Some broadcasting trends 'impossible to predict'

Some of the changes that will take place in broadcasting over the next five years are impossible to predict, an international conference in Dubai has been told.

However, broadcasters should not worry too much about what was going to happen in their industry, speakers at the Cabsat 2008 conference said during a discussion on the future of broadcasting.

"Not knowing what's going to happen is the best position to be in," Simon Eldridge of Omneon, a UK-based media server manufacturer, said. Consumers would choose how they wanted to receive and use material, and broadcasters would learn to adapt.

Kevan Jones of AV Specialist magazine agreed that while some broadcasting trends could not be predicted yet, others were becoming clear.

The reality was that over the next five years, anybody would be able to set himself up as a broadcaster and make his material available over a range of platforms, he said.

Mike Whittaker of Showtime Arabia said one of the main challenges for broadcasting, particularly in the Middle

The ABU booth at Cabsat, run by IRIB-Iran

East, would be the sustainability of the many new TV channels that had sprouted. Another was the availability of bandwidth; satellites in the region were getting full.

Peter Bruce of Thomson Grass Valley, a broadcasting equipment manufacturer, said the future of broadcasting would see it spread over many different formats, from high definition to mobile phones and the Internet.

Low-quality material would be available free to all, while people would still be willing to pay for high-quality content.

ABU Technical Director, Sharad Sadhu, who chaired the discussion, said broadcasters needed new products and services to survive. More training and more investment in bandwidth were also needed.

Mr Bruce said broadcasters with good reputations would continue to do well in the age of new media.

He pointed to the BBC website, which he said was one of the biggest in the world because people trusted the BBC.

Joost Verbrugge of Newtec said one of the unknown factors was how interactive TV would develop in the next five years. He predicted there would be a lot more interactivity but not in the way we thought of it now. □

On show at Cabsat...a huge digital outside broadcast (OB) van for sports events

ABU members to the fore: microphone covers on display at Cabsat

ABU members to take joint action on MPEG-4 licensing

The ABU Technical Bureau has decided that members should take a group approach to MPEG-4 licensing issues. The decision came at a two-day meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which ended on 6 May.

The bureau agreed that members would approach the licensing company, MPEG-LA, for full information on the licensing situation, including whether there are hidden licensors to be addressed.

The ABU Technical Department will then form a pool of members who want the ABU to negotiate licensing fees on their behalf.

In another decision, a study project on 'Broadcast Systems and Services for those with Special Needs' will be set up to facilitate broadcast media accessibility for people with special needs, in line with one of the recommendations made at the third World Electronic Media Forum in December.

The project will conduct studies on broadcasting systems and services for people with special needs and make recommendations on how such needs can be met, for example through closed caption and audio description.

The bureau members also agreed to set up the 'Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Industry Forum' which will provide a platform for exchange of information among stakeholders on problems experienced in the implementation of digital and mobile broadcasting services.

The forum will comprise players in the manufacturing industry – broadcasters, system integrators, service providers, national regulators and consumer groups.

The bureau also decided to take up preparation of an HDTV reference manual, incorporating the results of work carried out within the Technical Committee and HDTV developments in member countries.

Archive project

The bureau also emphasised the importance of the proposed Archive Showcase Project which will build up of archives from ground level and convert the existing analogue archives to digital.

The process of transforming would be documented as a reference guide for the other broadcasters. The ABU has approached TRT-Turkey for experts and is in the process of contacting French Government for funding the project.

Sharad Sadhu, ABU Technical Department Director, said: "The department receives a large number of requests from individual members for assistance on technical matters including on satellite broadcasting and earth stations, equipment identification, equipment and suppliers, and information on a wide variety of technical substance. The department considers this a high priority task and makes every effort to respond promptly."

The bureau also reviewed the activities of the Technical Department for the current year such as the ABU Digital Broadcasting Symposium 2008, the DTV roadmap for CEOs, 2007 World Radiocommunication Conference, the 5th Global Shortwave Frequency Coordination Conference, the Technical Advisory Service, roadshows on ICT applications, regional workshops on storage area networks, management for senior engineers, DTV frequency and coverage planning, planning of TV studios, showcases on archiving and HD-Radio/Mobile TV. □

ABU Technical Bureau members

New members for ABU

The ABU has welcomed several new additions to its membership since January, among them three Additional Full members and two Associate members. The union now has 194 members from 57 countries.

Joining the ABU as Additional Full members are Afghanistan's Saba Media Organisation (SMO) and Mongolia's NTV Television (NTV) and Radio & Television Network Department (RTND).

Headquartered in Ulaanbaatar, NTV was established in 2006, making it the youngest TV station in the country. Its aims are to contribute to the country's development, democracy and freedom.

RTND was set up in September 2000. It is a state-run free-to-air broadcaster providing broadcasting services of a national character and importance.

Afghanistan's SMO was established in 1997 as a cultural, social and non-profit media organisation to assist in the sustainable development of the country with the aim of raising awareness and education standards of the Afghan citizens.

Two Hong Kong-based media organisations have joined as Associate members. They are Dim Sum TV Company Ltd (Dim Sum TV) and PCCW Media Ltd (Now TV).

Launched in late 2003, Now TV has over 882,000 subscribers for its pay-TV service which offers more than 160 channels of Asian and international programming. It also offers IPTV, HDTV and mobile TV services.

Dim Sum TV, a Cantonese satellite TV channel, was launched in March 2007 to cater to Cantonese-speaking audiences in the Greater Pearl River Delta (GPRD) region and beyond.

Meanwhile, three Singapore-based media companies have signed on as Affiliate members. They are PCCW Global, Ascent Media, and Avid Technology (SEAsia) Pte Ltd (Avid).

Avid is a manufacturer of broadcast solutions, including feed ingest, newsroom operations, production and asset management, on-air graphics and automated multi-channel playout.

Ascent Media provides post-production, programme origination, transmission services and media consultancy to broadcasters, while PCCW Global offers fixed-line, IPTV, mobile, ICT solutions, global communications and telecommunication infrastructure services.

Malaysian-based Asia Media Monitors (AMM) and Sweden's Dolby also joined as Affiliate members. AMM monitors radio and TV news programmes for clients who want to track media coverage for their own and other organisations, while Dolby offers audio compression technology for radio, TV, mobile TV and mobile telecommunications applications. ☐

New faces in Publications and Info Systems

The ABU has new additions to its Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur. Jolaina Nasseri has joined as Editorial Assistant/Webmaster. She takes over from Izzatul Akhmar Abdul Karim.

A Malaysian, Jolaina holds a Masters' degree in art, design and creative multimedia from the United Kingdom and is familiar with photojournalism as well as magazine layout techniques.

Her main responsibility will be maintaining the ABU website, which is in the process of being revamped. She has also been tasked with designing various publications for the Secretariat, including the quarterly magazines, ABU News and Technical Review.

Faizal Abu Bakar has joined as Information Systems Officer. A Malaysian, Faizal has a diploma in computer systems and a computer technician certificate. He replaces Kalaiselvam Palaniappan.

Faizal has experience in maintaining and managing computer systems, storage servers and firewalls. He is also able to install, troubleshoot and repair computer hardware and peripherals.

He will assist in running the ABU's IT systems, including the website operations. ☐

Jolaina Nasseri (left) and Faizal Abu Bakar

ABU CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Events of interest to the ABU and its members in 2008

JUNE		
2-4	AIBD-ABU-BA Spectrum Planning Workshop	Kuala Lumpur
2-4	DW Global Media Forum	Bonn
12-13	WBU-ISOG	Atlanta
16-18	RadioAsia2008	Singapore
17-20	BroadcastAsia 2008	Singapore
30-1 July	37th ABU News Group Meeting	Ulaanbaatar

JULY		
3-4	EBU General Assembly	Budapest
6	WBU Annual Meeting	Budapest
7-10	ABU-HBF Workshop: 21st Century Management for Senior Engineers	Kuala Lumpur
21-24	ABU-ITU Workshop: UHF-VHF Band Planning for Digital TV Broadcasting Services	Kuala Lumpur

AUGUST		
3-8	International AIDS Conference 2008	Mexico City

SEPTEMBER		
11-16	IBC 2008	Amsterdam

OCTOBER		
8-10	PBI Conference	Arles
13-17	MIPCOM	Cannes
22-28	Japan Prize 2008 International Contest for Educational Media	Tokyo

NOVEMBER		
3-4	IIC Annual Conference	Hong Kong
17-18	AMAZIA Entertainment Summit	Hong Kong
18-20	AMAZIA Exhibition & Conference	Hong Kong
19-25	45th ABU General Assembly & Associated Meetings	Bali

Please note that the ABU Secretariat will be closed on the following Malaysian public holidays

Malaysian Public Holidays 2008	
7 June	Agong's Birthday
31 August	National Day
1-2 October	Hari Raya Puasa**
27 October	Deepavali**
8 December	Hari Raya Qurban**
25 December	Christmas Day
29 December	Awal Muharram (Maal Hijrah)

** Subject to change