

FACTS ABOUT THE BBC



BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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General

The BBC—the British Broadcasting Corporation—is responsible for all sound broadcasting in and from the United Kingdom. It also operates Britain's non-commercial television service.

The letters BBC were first used in 1922, when the British Broadcasting Company was formed and when regular daily broadcasts began. Five years later, in 1927, the company became the British Broadcasting Corporation, established by Royal Charter.

The BBC is an independent public body. The Royal Charter under which it operates is periodically renewable by Parliament, but the BBC is in no sense a government department. Nor is it a commercial concern. The Charter authorizes the BBC to fulfil a public service—the broadcasting of information, education and entertainment—and debars it from putting out sponsored broadcasts. The BBC has no opinion of its own on matters of public policy, and in all its programmes presents these questions entirely without bias. The Governors, at present nine in number, are men and women distinguished in various media of public life; their appointment is made by the Queen and is for a limited term in the case of each Governor (usually five years).

The chief executive officer of the BBC is the Director-General, who is responsible to the Governors for the day-to-day management of the Corporation's affairs; he meets the Governors at intervals when questions for higher consideration arise.

The Director-General is assisted by six Directors, who together constitute the Board of Management. They are : The Director of Television, Director of Sound Broadcasting, Director of External Broadcasting, Director of Engineering, Director of Administration, and the Chief Assistant to the Director-General.

Though a national service, the BBC tries to ensure that regional interests are properly catered for by the division of Britain into six regions, each of which has its own transmitters and can broadcast either its own programme or the basic home services from London.

The BBC also enjoys the advice of a General Advisory Council, of National Broadcasting Councils for Scotland and Wales, and of a number of other advisory bodies in the fields of Religion, Education, etc.

The BBC began broadcasting to listeners outside Britain in 1932, when on its own initiative it began an overseas service in English as a friendly link between peoples of the British Commonwealth. The BBC's Television Service, inaugurated in 1936, was the world's first regular high-definition television service available daily to the public.

Broadcasts to Europe began at the time of the Munich crisis, and were inaugurated at the request of the British Government, with broadcasts in French, German and Italian, on 27th September, 1938. The Arabic Service (the first of all) and Spanish and Portuguese Services for Latin America had already begun earlier in the year.

Audiences

The BBC's Audience Research Department uses up-to-date methods to assess the size, nature and tastes of audiences. In Britain three thousand members of the general public throughout the country are interviewed every day. Interviewers learn which programmes are listened to or viewed the day before, so that the size of the audience to every programme can be estimated. On an average day, just over 25 million people in Britain listen to BBC sound programmes and more than 24 million see BBC television. The opinions of the audiences are gathered through panels of ordinary listeners and viewers who report on and criticise specific programmes.

It is impossible to measure the size of the BBC's world-wide audience, but listening surveys are made in a dozen or more countries each year in order that the size and tastes of their BBC audiences can be assessed. These are enough to show that the BBC is heard by millions of people throughout the world. Listener panels and listener groups in many countries provide programme reaction and information about reception, and at the end of every quarter thousands of letters from listeners abroad are analysed.

The BBC welcomes letters from listeners in other countries. BBC engineers are always glad to help in cases of difficult reception, and listeners' comments on programmes and reception are always valued. They should be addressed to : BBC, Bush House, Strand, London, W.C.2, England.

Sound Services for Audiences in Britain

With the four basic national sound radio services, the Home Service, the Light Programme, the Third Programme and Net-

work Three, the BBC seeks to meet the needs and requirements of audiences throughout the United Kingdom.

The Home Service serves the broad middle section of the community, with the main news broadcasts, daily reports on Parliamentary proceedings, Party political broadcasts, schools programmes, a wide range of music and drama, discussion programmes and light entertainment. It is on the air daily from 0645 (Sundays 0750) to about 2330 hours.

The Light Programme aims to provide entertainment and relaxation. Comedy, light drama and light music are its basic ingredients, with due attention to other interests, such as sport and the inclusion of short news bulletins. It broadcasts daily from 0630 (Sundays 0855) to midnight.

The BBC Third Programme, started in 1946, is designed in general for the serious listener. It aims to broadcast, without regard to length or difficulty, the masterpieces of music, art and letters which lend themselves to transmission in sound.

Network Three uses the Third Programme frequencies and transmitters during the afternoon or early evening, before the Third Programme comes on the air. It serves selective minority audiences with such interests as the learning of languages, playing bridge or chess, gardening or motoring, etc. There are regular series for parents, and on Church affairs.

Regional contributions to the national sound networks amount to some 45 hours a week.

English by Radio

Every day, from London and from over 170 broadcasting stations in other countries, the BBC's English by Radio lessons are broadcast with explanations in more than forty languages.

Lessons entirely in English for advanced students are broadcast to Europe several times a day.

English by Radio textbooks have been published in more than 30 languages, and gramophone records of the principal courses can be bought through agents in 48 countries.

External Services

The External Services fall into two main groups—European and Overseas—with broadcasts to the world in English and thirty-eight other languages for a total of more than eighty hours every day.

The aims and purposes of the External Services were defined by the former Director-General, Sir Ian Jacob, as: "To state the truth with as much exactitude and sincerity as it is given to human beings to achieve; to elucidate objectively the world situation and the thoughts and actions of this country (Britain); and to build a closer understanding between peoples by providing interest, information and entertainment, each in due measure according to the needs of the many audiences."

The home of the External Services is Bush House in London's Strand, and it is the largest single broadcasting centre in the world.

The External Services are financed by a Treasury grant-in-aid voted annually by Parliament. (See Finance.)

The Postmaster-General prescribes the countries to which BBC broadcasts should be directed and the amount of time to be allocated to each, but the content of the programmes is entirely the responsibility of the BBC.

Transmissions in the External Services are designed to give accurate reports of world events and to present a broad picture of British life and thought.

In addition to news bulletins, programmes contain reviews of the British Press, topical talks and commentaries on the news, feature programmes, magazine programmes, book reviews, science, industrial and cultural programmes, etc.

The largest overseas programme is the General Overseas Service in English, which is on the air for nearly twenty-four hours a day and is heard in all parts of the world at times convenient to listeners in the various areas. There are also broadcasts in English for specific audiences (for example in North America), and an English Service for European audiences.

In languages other than English the BBC broadcasts in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cantonese, Czech, Finnish, French (for Europe, Africa and Canada), German, Greek, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kuoyü, Malay, Maltese, Persian, Polish, Portuguese (for Brazil), Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Sinhalese, Slovak, Slovene, Somali, Spanish (for Spain and Latin-America), Swahili, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

The regional departments responsible for these broadcasts are the West and South European, the German, the East European,

the Central European, the French, the African, the Arabic, the Asian, the Latin American, and a regional service which directs special programmes to the Caribbean, the Pacific area, North America, South Africa, Mauritius, Newfoundland, the Falkland Islands and Antarctica.

The longest of these transmissions is the Arabic, which is on the air for twelve hours daily. The German Service broadcasts include special programmes for the Soviet Zone.

Broadcasts to Iron Curtain countries total about 15 hours daily.

In early February, 1960, the greater part of Soviet jamming was withdrawn from BBC transmissions in the Russian, Finnish, Turkish, Greek, Hebrew and Persian languages. Since then they have been subject to bursts of deliberate interference of varying duration—in the case of Russian generally averaging 40% of the total broadcasting time, and reaching a peak of just over 80% during the Paris Conference in May, 1960. On the other language transmissions in question the average duration of this interference has usually amounted to much less—below 5% for all services. BBC broadcasts in the Hungarian, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Czech, Slovak, German, Polish, Kuoyü and Cantonese languages continue to be heavily jammed from various locations in the Communist bloc, not necessarily in the receiving country.

Finance

The BBC's domestic sound and television services are financed chiefly by the revenue received from licences. Licences for Sound Radio cost £1 a year; licences for Radio and Television combined cost £4 a year. Income from this source for the year 1959/60 amounted to £31,286,153. Of the £4 combined sound and television licence, one pound is deducted by the Government in tax; the Post Office deducts a small sum for the cost of collecting licence fees, preventing electrical interference, etc; and the Government retains a further 7½%.

In addition to licence revenue, the BBC has an income of approximately £1,300,000 a year from its publications, chiefly the "Radio Times".

The External Services are financed by a Treasury grant-in-aid, voted annually by Parliament. For the year 1959/60 this amounted to £6,679,000.

One hour of sound radio programmes in the domestic services costs about £550.

One hour of television programmes costs slightly over £4,000.

International Relations

The BBC's Overseas and Foreign Relations Department co-ordinates the considerable amount of business with broadcasting organisations all over the world which the wide scope of the BBC's activities involves.

The BBC has representatives in Beirut, New Delhi, New York, Ottawa, Paris, Berlin, Sydney and Toronto, and there is a BBC Far Eastern Station in Singapore.

The BBC maintains close contact with other broadcasting organisations in the Commonwealth, with fellow-members of the European Broadcasting Union and with broadcasting bodies in many countries, particularly in the USA. Relations are also maintained with broadcasting organisations behind the Iron Curtain.

The now extensive Eurovision network has grown from the first attempt at direct international television, on August 27, 1950, when BBC engineers and programme directors arranged the transmission to British screens of a Fête in Calais.

Junior Programmes

Programmes for children and young people are broadcast daily in both the sound and television services of the BBC. They include special programmes for children under five, and, on television, for deaf children.

Licences

At the end of July, 1961, there were more than 15 million licence-holders. There were 3,800,623 holders of the £1 sound radio licence, plus 50,000 free licences issued mostly to registered blind persons; and 11,469,980 holders of the £4 combined sound and television licence, plus some 15,000 free ones supplied mostly to deaf people.

Monitoring

The BBC Monitoring Service receives important broadcasts and agency transmissions from foreign countries all over the world, and maintains a constant service of news and information to the BBC News Division and others concerned with international affairs.

The Monitoring Service staff during the 24-hour period receive and report on more than 350 foreign voice and agency transmissions in some 35 languages from as many countries.

News

Main source of news, for all services, domestic sound, television, or External Services, are the leading news agencies. These are supplemented by reports from the BBC's Monitoring Service and its own correspondents, and for television by film agencies and the BBC's own cameramen.

The BBC maintains a staff of reporters in the United Kingdom, and also specialist political and diplomatic, parliamentary, industrial, scientific, agricultural, military, air and sports correspondents. BBC resident correspondents are stationed in Washington, Paris, Rome, Bonn, Berlin, Vienna, Nairobi, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Delhi, Cairo and Ottawa. There is also a United Nations correspondent in New York.

A considerable part of the BBC's news output originates in the regional news-rooms—in Bristol, Cardiff, Manchester, Birmingham, Belfast and Glasgow. All these centres produce their own bulletins in sound and television, with a strong regional flavour, and also supply regional news for the national bulletins.

One hundred and forty news bulletins are prepared daily by the sub-editors of the BBC's External Services News Department.

Premises and Studios

The BBC occupies premises in some 60 buildings in London, apart from the regional centres.

The new Television Centre, now operating, fills a thirteen acre site (5.261 hectares) at Shepherds Bush, London. It contains seven large studios with accompanying technical areas, office accommodation, scenery-buildings, scene storage and restaurant wings. At present the BBC has 13 television studios in use in London, and 15 in the regions. The biggest is Studio 3, at the new BBC Television Centre. It has a floor area of 743.2 square metres.

The BBC maintains 148 studios for domestic sound programmes, of which 59 are in London and 89 at various centres in the regions.

At Bush House, home of the External Services, there are 35 studios, with three continuity suites. To these can be added the BBC studios in Beirut, Paris, Berlin and New York.

Publications

"Radio Times", which covers all the BBC's home services in sound and television, has a circulation of some 7¼ million copies weekly.

"The Listener", published weekly, reproduces some of the most interesting talks broadcast during the previous week, and also contains book reviews and other specially-commissioned material.

BBC programme journals for listeners outside the United Kingdom are "London Calling Europe", and "Hier Spricht London" for Germany, and "London Calling" for listeners in other parts of the world.

The BBC also publishes a wide variety of pamphlets and booklets connected with major programme series, and with schools broadcasts in sound and vision (see "Schools Programmes" below).

Reference

There are some 50,000 books in the BBC Central Reference Library; a special branch is maintained at Bush House, with 15,000 books of particular interest to the External Services; this branch receives regularly 250 foreign daily newspapers, 500 foreign weekly papers, and some 200 radio journals from all over the world. The Television Library contains about 10,000 books and 500,000 illustrations.

The BBC Central Gramophone Library contains more than half a million disks. At Bush House, the External Services recorded programmes library contains more than 33,000 disks and 9,000 tapes.

News Information units serve the home, television, and External Services news departments in checking facts and providing background material for news and current affairs programmes. Each of these units has its own library of press cuttings.

Five hundred tons of music, in print and in manuscript, are contained in the BBC's main Music Library.

Schools Programmes

The BBC has 55 weekly transmissions in Sound, and some 20 separate programmes a week in Television, for children at school in term time. At the request of the advisory body, the Schools Broadcasting Council, the number of schools television programmes was doubled in the autumn of 1960. The sound programmes are taken by about 29,000 schools in the United Kingdom. They have been established more than thirty years. The schools television broadcasts began experimentally in 1957. Now, more than 2,000 schools are registered to receive them. This number is increasing rapidly, as more and more local authorities equip schools in their area with television receivers. The BBC publishes fully-illustrated pamphlets to accompany many of the schools programme series. Some nine million copies of these pamphlets are sold to schools each year.

Staff

The BBC's total staff of nearly 17,000 is divided roughly into 10,000 men and 7,000 women.

The division on a functional basis is roughly as follows: 3,700 technical engineering staff, 2,450 staff engaged on production and editorial duties, 1,700 in supporting and administrative services, 4,500 on secretarial and clerical grades, and 4,550 staff in the manual and catering groups.

About 5,550 members of the staff are engaged directly or indirectly on work connected with domestic sound broadcasting, about 8,000 on television, and about 3,450 on work for the External Services.

In the various language sections of the External Services, nationals of the country concerned work side by side with British colleagues, under a regional expert.

There are two main training organisations within the BBC: the Staff Training Department, which conducts courses in the techniques and practice of broadcasting in sound radio and television

for general staff, and an Engineering Training Department which trains technical staff in the Engineering Division. Attached to the Staff Training Department is a School for Secretarial Training. Each year some sixty courses are held, and over a thousand students pass through Staff Training Department. Broadcasting

organisations all over the world send guest trainees to these courses.

The BBC publishes its own staff magazine "Ariel", which is distributed free throughout the Corporation every month, and to retired members of staff.

Technical

Fifty-eight medium and long wave transmitters throughout the country are used for the sound radio broadcasts in the United Kingdom, with 27 reserve transmitters.

Twenty VHF stations with 117 transmitters make sound reception on the interference-free Very High Frequencies available to 99% of the population.

Twenty-three television transmitting stations make television available to more than 98% of the population, a higher proportion than in any other country.

External Services broadcasts are directed to Europe and the rest of the world by thirty-nine high power transmitters, of which two, for relay purposes, are in Malaya. Use is also made of some medium and short-wave transmitters in Cyprus.

Television

BBC television programmes are broadcast for a basic 50 hours a week, with extensions for religious, schools, Welsh language and Party political broadcasts, and outside broadcasts of special events.

The BBC television system operates with a definition of 405 lines, interlaced to provide 50 picture fields a second.

It is estimated that the adult television public approaches a figure of 30 million.

BBC Engineers developed the system by which news films can now be transmitted across the Atlantic over the transatlantic telephone cable. By this method, film has been shown on television little more than two hours after an event took place on the other side of the Atlantic. Previously it would have had to be flown across.

BBC television transmits every year over 300 plays and dramatised documentary features.

There are special television programmes for women, for schools (see under "Schools Programmes"), and for young people, ranging from the "under fives" to the older teen-agers.

The Television Design Department has to invent and create scenery and properties for over 70 programme items a week. Every week more than 10,000 articles of furniture and ornaments are sent into the studios.

The BBC Television Film unit, which occupies Ealing Studios, is the largest single film-making organization in the world. It supplies 1,600 BBC programmes a year, the amount of film shooting and editing being equivalent to, for example, 170 Hollywood feature productions. The permanent staff of the unit numbers 345. It sends camera teams on location to all parts of the world, to make full-length documentary programmes, or short items for use in magazine programmes. Films made by the BBC Television Service have won many awards at international film festivals during the last few years.

Transcriptions

More than 900 different sound programmes a year, amounting to some 70,000 records, are supplied to broadcasting organisations throughout the world. These programmes, recorded on high-quality disk or tape, reflect the whole range of BBC output.

Over 150 commercial and educational stations in the U.S.A. now subscribe to this service, as well as thirteen countries in Latin America. Programmes in Arabic are sent to twelve Middle East countries.

In addition to the transcriptions taken by European countries, talks and feature programmes are provided in a number of languages, notably German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish.

The Television Promotions Department distributes abroad films made by the BBC Television Service and telerecordings of BBC television programmes.

