

SERIES LEVEL DESCRIPTION
PRESENTATION (T55)

Scope & Content

The papers relate to programming produced by the television Presentation department. The files mainly consist of standard forms relating to the programmes including daily logs of the Programmes as Broadcast; costings; contracts; filming schedules; transcripts of interviews; scripts; shotlists; plus a limited amount of correspondence between the Presentation department and other departments.

The papers include documentation from the following sources: Head of Presentation, Television, producers & staff of the Presentation Department; contributors to programmes.

Archival History

The papers were originally filed in TV Central Registry before transfer to the Records Centre in 1979, where they were reviewed for historical importance and existence of film or tape in the television archive. They were transferred to the Written Archives Centre in 1991.

Arrangement

The files are arranged alphabetically by programme title.

There are no detailed précis lists available for this series.

Related Areas

Please note that the period 1972 - 1981 is covered by TV Presentation (T60), which also includes a file about breakdown notice slides from 1946-1955.

Information on the workings of the Presentation department can be found in files T31/121/1-3. For Radio Presentation there are various files under the Policy (R34) and Departmental (R13) series'.

Administrative History

There was no Presentation department when television restarted in 1946 following World War II, but by 1951 it had become apparent that some co-ordination of these functions was needed, and the role of Presentation Editor was created under the Television Productions Manager. It was intended that the Presentation Editor and assistants would be responsible for all aspects of presentation and continuity including announcements (at this time these were in-vision, with a host for the evening's viewing); timings; continuity links; supply of recorded breakdown announcements (plus emergency procedures for such eventualities); and devising and executing the presentation of special events. To this was later added the monitoring of programmes with special reference to any unusual technical or programme detail. For some time there was confusion about the role of the department, with a 1954 report highlighting the lack of communication with producers in regard to timing and general information about content.

In October 1955 Presentation became a department in its own right with the Presentation Editor beginning to report directly to Controller Programmes, Television. 1955 also saw the introduction of programme trailing, in the form of mini-programmes such as *The Weekend Ahead* and *Programme Parade*, which were made by the

Presentation Department. There were problems getting material from producers to make these programmes, with the Presentation Editor complaining that producers were often either apathetic or hostile to trailing, feeling it had little value or would spoil the impact of their programme. This attitude was gradually changed with the establishment of a dedicated trailer unit.

By 1959 the department's trailing responsibilities included traditional trailers similar to modern promotions, and also the provision of filler material. This included short films to fill either gaps (planned or inadvertent) between programmes and during breakdowns (and replace the now out-dated interludes). These were generally bought in items, but the department also began to create their own material, including items that utilised archive footage, such as *The Fifties* or *Plunder*, longer interviews, and short documentaries like *Now and Then* which dealt mainly with artefacts. The most well known output of Presentation was *Late Night Line Up*, which began on BBC-2 in April 1964. It began as an information programme scheduled at the start of the evening, but moved to a later slot, where it started to review BBC programmes, much to the distress of the production areas, who felt the BBC should not give time to criticising its own product. It is these filler programmes that form the basis of the T55 files.

At the same time Presentation retained its core responsibilities. Timing of programmes was a constant issue, with the need to enforce strict durations for programmes and avoid over and under running. Concerns began to arise that overruns were jeopardising the time allowed for trails - showing a marked turnaround in attitude to their importance. In addition there were also the tasks associated with continuity - announcements, breakdowns and buffering of programmes (to smooth the flow when two adjacent programmes had a different mood).

The 1960s (the period covered by these files) saw many changes in the department in both organisation and workload. It was recognised that the need for trailers would increase as more programmes had shorter running times (they were now being made with overseas sales in mind). Bought in programmes posed the same problem. This extra work would create a need for promotion writers, more graphics work and film stock for trailers and filler items. There was also now a need for sound only announcers (to speak over the end credits of programmes). For the time being the in vision announcers were maintained, but it was increasingly apparent that these posts were becoming redundant, and they were eventually phased out. The other problem facing the department at this time was the move away from live programmes to using more recorded material, whilst the infrastructure and systems in use remained relics of a time when everything went to air live.

With a departmental re-organisation in 1961, the new post of Head of Presentation, Television was established, along with an Assistant Head, who had direct responsibility for three Presentation Editors. These Presentation Editors and their teams of assistants would work in shifts, with each responsible for particular weeks of the schedule. The centralised trailer unit was abolished. There were also increasing duties in relation to presentation in the regions.

With the advent of BBC-2 in 1964, and an increase in transmission hours on BBC-1, it was necessary for further re-organisation. There would now be two Assistant Heads of Presentation, one for each channel, but sharing the operational teams of Presentation Editors and staff. An Operations Manager was added to take care of network matters, along with a Presentation Organiser to co-ordinate the administrative side. This freed the Presentation Editors to dedicate their time to forward planning, fillers, timing and the day to day problems of transmission. The final element was the creation of

Presentation Control in 1968 to take charge of day to day operations and act as a point of reference for programme and engineering staff on duty during transmission hours throughout the organisation. The department, from a small beginning, had established a strong, and essential, role for itself within the BBC.

c. 1,500 items

40 files

1964 - 1971