

SERIES LEVEL DESCRIPTION
TELEVISION POLICY (T16)

Scope & Content

The papers cover the origins and gradual expansion of the BBC television service.

The papers include documents and correspondence from the Director of Television (Broadcasting); Controller, Programme Services Television; Heads of BBC 1, BBC 2 (under various titles); departmental chiefs, e.g. Head of Talks Group, Television; production and administration staff within TV Directorate; plus occasional correspondence with Director General, Secretariat or other corporation-wide departments, e.g. Programme Contracts.

Archival History

The papers were originally filed in the Television Central Registry. The pre-1955 papers were reviewed there before being sent to the Written Archives Centre.

The post-1955 files also originated at Television Central Registry, and were reviewed by its successor, the Television Programmes Registry. The files then moved to the Records Management Centre, and were sent to Written Archives in 1981, where a further assessment took place.

Arrangement

The original pre-1955 sequence of files is arranged alphabetically by title (either subject or programme) but within this arrangement there are sub-sections, as detailed below.

The post-1955 accruals are filed in numerical order. Some pertain to earlier titles and others are new titles reflecting fresh developments.

A complete alphabetical listing of files in this series is available, as is a detailed precis for each file.

Sub-sections:

Artists	Pay as You View
Audience Research	Political Broadcasts
Colour TV	Programme Correspondence
Contracts	Programme Policy
Drama	Royal Family
Education	Russia
Finance	Sporting Events in Television
Meetings	Television Advisory Committee
News	Television Development
Obituaries	Television in Parliament
Outside Broadcasts	Transmission Hours
Outside Engagements	

There are also additional sub-series lists for the following areas, as they either cover a wide range of topics or the group title is not self-explanatory:

Merchandising
Programme Correspondence
Programme Policy
Promotions

BBC WRITTEN ARCHIVES CENTRE

Related Areas

Please note that a separate file sequence Commercial Television (T36) is similar in provenance to TV Policy, but comprises mainly files for each of the commercial television companies (e.g. Granada) and ancillary organisations (e.g. advertising agencies), with whom the BBC had dealings. For practical purposes, users should read TV Policy (T16) lists in conjunction with those for Commercial Television (T36) and Policy (R34), which also overlap.

Administrative History

The BBC originally gave facilities to the Baird Television Company to experiment with television in 1929, but did not participate fully themselves until 1934, when E.M.I. were also accorded similar facilities by the Corporation. The television service officially opened on 02/11/1936, with alternate transmissions by the Baird and E.M.I. systems; the Baird system was discontinued early in 1937. Television closed down on 01/09/1939, prior to the outbreak of World War II (this is why there are so few papers between 1940 and 1945).

The service re-opened on 07/06/1946 and starting in 1949 gradually extended its coverage from London and the Home Counties to the English Regions, Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland.

The post-1954 files continue the story, with the BBC concerned in the late 1950s with loss of audiences to ITV, and remedial steps to be taken. BBC 2, along with the new 625 line television format, was introduced in 1964. The new channel included a substantial educational content. The start of a regular colour service was not introduced until 1967.

From the late 1950s the BBC became less cautious in its treatment of controversial topics. The general election campaign of 1959 was the first covered in depth by radio and television; 'kitchen sink' drama, and satire shows such as *That Was the Week That Was* followed. Favourable or adverse reactions from the viewing public, or from various organisations affected, are found mainly in the Programme Correspondence section, but discussions about BBC editorial policy on controversial matters permeate much of the TV Policy file sequence.

The expansion of television was only made possible by the provision of more staff, studio accommodation and advanced equipment, both in London and the Regions. Their allocation aroused some friction within the BBC; complaints of Londonisation of programmes met counter-complaint of provincialism.

From its inception, the television service had to withstand opposition from organisations whose vested interests were affected by television. Contributors' unions, such as Equity and the Musicians' Union, wanted higher television fees for their members; the film industry (particularly Gaumont-British Pictures and the Rank Organisation) wanted to rediffuse television in cinemas - this led the BBC to press for copyright in the television image. Opposition also came from theatre managers (e.g. Theatres National Committee) and sports promoters (Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport).

c. 72,600 items

1,184 files

1928 – 1969, 1981