

SPIE Professional January 2008

## Keeping Up With the Times

*Kevin Harding, who has begun his tenure as 2008 SPIE President, talks to SPIE Professional about SPIE's evolving role in optics and his goals as President.*

How did you get involved in machine vision and metrology?

When I first started out, I was working in programs involved in materials testing, high powered lasers, which tied in as well to interferometry and ellipsometry. When I later moved over to dealing more exclusively with the industrial sector, the machine vision industry at the time was just getting started. So I got involved and was one of the few optics people actually involved with machine vision at the time.

What experiences have prepared you to be SPIE President?

I think there have been a few things: My involvement with SPIE in terms of conference organization, teaching at some of the meetings, and some of the standing committees over time. I think that has helped from the point of understanding how the Society works.

My work career has also been valuable in that regard. I have well over 20 years experience in playing a leadership role. I hope I might bring a fairly wide perspective in terms of not just seeing things from an academic point of view or an industry point of view.

And of course as with any leadership thing, it's understanding how to interact with people. Part of the role of president is serving as a mediator, I think, to help bring about the good ideas and make sure we don't get bogged down by the details of things.

What are some key issues SPIE is facing right now?

We've perhaps gone through an era of changing identity. Maintaining a focus of identity so people understand what we're about and what the topics are about I think is one of the key areas the Society needs to understand.

I think the other big challenge that we have started into, and is certainly going to continue to be a challenge, is how do we make the connection with the engineer/scientist who's just getting into the field, what we call our early career professionals. Nowadays things have changed, and people don't automatically join societies or belong to professional organizations. So how do we maintain the Society relevance to that new generation of members?

What role do you think SPIE should play in the optics and photonics community?

I think the best role that SPIE does play is two-fold. First is helping people get in touch with other people, the communications aspect.

One of the main reasons anyone goes to these conferences isn't

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necessarily always to hear the papers. Instead, you go to talk to people. You get to meet people who might be doing something different, and you kind of compare notes and compare ideas. You want all the details you read in the paper, of course. [However], you can go online and do that in your office.

Next is the initiative of dealing with publications of the future. Journals nowadays, even if they're paper, go all around the world, and most of them have some electronic connection. If we're going to be effective at being a source of information for these technologies, we have to be sure we have the media, the mechanisms, and just the right tools to work within the electronic world of computer networks.

What are some of your goals as SPIE President?

One thing I plan to do is get out and visit a number of student chapters. If we're going to have these student chapters, somebody from leadership should try to touch as many of the student chapters as we can. Find out what they're doing and show our support for their activities.

I'm hoping to start a plan whereby we have partnerships with the Boeings and the Lockheeds and the General Electrics, many of which have quite a few SPIE members. I'd like to see at least the beginnings of getting partnerships with these organizations. I'd like to see corporations sponsoring student scholarships, student travel grants to help bring new people along. I'd like to see sponsorships and partnerships of outreach activities.

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#### ***Meet Kevin Harding at SPIE Photonics West***

Meet SPIE President Kevin Harding at the SPIE members' reception at Photonics West. The member-only reception will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Monday, 21 January, at the California Theatre, 345 S. First St., San Jose.

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#### **SPIE Newsroom: Keeping Up With Technical News**

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The SPIE Newsroom covers the latest in optics and photonics worldwide with industry technical reports, video and news feeds organized around 13 technical communities; free Webcasts on hot topics such as solid-state lighting and advanced lithography; updates on the latest products; and links to news items in the trade and general press. Technical articles and news announcements are added to the site daily, and options are available to receive monthly [SPIE Newsroom e-mail alerts](#) on specific topics or more frequent updates via an RSS reader.

Within the SPIE Newsroom, [SPIE.TV](#) also delivers video coverage from selected events, professional development seminars, and interviews with experts.

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#### **Kevin Harding**



Kevin Harding is the senior researcher and project leader for the General Electric Global Research Center (Niskayuna, NY). He received his BA in physics/philosophy from Rider College (Lawrenceville, NJ), and his MS degree in optics from the

University of Rochester (Rochester, NY). Besides SPIE, Harding is involved with the Laser Institute of America, Engineering Society of Detroit, Society of Manufacturing Engineers, and the Optical Society of America. He was interviewed by Beth Kelley for *SPIE Professional*.

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