

ESTA Directions August 2000

*By Mike Wood*

Elsewhere in this issue you will see two articles on programs that speak to the heart of what a trade association should do for its members. The first is an update from Lori Rubinstein on the fast accelerating ESTA Market Research Program. You've read progress reports in these pages before of the early steps in this important study to obtain accurate, detailed information on the size and make-up of the market we all work in. The exciting news is that, spearheaded by a task group of industry manufacturing leaders, this survey is moving forward with increasing momentum and is likely to bear fruit earlier than we could have hoped. This is a perfect example of the utility and application of a strong trade association – ESTA can achieve on your behalf results that individual companies cannot – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

As I've said in this column before back in December of 1998 when we first started pushing for this survey it's a real sign of the growing maturity of the entertainment technology industry that we can participate in programs like this. Lori's article gives full details of the upcoming survey and tells you how you can be a part of it – it's important to realize that the only way to obtain the results of the survey is to be a participant, the more who participate the more reliable the survey's results will be.

The other program that is reaching launch time is Product Stewardship – this program has been through all the review processes and is ready to be released. The development work started a year ago as a spin-off from the Fog and Smoke Working Group in the Technical Standards Program. It became clear to the Fog and Smoke Working Group that a Product Stewardship program was going to be essential in demonstrating the responsibility and concern members have for the users of their equipment. All of us share a responsibility for the safe use of products we manufacture, distribute or use. Look elsewhere in this issue for further details.

Talking of the technical standards program it's worth mentioning the transition in focus of the Technical Standards Committee. The program is past its starting pains and, thanks to the efforts of many volunteers and the enthusiasm of the Technical Standards Manager, Karl Ruling, is actually producing a steady stream of useful standards. So what do the TSC do now? Their emphasis has shifted from dealing with the nuts and bolts of standards production to trying to foresee the needs of the membership in the standards arena and, of prime importance, dealing with the ongoing funding and public awareness of the whole program. To help follow this shifting role you'll see members joining the TSC with different skills to play different roles – fund raising, marketing and public relations are increasingly important. Keep an eye on who is involved in the regular 'Meet the TSC' column.

Finally, it's coming up to election time for the ESTA board and I'd like to take a moment to encourage you to vote. You should be seeing the ballot in your mail very soon - please open it and return it as soon as you can. It's important that you do for many reasons - this is your opportunity to establish your representation at board level and to make sure that ESTA moves forward in the direction you'd like.