

Bandscan analysis of Radio Handbooks for 2007

by Anker Petersen, Denmark, January 18, 2007. © DSWCI.
This article may be fully quoted, if the source is mentioned.

Again this year the publishers of the 2007 editions of the World Radio TV Handbook (WRTH), Nicholas Hardyman, UK, and of the Shortwave Frequency Guide (SWFG), Joerg Klingenfuss, Germany, sent me review copies of their latest Handbooks for a comparative analysis. Furthermore Michael Schmitz sent me a review copy of the German language "Sender & Frequenzen 2007" (S&F) which I will add to this analysis, although it is entirely intended for German speaking listeners in Central Europe without the same global coverage as WRTH and SWFG. On 29 October 2006 the B06 winter schedules became effective. I received the Handbooks in December and have now analysed and compared their value to the SW Broadcast DXer.

The WRTH 2007 (61st edition) has 688 pages this year, including 80 in full colour. The first article is about contributing editor for almost 50 years, Bengt Ericson, Sweden who is now also a member of the DSWCI. The WRTH Receiver Reviews 2007 describes the notable Etón E1, PCR1500 from Icom and the software-defined receivers SDR-1000 and WinRadio G305. The antenna tests cover a.o. Welbrook ALA-100. Then follows an article about The future of Radio and Broadcasting in the Pacific since 1894. Finally, before the maps is a Digital Update and George Jacob's forecast on SW reception conditions in 2007.

On pages 81-688 are the fully updated sections with all details about National and International Radio, MW and SW Frequency Lists, International broadcasts in English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish, on page 630 a useful list of current DRM International Broadcasts followed by Television and References.

The SWFG 2007 (11th edition) contains 472 pages in English (280 about Broadcasting and 192 about Utility stations). The Broadcasting part begins with an article about DRM including an up-to-date list of DRM schedules on LW, MW and SW. It is followed by the SW comprehensive frequencylist which for each frequency contains a line for each broadcast. That includes exact times, transmitter site, language and target area. The Country section contains the same data listed by Station, but without details like geographical coordinates, addresses, QSL info, etc.

At the same time Klingenfuss has published the 2007 Super Frequency List (SFL) on a CD-Rom with the same 9,100 Broadcast frequencies and 9,500 utility frequencies plus 20,700 formerly active frequencies. This modern tool is very easy to use on a PC using Microsoft Windows and has excellent search functions for specific frequencies, countries, stations, languages, call signs and times - or any combination thereof!

S&F 2007 (24th edition) has a total of 576 pages all in German. Its comprehensive Country section takes 303 pages which include many details about the stations, many photos and usable listening tips. For an English speaking reader it takes a little time to find the countries, e.g. if you would look in the index under C for the Czech Republic, you have to search under T for Tschechische Republik ! On the yellow pages 321-352 are listed in time order broadcasts in German, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Esperanto and Latin, plus Satellite broadcasts in German and English. On pages 355-412 are programme guides on German and English broadcasts in timeorder. A frequency list 150 kHz – 30 MHz covers 48 pages and is followed by 29 pages about Satellite Radio, including a long frequencylist. Internetradio and Podcasting is then dealt with on 21 pages. Clandestines, Pirates and Propagation is also covered before a review of Worldband receivers and antennas at the end.

Spotcheck by bandscanning

As in my analysis a year ago, I did not choose the traditional way of reviewing each section in the Handbooks. Instead I scanned through the shortwave bands at the end of December, selected 50 broadcast stations at random and identified them 100%, no matter what language.

I then checked in the three Handbooks, if each particular broadcast heard, was mentioned in the Country Section and in the SW frequency list with the essential details of station name, frequency, scheduled at that time, exact language and site of transmitter. Half of the SW stations carried domestic broadcasts, and half of them international broadcasts. For further details on any of my results, please contact me.

Analysis

I consider the five details mentioned above to be essential for the DX-er during his listening and identification of the transmitter and broadcast. Thus it was checked for each logging, if the Handbooks have all these essential details and they are correct. This is then marked "+" in my detailed analysis. If one is missing, the column got a ":".

I still consider it useful, if the Handbooks also can provide the DX-er with additional information about Geographical Coordinates for his propagation calculations and Google Earth search, and ID in the language heard. Furthermore it is necessary to know current addresses (postal, e-mail and web) and QSL-policy for his reception report writing.

Most of these useful details can be found in the WRTH and S&F, but they are still missing completely in the SWFG !

Comparison

I then counted how many essential details were correct for the 25 international and 25 domestic stations heard. The results were (each figure out of 5x25 = 125 possible):

	WRTH Int. Dom.	SWFG Int. Dom.	S&F Int. Dom.
Analysis result	125 122	122 119	80 99
Sum (Max. 250)	WRTH	SWFG	S&F
Analysis result	247 (99%)	241 (96%)	179 (72%)

The WRTH and the SWFG contain nearly all essential details. The reason for the rather poor results of S&F in my comparative analysis is that in most cases either broadcasts in the language heard or the transmitter site, or both, are missing. But it has probably not been intended by the editors to include them. Those schedules mentioned with frequencies and times are OK. To illustrate this, I can mention two of my loggings:

Voice of Russia was heard on 7170 kHz at 0045 with Portuguese to Brazil via the Samara transmitter and Radio Cairo, Abis, on 15810 kHz at 1235 in Indonesian. Both broadcasts are fully described in WRTH and SWFG whereas they only are mentioned in S&F in the frequency list (without transmitter sites). In the S&F Country Section these stations have schedules for German and English broadcasts to Europe (Radio Cairo also in French), but no other languages.

Please be aware that changes in broadcast schedules occur nearly each day and also during the period from the editorial deadline till the printed Handbook reaches the listener. It has always been so. Because of this, it is impossible to achieve a 100% score!

Conclusions

It is evident that the editors of all three Handbooks once more have done a tremendous work to gather up-to-date broadcasting schedules and other information for the B06 period and all have succeeded in this ! Each of the

Handbooks is useful for the DX-er and ordinary shortwave listener. The details published are at a very high accuracy level and can hardly be much better!

An important feature when searching for and identifying broadcast stations, is their complete frequency schedules, so that all parallel frequencies can be checked. The schedules are easily available and very complete in the WRTH and SWFG and on the SFL.

The **SWFG** is a Frequency List with SW schedules, but without any other details about the stations. I prefer the SWFG when I scan the SW broadcast bands, because the current schedule and language is available at each frequency. But I am afraid that the ordinary Broadcast DX-er does not have any use of the many Utility pages, so I suggest again this year that the book is split up into two cheaper publications in the future.

In contrary to the SWFG, the **WRTH** and **S&F** also contains LW, MW, FM and some TV information. Therefore I use these Handbooks when I DX on the bands mentioned or need more information about SW stations.

All three handbooks have complete agreement between the information in the Country Sections and in the Frequency Lists.

I must state that all three Handbooks are very comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate and absolutely worth purchasing by the active shortwavelistener and DX-er! It requires hard work by many experienced people to edit and publish such high quality products year after year!

Where to get them

The new WRTH costs 23.00 GBP, including worldwide postage, from the Publisher in England (www.wrth.com) or 34 Euro (+ postage) from Hein Radio Bookshop, Germany (www.radiobookshop.de). The SWFG costs 40 Euro including worldwide surface mailing from the Publisher, Klingenfuss. The SFL costs 30 Euro, but the package price for SWFG + SFL is only 60 Euro. More details at www.klingenfuss.org. Hein Radio Bookshop also sells the S&F 2007 for 25,90 Euro (+ postage).

Comments from the Publisher of Sender & Frequenzen:

"Dear Anker,
thanks for your review. Reading it I sometimes found that you compare apples with bananas. As you correctly wrote, it was not our intention to add all and every language or exact transmitter site used by the broadcasters (location of the country, where the outlet is located, must be enough for our purpose).

Our goal is to supply the reader with as much information as possible about the media in different countries, different ways of program distribution, program content for those languages mainly spoken and understood in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, interesting web radios and also satellite channels which can be received in Europe etc.

I share your opinion that just looking for those "five essentials" analysed by you others offer more or different content. As far as a more wider view is concerned our blend of information is unique and cannot be found anywhere else.

Thanks again for your review
Michael " (Schmitz, Jan 22, 2007)