

International broadcast & media briefs

A monthly summary of web-based news

Asia

Hong Kong's Phoenix in content deal with Galaxy

Hong Kong-based Phoenix Satellite Television Holdings will beam its InfoNews and Chinese channels over Galaxy Satellite's network to expand its coverage in Hong Kong. Phoenix currently broadcasts its InfoNews and Chinese channels over the cable networks of i-Cable Communications' Cable TV, PCCW's NOW Broadband TV and Star TV, with coverage of about 900,000 households.

Source: www.abu.org.my/

Digital TV to go on air in Beijing

Residents in Beijing will soon be able to enjoy digital television programs and receive free digital set-top boxes. Beijing Broadcast and Media TV Company said finance of the digital television service in Beijing will be backed by the local government and enterprises.

Source: www.abu.org.my/

Europe

Ten commandments for the attention of the European Union

Television is going through some hard times: major multinationals with strategies (good or bad), uncertainties and threats of national politics, critics trashing much of the programming as trivial and the ratings war that has disastrous consequences. All of this in a climate of unprecedented technological, economic and socio-cultural uncertainty.

More: www.ebu.ch/en/union/diffusion_on_line/pub_broadcasting/tcm_6-17093.php

Independent review: BBC digital television

The Secretary of State commissioned Professor Patrick Barwise to conduct an independent review of the BBC's Digital Television Services in April 2004. The report was delivered in October 2004. This report follows the Secretary of State's approval of the BBC's proposals for the relaunch of their digital channels, BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge, as BBC3, BBC4, CBeebies and CBBC. All the approvals were subject to a number of conditions, one of which was that the services would be subject to a review after two years. The report is supported by a market impact assessment conducted by Ofcom, www.ofcom.org.uk/codes_guidelines/broadcasting/tv/psb_review/reports/bbcnews.pdf

To see the full report: www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/review_bbc_digital_tv_services+.htm

Independent review: BBC digital radio

The Secretary of State commissioned Tim Gardam to conduct an independent review of the BBC's Digital Radio Services in April 2004. The report was delivered in October 2004. This report follows the Secretary of State's approval for five new digital radio stations: 1Xtra, BBC 6 Music, BBC7, BBC Asian Network and Five Live Sports Extra. The approvals were subject to a number of

conditions, one of which was that the services would be reviewed periodically. The report is supported by a market impact assessment conducted by Ofcom and published on 13 October: www.ofcom.org.uk/codes_guidelines/broadcasting/tv/psb_review/reports/bbcnews.pdf

Full report: www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/review_bbc_digital_radio_services.htm

European production quotas: Proposed guidance on the television without frontiers directive

Ofcom is seeking views, particularly from television broadcasters, on the guidance that it proposes to issue in relation to their licence obligations to comply with Articles 4 and 5 of the Television without Frontiers (TWF) Directive(-1-). These require, amongst other things, that European production should account for no more than 50 per cent of the transmission hours of each broadcaster established in the UK, subject to certain exclusions.

More: www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/e_p_q/

Express launches TV shopping channel

Daily Express owner Richard Desmond's first shopping channel has launched, and is billed as the first outlet to mix commerce with entertainment.

Source: www.broadcastnow.co.uk/

Sky free digital service launched

The service will offer some 200 television and radio channels for a single payment of £150, and is being launched in time for Christmas, with the aim of taking on the BBC's Freeview digital television platform, which sells an average of 200,000 set top boxes a month.

Source: www.dmeurope.com/default.asp?ArticleID=390

UK regulator conjures up idea of public IP TV broadcaster

Ofcom has called for the setting up of a new Public Service Provider which would distribute television programs in a digital format through broadband lines, networked personal video recorders, and mobile networks, as well as more conventional television distribution systems. It has proposed funding of £300m a year, include the commissioning of television programs, and spend as much as 290,000 Euros for each hour of content it created.

More: www.dmeurope.com/default.asp?ArticleID=3912

ITV enhances red button service

ITV has launched a new 24-hour interactive service called ITVi, which will have a range of services including betting, games, Friends Reunited and a dating service. The broadcaster initially introduced 'red-button' services on both ITV1 and ITV2 in May 2003, but has revamped the service with a raft of new features.

More: www.broadcastnow.co.uk

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US

DirecTV Group and News Corp. reorganise and consolidate satellite TV platforms in Latin America

The DirecTV Group, Inc. and News Corp. have announced a series of transactions with Grupo Televisa, Globopar and Liberty Media to reorganise the companies' direct-to-home (DTH) satellite television platforms in Latin America. The transactions are designed to ensure the long-term success of DirecTV Latin America and Sky Latin America by consolidating the two DTH platforms into a single platform in each of the major territories in the region.

More: www.satnews.com/frames.html

FCC adopts rules for broadband over power lines

As part of its goal to promote access to broadband services for all Americans and to encourage new facilities-based broadband platforms, the Federal Communications Commission has adopted changes to its rules to encourage the development of Access Broadband over Power Line systems while safeguarding existing licensed services against harmful interference.

More: hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-253125A1.doc

FCC removes more roadblocks to broadband deployment in residential neighborhoods

The Federal Communications Commission has taken further steps to encourage deployment of fiber optic broadband networks capable of delivering advanced data, video and voice service to the mass market by incumbent local telephone companies.

More: hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-253127A1.doc

Activists weigh in on restricting TV violence

A coalition of television writers and producers was the first of many industry and citizens groups expected to offer a take on the Federal Communications Commission's inquiry into the need for restricting violent television programming. Instead of restricting when violent programming may air, as the FCC is considering, the Center for Creative Voices in Media, the Caucus for Television Producers, Writers & Directors, and children's TV activist Peggy Charren suggest the FCC embark on a series of public education campaigns to promote healthy viewing habits.

More: www.broadcastingcable.com/

Public TV, DHS test new warning system

Public television stations and the Department of Homeland Security are launching a program to demonstrate the intergration of public stations' digital capabilities into a national system for delivering digital alerts and warning messages to television sets, radios, computers and other consumer wireless devices.

More: www.broadcastingcable.com/

Ten more Detroit stations light up IBOC

Ten more stations in Detroit have gone HD Radio, bringing the number of stations broadcasting in both digital and analog in that market to 13. The conversion in Detroit mirrors what's happening nationwide as three of the top five radio group owners have announced plans to convert 80 per cent of their stations to digital.

Source: www.rwonline.com/

Sirius reaches 700,000 subscribers

Sirius Satellite Radio now has 700,000 subscribers and the company says it will reach 1 million by year end. Competitor XM has 2.5 million listeners.

Source: www.rwonline.com/

Brought to you by the letters D-T-V

Comcast Corp., PBS, Sesame Workshop and HIT Entertainment will team up on an ad-supported digital-cable network for preschoolers to launch in 2005. A companion video-on-demand service will provide 50 hours of programming starting in early 2005.

More: www.broadcastingcable.com/

Kids' cablers violate commercial limits

Following a Federal Communications Commission investigation, as well as subsequent inquiries by the cable programmers and distributors involved, Nickelodeon and ABC Family have agreed to pay \$1 million and \$500,000, respectively, for carrying too much commercial matter in their kids' shows, in violation of FCC limits.

More: www.broadcastingcable.com/

FCC Chairman's Press statement: hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-253395A1.doc

White House disses DTV subsidy

The White House said it would rather light a fire under broadcasters with an analog spectrum fee than create a fund to buy digital converter boxes for those who might be left out in the transition. The FCC has suggested that one way to speed the transition to digital television is to subsidise converter boxes for those still without digital television sets or cable/satellite hookups when the government starts reclaiming the analog spectrum.

More: www.broadcastingcable.com/

CPB finalises \$9 million in IBOC grants

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting announced grants totaling more than \$9 million to help an additional 133 local public radio stations buy equipment needed to transition to digital radio. Alaska, Kansas and Wyoming are the states with the most stations included in this round, which is the third of matching grants for IBOC gear; the total of awarded grants is now 285 public radio stations. Some 170 TV stations also have received matching grants for their digital transition.

Source: www.rwonline.com