



Michael Dolan

*In this column, we provide interesting historical briefs from the Journal articles of days past. The purpose of this column is primarily entertainment, but we hope it will also stimulate your thinking and reflection on the Society's history, how far we have come in the industry, and (sometimes) how some things never change. This column is sponsored by Television Broadcast Technology, Inc. since March 2001: <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7257346>.*

### 25 Years Ago in the Journal

**T**he March 1996 *Journal* published in “Message From the President—Bill Clinton:” “Congratulations to the members of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers as you celebrate your organization’s 80th anniversary. Since their invention, motion pictures and television have become the preeminent entertainment and communications media of the 20th century, forever changing the way we view and understand our world and ourselves. Today, the magic of film and television transcends international boundaries, informing and entertaining, stimulating thought and reflection, and stirring the imagination. All of you can be proud of your long-standing contributions to the success of these remarkable industries. Ensuring the highest standards of excellence in film and media integration, SMPTE members have served to advance our cultural heritage for the better part of the 20th century. I salute all of you for your precision, your dedication to your work, and your commitment to progress. Best wishes for a wonderful anniversary year.” For the full article, see <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7242737>

### 50 Years Ago in the Journal

The March 1971 *Journal* published in “Computer-Generated Key-Frame Animation” by N. Burtnyk and M. Wein: “The potential role of computer graphics in generating animated film has been widely investigated in recent years. In order to simplify the task of computer programming, special animation languages have been developed for specifying an image sequence to be generated by a computer. Although this approach

to computer animation has provided some form of organization and control of the specification of image sequences, the computer remains out of reach to most animators because of the communication difficulty. An animator’s ideas involve mainly pictures and their motion. Thus, it is appropriate that the communication of ideas between the animator and the computer should be largely through pictures. Our interactive computer-controlled graphics system allows the animator to develop pictorial sequences directly on a cathode-ray tube display, without forcing the animator to become a computer programmer .... Our computer graphics facility is based on a small high-speed digital computer, driving a cathode-ray tube display. The processor has a memory capacity of 16K 24-bit words, supplemented by



A handheld mouse being used for drawing. Also shown are thumbwheel encoders on right of the table, and the lightpen on the left of the CRT (*JSMPTE*, Fig. 1, March 1971, p. 160).

a disc file storage unit. The graphics software consists of a family of interactive graphics programs that create, modify, and manipulate picture data. Of these, the major programing package is used for interactive three-dimensional (3D) graphics.” For the full article, see <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7239941>

### 75 Years Ago in the Journal

The March 1946 *Journal* published in “Current Literature of Interest to the Motion Picture Engineer:” **American Cinematographer:** Orthicon Pickup Tube for Television Cameras, Pointers on Use of New Ansco 16-Mm Color Film, Automatic Follow-Focus Device for Use in Cinematography, Sixteen Goes Hollywood, No Cherry Blossoms in a Factory, Using Your Movie Camera as a Motion Picture Step Printer; **British Kinematograph Society:** Sub-Standard Motion Picture Practice, Professional Sub-Standard Projection, Screen Brightness in Sub-Standard Projection, American Standards for

16-Mm Service Projectors, Sound Recording for Sub-Standard Films; **Electronic Engineering:** A Continuous Film-Recording Camera for Use with Standard Cathode-Ray Oscilloscopes; **The Ideal Kinema:** Westrex Sound System; **International Photographer:** The Strobolight, Rotocolor is Something Different; **International Projectionist:** A Post-War 16-Mm Projector: The Ampro Premier, Sharp Heat Reduction Better Color Rendition Claimed for New Glass, Projectionists’ Course on Basic Radio and Television—Vacuum Tubes, The Stratovision System for Television FM; **La Technique Cinematographique:** Standards of the Characteristic Dimensions of Auditoriums (Russian Standards); **Television:** Film Projection Equipment.” For the full article, see <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7252417>

### 100 Years Ago in the Journal

The May 1921 *Journal* published in “Discussion of Jenkin’s Paper:”

Mr. Jenkins: I certainly am very grateful to you for your patience and your kindness. I don’t usually apologize, but I am very much disappointed at the lack of electrical voltage here ... we have two forms of camera; one is the prismatic section ring, which up to the present time we have not been able to get more than 350–400 pictures per second from, and we have here a camera that is built a little differently, giving wholly continuous motion .... We have made pictures at the rate of 2,000 a second ... [In some scenarios] It is at too high a speed. But, it would be useful, for instance, when a balloon bursts. When a balloon bursts, what happens? We don’t know. Most of us beat it for the woods, but what else happens? Nobody knows .... I will sit down with any of you and tell you just how we do it, and, bless you, if you want to tackle the problem alone, go to it.” For the full article, see <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7229918>

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