

Director-General's Report

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It has been a while since our last *NABAcaster* and a lot has happened over the past few months.

We had a very successful AGM in mid-February hosted by PBS in Arlington, VA. Along with dealing with the business of our association, we had a very full day of content beginning with a passionate speech by PBS President Paula Kerger on the continued importance and role of public television in the United States.

The AGM took the occasion to follow up on our successful Cyber Security Symposium last December with two sessions; the first focusing on what we learned last December and the second on the importance of the Cyber Agenda ahead. These were both interesting and relevant discussions.

A session on the aftermath of the US Spectrum auction, including the repack, transition strategies and the timeline, was of immediate and high priority to those attending and provided some very useful information. The session on future trends and issues, featuring some of our industry leaders, was a fascinating glimpse of the challenging opportunities and tasks ahead. Individually and collectively we are much more than broadcasters, we are in fact broad spectrum media companies - ubiquitous on every available platform. What a change over the last decade!

We said goodbye to Bob Plummer, who has retired after more than 50 years in our industry with many contributions and patents to his credit. Bob was awarded this year's *NABA International Achievement Award*. It was both a celebration of Bob and a time of sadness for many of us who have worked with him for many years. He is a special friend and he is missed already. There is a goodbye interview with Bob Plummer in this very *NABAcaster* on page 3.

The day after the AGM, we held our now third *Future of Radio & Audio Symposium*, hosted by

the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) at their Washington, DC headquarters. The Symposium's keynote was delivered by Ajit Pai, the newly appointed Chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). It was Chairman Pai's first public appearance since his appointment and he gave a passionate and supportive speech on the crucial role radio plays in communities all across America.

With close to a 100 broadcasters from Mexico, the US and Canada, the day went on to explore the current challenges the radio industry faces. These included the future prominence of radio in the car dashboard, the activation of FM chips in smartphones, how to build listenership in a multi-platform world and how to effectively use social media to build a loyal audience. Podcasting and its relationship to traditional radio was thoroughly discussed, and it was agreed that the two are symbiotic in their relationship and not mutually exclusive.



NABA's President Richard Friedel (Fox) addressing members at NABA's 39th AGM in Arlington, VA.

Jeff Detweiler from HD Radio (now Xperi) presented a Digital Radio position paper that endorsed HD Radio as a voluntary North American Standard for Digital Radio. This was a very important deliverable that his working group of our Radio Committee took on almost two years back. This paper has been sent to

all three North American administrations with the goal of understanding that a successful roll-out of digital radio depends on a harmonization of standards, transition strategies and market consistency in all three major North American territories. As you may have noticed, Jeff expands on this position paper in our issue's cover story.

Finally, the notion of how data can be used to enhance broadcast services and advertising by using the internet to mine and measure consumer interests and habits was explored. Suffice to say, this is an opportunity that will only grow in the future as station groups and initiatives, like NextRadio, marry radio with internet services to better understand and serve their markets.

All in all, it was a very full and a very productive day for radio. Well done to Paul Brenner (Emmis/NextRadio) who chaired the day, and to the organizing committee too.

In March, NABA was at the ITU with a further submission on activating radio chips (FM chips in North America) in smartphones following up on our initial submission last November. The ITU is difficult to navigate by novices and we were fortunate to have Bob Weller (NAB) representing us on this important contribution. In essence, our ask of the ITU was to add this New Opinion to the already completed ITU-R BT.2299 entitled "Broadcasting for public warning, disaster mitigation, and relief." By activating radio chips in smartphones, mobile operators are enhancing an important public service.

All that to say our submission was accepted last November as a Proposed Draft New Opinion (or "PDNO" in ITU speak) and this past March, after considerable discussion and editing, the proposal was recommended by sub-working group on audio (SWG 6A-5) to Working Party 6A (WP 6A) who approved it as a Draft New Opinion (DNO), and sent it on to Study Group 6 (SG 6) who, at the end of March, approved the proposal as a New Opinion (NO).

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The New Opinion is now being circulated to all member countries for comment and we expect it to be recognized as part of BT.2299. This opinion is not legally binding, but it is a strong statement for mobile operators to do the right thing. Just recently, the Mexican Regulator ruled that mobile operators must enable chips in smartphones... incredible timing!

I've taken the time to briefly explain this process for two reasons. First, it is a huge step forward for radio and getting services to listeners where they are listening. Second, it is an example of how we, as a broadcast community, can work for changes which enhance our radio and television services as the world is rapidly changing around us. It was also a complicated and time-consuming process - it took many people from our radio committee and ITU specialists to produce this result and the future initiatives at the ITU will require the same effort no matter what the issue or medium. Well done all. Jenn Hadfield also mentions these ITU activities in this issue of *NABAcaster* on page 8.

Throughout April we focused on organizing our Educational Seminars on Common File Delivery Specifications for North America which are a necessary step for the broadcast and production community to adopt the NABA/DPP specifications for program delivery. The message is simple: we are Simplifying Video File Workflow and saving money, reducing errors, and facilitating increased volume to multiple platforms.

It has taken us a couple of years to get to this point, and it will take a couple of years for adoption, but when done this will be a major contribution to our efficiency and effectiveness in video file workflow. Throughout May we conducted seminars in production centres across the US and in Canada. We have recorded the presentation and it will soon be available on our website for streaming. If there is demand, we will organize webinars to follow-up in centres that we didn't initially get to.

This is important work, and we hope our members pay attention and plan their own adoption strategies. We encourage the wider production/delivery industry to do the same. NABA stands ready to help facilitate, illuminate and support our indus-

try's efforts. My thanks to Clyde Smith (Fox) for his continued leadership of this complicated, but nevertheless, absolutely necessary effort. For more information on the education seminars, see the article in this issue of *NABAcaster* on page 7.



Aside from all of the above, we continue to focus on the issues surrounding the Next Generation of Television including ATSC 3.0, HDR, and the Repack (along with transition strategies and trans-border issues). These issues will dominate much of our agenda over the coming months and years, but they are fundamental to our eventual transition to IP production and delivery.

To add to our knowledge base, the Media-over-IP (MoIP) report is now available to members and we are contemplating a seminar on the subject this fall in NYC. The rate of change in our television industry is about to get a jolt upwards and it won't be cheap. It will be challenging, but the results may well enhance our revenue opportunities, improve our efficiencies and save money. Getting there is never easy. Thomas Bause Mason will have an update on MoIP in our next issue of *NABAcaster* this summer.

Our Legal Committee has been focused on WIPO and the potential for a Broadcaster Treaty. It appeared that the last Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) meeting in the first week of May would potentially lead to a Diplomatic Conference sometime in 2018 on the

Treaty. Now we aren't so sure. Please see a brief commentary on this subject in this issue by the EBU's Heijo Ruijsenaars on page 5.

The Chair of our Radio Committee, Julie McCambley (CBC/Radio-Canada), has had a baby girl and is on maternity leave for a year. We all congratulate Julie and her husband Enzo and welcome Sofia into this world. In her absence, Paul Brenner (EMMIS/NextRadio) has stepped in to lead the committee, not that he needs another job. We thank Paul for his leadership.

As we move into June, the agenda continues to be demanding with the World Broadcasting Unions (WBU) International Media Connectivity Group (IMCG) Forum meeting in Washington, DC at the end of May, where Cyber Security, HEVC testing, and collection and delivery challenges in an IP dominated world are on the agenda. This is the first forum for John Ball (Turner) as Chair. John is enthusiastic about his new role and the positive initiatives leading to global consensus that come from his work. The forum will be hosted by the NAB, and we thank them for making their facility available to us. We can look forward to a re-cap of that event also in our summer *NABAcaster*.

In early June, the WBU Technical Committee meets in Stuttgart, Germany. The new Chair, Simon Fell (from the European Broadcasting Union), is renewing this committee's agenda which will include initiatives in Cyber Security, 5G, the Next Generation of Television and a new Radio Handbook encompassing global initiatives. John Lee (Fox, and NABA VP and TC Chair) is the Vice-Chair of the committee and will lead the Cyber Security coordination at a global level. Good luck, John.

And at the end of June, the Secretaries/Directors-General meet in Dublin to review the work of the WBU and approve the agenda for the year ahead. We can then only hope that we get a modest break for the summer.

I'm sorry this is so long, but it's been a while since I've had the chance to write to you all and as you can see, the agenda is full and getting even more so. Please drop me a line if something catches your eye. ■