

# SMPTE's Vision and Mission: Shaping the Future of Media in 2026 and the Next Century

BY RICHARD WELSH



**W**elcome to 2026! We may be a month or so in already, but it's not too late to wish you all a successful year! I decided to revisit the SMPTE Vision and Mission and reflect on what they mean to me and my hopes for the future of our industry.

## **SMPTE's Vision: Unlimited creativity, experiences for everyone**

This has certainly taken on new meaning in the age of artificial intelligence (AI). With generative technology, creativity is almost unbounded. If you can describe it, AI can bring it to life. Maybe in weird ways, but increasingly in the style and quality of a high-end production. This, of course, raises all sorts of questions about ethical data sourcing, content provenance, copyright, and individual creative rights. SMPTE is grabbing this challenge with both hands, and I expect to see significant progress this year in our standards groups in this and many other areas of AI. In a world where truth is so important to understand yet so hard to determine, work such as SMPTE TC 10E SG's on Content Provenance and Authenticity in Media could prove pivotal as we move into 2026. With regionally fragmented approaches to legislation and regulation, it's up to the industry to build trust in media. SMPTE is uniquely positioned to bring the industry together to deliver frameworks of trust that can only become more important as the lines between what's real and what's manufactured become imperceptible. AI is a powerful tool for

creativity, and its potential is merely scratching the surface of what's possible. Of course, with this power comes a responsibility, and in a global economy and community, it is up to the industry itself to address it.

## **SMPTE's Mission: To inspire technological advancement in art, science, and media everywhere for everyone**

The world of media and content has never been broader. It spans live broadcast of news, sports, music, and more—where every millisecond of latency counts—to blockbuster movies with years of production and post behind them; from those Hollywood studios to indie filmmakers around the globe, to content creators with a UHD camera ready in their pocket; and from episodic drama with huge budgets, grand concepts, and unmissable season finales to micro-dramas with tiny budgets, addictive plots, and a cliff-hanger in every 90-second episode. There have never been more ways to create and consume content, and this pace shows no sign of slowing. SMPTE sits at the heart of this evolution, and I am excited about how we are growing our membership—bringing in new talent while tapping into the incredibly powerful resource of our long-term members. We are actively encouraging this in every area of SMPTE; Standards is actively recruiting new, younger talent into groups and encouraging them to step into leadership roles. This is an important element of developing a sustainable pipeline of talent within SMPTE and ensuring our perspec-

tives on technology and the industry remain fresh and relevant. Education has many new initiatives planned to step up the development of new talent and support the very important, but often neglected, mid-career professional. We ran an extremely successful career development program at the October MTS, clearly demonstrating the strong demand for this type of resource within our membership and across the wider industry. Last but not least, our grassroots membership (that includes you!) is organizing events by and for new talent in our industry. The upcoming—and always sold-out—Young Innovators event is returning, with the local SMPTE U.K. Section now taking it on the road, featuring “by popular demand” repeat events in both the North and South of the country.

As we approach SMPTE’s 110th anniversary, I am excited about our work to engage and develop the newest talent

in our industry and to support our entire constituency, as this is essential to our future success and to SMPTE’s next century.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, I expect key trends that will undoubtedly influence SMPTE and serve as key drivers for the industry, including content convergence, where the creator economy collides with traditional media production. Sparks will fly, no doubt, as traditional business models around content production face significant challenges. Traditional models will face the reality of matching the returns of more cost-effective and profitable short-form formats, while the creator landscape will see competition driving expectations towards Hollywood production levels on YouTube timescales. AI will undoubtedly have a huge impact here, enabling creatives to bring visions to the screen that simply wouldn’t be possible with

traditional production techniques. At the same time, AI will be a key driver in business transformation across all aspects of business, from administrative functions to investment decisions, project greenlighting, and throughout creative processes. Despite the turmoil that has plagued the media industry since the pandemic, growth is possible and, to some extent, inevitable. The increase in content creation is not slowing down. Through harnessing the latest technology to enable new products, services, and revenue streams, I feel confident in a positive 2026 for the industry. Through our work at SMPTE, we will support these changes while staying true to our mission—to inspire talent, drive technological growth and innovation in our community, and enhance media for everyone, everywhere.

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