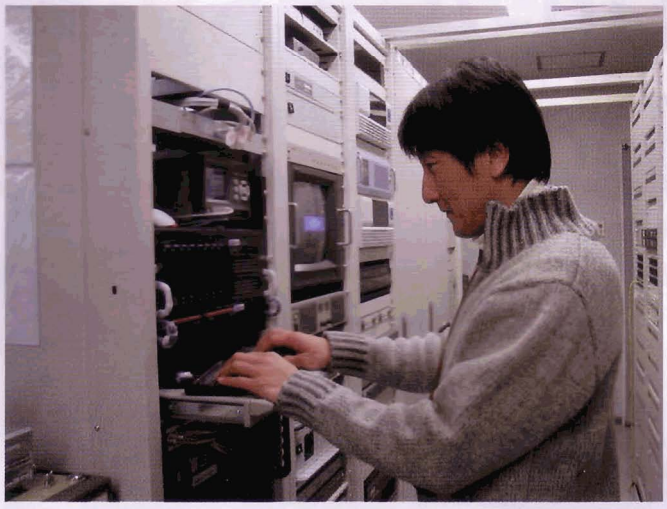
KAB Goes Tapeless

By Akihiro Shiraishi



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Kumamoto Asahi Broadcasting (KAB), a local station serving Japan's Kumamoto region, belongs to a subsidiary of All-Nippon News Network (ANN). Our station broadcasts national news and information from ANN to our audience in Kumamoto, and we also provide local news and information about our region for distribution to all of Japan through ANN.

Our television broadcast facilities are located in the centre of southern Japan's Kyushu Island, the prefectural capital of Kumamoto Prefecture, often symbolised by the volcanic mount Aso. The passage of new Japanese laws governing broadcasting required that we upgrade the monitoring capabilities at the facility so that we could record and save all our on-air broadcast content for a period of three months.

Until recently, KAB relied on a tape-based monitoring system. However, physical storage of taped broadcast content was a problem for us, and accessing recorded material was a difficult and slow process any time it became necessary for us to verify the content that was broadcast on KAB. Because of these issues, we decided to implement a new nonlinear recording system that would allow us to save material as dictated by Japanese law and to access it quickly.

We selected the Volicon Observer over competing systems largely because it's a very cost-effective solution. In addition to offering a good price-to-performance ratio, the system features a VLC (video LAN client) plug-in and Web browser-based interface that simplify user access to watch broadcast feeds and restore recorded video for analysis.

Unlike competing systems, Observer provides simple functionality in an affordable and easy-to-manage system. Volicon's distributor in Japan, Hoei Sangyo, introduced us to the Observer system, and we chose it because it fulfils all of the functionality we required in a monitoring system. Hoei Sangyo carried out the systems integration for us, so we were able to begin using the system with very little trouble.

Observer records the content KAB is broadcasting, and it does so non-stop, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Once we begin recording, we don't need to worry about changing tapes, which puts less of a burden on our operators. For us, the system's most useful feature has proven to be its use of a Web browser-based interface to display recorded content. We do play out content frame-by-frame in many cases, to check the content of a broadcast. The ability to use jog/shuttle functions makes close review of content much more convenient. It also helps that the system accommodates the VBI title display of NTSC video.

The system we're using records an analogue NTSC signal. With the launch of digital broadcasting in Japan, and to satisfy Japanese regulation, we also store a digital ISDB-T stream. We use this with another server system that enables digital storage. The two systems share a client terminal so that all content can be viewed at the desktop through the browser interface.

In moving to the Observer system, we do assume the costs associated with moving to hard disk storage technology, but the cost of software and hardware is markedly less expensive when compared with the cost of using tape-based media.

Additionally, the Volicon system requires very little physical space, and because it can be controlled over a LAN, there is no need for a dedicated administrative workspace located next to the hardware. Flexible access to the Observer monitoring system also saves us time, as it is possible to work with the system from any connected workstation in the facility.

The Observer allows for real-time monitoring of KAB broadcast with instant access at the desktop. Although there are broadcast stations that have adopted similar systems, there are still many broadcast stations saving their broadcast content on tape. Compared with these broadcasting stations, we spend much less time and effort on our monitoring operations. The advantage we gain is well worth the investment. ■

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CONNECTING ARCHIVES

Front Porch Digital's DIVArchive software allows functionality between large digital media storage devices, including advanced content replication, disaster recovery, and business continuance across multiple facilities. A Web-based content management application allows broadcasters to actively track all assets in the DIVArchive system and provides low bit-rate proxy browsing, frame-accurate EDL generation and export, and metadata search and management.

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AUTOMATED PLAY-OUT & LIVE ASSIST

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