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Progress

Welcome to the SMPTE 2021 Progress Report. What a year it has been. The emergence of vaccines against COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of documented, organized ways that large groups can work together toward a common goal. The vaccines gave hope that the world would go back to normal, but unfortunately, we are still a long way from globally returning to the prepandemic way of working.

SMPTE provides various platforms for collaborative work at the member, company, group, and interorganization levels. The enormous breadth and depth of the contributions to this edition highlight how different cohorts interact with SMPTE to help drive the media technology industry forward. It is interesting to compare the contents of this journal with the one from 30 years ago. Back in the 1990s, we were still fighting physics to process video fast enough at a high enough resolution to give an immersive experience. Today, anyone with an internet connection and a credit card can create a cloud-computing account and magic enough compute resources into existence to produce an 8K high-dynamic range photo-realistic animation that is powered by an artificial intelligence engine trained on billions of real-world images.

The contents of the *Journal* reflect that changing paradigm. There are some hardware and fundamental science-related articles, but the vast majority cover protocols and interfaces and software stacks, and other ways in which we organize data to interchange and process audio-visual media. This difference in focus is also evident in the way companies are structured and the way in which research studies are funded and executed today. It is true that there are still significant and secret projects taking place, but a large amount of research and development is much more iterative where a smaller investment upfront can deliver incremental improvements that are continually built upon to deliver big results to a growing user base.

It has been a real honor to serve the Society as the Standards Vice President over the past four years. I took the position hoping to change many aspects of how we create and publish standards so that they would become the go-to resource for the world's software and equipment designers. Despite the outstanding support from many exceptional and talented contributors, we are not there yet. There is still work to do.

I believe the Society as a whole needs to recognize that while it was the gravitational center of media interoperability for a long time, the technology needs for physically moving content are less and less important, while the needs for connecting systems and data are vital.

The problems of the future are around data, identification, security, governance, and globalization of content. One of my goals was to make standards free at the point of use for every developer so that the experience felt the same as using any recognized software library or hardware package. While we did not achieve it during my tenure, the journey has begun and the importance of that initiative for SMPTE's brand has been recognized.

I also feel that more is needed. SMPTE needs to become a global nurturer of ideas discussed and grown into tangible products and technologies. The annual technical conference has been great for this in previous years, but the absence of a physical event has shown how dependent the Society is on American-based physical face-to-face networking. Our media technology world is global, and I hope that some of the push-back I have experienced against working outside the U.S. 9–5 time zones is forever behind us.

I hope that I have helped nudge SMPTE toward a slightly better future. I also hope that we continue to reach around the world and find like-minded folks regardless of their country, color, or how they see themselves and continue to talk about how SMPTE can nurture technologies to make better entertainment for everyone, everywhere. Progress is difficult; change is required, and I am confident that SMPTE has the people to enact that change.

