

Panel Discussion (Summary)

Digital Broadcasting: Its scenario in Japan

Preparations for the upcoming commencement of digital terrestrial broadcasting services in December 2003 are steadily progressing. This symposium invited experts from universities and telecommunications (the content service industry, manufacturing, government, and broadcasting) to discuss their expectations for digital terrestrial broadcasting, approaches toward new services, what broadcasting digitization should offer viewers and its problems, and future R&D projects. After hearing their opinions, we asked them to comment further on the issues they raised.

Panelists



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*Managing Director, Matsushita
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Yuji INOUE

Senior Vice President, NTT



Nobuya WAZAKI

Managing Director, NHK



Gota IWANAMI

President, Infocity, Inc.



Kiyoharu AIZAWA

*Professor, Department of
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Moderator



Sei MIYAKE

Director-General, NHK STRL

The panelists' opinions

KUBOTA (the viewpoint of government): Work to transfer analog service frequencies in preparation for the start of digital terrestrial broadcasting is advancing smoothly and according to schedule. To promote digital terrestrial broadcasting, round-table conferences with the Prime Minister on future broadcasting in the broadband era will determine an action plan to promote this work.

The government's new strategic plan for IT lists important items that include establishing an environment in which broadcasting content can be distributed over the Internet, building digital archives, and distributing data within Japan and abroad. As broadcasting technology begins using the communications network, there will be a need to maintain the reliability of services, such as for broadcasting during emergencies.

KUSHIKI (the viewpoint of a manufacturer): Digital TV systems are expected to lead Internet home appliances,

and their communication function's technical specification is currently being examined by manufacturers. Television will fulfill a role as a video server system. We believe there will be a need for a ubiquitous information environment that meets different needs and situations and is based on a broadband infrastructure. This will require future Internet home appliances to have a high security capability.

INOUE (the viewpoint of a communications provider): We are currently putting an emphasis on high-speed circuits and optical fiber networks. An optical wavelength division multiplexing method that allows the distribution of contents for both broadcasting and communications over a single fiber cable is a noteworthy technology. Advances are also being made in establishing a real-time video communication environment, such as a linkage between FOMA* and PCs.

*FOMA is NTT DoCoMo's 3G mobile phone service.

WAZAKI (the viewpoint of broadcasters): As you can sense from this year's open house, the border between broadcasting and communications is disappearing. A business opportunity exists at the point where the two overlap, and NHK is devoting itself to further advancement and popularization of digital broadcasting in an aging society and in the life-long education field, together with contributing to the development of a broadband network in the areas of content and technology. TV is also positioned as an integrated services terminal for the home, requiring an advanced CAS (conditional access system) and RMP (Rights Management and Protection), which are common to broadcasting and broadband.

IWANAMI (the viewpoint of a content provider and user): While digital technology has already provided a high

level of convenience and control in the analog broadcasting, issues related to the large amount of data and rights protection for all-digital broadcasting may initially reduce its convenience. If this problem occurs, it must be dealt with promptly. The realization of diverse contents distribution and the users desire for convenience will necessitate the establishment of a common system for content metadata.

AIZAWA (the viewpoint of a university professor and user): I believe that TV needs to be functionally attractive. I feel that, in addition to its use in communications systems and normal contents related areas, TV has the potential to be, for example, a controller for home information appliances. It will also be important to examine its appropriateness as a new medium whose use extends beyond the home.



C o m m e n t s

KUBOTA: As a medium to distribute rich contents, digital broadcasting is far superior to communications. If the fourth-generation mobile communications system has sufficient reliability in the future, it may be employed for broadcasting services.

KUSHIKI: While the communications infrastructure is diversifying, development must be carried out from a user-oriented standpoint. Simple installation and connection, an easy-to-use human interface, and a secure system are very important. As manufactures, we would like to resolve these issues.

INOUE: With the aim of achieving a new broadband network, advances will be made on a rich resonant communication environment that incorporates the strengths of both telephone-type (central management type) and Internet-type (independent/distributed type) systems. I hope we create new business models and services along the way.

WAZAKI: Digital terrestrial data broadcasting can

provide localized service and mobile/portable services, enabling services that will help to protect viewers (people) or present information on peoples' whereabouts during a disaster. We are going to construct services that will be useful to anyone.

IWANAMI: Expectation is high for services that are linked or closely connected to broadcasting. This, in turn, raises the importance of how such services should be paid for by a user. It should be feasible to bill for anything, and in small amounts for individual services. I hope that, while considering other related systems, an advanced CAS will make convenient payment possible.

AIZAWA: I would like a mechanism through which contents can be accessed via broadband as soon as possible. Since there are many things that can easily be done in this regard even now, I hope that rights management issues will be implemented prior to others.