

For the Advancement of Digital Satellite Broadcasting in Japan

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Entered NHK in 1973, following graduation from Keio University Graduate School, with Master's Degree in Electronics.

Worked at the Yamagata Broadcast Station before being assigned to the Planning Division, Engineering Administration Department, in 1977. Held positions as Director of the Transmission Engineering Center; and Director of the Planning Division, Engineering Administration Department. Appointed Director-General of the Engineering Administration Department in April 2005.

At the end of August 2005, the number of households receiving Digital Satellite Broadcasting (DSB) in Japan exceeded the 10 million. Of these households, 8.3 million had DSB receivers, and 1.8 million were viewing digital contents in analog mode via cable TV.

DSB in Japan began in December 2000, so the above means that the proliferation of BS receivers exceeded 10 million in four years and nine months. I believe that this popularity has been due to the efforts of many people involved in the field of DSB.

In terms of content, this proliferation has been encouraged by the creation of attractive programs that take advantage of the high quality of audio and video that high-definition TV offers, as well as by major events such as the recent Sydney Olympics, the Athens Olympics, the Japan/Korea World Cup soccer tournament, and Major League Baseball games. In terms of hardware, the key to proliferation has been the determined efforts of engineers involved in securing broadcast waves and ensuring stable operations, and the combined efforts of equipment manufacturers and broadcasters, such as reducing the costs of digital receivers.

Here, I would like to take a look back at the history of satellite broadcasting in Japan.

The first test of a TV relay between Japan and the U.S. using a man-made satellite was conducted in 1963, using the Relay 1 satellite. The images that were received during this test – the news of President Kennedy's assassination – were so shocking that this test became symbolic of how images of global events could be brought directly into the viewers' living rooms.

Less than a year later, at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, the world's first satellite color TV relay was broadcast from Japan to the U.S. and Europe using the Syncom 3 satellite and broadcast technologies developed in Japan.

The following year, in 1965, then President Maeda of NHK announced his intention to promote the development of satellite broadcasting, a plan that led to the development and implementation of satellites in collaboration with national space development programs. Satellite broadcasting actually began about 20 years later, in 1984. The satellite BS-2a was successfully launched in preparation for the start of 2-channel broadcasts, but continuing problems with the “traveling wave tube” (TWT) in tests before the start of broadcasting made it necessary to begin test broadcasting on a single channel. Even after this, satellite operations in Japan were plagued by critical launch failures and equipment problems, but the concerted efforts of all those involved eventually led to the development of the successful broadcast environment in which over 20 million households enjoy satellite broadcasting today.

Research and development in high-definition TV has also played a major role in the proliferation of satellite broadcasting. Research in high-definition TV, which began at just around the time of the Tokyo Olympics, led to applications in a wide range of studio equipment, from cameras to VTRs, while research in TV displays for household use made it possible to realize the dream of “Wall-mounted TVs,” in today’s LCD and plasma screens. All of these developments have served to stimulate the desire of viewers to purchase newer and better televisions.

This history makes us keenly aware that the current proliferation of satellite broadcasting is the result of the blood, sweat, and tears of the many people who came before us, taking on many challenges and overcoming many failures to lay the foundations for the success of this industry.

2005 marks the 80th anniversary of the start of broadcasting in Japan. This is truly a year deserving of commemoration, as it also marks the turning point of DSB having reached more than 10 million homes. Now, after 80 years of broadcasting history, we are seeing the deployment of terrestrial digital broadcasting to nationwide.

DSB will play a leading role in the introduction of digital broadcast technologies. We fully expect that major events such as the 2006 World Cup soccer tournament in Germany and the 2008 Olympics in Beijing will lead to the further proliferation of digital broadcasting.

It is becoming increasingly important for broadcasters to make efforts to meet the expectations of the viewers, for example by securing broadcast waves and ensuring stable operations. There are still many issues to be discussed with regard to BS broadcasting, including the introduction of new digital channels following the termination of analog broadcast and the use of the four additional channels allocated at the World Radiocommunication Conference 2000.

I would like to ask all those concerned industry for their continued cooperation and determined efforts in overcoming new issues and working toward the further development of Digital Satellite Broadcasting.