

CABLE NEWS

March 1983

Number 4

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
MAR 11 11:10 AM 1983
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Glossary

It's a difficult thing these days to maintain a solid understanding of new technologies and their impact on the minutiae of everyday life. The computer boom provides an excellent example: Once upon a time, a machine that wouldn't work was busted. Today, it's "Down." The fact that Time Magazine has named the computer as its man of the year has more than a few people worried about things to come, but a clear understanding of what technology is about can do much to lessen modern techno-phobia. It follows that an understanding of technology depends largely on learning the lingo. Every field has its private, and often arcane, lexicon which separates those of casual interest from the true initiates and Cable T.V. is no exception. The apprehensions and misunderstandings most people have developed about cable stem, in part, from this type of language barrier. Herewith, we offer a beginners Cable T.V. Glossary with a list of alternative technologies in the hope that that barrier might become less formidable.

ACCESS

One of the most intriguing and misunderstood aspects of cable. Public access channels are set aside for programming produced by and for the community on any subject of interest to the community. Training, equipment, studio space, and channel time are made available free of charge on a first come, first served, non-discriminatory basis. Often a non-profit community based group is established to administer this service.

CATV SYSTEM

In a nutshell, a Cable TV (or community antenna television) system utilizes antennas to pull in local broadcast and satellite signals which are routed to a master studio (Headend) and sent out via coaxial cable to residents. Types of services offered are broadcast channels, satellite programs, pay cable services, data transfer, local programming, home shopping and banking.

DEDICATED CHANNEL

A Cable channel set aside for exclusive use for a special purpose or by a specified group. Public access, education, institutional loop channels for business, health care, data transfer, etc. are examples of dedicated channels.

DOWNSTREAM CHANNEL

The terms downstream and upstream refer to the directions of communication on a cable in relation to the headend. Signals travelling downstream go from the headend to a subscriber's home.

CAMBRIDGE

FRANCHISE FEE

Annual fee paid to the city or town by the cable operator as regulated by the FCC. The FCC currently allows 3%-5% of total gross revenues which can amount to \$150,000 to \$300,000 annually. Massachusetts law, however, sets a mandatory fee of fifty cents per subscriber which, in Cambridge, would mean about \$10,000 annually.

FRANCHISING AUTHORITY

Group or person with authority to award a franchise and license to run a cable system in a city or town. In Cambridge, the franchising authority is the City Manager.

HEADEND

Master distribution center of a cable operation. The headend collects local broadcast and satellite signals, amplifies and modulates those signals and transmits them over the cable to subscribers.

INTERACTIVE SERVICES

Services which make use of a computer and the capacity of cable to send signals upstream (from a subscriber to the headend) as well as downstream through use of a more sophisticated converter. Services such as pay-per-view programs, information retrieval, home shopping and banking are interactive.

LOCAL ORIGINATION

Local programming created and produced by the operator rather than the community.

LOCAL PROGRAMMING

Refers to both public access and local origination.

MSO

Multi-system operator. Any of a number of large cable companies (Warner-Amex, Cox, Cablevision) who operate more than one franchise.

NARROW CASTING

Refers to the cable's ability to transmit programming to a special (i.e. neighborhood) audience.

PAY CABLE

A number of satellite delivered channels charge an additional rate on top of the operators basic charge. HBO, Cinemax, Movie Channel, Preview, Star Channel, are all pay cable or premium services.

.....MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP VOTE.....
On Monday, March 14, at City Hall, the City Council will take the second of two votes required by law on the question of municipal ownership of Cable TV. The first vote passed 9-0 in favor.stay tuned

PENETRATION

The percentage of households subscribing to a cable service. 10,000 out of 20,000 households is a 50% penetration.

RFP

The city's request for proposals (sometimes known as its System Specifications) is a comprehensive document which includes specifications for planning and implementation of a cable system. Literally, a blueprint or guide for applicants to follow when developing their proposals.

TIER

Cable Operators offer different levels of service known as tiers which progress in price as they increase in channel capacity and diversity of programming.

TWO-WAY SERVICES

Simply another term for interactive services.

UPSTREAM CHANNELS

Channels which allow for signal transmission from the subscriber back to the head-end. These channels are used in two-way, interactive communications.

ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Cable and Broadcast TV are not alone in the telecommunication field. Lately, the development of alternative forms of television technology has opened up a whole new can of alphabet soup. Bon Appetit.

DBS

Direct Broadcast Satellite. New generation of satellites designed to distribute high frequency signals directly to homes, apartment complexes, or condos via small satellite dishes.

FIBER OPTICS

Very long, thin glass fibers can be used for transmission of video and data signals. Increased channel capacity and signal strength but still very experimental.

LPTV

Low Power Television. A Broadcast TV facility operating on 100 to 1000 watts and covering a small (10-15 mile) radius. Will likely use new satellite and local programming.

MATV

Master Antenna TV uses antennas and dishes to pickup broadcast and satellite programming for limited use (hotels, apartment and condo complexes). Actually a mini cable TV system.

498-9080

Cambridge, Ma. 02138

449 Broadway

Office of Cable Television

MDS

Multi-Point Distribution System is licensed as a common carrier broadcast microwave service to send out signals (usually Pay-TV programs) within a given city. HBO is available as an MDS in Cambridge.

STV

Subscription Television. A pay broadcast service delivered via a scrambled signal. Home TV sets use a de-scrambling device to receive the signal.

System Specifications

Continuing our look at topics and issues addressed in system specifications, we turn this time to local origination. Although L.O. Programming is controlled by the operator and not by the community, it is a form of local programming designed to serve the city and as such, deserves close attention. The Cable Advisory Committee has developed a number of questions regarding L.O. Programming: How many hours of L.O. programming will be provided per week? What kind of budget allocation will be made? Describe plans and policies for programming designed to meet the needs of multi-ethnic population, low-income, minority persons, women, and the handicapped. Describe plans for using locally produced material.

City of Cambridge

11.

S-114

Comm. from the Office of Cable Television
transmitting a copy of the March, 1983 edition of "Cable News".

In City Council,

March 14, 1983

- 3/14/83 -

- Placed
on
File -