



Bruce Devlin

Over the Top

“**I** see you’re watching the Simpsons OTT again,” I said to my daughter. “What on earth is OTT?” she replied. “Over the Top, of course,” I said to her confused look. “Over the top ... of what?” she scowled, annoyed that I’d interrupted her viewing.

This conversation was strange because, only a few years ago before she went to university, she watched the Simpsons on live TV. Now, her entire viewing habits have switched to OTT first and linear TV second. This is not really a surprise, but the fact we still think of OTT as a category of customer content delivery is increasingly strange. We are talking about a delivery solution that is invisible to many customers. Even a smart, computer-literate 20-year-old will take the path of least resistance to the content that they want to watch. They don’t care about OTT or cable or satellite or broadcast or online, as long as they can search, find, and play the content that they want quickly.

Some of the big topics in OTT include big data and using machine learning to create services personalized to the consumer.

There are two elements to big data. One of these is outside metadata about the consumer, which is really outside the scope of SMPTE, but the other is metadata about the title or content being delivered. Here, SMPTE has some great technology that is continuing to improve over time. The Interoperable Mastering Format (IMF) is actually a collection of technologies referenced by the SMPTE ST 2067 document suite that allows a master version of a title as well as different versions of that title to be created for distribution. The core standards are being generated within SMPTE, but there are several working groups around the world that are trying to figure out how to use IMF to enhance the titles that are entering the media world. In fact, IMF was featured in the Fall edition of *OTT Executive Magazine*, which shows that a technical solution from SMPTE is reaching the eyeballs of the OTT business executives.

Many of the top content creators around the world are busy creating titles and live programming in high dynamic range (HDR). The SMPTE standards for signaling and metadata carriage are crucial for the entire value chain to work correctly. The OTT world is a key early adopter of this

technology due to the shortened value chain between camera and screen. Delivery specifications including SMPTE standards for metadata and SMPTE standards for the containing files are pervasive in the HDR value chain. Combining SMPTE standards with metadata and identifier specifications from other organizations such as EIDR* and MovieLabs makes many OTT supply chains significantly more automated than their linear TV equivalents. This, in turn, will continue to change the economics of the global media ecosystem.

As the world continues to consume more and more video, with increasing investment in top-end productions appearing on OTT platforms before any other screens, it is safe to say that there is still going to be a lot of work for the SMPTE Standards Community to consider in the coming months and years. All members can take part in a SMPTE standards meeting as a guest before becoming part of the community. Please feel free to get in touch if you would like to attend our June meetings in Tokyo, Japan; our September meetings in Erlangen, Germany; or our December meetings in Santa Clara, CA.

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*<https://eidr.org>

