



Barbara H. Lange

## The U.K. Section and Region Say So Long, But Not Goodbye

It was back in 2011 when then Governor Richard Welsh proposed to the SMPTE Board of Governors that the U.K. had the requisite number of signatures to establish the U.K. Section. Some Board members were surprised to learn that SMPTE did not already have a U.K. Section. In fact, the Society had a London Section that existed back in the late 1920s. As it is today, London and the U.K., in general, were a hotbed of activity in the areas of motion pictures and its developing technologies. Due to internal politics, the London Section decided to secede from SMPE (no T at that time), and many of its members went on to form the British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society (BKSTS).

For nearly 70 years, there was no active SMPE or SMPTE Section in the U.K., until Richard Welsh submitted the petition. Of course, there were other groups, along with the BKSTS and the Royal Television Society (RTS), which were actively supporting the industry over those many years, but SMPTE's focus on motion imaging technology was missing.

Once the Board approved the Section's formation, the next big step was to identify volunteers to help organize the Section for

future programming. Among the first leaders were Chris Johns, as Section Chair, and Peter Weitzel, as Secretary/Treasurer, as well as a few other dedicated managers including Bob Gentry, Eric Bastin, and Tim Harris. This group of volunteers was actively involved from the start, planning monthly Section meetings and engaging with the U.K. community of media technologists. The reaction was phenomenal! Within a few short years, the U.K. membership grew to the point of requiring not just one, but two Governors. That's more than 500 members!

In any volunteer organization, it's the members who make the difference. It's the members who put their hearts and souls, not to mention time, energy, and personal funds, to make this Society work. Without these dedicated individuals, little would be achieved. That's right, very little is accomplished without the help of local volunteers organizing educational Section meetings, visiting prospective corporate members, and engaging with students and academic advisors.

As he steps down formally, I want to acknowledge Peter Weitzel for his enormous contribution to the success of the U.K. Section, now Region. Peter has been relentless in organizing Section events. In the early days of the Section, Peter used personal funds to support many Section activities,

because he firmly believed in the success of the local Section. On my many trips to London, it was Peter who arranged for me to meet with companies that make up the U.K. media technology sector. It was also with Peter's help that I got the opportunity to visit several academic institutions, being inspired by the young people who want to enter this field. All along the way, Peter was always ready and willing to answer any question, whether about membership, education, or standards. In his role on the Board of Governors, Peter has provided valuable input in every area, including complicated matters such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Value Added Tax (VAT), which are vital for the home office's understanding from across the pond.

I am genuinely thankful to Peter for all that he has given to SMPTE. He will tell you that it was SMPTE that allowed him to have a successful career and that he only wants to give back. In fact, Peter recently made a significant personal donation to SMPTE's Next Century Fund that will forever make a difference to future generations. I admire Peter for his enthusiasm and dedication. Peter will pass the managerial baton to others, but he plans to stay active and serve as an advisor. I will be grateful for his continued support. 