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Media Workflows Changing All the Time

A few weeks ago, I attended the SMPTE San Francisco Section's ET@19 conference. In its seventh year, this event is becoming a regular item on the local calendar of events in the media tech community. This year, the Section collaborated with the Advanced Imaging Society (AIS) to craft a conference that brought together the creative and tech sectors. It was a good mixture of the art and science of media innovation, as was mentioned several times across the two-day event.

What struck me most was the innovation that is happening in our space. It is fascinating to see these discussions at a SMPTE event. There was the talk of moving media (as in media delivered to autonomous vehicles), the new internet "fabric" and how it will change how content is delivered, the impact of 5G on connectivity (HetNet anyone?), and lots of interesting discussions around volumetric capture and holographic imaging. All of these technologies will impact how stories are told, produced, distributed, and consumed.

I started thinking about this as I was contemplating the topic of this column. How do workflows change and evolve with each advancement in media technology? Already, there is a concept of "snowflake" workflows, meaning each one is different from the other. There can't be a standard workflow because there are just so many options, so many tools that are at the disposal of the creative community. It boggles the mind to consider how quickly things can get complicated.

Take, for instance, the volumetric capture that is starting to catch on. We thought 4K was going to require large amounts of data storage and computational power. We have not yet begun to work with 8K or 16K, yet volumetric multiplies these figures exponentially. Not only we will have to be concerned with the sheer amount of data but soon we will have to worry about all the attributes that go along with it, such as color, dynamic range, and compression features. It just becomes a massive challenge, literally.

One interesting aspect is that, with all of these advancements, new areas of improvement emerge. As we learn how 5G will begin to impact our lives, someone will quickly develop the best mechanisms that

take the best advantage to produce content and thereby develop even more toolsets and workflows. I suppose that sort of evolution has been going on for more than 100 years. If we think back to when physical film was the way to record, distribute, and consume content, the workflows were specialized to maximize that capability. As we have advanced in our media technology space, we will continue to see new methods. I think that is excellent news for the people working in this space. It means there will be new players who will transform how we do things. It continues to be exciting times in our industry.

During the conference, Hewlett-Packard (HP) generously hosted an evening reception in their Customer Welcome Center. Not only did the space include the original offices of Bill Hewlett and David Packard but it also included a showcase of the many technologies that HP is actively developing and selling. I was impressed with the 3D printers and the use-cases for these technologies. I know HP from my first digital camera and the printer that I have in my office, but it is so much more than that. They are doing some amazing things, and we are pleased to have them as SMPTE partners.

