

IEEE

Broadcast Technology

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***U.S. TV Spectrum
Repack Wraps
Up With A Whirlwind
Of Activity –
See p. 6
For Complete Story***

President's Message

Ralph Hogan, BTS President



At the current moment, Covid-19 virus cases are still increasing in my area of Phoenix, Arizona. Parts of the world have seen a decline in the number of cases and are slowly easing regulations previously put into place to restrict the spread of Covid-19. The BTS Annual Broadcast Symposium (ABS) face-to-face meeting for 2020 has been deferred to 2021. Time will tell if we will be able to have an in-person meeting in 2021. A new virtual event will be held during the same time frame as the 2020 ABS this year. The Broadcast Multimedia Systems and Broadband (BMSB) conference has gone to a virtual conference for 2020 with plans for resuming a face-to-face meet-

ing in 2021 if conditions allow. BTS has been exploring how to better serve membership by providing virtual, meetings, webinars and enhanced training throughout the year. The educational and technical webinars are already taking place with the added benefit that after the live broadcast presentations are completed, they are archived in the BTS resource center which can be found through the BTS website. BTS has attracted more than 300 attendees for recent webinars, and has had over 200 visitors to the BTS resource center each month. Currently, there is a mixture of both pay and non-pay content available. All of the resource center products are available to BTS members at no cost.

There has been a sizable loss of BTS revenue in 2020 because of the pandemic, and this will have an impact on the 2021 budget. The most noticeable loss is from the IBC Show not being held in 2020. As BTS has reserves, some budget shortfalls will be covered by these in 2021, and possibly in 2022. Depending on how long the pandemic lasts, there will certainly be reduced revenue for the next few years. BTS staff and leadership have been working on several ideas that may help generate revenue from new sources such as a BTS job bank, paid webinars, paid virtual conferences, and increased use of the BTS Resource Center. The BTS finance committee is also providing advice on how we may eliminate/reduce this shortfall. At this time, it appears that travel will remain restricted as we go into 2021.

The Technical Activities Board (TAB) held its meeting series virtually because of Covid-19 over the course of several weeks in June and part of July. This meeting series usually occurs face-to-face over the course of a week. The virtual meetings were also shortened to cover only essential items that needed to be discussed and/or voted upon. Since there are volunteers that attend from all over the world, it was challenging to have the meetings at a time when the most people could attend. Even presented with these challenges, the virtual meetings were very well attended. The TAB board meeting, made up of all 39 Society presidents, was attended by 100 percent of the registered members. There were in excess of 170 people attending the meeting, including the IEEE TAB staff, and with the addition of visitors, the number increased to nearly 300. The meeting ran efficiently by use of a moderator and the Web meeting Chat feature. Those wishing to have the floor entered their name or question, and were called upon in the order received. Voting on motions by the presidents took a new twist by having all of them logged in as presenters and following a unique link to provide a secure connection to the voting site. As each motion came up, it was discussed and presented to the presidents for a vote. The anonymous votes were tallied and results given to the

Inside

President's Message	2
From The Editor	3
Marathon U.S. TV Spectrum Repack Ends	6
Making The Heavy Lift: American Tower Tackles The Repack	10
ATSC's Annual Meeting Goes Virtual.	12
BTS Distinguished Lecturer Series Moves To On-Line Platform	14
Serendipity In The Time Of Pandemic	15
Increasing VHF Band II Spectral Efficiency By Transmitter Combining FM Digital Radio Signals	16
ATSC Insider	20
RF Report	22
5G Broadcast—A New Competitor To Traditional Terrestrial Broadcasting	29
The Downward Path To Broadcast Engineering—No. 20	33
Analyzing TV Signals With Inexpensive Tuners And Open Source Software	35
DRM News And Views	39
Women In Broadcast	41
The Impact Of The New BTS YouTube Channel	45
ITU Report	51
Upcoming Events Of Interest To BTS Members	53
Letter To The Editor	54
What's New	55

A 'heavy-lift' helicopter is used to facilitate installation of new top-mount antenna at an American Tower Corp.-owned tower near Boston, Massachusetts as part of the 39-month-long U.S. TV spectrum repack initiative.

(Cover photo courtesy of American Tower Corp.)

continued on page 13

From The Editor

Moving Forward In A New Environment

By James E. O'Neal, Editor-in-Chief,
BTS Life Member



By my reckoning, it's been just about 100 days since the governor of the state in which I reside declared a state of emergency, with a "stay at home" order soon following. Similar actions were taken in most parts of the United States, just as they were in states and municipalities around the world. Governments are now beginning to relax the sanctions that mandated home confinement; however, this may be overly optimistic, as in the United States, at least, as the number of confirmed cases and mortalities appear to be on the rise again. Only time will tell how this all plays out.

I'm sure this is not exactly "news" to any of our members and/or readers, as it's just about impossible not to get similar reports any time your turn on the radio or television set or pick up a newspaper. So, what I'm wondering is how you've been spending those 100 or more days that the world has been standing still.

I know first-hand that world of academia hasn't ground to a halt. My wife is an adjunct professor of mathematics at an area institution of higher learning, and after a somewhat extended spring break in March, classes resumed, but at a distance, with "remote" or "distant" learning" kicking in full tilt. She and the rest of the faculty had to very quickly master the ins and outs of Zoom, and finished out the semester in a virtual classroom environment. The college has made the decision to stay virtual when fall classes get under way, so I've been working on a home studio that includes a couple of dedicated cameras, a graphics tablet, and a touchscreen display to emulate the "brick and mortar" classroom's chalkboard, uh, whiteboard!

I've also been busy attending plenty of virtual events, including the April on-line version of the NAB Show. (At the time that this is being written, it's still available for those who haven't yet made the rounds, or want to spend some additional time attending tech presentations or "kicking tires" at exhibitors' virtualized exhibit areas). I've also taken advantage of several educational opportunities that now exist through webinars being offered by the BTS and other industry organizations. While I think all of us miss attending conferences, symposia, trade shows, and other events in person, life goes on, and virtual events are the next best thing. Also, there is something of an "upside" to these virtualized industry events in that most of the presentations are being recorded and

made available on demand. This allows access to sessions that would be impossible to take in at a "bricks and mortar" event due to conflicting presentation times. I'm thankful that organizations such as ours are expending the time and effort to create these virtualized events to keep all of us connected and up-to-date with our rapidly evolving industry.

Working 'Smarter' Due To The Pandemic

As I mentioned in my editorial in the previous issue of **Broadcast Technology**, it's extremely fortunate that technology has advanced to the point where video connectivity (via the Internet) is available to almost everyone. There's another area of technology that's arrived in a big way in the 21st century and is also proving to be very useful in this era of social distancing and travel restrictions. I'm speaking, of course, of the ability to remotely diagnose problems, download software upgrades and "fixes," and perform other tasks that formerly would have required site visits by personnel. My first brush with this capability occurred some 30 years ago back in the pre-Internet days. I'd installed a new CAD program on my computer and was having trouble making it execute properly. After repeated attempts to diagnose and correct the problem via telephone calls with the company's help desk, the person there asked me if I perchance had a telephone modem installed in my computer. I answered in the affirmative, as this was something I used then for sending and receiving "faxes," rather than the conventional desktop dedicated facsimile scanner/printer. The help desk person asked for the "fax" phone number and permission to remotely access my computer in this fashion. This was all new to me, but I agreed, and soon the computer's telephone modem card was answering a call and then an unseen hand located a couple of thousand miles away began to manipulate the on-screen cursor and move around through the program's lines of code. Although I knew that such a thing was possible, I'd never seen it done and was in awe as I witnessed it for the first time. In just a few minutes, the conflict was identified and corrected, and I was asked to try to run the program again. It worked!

This was really some powerful "magic" back then and made a lasting impression on me. Today, of course, remote diagnostics and "fixes" are so commonplace that no one takes notice.

As most of you know, the U.S. implementation of ATSC 3.0 (or NextGen TV as it's now been officially branded) was supposed to happen in a big way this year, but those laying out the timeline and scheduling to make this happen didn't reckon with the disruptive effects of Covid-19 when drawing up their plans.