

Symposium Celebrating the 90 Years of Broadcasting: Radio Dreams of a Bright Future

- Report on the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute Forum 2015 -

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(Summary)

On 22nd March, 1925, Japan's first radio broadcast went on air from a temporary studio in an area now known as Minato Ward, Tokyo, and Japan's broadcasting celebrated its 90th birthday in 2015. On this occasion, the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute (BCRI) organized a symposium, in a part of its annual Forum, to look back on the 90 years of broadcasting as well as to look toward the future. Three experts in this field were invited as the panelists: Tanoshi Irie, media producer, Rika Tanioka, Professor, Tokai University, and Peter Barakan, broadcaster (introduced in Japanese alphabetical order). With four BCRI researchers presenting research reports, the panel discussed the past, present, and future of radio for about two hours.

At the opening of the symposium, a video made on the concept of "looking back on 90 years in 10 minutes" was shown to review the history of radio. Following the screening, MC asked the panelists for their opinions on significant events in the radio history, especially on the birth of commercial stations, as well as on the role of radio at a time of disaster. This was followed by a report from a BCRI researcher on how the radio industry responded to the advent of television.

Then panelists made comments on radio's relations with the Internet and with local communities, and BCRI researchers reported the current situations of radio in the United States and the United Kingdom as reference information to provide an outlook for radio's future. After the panelists debated about "radio enjoyed on digital devices," the other researcher presented a finding from BCRI's recent survey that had explored "what will happen to people who do not listen to radio if they are requested to do so for a week." The survey revealed radio can be "addictive once you try listening to it." This characteristic of radio surprised all the panelists as well as the audience.

In response to the report, panelists further discussed "what will be needed for radio's bright future," and the symposium ended with a silver lining conclusion: "The future of radio is not necessarily dark. Producers' efforts can make a change."