred to as the "crossroads of the world" and is filled with moving images. In fact, one of our members, John Footen, was part of the team that developed the original Nasdaq MarketSite video wall!

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