

State of the Society:

Growth Through Community and Purpose

BY SALLY-ANN D'AMATO



As this edition of the *Motion Imaging Journal* reflects on the progress our industry has made—and the developments yet to come—I find myself reflecting on the past year of my journey in this new (not so new anymore) role as Executive Director of SMPTE. It's hard to believe how quickly the time has passed. Most days, I catch myself thinking of something that happened six months ago as if it were just “last week.”

This year has been both challenging and marked by tremendous growth. As a staff and as a Society, we've faced difficult realities and worked hard to emerge stronger, more focused, and more connected to our mission. And for those who have been wondering, let me assure you, **SMPTE is not going anywhere.**

We've been putting our business in order, refining our operations, and finding new ways to deliver value to the industry through membership, education, and standards. I've come to deeply believe in the “it takes a village” philosophy, and over the past year, I've been building my own *SMPTE Village*—a blend of longtime members whose wisdom has guided us through many eras, and early-career professionals whose energy and fresh perspectives will ignite our next phase of growth.

Strengthening the Foundation

Our first major challenge was to unravel the mysteries of SMPTE's financials and create a clearer, stronger

foundation for the future. I'm proud to share that we've reignited the **Next Century Fund**, originally established during SMPTE's Centennial Celebration in 2016 as a forward-looking investment in our Society's future.

Created to ensure that SMPTE would keep advancing, innovating, and serving the global motion-imaging community for generations to come, the Fund has already made a meaningful impact, thanks to the generosity of our inaugural corporate donors—**The Walt Disney Company, Panasonic, Technicolor, Dolby, Google, Netflix, Blackmagic Design, FotoKem, Ross Video, and Fox Corporation**—along with many dedicated individual supporters.

It has helped send students to industry events, expand SMPTE's presence at programs for emerging professionals, sponsor educational activities, strengthen our standards development and publishing processes, and, most recently, **enable the launch of our new member portal**, which went live at the end of October (in fact, the launch was literally unfolding as I wrote this!).

This new platform will integrate our systems and streamline our workflows, creating online communities for Sections, committees, and the Board—all designed to deliver a better member experience. Next on the horizon is a **new digital library solution** that will provide access to SMPTE's entire content library, including the *Motion Imaging Journal*, to conference proceedings, Section presentations, and beyond. Volunteers

are already hard at work aggregating and tagging our content in preparation. Once complete, this will be another major step forward, not only restoring institutional subscriptions but also giving members seamless access to the full breadth of SMPTE's technical and educational resources.

Looking ahead, we're also reimagining our **educational offerings**, unveiling a new model next year that will better serve the evolving needs of individuals and companies in a rapidly changing industry.

The Media Technology Summit: A Community Reignited

I also want to reflect on this year's **Media Technology Summit**, held at our new venue in Pasadena, California. It was, in every sense, a milestone event for SMPTE. The energy was electric. The venue and staff exceeded all expectations, and the sense of community was palpable.

My heartfelt thanks go to our Program Co-Chairs, **Marc Zorn** and **Dagmar Driesnack**, our tireless Program Committee, dedicated staff, passionate volunteers, and Section leaders. Through your teamwork and dedication, you made the impossible possible. I can't thank everyone individually, but I do want to acknowledge a few of our amazing members.

To **Eric Gsell**, our Executive Vice President and Local Arrangements Chair—and curator of this *Progress Report* edition—you truly embody the heart of SMPTE. Your dedication, creativity, and countless hours of effort have helped this Society thrive and grow. Thank you for bringing the *Solutions Hub* to life with your interactive workflow demos, and for always finding ingenious ways to make our champagne dreams come true on a beer budget.

To **Bill Hogan**—you are the ultimate magic-maker, always finding a way to pull together the people,

equipment, and resources needed to make it all happen. When you've mentored half the industry, it turns out you have quite a few favors to call in, and we're so thankful you used them on our behalf!

To **Veronica Piñeda**—you pulled together our outstanding Career Development Program in record time, creating an experience that offered real value to our students and early-career professionals. You brought together industry leaders at every level to share their knowledge and perspective, and it was a resounding success. Consider yourself officially “hired” for next year's program!

To **all of our sponsors, partners, and supporters** who said “yes” to our last-minute and sometimes wild requests—I'm continually amazed by what you were willing to give and do without hesitation to ensure the success of this event. Your generosity made a difference not just for SMPTE but for every attendee who came seeking knowledge, connection, and a competitive edge in an uncertain economy. Thank you for being part of this village and for helping to shape the future of our industry.

By the Numbers—and Beyond

In a year when association events across the board are trending **20–30% below last year's numbers**, SMPTE was **ahead**, with registration up **20% over 2024!** That success belongs to *you*—our members—for showing up, spreading the word, and reminding the world why SMPTE matters.

Even more exciting, we welcomed **132 students**—a **74% increase** over our previous record high in 2023 and the highest number in more than a decade. These students are the future leaders of our industry, and their energy is contagious. If you're involved in a Section, I encourage you to involve these students and early-career professionals in your activities. You'll

be amazed by how much *you* can learn from *them*, and how deeply they'll value the chance to learn from you.

A Call to Action

As we look toward the year ahead, growth remains our theme, but growth depends on participation. We often talk about SMPTE's *value proposition*—what the Society can offer its members. And there's so much: networking, education, research, community, and collaboration through standards that keep our industry interoperable and innovative.

But to paraphrase a certain American President, I'd like to challenge us all to think differently:

“Ask not just what SMPTE can do for you, but what you can do for SMPTE.”

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, SMPTE relies on the generosity of its members, partners, and friends to sustain the programs that educate, connect, and inspire our community. Your membership, sponsorships, purchases, and donations make a real difference, supporting standards development, scholarships, training, and global events that bring our community together to share knowledge and shape the future.

When you give to SMPTE, through your engagement, expertise, or financial support—you're investing in the future of media technology and the people who make it extraordinary.

For more than a century, SMPTE has defined the standards of our industry. With your continued support, we'll define its future, too.

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