

RYERSON CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF TV

The pioneering spirit that is inherent in much of the technological research performed at Ryerson's Rogers Communications Centre has its roots in an event that took place over 50 years ago. The year was 1949. Ryerson Institute of Technology was just a year old and Dr. H. H. Kerr (of Kerr Hall fame) was the principal. It was November 14th, and in the Ryerson Auditorium, about 300

people were gathered to watch a cast of 15 students and a support crew of 13 students, make history. On that day, Ryerson students, from the schools of Costume Design and Radio Broadcasting, had the distinction of producing the first multi-camera, live TV program in Canada. *This is the Fashion*, made possible by the use of \$100,000 in borrowed equipment, was a 20-minute fashion show consisting of various skits and songs.

John Barnes, the producer, told the press that the show had gone off "without a ripple or wrinkle." Ironically, none of the 12,000 people in Toronto who had TVs at the time were able to see it. The live video and clear audio was reserved for the two screens in the auditorium where members of the radio and television community (mostly retail dealers) were invited to watch. At the event, Principal Kerr spoke about the Institute, and Eric Palin (of Palin Hall Fame and Director of the then School of Electronics) discussed the radio station CJRT, which at the time was owned by Ryerson. He also spoke about a new radio frequency known as FM. He then commented that Ryerson would be making more television productions. "When? We don't know," he said, "but we are going to have to get television equipment in order to expand our course training."

Perhaps Palin foresaw that Ryerson would become a Canadian powerhouse and a leader in the areas of television training and research. But back in 1949 the technology was very new. No one, not even the faculty, knew all the different elements that needed to come together to produce a show.

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First In Canadian TV Studio Show

First Live Canadian TV Show Ryerson Students Present "This is The Fashion"

By F.J.R.
What is television?
How does it work?

the form of electrical impulses,
along a special-type of cable
(coaxial, \$2.80 a foot) to two

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Commenting on the collection of cameras, monitors, wires, and special lighting provided by the School of Photography, the Ryersonian called the event "very Hollywoodish and impressive." David Shano, a 1950 school of Electronics Graduate, was on camera control that night. "I don't actually remember much of the show because I was too busy worrying about the quality of the picture. The brightness and contrast and all that," he said. One thing he did remember was the act performed by his classmate, John Vail. For a laugh, Vail appeared as one of the girls and, according to the Ryersonian, gave an excellent demonstration on how NOT to model a dress. "John Vail was about six foot five and built like a lineman for the Argos. He was huge and impressive, and there he was in drag. That part, I remember," said Shano.

Back in 1949, Shano found his course load quite heavy. "We were always cramming," he said. The program was in the very early stages of development then. Now more than 50 years later Ryerson is home to Canada's largest facility for educational training in the areas of Radio and Television - providing four fully equipped broadcast TV studios, over twenty video editing suites, five in-house channels, and a full degree program in Radio and Television Arts into which 140 students are accepted each year.

Ryerson has other television milestones to its credit. According to Wayne Detcher, longtime Ryerson employee in Computer and Communications Services who is now with IMMAD, Ryerson's studio cameras were used to shoot the opening of CFTO's station in the early 1960's. Detcher also noted that over time, several notable Canadian shows have been produced from the school. In the late sixties, Ryerson produced a weekly talk show called Open Mind which aired on Hamilton's Channel 11. Jim Peters was the host and guests discussed pertinent Toronto issues. Pierre Burton, another talk show icon, later used Ryerson studios to record some of his guests when they were in the downtown Toronto area.

Student television production peaked in the early 1970's when the students at Ryerson had access to their own studio and produced programming that was played to a series of monitors spread across the Ryerson campus. Today, the Rogers Centre modulates five channels through the cable system. Last year Channel 84 was launched to provide an information service for the Ryerson community. This year Channel 83 is being launched. It will have a video fileserver allowing student films and videos to be played back in a continuous loop. The service currently is operational in the Rogers Centre and the student residences. As the Cable system gets rebuilt, all areas of Ryerson will be able to receive the channels.

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