

From the Editor

From 1963 to 1999 NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute published *Studies of Broadcasting*, an English-language annual journal of broadcasting research. A total of thirty-four issues came out, each containing a number of essays dealing with major topics of the time. For example, the 1967 issue, coming out following the Tokyo Olympic Games, featured articles on the “Tokyo Olympics and the Japanese Public,” examining how the Games had been broadcast in Japan.

Studies of Broadcasting was launched to help build links between Japan and the world and contribute to the advancement not only of public service broadcasting but broadcasting as a whole. The journal was intended to provide both the results of surveys and research by specialists at the Institute translated into English and timely contributions on problems facing the media industry in other parts of the world by overseas researchers and people in broadcasting. Publication came to a halt, however, following the appearance of No. 34 in the series. Since then, the Institute has received much encouragement to resume regular publication from readers, contributors, universities, libraries, and institutes in the field in many countries.

As the new millennium, the new century, dawns, the media is a world more complex and diverse than ever before. Digital and multichannel broadcasting, broadband technology, interactive media, and other new frontiers are sparking dramatic changes in the media environment. Among the numerous issues now under global debate, one of the most prominent is the institutional position of public broadcasting.

In Britain, the first country to make available terrestrial digital television broadcasting, demand for multichannel broadcasting has leveled off. The future of the BBC is now a topic of debate as its funding system is to be revised when the Royal Charter comes up for renewal in 2006. The BBC is seeking to hold its ground by enhancing production and broadcasting standards aimed at “universality, quality, distinctiveness, and diversity.”

In the European Union, in October 2001, the European Commission adopted guidelines on application of state aid rules to public service broadcasting. Taking into account the former EC principle of competition, it is hoped that these guidelines will set standards for establishing systems and preventing disputes regarding public service broadcasting for the digital/broadband age.

Member states are in the process of establishing domestic infrastructure and legal provisions for the new era.

In the United States, commercial broadcasting is based on advertising revenue and public broadcasting derives its funding from viewers and charitable donations. Both depend on a grasp of market trends and trends in the tastes of citizens and viewers. PBS offers chiefly educational programming and services that have earned it a reputation as being “America’s conscience.” It is trying to build a distinctive identity by employing the new media and offering services not available through commercial broadcasting or cable television.

Korea has drawn international attention with its broadband system, believed to be the most advanced in the world and for the launch of what it calls the first terrestrial digital broadcasting system in Asia. Reportedly, China, too, is planning to start terrestrial digital broadcasting on the occasion of the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

As the convergence of communications and broadcasting gains momentum, pressure to ease government regulations is increasing in Japan. The debate on broadcasting has often been sidetracked; at the moment it is focused on fragmentary issues, such as the pros and cons of NHK’s advance into Internet services. Even though we are moving quickly into the broadband era, NHK stands firmly behind its responsibility as a public broadcaster to enrich national culture through production and broadcasting of quality programs that defend the interests of viewers, and the lives and assets of the people. More active and engaged debate on the nature of public broadcasting is urgently needed.

Considering the state of the world of broadcasting today and the new media environment of our time, clearly we need a fundamental review and reassessment of the role and mission of public broadcasting. “By learning about others, one learns about oneself,” as the saying goes; a forum where public broadcasting in the world can link hands, collaborate, and cooperate, is vital.

Endeavoring to build such bonds, NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute is pleased to announce that it is resuming publication of its annual journal on broadcasting under the new title *NHK Broadcasting Studies*.

For this first issue we are fortunate to be able to include an essay by Professor Vincent Porter of the University of Westminster, U.K. We look forward to publishing essays by scholars in other countries on a regular basis.

We hope that *NHK Broadcasting Studies* will encourage more collaboration and cooperation among broadcasters throughout the world, especially public broadcasters, thereby contributing to the development of the industry and to the advancement of the world’s broadcasting culture.

Okamoto Takashi
Editor