



MARK S. RICHER

President Emeritus
Advanced Television Systems
Committee

Mark Richer's four-decade television career has spanned the transitions from analog to digital TV, standard-definition to high-definition TV, and now to 4K and NEXTGEN TV. He is President Emeritus of the Advanced Television Systems Committee Inc., developers of international television standards, best known for pioneering HDTV and digital broadcasting.

He served as ATSC President from 2000 to 2019 and previously served as ATSC Executive Director in 1996-97 in between senior technology leadership roles at PBS and Thomcast Communications. The capstone of Richer's career is the new ATSC 3.0 suite of Next Gen TV standards, representing the world's first Internet Protocol-based system that marries broadcast and broadband, poised to roll out across the nation in 2020 and beyond.

In addition to leading the ATSC for 20 of its 35 years, Richer's noteworthy industry contributions include his role in the pioneering development and industry implementation of closed captioning in the 1980s and his key part in the 1990s related to what is now known as ATSC 1.0 when he oversaw the technical evaluations of proponent systems for the world's first digital TV broadcast standard.



Former ATSC Chairman Glenn Reitmeier and Mark Richer accepting a technical Emmy.



Former ATSC Executive Director Dr. Robert Hopkins and chairman James McKinney with Mark Richer at the 60th Annual Technology & Engineering Emmy Awards in 2009.

Humble Beginnings

Mark Richer was born in New York City in 1955. He says his mother taught him to appreciate the good in everyone, which is "a really important trait if you run a membership organization," and which he and his wife Diane passed along to their children, Madeline and Benjamin. From his father, Mark learned the basics of mechanics and electrical repair, "and more importantly, to take on new challenges," he says. At age 14, Mark helped his father assemble a complicated Heathkit color TV in their Long Island, N.Y., home. His dad may have panicked at the elaborate high-tech jigsaw puzzle, but the son was unfazed, laying the foundation of his engineering career.

By the time he headed to the Rochester Institute of Technology, his focus was photography. While there, he took computer classes and started working at the campus television studio of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. After a stint at WROC Rochester, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked briefly for Byron Motion Pictures. But his work soon thereafter as a PBS laboratory technician proved career defining: the development of the closed-captioning system.



Mark Richer in the Engineering Development Lab at PBS.

Storied Career

Richer spent 16 years at PBS ultimately serving as Vice President of Engineering & Computer Services, responsible for development of new technologies for PBS and its member stations, design of audio/video systems and management of computer operations.

Widely recognized for his significant contributions to accessible technology for people with disabilities, Richer was instrumental in the development of the Line 21 closed captioning system for which PBS was awarded a technical Emmy. He also was responsible for the selection and implementation of digital video compression and transmission technology and led PBS efforts in the area of digital and high definition television.

Richer first joined ATSC as Executive Director in 1996. From 1997 to 2000 (what he calls his “sabbatical” from ATSC), Richer was Vice President and General Manager at Comark Digital Services, a division of Thomcast Communications. At Thomcast, he was responsible for strategic planning, business development, marketing and communications, for Thomcast Communications, including its Comark and Comwave subsidiaries.

Playing a huge role in ushering in the era of HDTV and digital television broadcasting, Richer was tapped to chair the system testing and evaluation working group for the FCC Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Service, chaired by former FCC Chairman (and Giants of Broadcasting inductee) Richard E. Wiley from 1987-95. Richer’s group was responsible for testing proponent advanced television systems, including that of the Digital HDTV Grand Alliance, the core of the ATSC 1.0 digital broadcast standard adopted by the Federal Communications Commission on Christmas Eve 1996.



The late Joe Flaherty, a previous Giants recipient, receives an ATSC rubber chicken award from Mark.

Well-Deserved Recognition

Among his many accolades over the years, Richer received Broadcasting & Cable’s Technology Leadership Award in 2007, the National Association of Broadcasters’ Television Engineering Achievement Award in 2010, and America’s Public Television Stations’ EDGE Award for Excellence in Innovation in 2018.

Under Richer’s leadership, ATSC received three Emmy awards, among them one for techniques for maintaining audio loudness levels for digital TV broadcasts (the ATSC A/85 recommended practice). In 2010, Congress passed the CALM Act (Commercial Advertising Loudness Mitigation Act) that required the FCC to adopt the relevant portions of A/85 developed by ATSC.



Mark and Alex Trebek at the 66th Engineering Emmy Awards in Las Vegas, NV during CES 2015.



Brian Markwalter of CTA, Mark Richer of ATSC, and Sam Matheny of NAB cut the ribbon at the Next Gen Hub.

Richer’s Legacy

Reflecting on his career, Richer says, “It’s been an honor and a privilege to participate in the dynamic television industry over the years. I’m particularly proud of ATSC’s role in redefining the future of television with ATSC 3.0, but our work isn’t done by any means,” he adds, citing ATSC’s important role in updating and developing standards, while supporting the widespread deployment of Next Gen TV broadcasting.

In 2019, ATSC established the Mark Richer Industry Leadership Medal to recognize an individual or team that demonstrates exemplary leadership in advancing the mission of ATSC and epitomizes the vision, tenacity and leadership qualities that have been the hallmark of his leadership. Richer was also presented with his own bronze rubber chicken award, in recognition of his wonderful sense of humor that often defused tense discussions.

Madeleine Noland, who succeeded Richer as ATSC President in mid-2019, says, “Mark is well known and respected for his leadership skills, deep industry knowledge, unwavering integrity, future-focused vision and wry sense of humor. With broadcaster deployments of ATSC 3.0 now underway, he went out on top. I still confer with him often and, while we miss his day-to-day involvement, Mark’s legacy is having positioned the broadcast industry for a very bright future.”



Mark receives the bronze rubber chicken award from ATSC president Madeleine Noland as his wife Diane (in chicken costume) and NAB’s Lynn Claudy, ATSC Board Chairman, look on.