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Switching to Digital Television UK Public Policy and the Market

Michael Starks

Between 2008 and 2012 the UK plans to turn off its conventional analogue terrestrial television and switch fully to digital TV. This is part of a trend across all the technologically advanced nations of the world. The city of Berlin led the way in 2003. The Netherlands became the first country to switch fully in 2006.

Digital television was launched in the UK in 1998. Its growth has been dramatic and by no means smooth. The decision to switch fully is, at its heart, a political one: governments and regulators manage terrestrial spectrum and are ultimately responsible for switchover policy. Switching off the conventional analogue television signals to which consumers (and voters) have been accustomed for most of their lives poses a tricky political challenge. It cannot be accomplished by government diktat. *Switching to Digital Television* shows how, for success, public policy needs to work in conjunction with both competitive market forces and with organised broadcasting industry collaboration.

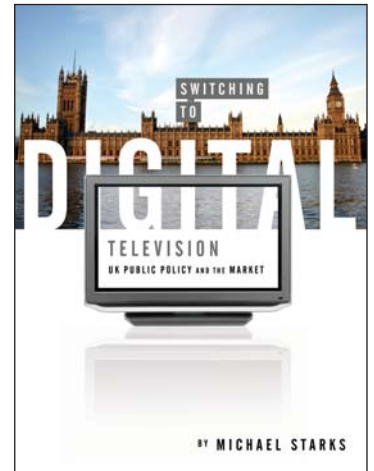
Switching to Digital Television is an authoritative study of the policy of digital switchover. It is based primarily on UK experience but includes comparative studies spanning the United States, Japan and the leading countries of western Europe.

About the Author

Michael Starks is an associate of the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy at Oxford University. From 2002 to 2004 he managed the UK Digital TV Project, working for the UK Government to plan the nation's switchover strategy. Earlier he directed much of the BBC's work on digital television and was the founder Chairman of the UK Digital TV Group.

Comments

'Michael Starks brilliantly describes the complex mix of Government and industry responses to technological change which have led to the digital switchover process in the UK. No-one is "in charge" of the programme, but it happens collaboratively anyway.' (Barry Cox, Chairman of Digital UK)



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