

1-2001

## Book review: Public Service Broadcasting in Asia: Surviving in the New Information Age

P. Wessels

*Commonwealth Journalists' Association, Australia*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/apme>

---

### Recommended Citation

Wessels, P., Book review: Public Service Broadcasting in Asia: Surviving in the New Information Age, *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 10, 2001, 166-167.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss10/18>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: [research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

**ASIAN Media Information and Communication Centre, (1999)Public Service Broadcasting in Asia: Surviving in the New Information Age, AMIC, Singapore, 168 pp.**  
ISBN 9971 905 744

Reviewed by Pieter Wessels  
Commonwealth Journalists' Association, Australia

This is a compilation of mostly well-researched and referenced articles on public service broadcasting in Asia and crucial to any understanding of what is happening in the region. It covers Pakistan to the Philippines, Japan to Indonesia and most places in between. But more importantly it puts into print much of what has been said about public service broadcasting in recent years.

The biggest concern is the comparison with commercial broadcasting, and that's followed by worries about where public service broadcasting will go in the digital/new media age. These concerns led to this book, says AMIC Secretary-General Vijay Menon in his introduction. He concludes that the developing rural economies of Asia still need public service broadcasting and because they need it, public service broadcasting is not likely to die out in Asia. Asian Broadcasting Union head Hugh Leonard defines public service broadcasting as "programming transmitted in the interests of the public ... programming that provides some sort of service to the public".

Perhaps the most important article in this compilation is by Marc Raboy of the University of Montreal in his long, readable and referenced paper on "The World Situation of Public Service Broadcasting". Then Hugh Leonard narrows the view to an Asian focus with a paper on "The Challenge of Public Service Broadcasting". His plea for new programming, entertaining programs and a role for radio even in the face of the new technology is passionate. Also passionate is Akiyoshi Kobayashi, President of NHK International, in his Part 1 paper on public service television worldwide. He ends with a plea: "Television is too important a medium to leave its future in the hands of those interested only in making money."

Part 2 of the book breaks the issues into Audience Programming, Deregulation and Commercialization, Quality, Competition and Technology. Audience Programming talks of diversity in India, the very strong commercial sector in the Philippines, and gives a Korean example of a public service broadcaster taking on the commercials at their own game. Deregulation and Commercialization are well advanced in Asia and their effects are looked at in Indonesia, Korea, Pakistan and Singapore. Then William Crawley, the former head of the BBC's eastern service, argues that autonomy is the best means to achieving the aims of public service broadcasting. He does not get into more recent concerns, where public service broadcasting is offering its services on the (usually expensive) Internet only.

Elizabeth Smith of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association argues for regulation, but in the commercial sector only. She makes her case briefly and includes some ideas on how to pay for it. Santokh Singh Gill of RTM Malaysia and Ramy S Diez of PTV Philippines carry this through into Competition where they talk of a level playing field between the public and private sectors. Their conclusion is that level playing fields cost money - public money.

The last two papers at the end of the book look at the looming technical side of surviving in the new information age. G C Stephens, the Malaysian satellite expert,

looks at the impact of digital technology on what he calls “the Broadcasting Business”. He warns public service broadcasters to jump on the new technology bandwagon, or lose the race altogether. Tatsuhito Nagaya of the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute in Japan takes the argument into the Internet age, arguing that space for the public sphere should be kept available in any new media “for the sake of democracy”.

Note: This book can be hard to get. The easiest way is to order direct online from the AMIC bookshop at [www.amic.org.sg](http://www.amic.org.sg) using a credit card.

*PIETER WESSELS chairs the Australian chapter of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association and is the Australasian representative on the CJA Executive Committee. He works from Sydney as an independent journalist.*