

WBU-IMCG Forum - May 30-31, 2018 in Atlanta, GA

John Ball, VP, International Distribution Technology, Turner | WBU-IMCG Chair

The World Broadcasting Unions – International Media Connectivity Group (WBU-IMCG) convened in Atlanta, Georgia for its bi-annual Forum on May 30-31, 2018. Turner hosted the event at its Techwood Campus for two days presenting and discussing important and timely industry topics. Participants included broadcasters, satellite operators, cyber security experts, social media representatives, and equipment suppliers. There were tours organized for both CNN Center and Intelsat's Ellenwood facility the afternoon before the forum, as well as tours of the Techwood Campus at the end of each day of the Forum.

Jack Womack, SVP, US News Operations, CNN, opened the Forum with special remarks in tribute to Dick Tauber, a long time colleague and friend. Jack commented that Dick's passion for CNN and the industry never changed over his three decades at the company and the endless contributions and high standards he set for newsgathering for the 24/7 News channel. Jack reflected on several stories about Dick, recognizing the tremendous impact he made to the industry and ISOG (the name of the Committee at the time). In closing, Jack thanked everyone for the privilege of welcoming everyone to CNN/Turner and sharing his memories of Dick.

The lead panel for the Forum was "Cyber Security – How Can Broadcasters Protect Their Operations and Keep Their Content Safe". We were fortunate to again have John Lee, NABA Technical Committee Chair and Digital Engineering Consultant at Fox, as the moderator. This subject remains to be high in terms of priority and importance as the increase of cyber attacks continues. The panelists were experts in information security from programmers to industry service providers. This subject will continue to be part of future Forums as our industry evolves into IP ecosystems.

Our next panel, "ATSC 3.0 – What Does it Mean To A Broadcaster", moderated by Sam Matheny, EVP and CTO, NAB, focused on the next generation terrestrial broadcasting in the United States. This very informative panel illustrated the benefits and challenges with implementing ATSC 3.0. There's a promising future outlook with terrestrial television that was unanimous with the subject expert panelists.

The session on "Contribution Newsgathering Technologies", moderated by Mel Olinsky, Director, Operations, CBS News, focused on the evolution of technologies available to news organizations and the growing need to originate IP from the field globally. Panelists included technology solution providers and broadcasters that discussed how to implement the latest technologies, training of staff, and best practices. The need for increase reliability and shrinking budgets will depend on the benefits of technology advancement.

In the afternoon of the first day, the session on "5G" was moderated by Simon Fell, WBU Technical Committee Chair. The very intriguing panelists discussed what 5G is, the promise of 5G and some difference of opinions in the timeframes of practical implementation. 5G holds a lot of promise and several examples were shared on how our industry could benefit. This topic will certainly be featured again in future Forums.

We had an update on the progress of the HEVC Interoperability Test Program given by Tom Gibbon, Legal and Technical Advisor, NHK. The program is progressing with October as the target date for final participant testing hosted at Intelsat facilities. There have been several challenges along the path of testing with securing compliant content and all the related elements. The program should come to its conclusion at the end of October with test results being shared at the next Forum.

Nigel Fry, Head Distribution, BBC World Service, provided an update on the WBU-Intentional Interference to Satellite Services Working Group Report, followed by Martin Coleman, Executive Director, IRG, with the latest update on Satellite Interference Reduction efforts.

We closed the first day with a tour of Turner studios and wonderful tribute reception in honor of Dick Tauber. Our industry colleagues were so kind and gracious, sharing fond stories and gratitude to a person that touched so many. Special thanks to CenturyLink, Eutelsat, and CNN for sponsoring the reception.

We began day two with a keynote address from Usman Shakeel, Worldwide Leader, Media and Enterprise, Amazon AWS. The focus of remarks were the evolving media workflows pivoting from end-to-end, meeting viewer expectations and efficiencies as the industry continues to adopt and migrate to IP.

Following that, the "Future of VR and AR in News and Documentary Filmmaking" session was moderated by Anna Bressanin, Multimedia Editor, BBC. Once thought to be primarily for the game industry, VR and AR are gaining traction in movie shorts and in our news organization to provide enhanced viewer experience in storytelling.

Jeff Young, Legal and Technical Advisor, NHK, moderated the next session on "Artificial Intelligence – How is Innovation in AI Technology Changing Production Workflows". The promising outlook, especially in the subtitle/captioning area with gains in accuracy, was demonstrated live by using Google's speech engine Webcaptioner. We plan to extend this topic in the future to include multiple languages real-time speech to captioning translation.

The "New Trends in Media and Video Contribution and Delivery" session was moderated by Michael McEwen, Director-General, North American Broadcasters Association, with panelists representing the range of service/solution providers across our industry. The theme echoed the importance of the customer and the comment by Usman at the beginning of the day: "we have moved from content to customer as king in the digital evolution". The consumers want ease of use, the "watch when, where, and how" is driven by them. Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google (FANGs) have changed the landscape in how broadcasters/programmers need to deliver content, both in contribution and to the consumer.

Winston Caldwell, VP, Spectrum Engineering, Advanced Engineering, Fox, pulled together the "Spectrum Issues and Update". The topic continues to spark many with the North America UHF repack and repurpose of a portion of C-Band spectrum, plus the wide use of wireless RF equipment used in the industry (microphones, etc). Several delegates voiced concerns that perceived 5G needs will continue to pressure satellite industry on frequency hand-back and that this will become a global trend.

Next session, "IP Evolution and the Enabling Opportunities to Integrate Cloud, File Delivery, Data Centers and Satellites" was moderated by yours truly. The panel focused on the ways and means of migrating and operating seamlessly across IP infrastructures to increase efficiencies and the importance of shaping our digital strategies including the growth need in CDNs. Examples of high profile events are creating greater demands on CDNs to maintain the consumer expectations of viewing experience.

The final session, "Cloud: Innovation for News", was moderated by John Lee, NABA Technical Committee Chair and Digital Engineering Consultant, Fox, and expert panelists discussed how our newsrooms have changed from the past and now are on an evolutionary scale. The panelists shared comments that cloud already plays an important role and noted the benefits of cloud technologies examples. Points also included the speed of which a news story can be shared, edited, reviewed simultaneously and getting the content to the consumer quickly.

We closed the Forum with announcing the Fall Forum being hosted by EBU in Geneva on November 29-30. The attendance for both days were at or near capacity and we received positive feedback on the sessions, the demos (SES 4K HD, Inmarsat, Arqiva, Dejero). The range and depth of the panel topics were well received and this continues to chart our way forward in future Forums.

Thanks to our sponsors: Arqiva, CNN, CenturyLink, Dejero Labs and Eutelsat. As we celebrate the successful Forum, the tremendous contributions and credit go to Anh Ngo, Michael McEwen, Vice-Chairs Joe Shimizu and Kazimir Bacic, Tom Gibbon and Jeff Young, the planning committee, the gracious work of the moderators and panelists, and our attendees. As noted in last year's report, the bar was raised and we successfully raised the bar again for this Forum, with thanks to everyone mentioned above. Special note of thanks to the Turner team for their warm welcome and southern hospitality.