

This year, the special topic at the General Assembly was 'Cybercasting—Seizing the Opportunities'. As the Internet continues to evolve at a rapid pace, questions arise as to the impact it will have on broadcasting and the potential opportunities it will offer broadcasters. Audio via the Internet is already a reality. Video delivery is still in its infancy and the existing quality problems and bandwidth constraints will in time be overcome. This will pose both new challenges and opportunities to service providers. For the broadcasters, the opportunities will go well beyond just 'more of the same' to new forms of service that seek to complement the traditional viewing experience of television with the interactivity of the Internet. One speaker described the Internet as the right interactive medium and television as the right broadcast medium. He also noted that while the Internet afforded many new opportunities it should not be used as a poor imitation of broadcasting.

Shortwave broadcasting

In one of the final sessions, the General Assembly discussed the future of shortwave broadcasting in a world of satellite radio and Internet broadcasting. It was noted that as much as 40 percent of the world's population has access to shortwave radio and no other medium was likely to match this figure for quite some time. Also, despite some predictions, recent statistics had shown that reception of shortwave was actually growing. Although some international broadcasters made use of additional delivery platforms to reach their audiences, all agreed that shortwave remained the mainstay of their services. It appears that the traditional strengths of this medium—the ability to independently reach distant audiences, as well as the simplicity and inexpensive cost of reception—will ensure its continued role. Subject to the availability of reasonably priced receivers, the onset of digitalisation will only serve to further boost the prospects for shortwave.

International Forum of Researchers on Young People and the Media

The ABA was a major sponsor of the International Forum of Researchers on Young People and the Media. The forum, held in Sydney from 27–29 November, examined young people's use of the Internet, media in the home environment, video games, screen violence, television content regulation and policy, and policy and regulation in the global environment.

'The ABA has been honoured to be associated with this international forum,' said Professor Flint. 'It has given researchers from all over the world the

opportunity to share the findings of their studies and to debate the issues that emerge.'

The Australian National Commission for UNESCO hosted the forum, which was organised by the ABA. The Governor of New South Wales, H.E. the Hon. Gordon Samuels opened the forum on Sunday 26 November.

'The forum gave all of us from the research community and representatives of research user groups such as regulators, producers and educators the opportunity to discuss our needs and the contributions that we can make to better inform each other's functions,' said Professor Flint.

The Australian National Commission for UNESCO also hosted the Asia-Pacific Youth and the Media Conference in conjunction with the forum.



Tom O'Regan, of the Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy with Virginia Nightingale, University of Western Sydney, with Phyllis Fong, Manager, Research and Policy, ABA



Lori Lemon (left) and Phyllis Fong (right), of the ABA, with Ubonrat Siriyuvaasak of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

For more information about the forum, including the forum papers, go to the forum web site: www.sydneforum.com.