

SMPTE ALMANAC

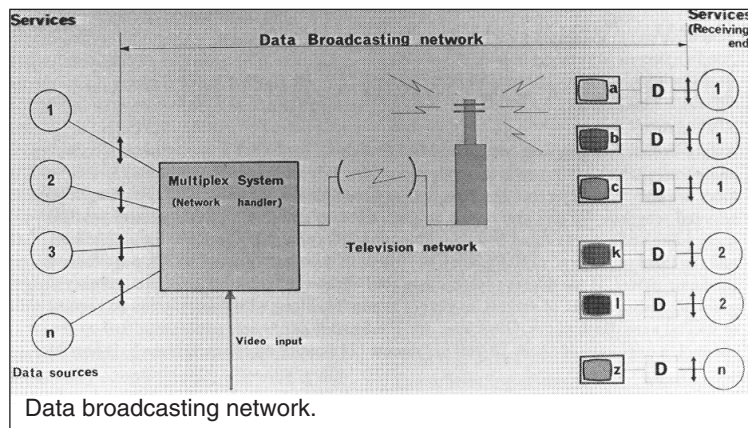
By Michael Dolan



In this column we provide interesting historical briefs from *Journal* articles of days past. The purpose of this column is primarily entertainment, but we hope it will also stimulate your thinking and reflection on the Society's history, how far we have come in the industry, and (sometimes) how some things never change. This is not meant to be an authoritative reference, and no attempt is made to correct any past errors or omissions of the *Journal*. We simply hope you enjoy the material.

25 Years Ago in the Journal

The November 1977 *Journal* reported on *New Ancillary Services Using a Television Channel* by Bernard Marti: "A data broadcasting system implemented in France by the CCETT is discussed. Employing an ordinary television channel, the system provides at least three new ancillary services, and more are under development. The first service accomplishes the automatic recording of pre-selected programs for any user with a keypad, memory unit and VTR; the second provides scrambling and unscrambling of a television signal as for pay TV and theater projection; and the third uses the ANTIOPE teletext system to transmit "magazines" in page form to the home viewer. If the teletext system uses time-division multiplexing with an ordinary program, subtitling in any of several languages is possible along with transmission on request of special news-flash pages. Otherwise, when magazine pages only are transmitted on the channel, a page rate of about 20,000 per minute (24 lines of 40 characters each) is possible... eleven years ago, it was proposed to use time-multiplex techniques for data transmission in a television channel, but this was only for the use of broadcasters themselves and not for the public....The first studies gave rise to a fully new service, independent from the usual program, named the teletext service.



50 Years Ago in the Journal

The November 1952 *Journal* reported in *The Economics of High-Speed Photography* by A. C. Keller: "Almost 60 years ago, Lord Kelvin discussed the importance of measurement as follows: 'When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely, in your thoughts, advanced to the stage of science, whatever the matter may be.' This observation is probably more important today than it was sixty years ago, because our apparatus and systems have become more and more complex and operate faster and faster....As measurements are taken of apparatus or systems we frequently change our ideas of how and why devices act as they do. I can think of no other tool available to the engineer which has caused him to change his view of things as much as high-speed photography. Intuition is a valuable human trait but it may easily lead us astray in engineering matters. It has been said that our troubles are not always due to facts we do not know but frequently to those things that we are sure are true but which are in reality untrue."

75 Years Ago in the Journal

The Fall 1927 *Journal* reported on *The Structure of the Motion Picture Industry* by William A. Johnston: "The least understood fact about the motion picture business is, strangely enough, the large and basic one that it is an industrial machine. From manufacturer to consumer, it functions exactly like the industries of automobiles, clothing, food products or of any manufactured products. Most people who, for some reason or another, want to 'reform' motion pictures proceed with a conception of the motion picture itself as a great, modern-day agent of education and culture. That is perfectly true. But in order to put a screen picture to-day before the world public, that picture must be created out of raw product, wholesaled to a retailer, and sold by him to the public. From beginning to end, it must be, of course, a commercially profitable transaction. The total investment in the American industry is approximately a billion and a half dollars. Of this amount, the investment in 15,000 theaters is about a billion and a quarter; in studios and distribution offices, about two hundred and fifty million."