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EDITORIAL

PETROS IOSIFIDIS

Welcome to the first issue of 2014. My predecessor and founding editor of the journal, Michael Starks, retired at the end of 2013, so this is my first Editorial. I have been associated with the *International Journal of Digital Television* since 2010, first as Book Reviews Editor, and then as Associate Editor. The backdrop of the journal's initiative was the switchover process of introducing digital television transition and switching off analogue terrestrial television. The switch off process has been completed in most parts of the (Western) world and this journal highlighted business and regulatory issues along the way, and covered the challenge of raising citizen awareness, especially through the painstaking work of its founding editor and the publication of high quality material addressing various national contexts. Through my involvement in the journal I was fortunate to exchange ideas with Michael Starks, the Associate Editors (Jock Given and Jeff Hart, the latter also retiring this year, giving his place to our new Associate Editor for America, Darcy Gerbarg), as well as members of the Editorial Board.

But it was not only his work on the journal that established Michael Starks as a leading expert on the public policy of switching to digital television. He served as an academic advisor to the University of Melbourne, has advised the New Zealand government and the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica on digital switchover policy, and from 2002 to 2004 he managed the UK Digital TV Project. Prior to that he directed the BBC's initial feasibility study of digital TV, became the founder Chairman of the industry-wide UK Digital TV Group, and then led the BBC's Free-to-View Digital TV Project, which culminated in the launch of Freeview. Michael Starks is the author of *Switching to Digital Television: UK Policy and the Market* (Intellect, 2007) and *The Digital Television Revolution: Origins to Outcomes*, which was published in 2013 under the Palgrave Global Media Policy and Business Series that I co-direct with Jeanette Steemers and Gerry Sussman (<http://www.palgrave.com/products/SearchResults.aspx?s=GMPB&fid=33375>). We foresee a review of the 2013 book in issue 5.2. Through his intense and varied engagement, Michael Starks has informed the debates on digital TV and switchover process at an international level. Michael's retirement leaves a big gap that will be difficult to fill.

As digital television has moved well beyond its infancy, the *International Journal of Digital Television* enters a new era. In future it will focus, among other subjects, on the 'television after switchover' by offering a mixture of critical work on technological, industry and regulatory convergence, the emerging wider socio-cultural and political questions such as audience behaviour, plurality of TV channels and television influence. The journal is rooted in a belief in the socio-cultural, political and economic importance of digital television and will conceive it as a platform for international and interdisciplinary approaches that open up new avenues for theoretically driven, historically inclined works that occasionally draw on scholarship adapting case studies and comparative analysis. This journal will continue inviting work on the growth of digital terrestrial, cable or satellite TV and broadband distribution as well as subjects such as the future of regional and local TV channels in an all-digital television systems and the use of the 'digital dividend' for additional broadcasting or telecommunications purposes.

That said the journal intends to widen its scope and invite contributions that address in a timely way the complexity of technological, socio-cultural, institutional, regulatory, political, economic and legal issues that are shaping the policy and business of television around the globe in new and transformative ways. We acknowledge the importance and continued influence of television - this is why we wish to maintain a clearly defined journal title - but meanwhile we appreciate the changing nature of television or even the changing definition of television (connected TV, "television-like services") that result in a shift in viewing habits. The possibility of interactivity has been highlighted as one of the most prominent features of the digital technologies by various technology gurus. In fact, technology allows the recipients of broadcasting services to interact with the sender by offering greater opportunities to feedback or participate in programmes. But how many of us have actually taken advantage of this? The younger generation may be more likely to use new interactive features as they are familiar with new gadgets like tablets and 3/4G mobile phones, engage in social media, and upload self-generated content for Internet viewing. However, it may be a challenge to change the habits and preferences of older viewers who grew up with analogue TV. What actions (if any) should governments, regulatory agencies and the industry take to motivate these citizens to embrace digital? Market shares of traditional broadcasters has shrunk significantly in multi-channel digital environments, but a significant part of the audience still settles for the main channels that were available in the analogue era. In the UK, for instance, the audience share of the main five TV

channels was 73.8 per cent in 2004 and, while this dropped to 53.7 per cent in 2011 (see Ofcom 2012, p. 160) it is still high considering the increased choice viewers.

In light of these, potential issues to be addressed in future include, among others: the extent to which new media developments and changing media consumption require changes in regulatory philosophy and business practice; the extent to which globalisation, privatisation and deregulation alter the creative freedom and public accountability of media enterprises; whether digital TV actually increases choice and diversity or just offers more of the same and/or recycled programmes; concentration of media ownership and its effect on pluralism and diversity; national debates about the role of public service broadcasting in the digital epoch; comparative analyses of global TV formats; television for children; sports programming and televised sports rights. And of course the journal will retain its international character and will continue inviting research articles into digital TV content and services and into patterns of viewer behaviour in an all-digital television environment in Europe, North America, East Asia, Australasia and Africa. The journal is based with a UK publisher, but its editorial team and board are from across the English-speaking world and well beyond, therefore guaranteeing that contributors (articles, commentaries, book reviews, conference reports) are from all over the world.

In the future we also envisage including themed editions in response to emergent trends that the Editorial Team and the Editorial Board consider prominent so interested parties are welcome to contact me. The current issue incorporates such a Special feature entitled Private Television in Europe with contributions deriving from the second conference on private television in Europe organised by the research centre SMIT (Studies on Media Information and Telecommunication). The aim of the conference was to highlight the significance of private television's economic, and socio-cultural role. The introduction and the three distinct, yet complimentary articles that are included in this special issue aim to further theoretical as well as empirically under-pinned research dealing with content, markets and policies. In the introductory chapter, Karen Donders and Caroline Pauwels observe that private television companies (free-to-air and pay-television) operate in a rapidly evolving media environment and can only succeed, first, by securing revenue from a wide range of sources including advertising, subscription and online revenues, and second, by providing local content as trusted media brands. In their work, Hilde Van den Bulck, Sil Tambuyzer and Nele Simons emphasise the continued importance of scheduling and continuity techniques in a digital media environment and offer empirical evidence that the digital era warrants combined strategies to reach the younger and older viewers alike. The second contribution in the special issue, authored by Tom Evens, focuses on the new business strategies of private broadcasters with projects like Hulu and YouView and contends that private television companies will increasingly engage in cooperation strategies to tackle challenges in new media markets and develop new businesses. In the third and

final piece, Maria Michalis emphasises the significance of infrastructure for the development of private television and referring mainly to the British media ecology she argues that infrastructure is a key factor shaping the future of private television.

The two main articles in this issue are titled *Changing Influences on the Concept of 'Media Influence'* and *The Transition to Digital Television in Greece: Now What?* In the first article Terry Flew revisits questions of media influence through a number of case studies and critically reflects upon the ways in which the concept of media influence' is relevant in the contemporary convergent media environment. He concludes that future deliberations on media influence should go beyond traditional media and consider the influence of media content aggregators in their various shifting forms. In the second article, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos examines the latest digital TV developments in Greece in the midst of financial crisis and suggests that the Greek government adopted a purely market-driven approach leaving the private forces to take up digital terrestrial television. Papathanassopoulos argues that the abrupt closure of the public broadcaster, ERT, in 2013 accelerates the neoliberal market-driven policy and that Greece ends up as one of the few countries which have left the development of digital terrestrial television entirely to the private sector. This article should be read together with the conference report *Public Service Broadcasting in the Era of Austerity: The Case of Greek ERT* that was co-written by me and Irini Katsirea. Our new Associate Editor for America Darcy Gerbarg provided the second conference report *New York City Television Week Broadcasting and Cable/Multichannel News*. The issue also includes Toby Miller's Commentary on *The Forgotten Other of Digital TV*, as well as three Book Reviews which were organized by our Book Reviews Editor Tom Evens.

REFERENCES

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