

SERIES LEVEL DESCRIPTION
TV PROGRAMME PLANNING

Scope & Content

The papers relate to the planning of television schedules, including the organisation, technical requirements and placement of particular programmes or types of programmes.

The files mainly consist of memoranda, though also include a small number of letters, minutes of meetings, working papers and proposals for programming. This correspondence is from the following sources: Head of Planning, Head of Programme Planning, Television, Programme Organisers, Planning Assistants, Planning Managers, Controllers, Assistant Controllers, Television Enterprises, department heads, producers, Outside Broadcast department, the General Post Office and the Satellite Planning Group.

Archival History

The papers were originally filed in the TV Central Registry, and appear to have been sent to Written Archives in two batches, one period covering files from 1947-1954 and the second batch 1958-1968.

Arrangement

Each file deals with a particular subject (e.g. Repeat Programmes or Outside Broadcasts). The initial sequence of files, covering 1947-1954, is arranged numerically, whilst the latter sequence, covering 1958-1968 is filed alphabetically by subject.

A complete alphabetical listing and file level descriptions for this series are available.

Related Areas

Programme Planning Committee papers are held in the T16 TV Policy series, (files T16/439/1-6) and there are also papers relating to programme planning at T16/149/1-4. Programme Planning annual plans for the years 1971-1974 are at T41/10-13, in the TV Central Registry series. Material from the period later than the dates covered by T20 are likely to be under individual file headings in T16 TV Policy or T41 TV Central Registry.

The programme planning files for radio are mainly filed in the R34 Policy series, e.g. R34/609-610, with other information coming under individual headings within this series. Later material is under the R139 Planning & Presentation section.

There are also a few regional files, such as the SC9 Programme Arrangements section for Scotland, and the M12 Programme Routine section for the Midlands.

BBC WRITTEN ARCHIVES CENTRE

Administrative History

When television restarted in 1946 following World War II it was the Programme Planning Committee that had the initial task of deciding what people would watch. Cecil Madden was appointed to the role of Programme Organiser. Rough schedules were worked out nine and a half weeks in advance with more detailed schedules two weeks later. The opening day included some items that had been intended to air when the system was closed down when the war began.

When Madden was promoted to Assistant to Controller, TV Programmes in 1952, Joanna Spicer was brought in under him to take over the role of Programme Organiser, later becoming Head of Programme Planning, Television, as the role expanded in the early 1950s with the greater importance of the television service. As the complexities of running a television service increased so did the staff of the department, with a steady demand for more planning assistants, some assigned to specific roles, during the late 1950s and particularly throughout the 1960s. The start of BBC-2 in 1964 would have placed greater demand on the department, with the expansion of television output.

The role of the Programme Planning department is one of the few that has remained consistent over time, namely to schedule the programmes that are to be broadcast, taking into account the need for a balanced schedule with not too much of any type of programme, and undertaking the challenging task of fitting the various programmes into the time available in a logical way. The department also had a role, particularly in the days of live television, in organising the resources that would be required to put out the programmes.

Topics covered by these files include the first trans-Atlantic satellite broadcast by the Telstar satellite in 1962, problems of Outside Broadcasts (often over or under running), and the 'grading' of broadcasts. Speeches by the Queen and senior members of the Royal Family were grade I, and speeches by the Prime Minister or senior government ministers grade II along with lesser appearance by the Royal Family. There are also statistics on the American content in programmes and schedules, and planning for New Year broadcasts and other special events, such as the 25th anniversary of television.

c. 675 items

16 files

1947 – 1968