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Deutsche Welle - AMIC
Seminar on
RADIO PROGRAMMING
IN A MULTIMEDIA AGE

COUNTRY PAPER – CHINA

jointly organised by

Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre
Köln, Germany

and

Asian Media Information
and Communication Centre (AMIC)

River View Hotel, Singapore
I. General Review of Broadcasting Stations

1. Number of Stations:

Statistics show that as of the end of 1997, there were 1,364 wireless broadcasting stations across the country, including two national stations --- China National Radio and China Radio International. Their programs were transmitted through 747 medium and short wave transmission and relaying stations as well as 2,134 FM transmission and relaying stations. There were also some 2,100 wired broadcasting stations at the city and county level while the number of wired broadcasting stations at the township level topped 4,000. There were 1,886 micro-wave relaying stations with a total of 70,136 kilometers of micro-wave line designated for transmission of radio and TV programs. The number of satellite earth stations reached 150,000.

By the end of 1997, radio and TV covered 86.15 percent of the country's total population, making China number one in the world in terms of broadcasting coverage. Nevertheless, there are
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nearly 200 million people in China who still cannot listen to radio or watch television, as the country has a population of 1.2 billion. Therefore, the Chinese government has adopted concrete plans to achieve nationwide radio and television coverage by the year 2,000.

2. Development of Broadcasting:

China has made remarkable achievement in its broadcasting sector over the past 50 years. During the 1950’s, the country had few broadcasting facilities. The emphasis was placed on development of audio broadcasting as there was no television at the time. For that period of time, China conducted large-scale construction of broadcasting transmission facilities, quickly expanding its audio broadcasting coverage. In 1958, China began broadcasting its own black-and-white television programs, using home-made facilities and equipment. During the 1960’s, while continuing its efforts to expand radio and television coverage, China focused on developing wired broadcasting in the rural areas by using home-made facilities and equipment. Even today, the wired broadcasting systems are playing an important role in the rural areas. In the 1970’s, China invested heavily in building large and medium-sized transmission and relaying stations across the country, thus effectively and quickly expanded its broadcasting coverage. The 1980’s witnessed a drastic development of television in China. Starting from 1985, China began satellite transmission of television programs, which effectively solved the problem of low coverage by means of ground transmission. Since the beginning of the 1990’s, China’s broadcasting industry has entered into a period of fast growth. With the appearance of satellite technology, digital
compression technology, the Internet and others, broadcasting faces challenges as well as opportunities. Utilization of modern hi-technology in the development of broadcasting has become a prominent feature of the development of China's broadcasting industry in the 1990's. A nationwide radio and television network, involving national and local stations as well as wired and wireless media, has begun to take shape. Television covers more than 87 percent of the population while radio coverage stands at 86 percent, surpassing the targeted coverage figure of 85 percent.

3. Programming:

The deepening of China's reform and opening-up has not only increased the number of stations, but also given birth to various format radios, such as entertainment radio, economic information radio and traffic information radio, to name but a few, which in turn, have led to a richer variety of programs. According to statistics collected at the end of 1997, there was a total of 1,616 kinds of programs, including news, features and entertainment as well as educational and service programs, out of which, news accounted for 13.6 percent of the total, features 21.5 percent, entertainment 42.3 percent, education 4.6 percent and service 18 percent.

4. New Technology:

(1) Digital Technology: In 1996, China drew up the "Plan For Radio And Television Digital Transmission System", which set forth reference standards for digital radio and television production and transmission. Currently, China is working on a standard system for its digital radio and television broadcasting. Also, it's become one of the country's technology
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policies not to use anologue mode in satellite transmission. Now, DVB-S has become a transmission standard widely used in satellite broadcasting by radio and television stations in more than 20 provinces and cities.

The country's first digital audio broadcasting (DAB) network was set up in the Zhujiang Delta by the end of 1996. The network is now working on a trial basis. The scientific research project of "experimental digital ground television broadcasting in the Beijing area", which was approved by the State in 1996, has begun trial operation and testing. Digital technology has been widely used in the country's broadcasting. China Radio International, which mainly broadcasts to overseas audiences, has realized digitalization of its program production and transmission.

(2) Network: The Internet has undergone a rapid development in China. According to the latest "Statistic Report On The Development Of Internet In China" released by the China Internet Information Center in July, 1998, the Internet has become the latest fad in China. The number of registered domain names under "cn" reached 8,274. The number of Internet users topped 1.17 million. There were 640,000 computers connected to the Internet. Of the Internet users, 83.8 percent have at least a secondary school education. It's predicted that there will be three million Internet users in China by the year 2,000.

The Internet has also become a new stage for the Chinese news media. Starting from 1995, the Chinese press took the lead in setting up their websites on the Internet. According to incomplete statistics, 155 newspapers and wire services as well as radio and television stations have their own websites up till
As far as radio is concerned, 26 radio stations have placed their programs on the Internet. This represents 16.8 percent of the total news media with Internet access. Twenty-one of the radio stations are in the coastal area while five are located in Central China. Their websites consist of news, on-line broadcasting, features and PR materials about the radios.

II. MAJOR RADIO STATIONS

1. China National Radio

China National Radio (CNR) is a state-run station in China. It was born on Dec. 30, 1940 in Yan'an, Shaanxi Province.

CNR currently has seven program channels, broadcasting 129 hours a day. Each of the seven channels has its unique features. Channel One offers comprehensive format, mainly news. Channel Two focuses on economy and technology. Channel Three broadcasts stereo entertainment programs on FM. Channel Four serves the ethnic groups with programs in Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, Kazak and Korean languages. Channels Five, Six and Seven broadcast to Hong Kong, Macao and the Zhujiang Delta. The first three channels broadcast nationwide while the latter four transmit programs to targeted areas.

After years' experience, China National Radio has produced quite a number of programs popular among the listeners, such as "News And Press Clippings", "Syndicated News Across the Country", "Thirty Minutes at Noon", "Sports", "Rural Program", "Legal Affairs", "Radio Drama and Novel Reading", to name but a few.

Since 1994, as a result of dramatic program readjustment, many new programs have been introduced, such as "News Review", "..."

CNR transmits its programs across the country via its micro-wave and satellite networks. Statistics from 1997 show that more than 659 million people between the ages of 12 and 70 across the country listen to CNR programs. CNR boasts an audience of 791 million if a 20 percent passive audience is added to the figure.

Right now, CNR has 39 correspondent bureaus throughout the country. It has also established business relations with broadcasting organizations in 40 countries and regions.

The new CNR Office Building will be put to use in June, 1999. This modern building with complete functions and advanced facilities will certainly make CNR one of the world’s leading broadcasters.

2. China Radio International

China Radio International (CRI) is the country’s only state-run radio that caters to overseas listeners. It was established during the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945). On December 3, 1941, a section of the Northern Shaanxi Xinhua Radio, which later became Radio Beijing and then today’s CRI, launched a 15-minute program in Japanese. In the following half-century, CRI grew into a major international broadcasting station with an aggregate daily programming time of 211 hours in 38 foreign languages, Putonghua (Standard Chinese) and four Chinese dialects.
CRI began to build a contingent of overseas correspondents in the early 1980's. By 1999 it has established 29 overseas correspondent bureaus on five continents.

In the past 20 years, CRI's feature programs have increased from around a dozen to today's nearly 500. These programs are colorful, interesting, and in a wide range of formats.

China Radio International has come a long way in transmitting and otherwise sending programs to be broadcast outside the mainland. It regularly transmits to eight radio and TV stations located in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Japan and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in English, Spanish, Japanese, Portuguese, Putonghua and Cantonese. In addition, it mails programs to 28 radio stations in 19 countries.

The start of China's reform and opening program 20 years ago led CRI, in 1984, to launch domestic services in English, French, German, Japanese and Spanish. This answered the needs expressed by foreign embassies and international friends living in China. Besides serving as a window through which foreigners can learn about China, these domestic programs have become a good teacher for Chinese students of foreign languages.

On March 28, 1999, CRI opened a second domestic FM channel. The original frequency now broadcasts English-language programs only, while the new channel offers programs English, Spanish, Arabic, French, German, Korean, Japanese, Russian and Cantonese.

China Radio International has made many technical
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renovations and improvements over the past 20 years. After considerable investigation, it finally selected and installed the CARAT broadcasting system developed by Siemens of Austria. The system is capable of automatically broadcasting 14 sets of digital programs. Four sets can be simultaneously broadcast live. The system went on line on April 23, 1998, and all of CRI's 32 sets of programs in 43 languages have since been recorded and broadcast digitally.

In order to improve the quality of its overseas transmissions, since 1987 CRI has cooperated with eight radio stations in seven countries to mutually transmit programs and rent transmitting stations. These partners are Russia, France, Spain, Switzerland, Canada, Mali and Brazil.

CRI had begun transmitting 21 sets of programs through the Asian II satellite by 1995. In 1998, it began transmitting via the Pan-American II, III and IV satellites rented by China Central Television. Now, CRI broadcasts all its foreign-language programs via satellite, with the sole exception of Japanese.

CRI went on line with the internet in 1998 by creating websites for five of its language services. Four of these include scripts and graphics, and all five offer the audio versions of the programs.

The number of listeners contacting CRI is on the rise. The station receives an average of 600,000 letters per year from about 180 countries and regions. In 1998, the number of letters reached a record high of 678,000.

III. TRENDS IN BROADCASTING

1. Making Full Use of Hi-technology
Digital compressing, satellite technology and the Internet are and will continue to play an important role in Chinese broadcasting. Advanced multimedia technologies are spearheading China's development in this regard, and the government is drafting plans for the continuation of this trend. The State General Administration of Radio, Film and Television (GARFT) has proposed offering live satellite broadcasts by the year 2000. Trial operations are already under way and the format for Chinese International Receiving Devices (IRDs) has already been standardized.

2. Expanding Domestic Broadcasting Coverage

China has more than 320 million families, most of which are in rural areas. There are nearly 90,000 villages that still do not have access to radio broadcasts. In response, GARFT has begun Phase One of the DTH project. This entails renting a KU-band frequency transmitter on a telecommunications satellite and digitally transmitting eight television channels and eight radio stations. The project also includes purchasing 10,000 KU-band frequency ground satellite receivers. When complete, the DTH project will enable full radio and TV coverage in all of China's remote areas. The goal is to make radio and television basically accessible in every village across the country by the year 2000.