



American Society of Media Photographers
Smarter. Stronger. Together.

ASMP's Future Vision – Tom Kennedy

As Executive Director of ASMP, my goals for our organization are rooted in an acknowledgement and appreciation of our past while we address the needs of our members and the challenges and opportunities found in a rapidly-evolving 21st century global marketplace for images.

I continue to believe that our goals remain anchored in the idea that ASMP exists to serve the needs of professional photographers by building community and offering the tools and resources that enable our members to be their “best selves.” Our goal is to enable photographers to create work of value to clients and public alike, contributing to our cultural heritage and visual history. To do that effectively, we need to support photographers in their creative work and business life.

The incredible speed of technological change has altered the landscape of publishing in ways that our founding members might have found unimaginable. It is also requiring that we continue to fight for fair compensation, respect for the rights of visual creators embodied in the idea of copyright, and that we enable photographers to communicate effectively about the value of professionally done visual communication at a time when the technological barriers that previously separated amateur and professional work no longer exist, and the world is experiencing visual images an essential language spoken by all.

We need to convince clients and public alike that our experience and skills yield visual communications that add to our cultural heritage, deepen our understanding of the world, and literally change how people see the world. While the world may be awash in amateur-produced content being supplied daily, professionally produced images (whether stills or motion) are the basis for a language that is powerful, impactful, and increasingly important as a form of communication.

To meet the challenges of the moment and remain viable and relevant as a trade association representing independent professional photographers working across editorial and commercial genres, we need to embrace change and seize new possibilities in the marketplace. The National Board of Directors and I met in Raleigh to begin planning on new initiatives to transform ASMP and ensure its long-term relevance and viability. Our adaptation to new economic realities has to begin with internal cultural change within ASMP.

A list of committees headed by board and staff members (see attachment) will begin the process of achieving transformative change as ASMP. We have identified specific areas needing attention, partially as a result of board and staff “listening tours” carried out during my first six months as Executive Director. As we make assignments and carry



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out some necessary short-term actions, we are looking at the big picture strategic direction we want to pursue longer term.

We want to make ASMP a “high-touch”, nimble organization that understands member goals and needs and responds accordingly. We will be creating new materials that address specific business management needs and that support individual creativity. We will offer inspirational programming and events that enable the public to understand our work and value it more highly. At the same time, we will be working to shape new mechanisms for strengthening our community and centering it within the larger communities where our members live and work. Our goals as visual communicators will always be influenced by the needs of clients, but we need to continuously nurture our own wellsprings of passion and creativity through the ways we interact and the information we provide.

We need to enlarge our definition of advocacy to include messaging to the public about the value of visual communication, even as we respond to ongoing legal issues and business practices. We also need to continue to educate the next generation of visual communicators. This means paying more attention to students and emerging photographers, and working with educators to ensure they have the ability to teach young people how to build and sustain meaningful careers.

I want to help ASMP produce new tools, new resources, and new programs that elevate professional photography as a worthy profession (not unlike what the AMA has done for doctors or the ABA for lawyers) and I want to help us shape a curriculum that would be an “ASMP Masters Degree” as something we offer aspiring professionals to help them succeed more fully and contribute immediately to our community.

Helping members achieve business success requires us to address changing market realities with a particular focus on finding and retaining clients and enabling those clients to understand how visual communication can help them solve specific business issues. We need to help members grapple with the transition from an identity as individual independent visual creators solely making images as a product to one that has clients seeing us as visual solutions service providers who can act as producers guiding collaborative teams when necessary to yield effective visual messaging, regardless of medium.

Our success will depend on monitoring the needs and desires of members and using that knowledge to enable fellow professionals to continuously adapt and change in response to the world economy. Creating an ASMP for the 21st century is a shared responsibility of all members and we need to listen and learn from each other. We need to communicate with mutual respect and look always to share knowledge that builds and strengthens each member.