

SERIES LEVEL DESCRIPTION
PROGRAMME RECORDS/PROGRAMME INDEX

Scope & Content

The Programme Records (1922-1938) and Programme Index (1945-1992) are the principal means of investigating BBC programme output, whether searching for specific programmes, individual contributors, or attempting an overview of how the BBC has handled a topic of public interest. The scope and content vary over the years, but the three strands of the index – nominal (i.e. contributor's name), title (i.e. programme title) and subject – are constant. The indexes were compiled from the programmes-as-broadcast, and are thus a more faithful record than Radio Times, which remains unindexed. The Programme Records are in ten printed volumes with separate index volumes. They cover the output of the 2LO/Daventry stations, the National/London Regional stations which succeeded them and, from 1936, the Television Service. The Programme Records do not cover individual nations or regions, or the Empire Service. The records were compiled some way in arrears, and ceased during the 1939-1945 war. Consequently there is only a partial index to the year 1938, and nothing thereafter.

The Programme Index succeeded Programme Records in 1945 (although evidence can be found to show that some wartime indexing was being done). The Programme Index is in the form of typed record cards transferred to microfilm, running in three sequences roughly corresponding to the decades 1945-1976. Radio and television are separate, and each contains the three strands of contributor, title and subject. There are separate films covering indexes to composers (by name) and Welsh and Gaelic titles. In the fourth quarter of 1976, Programme Index was computerized, and the yearly print-outs transferred to microfiche. One difference was that radio and television were combined, but the same three strands were kept. There is also an additional Main Index (the master entry, by programme, from which the indexes were made). Television ceased to be indexed in early 1983, and the index itself was closed ten years later. The internal database INFAX took over the function of recording details of tape holdings, but not all material that was broadcast. Programme Index aimed to cover regional output of the BBC (although the scope does vary) but not the External Services.

Archival History

The printed versions of Programme Records were distributed to programme and programme planning departments throughout the BBC. Written Archives has held at least one set of the Programme Records since its inception in 1970, and now has three working sets.

The 1945-1964 microfilm sections of the Programme Index arrived in the early 1970s. Later additions were added incrementally once microfilming had taken place. The shortcomings of 1970s microfilming of index cards are sometimes apparent in the quality of the reproduction.

Arrangement

Programme Records are in chronological volumes covering 1922-26, 1927-28, 1929-30, 1931-32, 1933-34, 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1938. These list programme output on a day-by-day basis. They are accompanied by index volumes following a slightly different pattern, thus : 1922-8, 1929-32, 1933-4, 1935 and 1937. (1936 is bound in with its parent volume). Television of 1936 and the prior experimental period is indexed with radio : there is a separate volume and index for 1937-8. The indexes form one continuous alphabetical sequence incorporating nominal, title and subject entries. Entries take the form of volume and page numbers which then need to be looked up individually.

The first part of Programme Index is in three chronological sequences of microfilm (1945-1954, 1955-1964 and 1965-1976) for radio and television, each with its own alphabetical nominal, title and subject sequences. The indexes are typed record cards which vary in detail, but generally give the following information : programme title, time of commencement of broadcast, service (including nations and regions), indications of repeats. Each entry has a numerical code which represents the category or sub-category of broadcast by type. These were used for statistical purposes at the time, but are now largely obsolete. The second part of Programme Index, from 1976 onwards, was computer-generated, and is now on microfiche. The years 1976-1978 are combined, but thereafter they comprise one set of fiche per calendar year. Each year has a Main Index, being the master entries (by programme title) from which separate nominal, title, and subject indexes derive. The same information is given as previously, but radio and television programmes appear together. Television ceases in early 1983, and radio, to all intents and purposes, at the end of 1992.

Related Areas

A source as all-encompassing as these indexes may be supplemented by information from almost any other area, but they are most often used in conjunction with the Programmes-as-Broadcast (PasBs) from which they derive, *Radio Times*, the contributors' correspondence sections (RCONT and TVART) and the radio script library indexes. The electronic successor to these indexes (INFAX) is administered as an operational search tool, and is not yet available as a general finding aid. It should also be noted that INFAX only covers programmes for which physical holdings (e.g. audio or video tape) exist, not all BBC output.

Administrative History

The Programme Records were begun retrospectively in 1933 at the instigation of D.H. Clarke (Establishment Officer), it having been discovered that the original Programmes as Broadcast were becoming too faded for reference use. The work was supervised by C.R. Wade of the Programme Correspondence Section, and the pencilled marks used by the indexers to determine what should be included are still to be seen on the programmes-as-broadcast. The printed versions of Programme Records were distributed to programme and programme planning departments throughout the BBC and, in some cases, to organisations outside it. It is not known how many still exist. The work fell into abeyance on the outbreak of war, although the decision to discontinue it was not formally taken until May 1940. When Programme Index was brought into being to replace it in 1945, it was still part of Programme Correspondence Section. It remained there until 1973, when it moved across the Public Affairs division to the Reference and Registry Service (later BBC Data). Programme Index lost its responsibilities for television indexing in 1983, when this was subsumed into the work of the cataloguers of the Film and Videotape Library. The radio Programme Index was discontinued for economic reasons in 1993.

15 volumes

c.132 microfilms

c.2,547 microfiche

1922-1993