

Jonquil Ritter, ABA Director Planning and Licensing represented the ABA at the recent BroadcastAsia 2000 conference in Singapore. Here are her impressions:

## BroadcastAsia 2000 Conference

**B**roadcastAsia 2000 was held in conjunction with CommunicAsia 2000. They are both being held in the same venue, leading to a convergence of people if not a convergence of ideas. I suspect that there will always be a difference, a divergence of the interest of these two groups, broadcasters and those in the bigger group of telecommunications.

### Newsflashes

While at the Conference Singapore announced the release of two digital licenses. The two new digital broadcasting licenses are for the incumbents to simulcast and for mobile digital television services.

It was also announced that, after a review, Singapore has decided to leave its local media broadcasting services in the hands of Singaporeans.

To quote from the *Straits Times*:

Singapore's media industry is to be liberalised, the government announced yesterday.

Unlike the free-for-all competition unleashed by the liberalisation of the telecommunications industry, the media industry here will be freed up only gradually, with controlled competition introduced.

To begin with, Singapore Press Holdings which now publishes 10 newspapers in four languages, will be able to cross over into television and radio.

And the Media Corporation of Singapore, which owns the local television and most of the local radio channels will get a newspaper licence. SPH will be able to

operate up to two free to air television channels and run one or two radio stations, Minister for Information and the Arts, Lee Yock Suan announced yesterday at a seminar at the BroadcastAsia 2000 Trade Show at the Singapore Expo in Changi.

Next will be a review of the ban on satellite dishes, when the exclusive licence for Singapore Cable Vision's pay TV service ends in 2002.

The Government will also consider issuing more pay TV licences then ...

Mr Lee noted that 99 percent of Singapore audiences tune into local television channels, with 60 percent of cable television subscribers spending as much or more time watching local channels'.

### Opening ceremony

At the opening ceremony Mr Hugh Leonard, the Secretary General of the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union talked about the fact that he still watched television the same way he always had. He said that really the only new technologies that had influenced most people were mobile telephones and email. This was because they were useful, user-friendly and affordable and that when looking at affordability we really need to bear in mind that there had to be common international standards. He further made the point that new technologies add on but don't replace so the current broadcasters don't need to get too nervous.

Dr Tan, the Deputy Prime Minister talked about about e-government — such things as electronic service deliv-

ery for people needing Government services.

### Digital experiences

The highlights of the digital experiences sessions were:

- Edgar J Wilson from New Technology, European Broadcasting Union, Switzerland on 'Implementing Networks and Introducing Services in Digital and Terrestrial TV in Europe' which gave a very good overview of all the developments in Europe. It would seem that in the UK the thinking is that high definition television, when it comes to the UK, will be via cable or satellite, not by the broadcasting radio frequency spectrum; and

- Lee Chin Siong, Director, TV Mobile Engineering Division, Television Corporation of Singapore 'TV Mobile Television for People on the Move'. The TV Mobile Session showed all the different trials they have been doing in Singapore with mobile television. The trials show that it works well. In Singapore it looks likely to be a product much in demand.

### Other themes

There was also significant discussion about leveraging broadcasting or other business by video streaming on the Internet. This was backed up by a number of engineering presentations on how to ensure good technical quality for. Apparently video streaming in the USA is expected to be worth \$10 billion by 2004.

