

2009 PACA International Conference

The Picture Archive Council of America (PACA) held its annual International Meeting this year in October at the elegant Eden Roc Beach Resort in Miami. The attendance covered a broad spectrum of countries from Sweden, Austria, Germany, France and the UK, to Brazil, Korea, Japan and India. On the North American Continent, Canada and the US were well represented. Concerns about the economy and constantly changing business models served as an incentive for collaboration, learning, and the enhancement of change management systems to foster growth and profitability for the future.

PACA is actively collaborating with other trade organizations to share knowledge, promote proper licensing practices, and also keep ahead of the legal issues in the industry. The American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP), The Coordination of European Picture Agencies (CEPIC), The British Association of Picture Libraries and Agencies (BAPLA), The American Society of Picture Professionals (ASPP), and Stock Artists Alliance (SAA, now merging with AVA) are all part of this initiative.

Maria Kessler, PACA President, gave the opening speech, and emphasized the importance of staying abreast of changes in the industry and identifying the opportunities that abound: “As an industry we need to make sure we are not insular, and that we pay attention to the larger content industry to observe how we fit in. We can see disruption, but also opportunity. In the cross winds of change, keeping our industry alive and healthy relies on a lot of forces. We know the ad market is severely slumping, and print media is hurting, but the opportunity to provide imagery abounds – particularly online. The image is more relevant than ever.”

Each conference day was filled with well designed workshops to help everyone stay ahead of the curve. The Stock Footage Production Workshop was directed by Lorena Arnold of Hola Images (holaimages.com), and produced by the technical talent at Digital Decaf (digitaldecaf.com). The live footage shoot offered real-time opportunities to learn about digital production and workflow, along with the technical aspects of The Red camera or the Canon 5D, and all the hardware and software involved in a stock footage shoot. From directing talent to handling post production, every step of the way demonstrated how to create footage appropriate for high production value distribution.

The panel discussion that followed was on supplying footage and stills to the market. It was moderated by Christina Vaughan, CEO of Image Source, VP of PACA and President of CEPIC. Listening to the experts from Rubberball, Adnet, Digital Decaf, and Blend Images, we learned what constitutes quality of production, how to make workflow decisions and what is valuable in the market today.

Shooting footage can be a one to two year investment before enjoying returns. Assessing trends and hard to access locations are important to fill inventory needs. Stewart Cohen’s (Blend Images) newsroom footage and Mark Anderson’s (Rubberball) funeral procession

demonstrated examples of top quality “Red” production and story lines not available in the current media.

The panel discussion that followed closed the loop of information by addressing distribution models for still and motion production. It was moderated by Laurretta Dives of The Picture Desk, and Jamie DiVenere of Getty Images, and Mattias Josefsson of Johner Images showed how to best offer footage to the customer on their sites from the point of view of quality, cost and technical standards.

We learned that clients want both stills and footage. Platforms for footage content are expanding while ad prices are down 20% for still usage. This means footage will be the content of the future. The importance of meeting clients who purchase imagery is key. Discovering client’s needs, while doing a demo of the new technologies, is very powerful.

The next day featured a number of wonderful seminars offering updates on many important aspects of the imaging industry. Patricia Lanza, Talent and Content Manager at the Annenberg Space for Photography, reminded us that we are still “part of the art community.” (www.annenberg.spaceforphotography.org)

According to the website: “The Annenberg Space for Photography is an entirely new cultural destination dedicated to exhibiting both digital and print photography in an intimate environment. The space features state-of-the-art, high-definition digital technology as well as traditional prints by some of the world’s most renowned photographers and a selection of emerging photographic talents as well.” It was inspiring to view the very talented work, see their impressive gallery spaces and state-of-the-art technology, all funded by the Annenberg Foundation.

Then Jerry Tavin (Co-Founder) brought us up to date on the Young Photographers Alliance (www.youngphotographersalliance.org). Launched by Jerry and Deborah Free of Picture House, this educational foundation brings emerging photographers the opportunity for advancement and help to stay in the industry via scholarships, mentoring, internships, and seminars. They have an impressive array of sponsors and are always looking for more.

Brian Solis, Principal of FutureWorks, a PR and New Media Agency, gave a spellbinding seminar on Social Networking & Marketing in 2010. He emphasized the importance of understanding and employing social networking in your business. As a consumer, everything begins with a search, and you can be everywhere with keywords. He demonstrated how the company Shutterstock (PACA member) understands the concept that social networking is more about the value of “influence” and less about “ROI” (return on investment). They will win in the long term.

Robert Henson, Co-Chair of PACA’s Technology Committee, held a seminar on Semantic Search with Dr. Chris Town of imense, and Matt Zitzmann of Google as speakers. Digging into the background of search technology demonstrated the important

impact it has on image and video search and the user's experience. "Semantic Search technology is smart enough to understand what sentences or combinations of words actually mean, as opposed to traditional search engines that base matching keywords associated with images, video and other online data."

Then Doug Dewirs, PACA Technical Advisor, demonstrated *PACA-Search*. This is the new meta-search engine under development that will launch in early 2010. It will allow clients searching for imagery to find the agency or archive that has those images through the PACA network. This will allow them quick access to professional talent and risk free licensing, and will become the new "Go To" of professional image search.

Closing a busy weekend, Nancy Wolff, PACA's Counsel, gave an "Ask the Attorney" session on legal questions of the day. Subjects covered included Copyright, Orphan Works, Google Books Settlement, and the Three Strikes Law. Everyone walked away from the weekend better informed, fully inspired, and ready to meet the challenges of the changing times and the opportunities that 2010 has to offer.

(Pat Hunt is a writer and workshop leader for the stock photo industry, and Managing Director of *Huntstock.com* in Boston, a lifestyle image production company. pat@huntstock.com.)
