

> Radio Télévision Belge

The RTBF goes digital with NETIA

The Radio Télévision Belge de la communauté Francophone is a broadcasting corporation operating in the French-speaking area of Belgium. It manages seven radio broadcasting channels catering to the needs of all types of audience. It has 6 stations distributed over the French-speaking area of Belgium (Brussels, Charleroi, Liège, Mons, Namur and Verviers), equipped with a total of 6 programming and broadcasting systems installed by NETIA, its technical partner since 1997.

That year the **RTBF** installed a high-performance news processing and broadcasting system with a 100 Mb Ethernet network running under Windows NT 4.0. «*The choice we made provides for all the extensions we might require in the near future, is compatible with our office automation and television networks and reinforces standardization and control of the tool by our maintenance engineers*», adds **Roland Leysen**, Technical Coordinator for **RTBF** Liège.

Following the system's installation, the **RTBF** gave NETIA the job of creating a global production and broadcasting system and putting it into service. The **RTBF** thus became one of the first radio broadcasting services to acquire **Radio-Assist**, an easy-to-use, accurate, fast, reliable suite of digital audio tools that can be adapted to existing hardware and software.

The suite can manage all stages of sound data acquisition through to putting them on air, after audio production. **Radio-Assist** consists of software for the acquisition of sound and associated data from various sources and of production and broadcasting software.

The suite also includes software for sound archiving on various media and in various formats (linear, MPEG, WAVE, BWF, etc.), system management software (user rights definition and management by user group) and lastly a «News» module dedicated to the real-time production of news items for radio.

Roland Leysen is satisfied with this production and broadcasting system and states that «*digital editing on a computer workstation guarantees that there is no loss of quality throughout sound processing. The same recording can be used to produce several items rapidly and non-destructively, for different radio news programmes.*



With its user-friendly and ergonomic presentation, it adds vitality and value to the work of technicians and journalists alike.»

Staff can access all the functionalities they need from a single screen. Editing can be started even before the document has finished being recorded, enabling rapid reaction to news events. Moreover, several users can access the same document and work on it simultaneously in shared mode, making the system extremely flexible, saving a lot of time and improving productivity.

Preparation for broadcasting is carried out using **Feder All**. This set of modules includes the scheduling tool, which is intended for «head-end» stations and can combine all the various cue sheets (music, advertising, information, etc.) into a single overall cue sheet. It employs the new multi-broadcasting technologies and can be used to broadcast simultaneously for one or more radio stations, and simultaneously on several associated levels: Audio, Text, RDS, SMS, HTML, DAB, etc. It also allows immediate and transparent intervention in case of malfunction: manual or automatic smoothing of the constraints in all programming schedules, simultaneous updating of information on all workstations, and monitoring of the on-air stations in use.

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Air-DDO is a tool for «head-end» stations, which has four channels outputs and PFL listening available simultaneously, thus allowing multi-broadcasting. All the day's dynamic additions can be made from any workstation by simple Drag & Drop.

Air-Cartstack is a very ergonomic on-air station because of its simplicity of use. With 4 channels broadcasting simultaneously, it offers all the features that studio technicians look for: counters, automatic or manual sequencing, last-minute modification, display of associated data, etc.

A GPI command can be used to start recording the broadcast manually. The resulting document is directly indexed, then stored on the server. It becomes easy to retrieve off-air recordings, to archive programmes or to copy them onto CD.

NETIA is at present marketing a new generation of tools. Its Internet department offers a range of different Internet products and services, such as accommodation of Internet servers, high speed access and broadcasting of live or pre-recorded programmes.

Web Dispatcher is one of these new products. It is an automatic device for the publication of audio information with its associated data on an Internet site. The user selects the sounds required for the Internet site from the database browser. Web Dispatcher automatically converts all checked sounds and transfers them with their associated data to the Internet server. It then dynamically generates new pages on the Internet site.

The publication of sound elements on the Internet is fully managed by the automatic Web Dispatcher device. In the same spirit, as far as transfers are concerned, following the successive installation of all its sites, the **RTBF** remains faithful to NETIA and is turning to new technologies with the networking of all its systems.

Liège and Verviers are the sites initiating this sharing of audio and text databases. Using a Cisco router and an ISDN link, Verviers staff can access sounds from the Liège database and vice versa.

Now that all **RTBF** sites are equipped, the way is clear to implement complementary projects. The prospects of extending the system and further developing the software are virtually unlimited. Radio staff now have at their disposal a high-performance tool that will allow them to achieve their ambitions, is both adapted to the present and designed to handle future requirements. They will be the main beneficiaries of a technology at the service of the listening public.

