

Annual Meeting Hits Record Numbers

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In what was the largest Annual Meeting in INTA's history, 7,580 attendees thronged to the Convention Center in downtown San Diego, from May 14 - 18, for five full days of education, networking and fun.

The theme of the meeting, "That's Entertainment" permeated all aspects of the event, from programming to the receptions, and added to the overall satisfaction of the attendees. Attendees were also treated to sunny skies and balmy weather as well as an easily navigable convention area. The event opened with welcome remarks by INTA Executive Director Alan C. Drewsen and 127th Annual Meeting Co-Chairs David Bernstein and Lisa Gigliotti. Mr. Drewsen congratulated the more than 50 project team members and staff for their hard work on the meeting and predicted that attendees would leave San Diego with information and insights that they could apply when they returned home.



INTA President Anne Gundelfinger shares her experiences with committee and volunteer work.

INTA President Anne Gundelfinger then outlined the Association's 2005 initiatives including strong anti-counterfeiting advocacy and the revision of the U.S. Federal Trademark Dilution Act, which recently passed the House of Representatives with broad support. She also spoke about the work of the three 2005 task forces, which are focusing on the INTA Leadership Meeting, the internationalization of INTA's publications and confronting anti-IP views. Throughout her presentation, Ms. Gundelfinger talked passionately about her volunteer work with the Association and urged attendees to "get involved" whenever possible. She said, "Not only will you be making a difference in trademark law worldwide, it's also a lot of fun. So, get involved, join a committee or write an article."

In line with the entertainment theme, topics such as the right to use celebrity images, merchandising, endorsement and the use of brands in the entertainment industry were addressed in various engaging sessions – one of the highlights being the opening night keynote presentation by CMG Worldwide Chairman and CEO Mark Roesler. Mr. Roesler described how changes in entertainment and technology indicate that celebrities can now be brought to life in new ways, be given new images or voices and even gain a life beyond death. Mr. Roesler further emphasized that this life-beyond-death revolution poses challenges for all involved in protecting and exploiting celebrities' rights. He told the audience that it is the responsibility of legal representatives to protect what deceased celebrities would have wanted or how they would want their image exploited.



CMG Worldwide Chairman and CEO Mark Roesler speaks about the changing world of entertainment law.

New on the agenda this year were interactive workshops that focused on trademark-related subjects such as depositions, due diligence and UDRP proceedings. The workshops, which were smaller than the sessions, were designed as instructional "classes," and provided, as one attendee remarked, "excellent solutions to real-world types of problems." The meeting also featured, for the first time, a real-time deliberation involving a jury made up of local people, seen live by the audience and commented on by a panel of litigation specialists. Attendees at the session viewed the jury's 30-minute deliberations over a closed-circuit TV link, noting that most seemed to grasp the main facts of the case, while one confused trademark and copyright law and another questioned the validity of the trademark, which in this case was the image of TIGER WOODS.



Annual Meeting Co-Chairs Lisa Gigliotti and David Bernstein illustrate the meeting's theme of "That's Entertainment."

The sessions, table topics and workshops were not the only things on the agendas of meeting attendees. The Annual Meeting gave INTA's more than 2,000 volunteer committee members time to get together and work on committee projects. The San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina, which is located next to the convention center, teemed with participants busy attending one of nearly 30 committee meetings and more than 100 subcommittee meetings.

The city also provided ample opportunity for attendees to get to know their colleagues in a relaxed setting. Business meetings were held around tables on the boardwalk near the waterfront or in small restaurants and cafés just a few blocks away. To further facilitate networking opportunities, receptions were organized for various interest groups which, among others, included new attendees, the leadership, TMtopics email discussion list members, government officials and regular members. The two largest receptions held for all registrants were, as one attendee put it, "superb." The meeting began with an outdoor fiesta near the water, featuring celebrity look-alikes, such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis, and concluded with a command performance by killer whale celebrity Shamu at SeaWorld® park.

Perhaps it was the combination of the educational and networking opportunities, the appeal of the locale and the beautiful weather that contributed the comment heard more than once: "This is one of the best Annual Meetings I have ever attended."