

Foreword

The year 2002 has seen many promising developments for DAB in many parts of the world. There is a feeling that the market is moving and making real progress. For the first time, DAB has reached a stage where those who work to make DAB a market success find themselves involved in an ongoing dialogue with those for whom DAB Digital Radio is ultimately intended, the consumers. And feedback is exceedingly good. “Yes, we love the improved sound quality and ease of use”, say the new digital radio owners. “Above all, we love the new services and the choices that DAB Digital Radio has brought us, and we very much enjoy being able to control how, where and when we listen to radio.” This is very encouraging to see. The audience feels that promises have indeed been delivered. For the moment the market development has come furthest in the UK, but many other countries are well under way to reach the same stage. For instance in Denmark during the past six months a good choice of programmes and a large proportion of new DAB-only services are encouraging the rapid adoption of DAB Digital Radio.

One of the reasons we have reached this stage in the market development of DAB, is the fact that a wide range of reasonably priced receivers is now available, and as a result demand is outstripping supply. All this has been made possible by recent, very promising chip set developments.

At this particular point in time it is also very pleasing that a new and updated edition of this excellent handbook will be published. It is a technical book, written by engineers for engineers. For anybody within the technical area of the broadcasting industry or university world, in need of a handbook on DAB, it is an excellent and essential source of information. Furthermore, having all this relevant information gathered in one place makes this publication the ideal point of initial contact.

Digital Audio Broadcasting was first introduced to me in 1997 on returning to radio, after a period of ten years in television. DAB seemed to be a highly technical subject at the time, and I remember being fairly sceptical about it. At that time I felt that the ongoing discussion had no connection with the ultimate user and consumer of digital radio services, and as a programmer that was of course not very satisfying. But I soon realised what a great opportunity DAB was for radio, and the further we took the process of digitalisation of radio production within YLE, the more convinced I became that ultimately the digital distribution of radio would become inevitable. Otherwise the consumer would never benefit from many of the advantages that digitalisation brought with it. When all information and data is available to

every journalist and programme maker in a large broadcasting centre, the possibilities for interpreting and re-using that material to the benefit of the consumer are endless. Just re-packaging the material into various broadcasting services provides the listener with numerous new possibilities for finding a radio channel to serve exactly their needs. But that is of course only part of what can be done. The spectrum efficiency of DAB makes it possible to broadcast much more. For the consumer the choice increases. Niche audiences that have been under-served can get their services; language minorities, or any other kind of audience groups with special interests, can get their own radio channels. Channels for children, the numerous music styles and sports, the diverse cultures and minorities and even drama and comedy channels are just some of the services that broadcasters are now offering via DAB, because they can.

There are other important features of radio that will not only be retained, but greatly enhanced with digital radio. Radio is a very friendly medium, with close relations to its listeners. In fact I remember that one of the things I noticed when I left television to come back to radio was how much closer to the audience I suddenly felt, and how much more confidence I had in what the audience needed and wanted. With DAB Digital Radio, the relationship will have every chance of becoming even closer, especially as the possibilities for new forms of interactivity grow. The new features that DAB brings will mean a radical departure from today's broadcasting practices into a new relationship between the broadcaster and the listener, where the listener is the decision-maker. Amongst others, these features include scrolling text and Electronic Programme Guides, as well as numerous data services and added programme-related information.

DAB Digital Radio is an important part of the migration from analogue to digital broadcasting. DAB is the only mature digital technology for radio in existence today, and the only one being recommended by the European Union in their recently published list of standards.

DAB Digital Radio is still to a large extent audio, the way radio has always been. What makes that new broadcasting service so fascinating for me is the fact that all the qualities radio has ever had continue to thrive in the digital age in a greatly improved form. An already very healthy and much loved medium becomes even healthier.

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