

Word of the bbc and the original intention



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Word Count: 3031AbstractThis essay intends to discuss the following statement; will have a fundamental effect on viewing patterns, popular culture and audience identity. This will be done firstly by looking at the history of the BBC and the original intention of Public Service Broadcasting. It will discuss how by John Reiths successful approach to broadcasting, the BBC became a National Institution creating popular culture and a National Identity. It will examine how these first steps and ideas have major role in the introduction of Digital Broadcasting today and whether the initial Reithian values have any meaning in todays society. It will finally conclude what effect if any, these changes will have on British life as a whole and whether the fear of change is justified. In the 20th century the advance of technology has been fundamental in the way we live our lives today. The recent introduction of Digital Broadcasting to Great Britain has caused many technologists to become swept up in a sense of awed enthusiasm about the infinite possibilities of the new digital age. In its early stages digital broadcasting is only available to a minority and it will take ten years or so to become a new way of life.

Digital Broadcasting has thousands of new services to offer its viewers and listeners. Instead of pictures and sound being transformed into waves, the new technology turns them into a series of digits which are transmitted through the air and received by television or radio aerials. Digital Broadcasting is more efficient than analogue, giving space for six channels where analogue would give you one.

Digital brings better picture, better sound quality and more choice and cinematic style. The new era gives the audience greater interaction with its broadcaster and also the opportunity to shop, book holidays, bank and play games all from remote control. It is not just television that is going digital. Radio too will offer the listener a transformed experience in what we enjoy the most. The sound quality will be crystal clear and free from interruption.

New digital radio sets will offer a built in display panel which will show graphics as well as facts and figures relating to the programme you are listening to. These are the things that we have come to expect from a broadcasting journey lasting 80 years. The new technological change is revolutionary as radio was 75 years ago and as television was 25 years after. Overnight we will move from a world of scarcity with limitation, to a world of plenty where an infinity of services become possible. The fear of change is as great as it was 77 years ago when broadcasting began.

The digital age brings risks as well as opportunities. The risk that globalisation of culture may threaten national identities; that the powerful gateway controllers may restrain rather than promote diversity; the risk of a possible two class society; the information rich, ready and able to pay for their increasingly expensive media, and the information poor who cannot. Are these threats true to life ? How could this be avoided ? The introduction of digital broadcasting has followed a similar pattern to the advent of broadcasting itself 77 years ago by its gradual availability to all. In 1922 the British Broadcasting Company was founded. Owned by a consortium of radio manufacturers Peter Eckersley one of the companies first employees said, " The BBC was formed as an expedient solution to a technical problem".

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(ECKERSLEY, 1922, pg112)The government had decided that there was going to be no radio free for all. Led by 33 year old John Reith the BBC set to work at inventing broadcasting.

The BBC was set up as a public service, meaning that the provision should be public goods rather than of a private commodity. Funding the public service was decided when it was felt that advertising could limit the number of programmes broadcast. Therefore to move away from the governments intervention a licence fee paid for by the owners of radios sets would mean money could be reinvested into the research and development of the service. Advertising was ruled out by the Sykes Committee of 1923 because of the detrimental effect it had on programmes in America.

The American notion of broadcasting