

PSIP:

PROGRAM AND SYSTEM INFORMATION PROTOCOL

NAMING, NUMBERING, AND NAVIGATION FOR DIGITAL TELEVISION

National Association of
NAB
BROADCASTERS

- PSIP Implementation Strategy
- Understand PSIP Design Philosophy
- Guidelines for Design of Digital Cable-Ready Devices
- Electronic Program Codes Demystified

MARK K. EYER

PSIP: Program and System Information Protocol

Naming, Numbering, and Navigation for Digital Television

Mark K. Eyer

Jerry C. Whitaker, Editor

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For *Ben*

Foreword

Bernard Lechner

This book is a major contribution to the understanding and application of the ATSC PSIP Standard. The author, Mark K. Eyer, was a principal architect of the PSIP Standard and is today, unquestionably, the world's leading expert on PSIP. I am delighted that he found the time to write this outstanding book.

PSIP uses the basic MPEG-2 Systems toolkit to provide a means for broadcasters to include information about their current and future programs as an integral part of the transmitted signal. Once collected by the television receiver, this information can be used to provide a rich user interface that may include an interactive on-screen Electronic Program Guide to facilitate navigating the channels.

The PSIP Standard was developed by the ATSC Specialist Group on Service Multiplex and Transport Systems Characteristics (T3/S8). I was privileged to be the Chairman of T3/S8 from its inception in January of 1994 until April of 2002 and was thus able to witness and guide the development of the PSIP Standard. The work on PSIP began in the latter part of 1996 and the finished Standard (A/65) was adopted by the ATSC a little over a year later on December 23, 1997. Mark Eyer participated in the development process from start to finish and made major contributions to the resulting standard. He continues today, now as Chairman of T3/S8, to work on improvements and extensions to the standard. He is also an active participant in related standards work of CEA and SCTE.

The book not only describes the syntax and semantics of the PSIP Tables and Descriptors but also includes an excellent tutorial on the relevant aspects of MPEG-2 Systems. The relationship between the required Program Specific Information (PSI) elements of MPEG-2 Systems and PSIP is described. In addition to everything you ever wanted to know about PSIP, from two-part channel numbers to Directed Channel Change, the author has included a wealth of information about related EIA/CEA and SCTE standards. Especially informative is the discussion of how PSIP relates to digital cable-ready television receivers and the current, and planned future, practices for System Information used on cable television systems, as documented in SCTE standards.

Mark Eyer has provided a wealth of examples to help the reader understand how PSIP works and how to implement it in the broadcast plant and the consumer digital television receiver. This very readable book is destined to become the definitive reference on PSIP.

Bernard J. Lechner
Princeton, New Jersey
June 2002

Acknowledgments

Just after the *ATSC Data Broadcasting* book was published by McGraw-Hill last year, one of the authors, Michael Dolan, called to suggest that PSIP would be a natural topic for another book in the DTV series and that I ought to take on that challenge. My thanks goes out to Mike for the initial idea and for putting me in touch with Steve Chapman, Executive Editor at McGraw-Hill Professional who has supported the project and all my various needs throughout the process. My thanks also to Henry Derovanessian and Mike Fidler at Sony for supporting my request to take on this assignment.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to everyone who helped review the manuscript: Art Allison, Richard Chernock, Michael Field, Adam Goldberg, Matthew Goldman, Edwin Heredia, Michael Isnardi, Steve Johnson, Jeff Krauss, Bernie Lechner, Don Moore, Gomer Thomas, and Joe Weber. My sincere thanks goes to Jerry Whitaker for his support of the project from the beginning, for introducing me to the mechanics of the authoring process (and answering endless questions about it), and for encouraging me to tackle the production and layout aspects of the job. Many thanks to Sharon Sears for her diligent work in copy editing and helping to convert the manuscript to camera-ready format.

One of the tasks in preparation of this book involved creation of actual example PSIP tables. The folks at Triveni Digital were kind enough to loan me one of their PSIP generator products, the GuideBuilder, to assist in that work. My thanks to Russell Wise, Brian Lee, and Luis Don for their help and support.

The standard that is the topic of this book, ATSC A/65, came into being as the result of the collaborative effort of engineers representing various industries, including broadcasters, consumer electronics manufacturers, and those involved with digital cable television. I would like to especially thank Bernard Lechner, under whose leadership in the ATSC Transport Specialists group the ATSC A/65 Standard was crafted. Bernie's expertise and guidance created the environment that allowed all those involved to do their best and most creative work. In addition to Bernie, those who played a significant role in the initial PSIP standard include Jack Chaney, Mehmet Ozkhan, Andy Teng, Edwin Heredia, Art Allison, Warner W. Johnston, and Matthew Goldman. Matthew's contribution has, and continues to be, to help us keep strict adherence to the philosophy and terminology established in the MPEG-2 *Systems* standard.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark K. Eyer is currently Director of Systems at the Technology Standards Office of Sony Electronics. He graduated Cum Laude with a B.S. degree from the University of Washington in 1973 and received an MSEE degree in 1978 from the same institution. For the past twenty years, Mr. Eyer has been involved with the development of technologies and products related to secure and digital television and he holds twelve US patents in these areas.

After joining General Instrument (now Motorola) in 1982, he was responsible for design of decoder firmware and system control software. Beginning in 1988, Mr. Eyer designed firmware for products employing digital video compression technology. In 1990, he was given responsibility for the development and maintenance of the protocols used to deliver data and control across the satellite link to individual decoders. This work formed a contribution to ATSC that led to the A/56 System Information for Digital Television standard in 1994.

Since 1994, Mr. Eyer has made contributions to various digital television standards including ATSC A/65 *Program and System Information Protocol (PSIP) for Terrestrial Broadcast and Cable*, part of which was derived from the earlier A/56 work. He became involved in digital interconnection standards in 1997, and co-chaired the committees in EIA/CEA that created the EIA-775-A *DTV 1394 Interface Specification*, EIA-775.2 *Service Selection Information for Storage Media Interoperability* and EIA-849 *Application Profiles for EIA-775-A Compliant DTVs*. Mr. Eyer was a primary contributor to various SCTE Digital Video Subcommittee (DVS) standards including ANSI/SCTE 26 *Home Digital Network Interface*, DVS 216 *POD Extended Channel Specification*, and SCTE 65 *Service Information Delivered Out-of-Band for Digital Cable Television* and he led the team that developed EIA-814/SCTE 18 *Emergency Alert Message for Cable*. Currently, Mr. Eyer chairs the ATSC T3/S8 Transport Specialists group, works with various SCTE, ATSC, and EIA/CEA standards committees, and contributes systems engineering expertise to the development of Sony's digital television and cable set-top box products.

Contents

Foreword	xv
Acknowledgments	xvii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
What is PSIP?	1
Why PSIP?	2
Essential Resources	4
Table Syntax and Semantics	4
Structure of This Book	5
Chapter 2: PSIP Design Requirements	9
Terrestrial broadcast requirements	11
Cable requirements	11
Desirable features	12
The naming, numbering and navigation (N ³) problem	12
The two-part channel number	13
Example Broadcast Scenario	14
References	17
Chapter 3: MPEG-2 Transport	19
MPEG-2 Standards	19
MPEG-2 Terminology	21
The MPEG-2 Systems Standard	23
The MPEG-2 Transport Stream	23
Transport Stream Null Packets	30
Adaptation Field	31
MPEG-2 Tables	33
MPEG-2 Table Section Syntax	33
Table instances and receiver processing	42
MPEG-2 table segmentation and reassembly	45
Table version control	47
Table Section Transport	50
Transport Stream Packet Stuffing Bytes	51
Program Specific Information (PSI)	53
Program Association Table (PAT)	54
Program Map Table (PMT)	55
PMT sections	57
Conditional Access Table (CAT)	57
Transport Stream Description Table (TSDT)	60
Relationship of PAT and PMT	60
PAT Syntax and Semantics	63
PAT repetition rate	65
Example PAT	66
PMT Section Syntax and Semantics	67

PMT repetition rate	74
Example PMT section	74
CAT Syntax and Semantics	78
Conditional Access Table descriptors	79
Descriptors Defined in MPEG-2 Systems	79
Video Stream Descriptor	80
MPEG-2 Registration Descriptor (MRD)	81
Data Stream Alignment Descriptor	83
Conditional Access Descriptor	84
ISO 639 Language Descriptor	86
References	88
Chapter 4: Virtual Channels	91
What's in a Virtual Channel?	91
Terrestrial and Cable Virtual Channel Tables	93
Service References	93
One-part Numbers	93
PSIP on Cable Transport Streams	95
Cable Virtual Channel Table	95
Cable VCT in the Terrestrial Multiplex	96
References	98
Chapter 5: Two-Part Channel Numbers	99
A "Mental Model"	99
Navigation Scenarios for Two-Part Channel Numbers	100
Rules for Major and Minor Number Assignment	101
Assignment of major/minor channel numbers in the US	104
Directional antennas	107
Chapter 6: Source IDs	109
Local vs. "Regional" Scope	109
Composite Services	112
Registration of Source IDs	113
References	113
Chapter 7: Program Content Advisories	115
Dimensions and Levels	115
Graduated Scales	117
System Design Goals	117
The US Rating Region Table	119
US rating dimensions	119
Transmission of the US RRT	121
RRT Text	122
The Canadian Rating Region Table	123
The Content Advisory Descriptor	123
References	125

Chapter 8: Caption Services	127
Transport of Closed Caption Data	127
Closed captioning for terrestrial broadcast	128
DTV closed captioning services	129
Closed captioning for cable	129
Closed captioning data rates	130
NTSC closed captions in digital video	130
Announcement of Closed Caption Services	130
References	131
 Chapter 9: Data Representation	 133
Unsigned Integers	133
Binary Flags	133
Text Representation	134
Huffman text compression	139
Compression for Unicode	145
Null strings	146
Multilingual text	146
Example Multiple String Structure	147
Languages	147
Representation of Time and Date	147
Time zones	151
Daylight Saving Time	152
References	153
 Chapter 10: The Main PSIP Tables	 155
Common Structure of PSIP Tables	155
Protocol version	156
System Time Table (STT)	157
Structure of the System Time Table	158
STT transport	158
STT syntax and semantics	159
Interpretation of the Daylight Saving Time fields	161
STT transport rate and cycle time	163
Example STT	163
Master Guide Table (MGT)	164
Structure of the Master Guide Table	165
References to private tables	165
MGT transport	165
MGT syntax and semantics	166
MGT table types	170
References to private tables	171
MGT transport rate and cycle time	171
Example MGT	172
Virtual Channel Table (VCT)	174
Structure of the Virtual Channel Table	175
VCT transport	176
Terrestrial Broadcast VCT (TVCT)	177

VCT syntax and semantics	177
TVCT transport rate and cycle time	186
CVCT transport rate and cycle time	187
Example VCT	187
Rating Region Table (RRT)	187
Structure of the Rating Region Table	193
RRT transport	194
RRT syntax and semantics	195
RRT transport rate and cycle time	199
Event Information Table (EIT)	199
Structure of the Event Information Table	199
EIT transport	200
EIT syntax and semantics	201
EIT transport rate and cycle time	206
Example EIT	207
Extended Text Table (ETT)	210
Structure of the Extended Text Table	210
ETT transport constraints	211
ETT syntax and semantics	211
ETT transport rate and cycle time	213
Example ETT	214
References	215

Chapter 11: The PSIP Descriptors **217**

AC-3 Audio Descriptor	217
AC-3 Audio Descriptor structure	218
Syntax and semantics	219
Usage rules	224
ATSC Private Information Descriptor	224
Syntax and semantics	225
Usage rules	226
Caption Service Descriptor	226
Syntax and semantics	227
Usage rules	229
Component Name Descriptor	230
Syntax and semantics	230
Usage rules	231
Content Advisory Descriptor	231
Syntax and semantics	232
Usage rules	234
Extended Channel Name Descriptor	235
Usage rules	236
Redistribution Control Descriptor	236
Syntax and semantics	237
Service Location Descriptor	237
Syntax and semantics	239
Usage rules	240
Time-Shifted Service Descriptor	240
Near Video On Demand	241

Time-Shifted Service Descriptor structure	241
Syntax and semantics	242
Usage rules	243
Summary of Usage Rules for Descriptors	243
References	245
Chapter 12: The Electronic Program Guide	247
General EIT Principles	247
EIT Transport	250
EIT-0	251
MGT References	253
Passage of Time	253
PID-shift vs. pointer-shift	254
Pointer shift approach	257
Table shift approach	258
Other Considerations	258
Short events and odd starting times	258
Inactive channels	259
Chapter 13: Directed Channel Change	261
Overview of Directed Channel Change	261
Viewer direct-select	263
Specification mask	264
Overview of DCC logic	265
DCC context	265
DCC example time line	267
Avoiding a tuning glitch	268
Additional functions	269
Minimum requirements	270
Directed Channel Change Table (DCCT)	270
Structure of the DCCT	270
DCCT transport	271
DCCT syntax and semantics	272
DCC selection type	275
DCC selection ID coding	277
Demographic categories	277
Categorical Genre Code Assignment Table (CGCAT)	278
DCCT transport rate and cycle time	279
DCC Selection Code Table (DCCSCT)	279
Structure of the DCCSCT	279
DCCSCT transport	280
DCCSCT syntax and semantics	281
DCCSCT transport rate and cycle time	283
DCC Descriptors	283
DCC Arriving Request Descriptor	283
DCC Departing Request Descriptor	284
DCC Examples	285
References	286

Chapter 14: PSIP Expandability	287
Reserved Fields	288
Reserved Table IDs	289
Reserved Table ID Extensions	290
Reserved Descriptor Tags	290
Reserved Stream Types	291
Reserved PIDs	292
Length Extensions	293
Extensions to the lengths of table sections	293
Extensions to descriptor length	293
Appearance of Descriptors	294
References	294
Chapter 15: Private Data	295
Collision avoidance	295
Multi-standard receivers	296
User Private Tables	296
MGT references to private tables	298
Private tables as program elements	298
User Private Stream Types	301
Other Syntactic Elements	302
User Private Descriptors	302
Chapter 16: PSIP and the Digital Cable-Ready Receiver	303
OpenCable™	304
OCI-N and the Cable Network Interface	306
OCI-C1 and the Home Digital Network Interface	309
EIA-775-A—DTV 1394 Interface Specification	310
SCTE 26 Home Digital Network Interface (HDNI)	310
Navigating the networked transport stream	311
EIA-849-A	313
OCI-C2 and the POD-Host Interface Specifications	314
SCTE 54 Cable Transport Specification	315
In-band System/Service Information	315
Program Specific Information	316
Private data	317
Audio type and language	317
Component names	318
Other PMT descriptors	318
Labeling “Digital Cable-Ready” Devices	318
Considerations for Cable-ready Receiver Implementation	319
Supporting the POD module	320
Virtual Channel Tables and navigation on cable	321
When both in-band and out-of-band SI data are available	322
Channel numbering	323
Descriptor placement	324
Acquisition performance—caching PID values	325
The cable channel map	326

Channel numbering issues	326
Still pictures	327
8-VSB modulation on cable	327
References	328
Chapter 17: Service Information for Out-of-Band Cable	331
The Cable Spectrum	332
Point of Deployment (POD) Architecture	335
Extended Channel Interface	337
Out-of-Band vs. In-Band SI	339
The SCTE 65 Standard	342
Overview of SCTE 65 tables	342
Overview of SCTE 65 descriptors	344
Profiles for out-of-band SI	344
The Aggregate Event Information and Extended Text Tables	349
PID assignment for AEIT and AETT	353
References	355
Chapter 18: Emergency Alert System	357
EAS Background	358
EAS for Cable	359
Overview of the Cable Emergency Alert Message	360
CEAM Transport	363
Structure of the Cable Emergency Alert Message	363
CEAM Syntax and Semantics	365
Processing Requirements for the DCRD	378
Duplicate detection in the DCRD	381
Overlapping alert events	382
Optional EAS-Related Features in the Cable-Ready Device	383
Emergency Alerts in Time-shifted Transport Streams	384
References	384
Chapter 19: NCTA/CEA PSIP Agreement	387
Overview	388
Remultiplexing	388
Provisions of the agreement	389
Cable distribution scenarios	391
Intact multiplex	391
Re-encoding of satellite feeds	392
Remultiplexer	394
Master downlink feeding multiple systems	395
Distribution of a terrestrial broadcast multiplex	397
Current Status	399
References:	399
Chapter 20: PSIP Implementation	401
General Considerations for Receiver Designers	401
Compatibility with protocol revisions	401

New stream types	402
Text coding	402
High bit-rates	403
Decreasing channel acquisition time	403
Managing changes to the virtual channel table	404
Considerations for Terrestrial Broadcast Receiver Designers	404
Unusual environments	404
Miscellaneous considerations	406
Considerations for Cable-ready Device Designers	407
Considerations for Broadcast Station Operators	407
Considerations for Cable System Operators	408
Carriage of PSIP and EPG data	408
Carriage of terrestrial broadcast signals	408
References	410
Appendix A: Acronyms List	411
Appendix B: References on the Web	415
Appendix C: February 2000 PSIP Agreement	417
1. Purpose and Scope	417
2. Requirements	417
3. Implementation Scenarios	419
3.1. PSIP in Multiplex	419
3.2. Content Re-Encoding	419
3.3. Content Provider PSIP Creation	421
3.4. Remultiplexing	421
3.5. Master Downlink, Multiple Channel Maps	421
4. Implementation Plan	423
5. Conclusions	424
Appendix D: History of the PSIP Standard	425
Predecessor standards	425
Genesis of PSIP	427
Changes since first release	429
“A” Version of A/65	429
Amendment No. 1 to A/65A	429
Amendment No. 2 to A/65A	430
Amendment No. 3 to A/65A	433
“B” Version of A/65	433
References	434
Index	435

Introduction

If you are involved in any technical way with digital television sent either via terrestrial broadcast or cable means, chances are good you will need to deal in some way with the Program and System Information Protocol, or PSIP. This book was written to serve as an introduction to the general concepts embodied in the protocol, to explain how PSIP builds on the MPEG standards, and to describe the design philosophy the architects had in mind when the protocol was conceived. It offers a variety of helpful guidelines and insights to engineers involved in the design of consumer electronic and professional-grade products that support the PSIP protocol. It will also be helpful to broadcast station engineers and cable headend operations managers, or anyone who is involved with the creation and transmission of PSIP data.

In this introductory chapter, we start at the beginning by answering the most basic question, “what is PSIP?” Next we look at the reasons why the protocol was needed in the first place. We then discuss the conventions used in the book for table syntax and semantics, and then outline the structure of the book.

What is PSIP?

Simply put, the Program and System Information Protocol, or PSIP, is the part of the US Digital Television Standard that lets the digital television receiver know such things as the name of the channel and the name and description of current and future programs on that channel. In addition, PSIP is actually much more than that, as this book will show.

PSIP defines “system information” (sometimes called “service information” or just SI) for the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) standard developed in the United States. The ATSC A/65 PSIP Standard describes a method for delivery of program guide and system data tables carried in any compliant MPEG-2 transport multiplex.

The primary purpose of PSIP is to facilitate acquisition and navigation among the analog and digital services available to a particular receiver or set-top box, but it

also serves as a support platform for applications such as data broadcasting. Delivery of PSIP data is essential for digital terrestrial broadcasts in North America, and cable operators have pledged to support it as well for the benefit of cable-ready digital televisions.

Why PSIP?

One might ask “why is PSIP necessary?” To answer that question it is helpful to look at the difference between analog and digital television signals. An analog television broadcast or cable signal includes at most one video component and one or two audio components. One analog signal represents one “channel” of programming, so that if a receiver acquires the signal, it has acquired that channel. If a user commands an analog-only television receiver to go to channel 4, the receiver looks for an analog signal in the 66-72 MHz band because “channel 4” is known to map to this portion of the spectrum.

Digital television, on the other hand, provides for the possibility that one broadcast or cable signal includes several television channels. Digital compression allows as many as a dozen or more standard-definition programs to be delivered within the same multiplex signal. Each program has a video component, one or more audio tracks, and may include accompanying data as well.

The FCC ruled that the RF spectrum currently in use for analog terrestrial broadcast must be relinquished for use by other digital services by the year 2006. In compensation, each broadcast licensee has been assigned a second 6-MHz channel for transmission of digital TV. The FCC’s table of DTV channel allotments, defined in 47 CFR 73.622, was designed to minimize use of the spectrum at channels 60-69 and 2 through 13 as well. As originally conceived each 6-MHz channel would carry a single High Definition TV (HDTV) channel. Presumably, users would re-learn the new channel number for each of their favorite local broadcasters when the shift to digital occurred.

Early on, the flexibility of the MPEG-2 video compression standard was recognized. ATSC defined a set of possible compression formats including not only HDTV formats but standard definition (SD) formats as well. Clearly a broadcaster could choose to deliver a signal that included not just one channel but several. Typically, part of the broadcast day would be devoted to HD content. During that time, the other channels would have to go off the air because the HD channel would consume the full bandwidth of the channel. For other parts of the day, several channels of programming could be provided—all in the same broadcast multiplex.

It soon became clear that some guidance would have to be provided to the receiver (and hence to the viewer) to make sense of such a multi-channel signal. How would channel numbers work when the familiar RF-related channel number could be associated with more than one “TV channel”? Broadcasters realized their