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RADIO PRESERVATION, ACCESS, AND EDUCATION

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PANEL: PUBLIC RADIO AND AMERICAN
CULTURAL HISTORY

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FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 26, 2016

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The Panel met in the Library of Congress Montpelier Room, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C., at 10:45 a.m., Mark J. Williams, Chair, presiding.

PANEL MEMBERS

MARK J. WILLIAMS, PhD, Dartmouth College, Chair
KAREN CARIANI, America Archive of Public
Broadcasting (AAPB)
WILL CHASE, NPR
MICHAEL HUNTSBERGER, PhD, Linfield College
JULIE ROGERS, NPR

RESPONDENT

ALAN STAVITSKY, PhD, University of Nevada

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

10:51 a.m.

CHAIR WILLIAMS: Hi, good morning. Thank you so much for coming to our panel on public radio and American cultural history, a panel that has a decided emphasis and focus on the local which I think is extraordinarily important and very typically ignored, or even effaced, particularly in American broadcast history.

A lot of history for many reasons focuses on the national and on the network. And in the U.S. in particular the network was really only possible because of the FCC-mandated skeleton of local stations which unfortunately have been ignored by and large in that history.

So, that's part of what's exciting about today's presentations, part of what's exciting about the innovations that we know are going to emerge from this extraordinary conference.

My name is Mark Williams. I'm at Dartmouth College and I'm happy to be in a position

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to chair this panel.

We're having a little bit of technical snafus so the order may change from the order in your program.

But we're going to start this morning with Karen Cariani, who is the director of the amazing, amazing archive at WGBH, and also the co-coordinator of the AAPB archive which, as you know, is co-convened by the Library of Congress and WGBH. WGBH is in charge of access. Yes! We love access to things. Yes, we all love preservation as well.

So, Karen will start us off and we're confident that the technology for her presentation exists.

So, here's an anecdote. I often tell my students that the definition of technology is that which can break down when you need it most. So, this is just another panel that is engaged with technology.

Do you guys, do you need another minute?

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We could ask our friends from NPR to go.

Okay, all right. So we just had a wonderful talk about "live-ness." We are going with the flow. This is realtime.

Let me please introduce our colleagues -- Will Chase and Julie Rogers, who are here from NPR. For those of you lucky enough to do the NPR tour yesterday you probably met them. They are both involved with the RAD program at NPR which I believe is Research, Archives and Data.

And Julie, in particular, is a great public historian. And Will I think is stronger on the archives side of things.

So we're delighted to have them tell us about their work at NPR, and please welcome them.

(Applause)

MR. CHASE: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining us. As Mark mentioned, we're part of what we like to call the RAD team, formerly known as the NPR Library. We felt that Research, Archives and Data kind of better conveyed our many

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roles within the company.

So we'll briefly cover the origins of RAD later on in the presentation. And I also wanted to mention that our colleagues , Jane Gilvin and Ayda Pourasad, are presenting on the origins of NPR's corporate archives in a concurrent session.

So, just a brief overview of NPR: we are both a content creator and distributor. Our flagship programs "All Things Considered" and "Morning Edition" are heard on over 900 member stations across the country and we have 17 bureaus in the U.S. as well as 17 international bureaus which really allow us to bring unique stories and diverse voices from around the globe to the airwaves.

MS. ROGERS: So, from the very first broadcast NPR programming was defined by experimentation with sound and technology, in-depth reporting and a commitment to public service.

But what really set the new organization apart from other national news networks was its

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mandate to speak with many voices and many dialects.

This vision paralleled the cultural changes that were going on in the 1970s and changing expectations about who should be representing America.

By opening the airwaves to women, minorities and regional voices NPR redefined the content, substance and sound of the national news.

NPR was incorporated in 1970 and, that same year, Bill Siemering, who is in our audience today, drafted the original mission statement for National Public Radio.

In this document, Siemering provided an outline for the program that would become "All Things Considered."

He envisioned a daily product of excellence that would speak to a general audience but he insisted that the program would not substitute superficial blandness for genuine diversity of regions, values and cultural and ethnic minorities which comprise American society.

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The title of our presentation today comes from this vision. It would speak with many voices and many dialects.

Bill originally took this mission quite literally. His original idea was to have ordinary people deliver the network identification, "This is National Public Radio."

Of course, not many people were familiar with public radio in 1971 so it ended up coming out more like a question and the idea was scrapped.

Today we're going to focus on the early efforts made by NPR to bring local and regional voices to the national news and the ways that we can rediscover these voices in our archives.

My research has drawn from a variety of secondary sources as well as primary source material and oral histories that the NPR early staff have been generous to give me.

So, National Public Radio's origins are firmly located in local, non-commercial and educational radio stations.

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NPR began with 90 charter stations located around the country. The first six board members of the board of directors were all local radio station managers including the manager of WBFO, the State University of Buffalo's radio station, none other than Bill Siemering.

The original mission statement for NPR was deeply influenced by his experiences in Buffalo. He reached out to the community, opening a storefront broadcast facility in a predominantly African-American neighborhood.

He also covered campus protests during the Vietnam War. From this experience, he learned that WBFO could be a voice of reason and present all sides of the conflict.

It reinforced his beliefs in the power and promise of radio. He said "Pay attention, this is what radio can do."

He brought these lessons to Washington, DC, when he became NPR's first programming director.

On May 3, 1971, "All Things Considered"

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debuted and its style of storytelling has influenced NPR and American media as a whole.

In contrast to other commercial news bulletins of the day, "All Things Considered" focused on long-form narrative, first-person interviews and ambient sounds.

On the day of "All Things Considered's" debut, over 20,000 protesters gathered in Washington, DC to demonstrate against the Vietnam War.

"All Things Considered" documented all sides of this anti-war protest with an in-depth 24-minute sound portrait.

The piece stands as a record of that turbulent day in American history, but it also is an articulation of the goals of the new public broadcasting network.

I'd like to share a short clip of this story with you now.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. ROGERS: So, this is just one short

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clip from this amazing 24-minute piece from the first day.

And this piece features the voices of protesters, police and DC residents that were caught in the turmoil of the day.

In addition to coverage of these May Day demonstrations, the first episode of "All Things Considered" also featured an in-depth profile of a nurse struggling with addiction and a local barbershop in Ames, Iowa.

So, NPR's mission statement called for it to be national in input as well as distribution.

And this was a big challenge for the network in the 1970s. They tried a variety of approaches with varying levels of success.

"All Things Considered" host Susan Stamberg, who actually became the first woman to anchor a national network news program in 1972, especially wanted the public to become part of the program.

She read from listeners' letters. She

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broadcast their ideas, their voices. She was a master of the phone interview and did a segment on "All Things Considered" called The Village Well where she called people to talk about local issues and local concerns in their communities.

NPR also solicited stories from member stations. For instance, after the Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, "All Things Considered" broadcast reactions from men and women on the streets in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

NPR also went on the road. Here you can see a picture of the NPR Winnebago studio.

"All Things Considered" host Mike Waters made trips to selected stations across the country and hosted the program from those cities.

And in 1973 he went to Buffalo and hosted from WBFO, helping a reporter produce her first national radio story.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. ROGERS: So yes, Terry Gross's first national news story was about a frosted cereal with

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as much saturated fat as a breakfast of bacon and eggs.

This was a very local story, but it had national importance. And NPR was able to leverage their network of local stations to tell a national story in new ways.

For example, in 1974 NPR and six affiliate member stations teamed up for a marathon reading of the Nixon White House tape transcripts.

Reporters from around the country took turns reading the very long documents all weekend.

These types of broadcasts were made possible by NPR's interconnection system. Affiliate stations were connected by a copper telephone land line, and certain stations were connected in what's called a round-robin system. This allowed them to actually send production feeds back to NPR headquarters in Washington, DC.

But there are technical limits to this approach, and from the very beginning NPR wanted to make plans for a satellite system.

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Engineers made tests during the 1970s, and by 1979, NPR sent its first satellite signal to a member station in Eugene, Oregon. We actually recently unearthed the broadcast.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. ROGERS: By 1980, we had completed our network and it was actually the first nationwide radio satellite distribution network.

And by this time NPR had over 200 affiliate member stations across the country.

So this satellite network allowed us to broadcast with superior sound quality, but it also featured 15 origination points from around the country, allowing more opportunities for local voices to reach a national audience.

MR. CHASE: But then what happened to these early stories? Well, they're in our archives. And I don't think Julie would have been able to do the wonderful research that she's done without a kind of longstanding commitment from NPR to its archive.

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In 1972, the NPR library was established with a \$50,000 grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with the intent of creating a resource both for broadcast production purposes and future scholarly research.

NPR began cataloguing all stories in 1973 using a variety of systems and starting with card catalogs, moving into more digital-based systems later on.

But, in doing so, documenting the names of who you were listening to, subject terms and geographic locations.

In 2011, we finally arrived at our own digital archive system called Artemis. And you can see here in the screenshot Terry Gross's first national story there for WBFO.

Artemis is our comprehensive repository for audio, transcripts and metadata. And there are over 800,000 catalogued stories in there today.

What about this data allows us to find these local voices that might have otherwise been

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lost? We always document bylines and byline sources, the call letters for each member station, geographic subject terms, and also searchable transcripts.

Our goal, of course, as stated in the original letter, is to make this archive available to scholars as well as our own colleagues for production purposes.

Right now, researchers can access this database at the University of Maryland at the National Public Broadcasting Archives.

We're currently working on building Artemis 2.0.

We also make our transcripts available in scholarly databases such as LexisNexis and ProQuest. And we're also working on digitizing and eventually transcribing our legacy content.

As with the satellite system, today NPR continues to meet listeners where they are, whether that's over terrestrial airwaves, or online, or through podcasting, streaming.

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And this is further exemplified with NPR One which is sort of the Pandora-like streaming service that allows listeners to connect with their member stations, even donate to them as well as serendipitously discover new stories from around the world.

And this is just one potential outlet for discovery of these voices. And I'm sure there will be more to come in the future.

As NPR continues to strive towards its goal of speaking with many voices the Research, Archives and Data team is also driven by its mission to support NPR's production needs while telling a story for future generations. Thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you very much. Next up is Karen Cariani, director of both the library and the archive at WGBH, and one of the leaders of the American Archive of Public Broadcasting Project.

Karen is one of the most self-effacing

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legends in media archives today. Karen?

(Applause)

MS. CARIANI: Sorry about all the technical issues. Hopefully I'll get the slides up, I hope.

So, I'm going to dial it back a little bit. Sorry for the pun. But I'm going to start with how 'GBH got started, particularly our radio station.

So, in the beginning, there was radio. WGBH actually dates back to the 1830s when John Lowell, Jr., bequeathed some money to begin public lectures in the Boston area to help educate the Boston citizenry.

And then, in the mid-20th century, when broadcasting came about they decided, "Hey, why don't we broadcast these public lectures?" And that would be a way to even have further reach in the Boston area.

So they started using commercial radio stations to broadcast these lectures. And, if you

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can click on the audio file, this is actually a 20th anniversary looking back to the first early days.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: The Lowell Institute didn't want to continue to have to fight for airtime on commercial stations in order to broadcast these educational programs.

So when the FCC started giving out educational non-profit licenses they went for one and they called it WGBH radio in 1951. And we subsequently got a TV license in 1955. But radio began in '51 thanks to the Lowell Institute.

And, as you noticed, as he was listing off all of the educational institutions in Boston of which there are many even to this day, four of those institutions have presidents of those universities on our board of trustees. So we continue to have a very close relationship with the universities and the academic community in the Boston area.

We were originally housed at 84 Mass Ave

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on the MIT campus. And our first broadcast as WGBH with our call letters was the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

We've sort of branched out from just doing lectures from the academic institutions into bringing cultural heritage to the Boston citizenry into their homes. So, if you want to play that clip, that would be great.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: So, originally there was a lot of news reporting on local events and local news for the local public, and occasionally national news also.

But they were read. It was like a script and they were read and it was very stiff. I wish I had a recording of that, but I don't.

But the early broadcasts were really mostly news.

However, 'GBH didn't just stop with news broadcasts. We also started developing children's programming and some other pieces where we were

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bringing artists and performers to give lectures and talks on the air.

So if you can play the first clip on the left. This is the children's programming.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: Okay, you can play the next clip now.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: Agnes de Mille was a choreographer.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: So, in 1961, as you heard in that other anniversary broadcast, there was a fire and a lot of -- the entire studio was destroyed. And a lot of the archive of the materials from that date for the last 10 years were destroyed also.

We've been picking and choosing in trying to gather together the earlier programs that we can at other institutions that may have had them.

For example, the University of Georgia Peabody Collection, [where] we submitted a number

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of programs for the Peabody, and they may have some of our older programs. So we're trying to gather those back as much as we can.

This audio clip is about the fire.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: So, as you can see, radio got on the air really fast. And the community came together and gave us space. We were broadcasting from all kinds of institutions across the city.

But radio, because it was more flexible, the equipment was easier to get up and running, they were able to get on the air right away which was fabulous.

TV took a little bit more time and it was a little bit more complicated.

And of course we had a fundraiser, as we always do. We still have fundraisers.

But we did manage to rebuild and the new studios were at 125 Western Avenue, which I don't know if any of you are from Boston or were in Boston, but we were there for a very long time until we

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recently moved to another location.

So, WGBH Radio. In the 60's we started to branch out and we were producing a lot of materials. This is also pre-NPR.

There was a loose network of stations which I will talk about in a minute. But there are two clips here just show you the kind of variety of material that we were producing and broadcasting locally.

One of them is Phil Ochs singing during a Vietnam protest. And you can play a little bit of that one. Yes, it's that one there.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: So, as you can see we started reporting national events to the local audience. And we also started reaching out and covering, actually sending people and covering events that were happening in other locations.

I'm not going to play the clip "Long Hot Summer '64." I think it's in one of the collections in the American Archives. You can check it out.

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But it was basically the Freedom Summer. Voting registration that was going on in Mississippi. And people from Boston were going down there to help with voter registration. And it's a story about a letter that a young woman wrote to her mom that she's reading out loud while she was spending two days in jail.

The March on Washington was the first really big national program that we collaborated [on] with the Educational Radio Network which was at first a very loose network of radio stations across the country, mostly on the eastern seaboard that banded together in order to share stories.

And we actually used to bicycle the tapes to each station so that they could re-air it because there was no satellite in place.

The March on Washington piece were six stations that came together to cover it. And actually, if you play the clip, it gives you a little bit more background.

'GBH was the only station of the six that

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recorded all 17 hours of the March on Washington and they are now available in the American Archive or on our Open Vault website.

(Whereupon, the audio was played back.)

MS. CARIANI: So, I'm going to kind of skip over the '70s because that's when NPR came into existence. And really, in terms of radio and national radio, they really stepped up and became kind of the cornerstone of radio news and broadcast. So I'm going to skip this.

And we still did programs like this which was reading aloud, where we actually had somebody reading books out loud to the public.

And actually we still get requests for these programs because they were so popular in the Boston area.

But radio did make a really big comeback with the internet....

And new series like "NOVA," "Frontline," "Masterpiece Theater" came onboard. And all of the station's focus and fundraising

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efforts kind of really went to those national television entities mostly because they were thinking "That's where the reach was, that's where the audience was."

So radio at 'GBH kind of took a back step and we were really just broadcasting the feeds from NPR for a long time. And the local programming was really kind of patchwork and all over the place.

But I have to say, when the internet came along it was much easier for radio to take advantage of the internet and to put their files on the internet and stream them because the files were smaller and the rights were much less complicated.

So they really took advantage of the digital world much faster than television did. And that kind of allowed them to reinvigorate their efforts and their stories.

This is an example of 'GBH radio, all the different things that they're doing now. They've got like three outlets, and they've got news stories coming out.

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And there are even things that go out on the internet that they don't necessarily broadcast.

And, as you all know, in the last 10-15 years, all these wonderful radio programs have come about. And a lot of them have come about from independents that then had been fed through the national network.

And then we come to the American Archive. And the American Archive is a collaboration with the Library of Congress.

It was originally funded by CPB with a generous grant to digitize 40,000 hours of material from both TV and radio. I would say about half of it is radio.

It's a contribution from 100 stations, TV and radio, across the country. So, it's an unprecedented collection.

The Library of Congress is ingesting and managing the preservation files. It's a wonderful collaboration between us. 'GBH is working on

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access and outreach to the stations, and we're both together trying to grow the collection.

This is our vision -- to preserve and make accessible as much of this content as we can.

Radio again is a little bit easier to make accessible to the public because of the rights issues.

Our current status is that we've accessioned almost all of the 40,000 hours into the Library of Congress systems. We're somewhere between 85 and 90 percent done.

We've launched a website for public access with 2.5 million records as a result of an inventory project that CPB funded.

And we have public access to all the proxy files on location at GBH or the Library of Congress.

We have an online reading room which is now allowing 12,000 items to be available to the general public anywhere.

Our long-term goals are to grow the

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collection by adding inventory records, metadata records, proxies and preservation files.

We want to help public media organizations with archiving and digitizing. And we want to build a consortium around preservation and access for public media content.

So, this is the website. Please go and visit it. We are constantly working on it and updating it.

This shows the breadth of the participating stations across the country.

We've got some keywords for browse-ability and some themes. We're constantly working on this and improving it.

The catalog is not perfect by any means. We took raw data from the station. So one of our efforts is to really improve that cataloging to improve the accessibility. But at the very least the material is there and you can look for it.

So, we're improving scholarly access by creating transcripts of all 40,000 hours. We're

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hoping to work with subject specialists to determine some keywords and topics.

We're enlisting IT specialists to help us query those transcripts in order to use some computational analytics to really pull out some key themes.

And we're enhancing the display so that we can relate things a little bit better and put them into context.

Here's our social media. Please note the website, the blog, the Twitter and our Facebook. And we're very active on social media.

And thank you so much. Here are all our contact infos. Thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Karen. Quick shout out to Casey Davis who's the project manager of AAPB.

(Applause)

CHAIR WILLIAMS: So, next up is Michael Huntsberger, who's a professor at Linfield College

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in the great State of Oregon.

He does a lot of work on community and public radio, media technology and emerging models for public service media.

He teaches widely across mass media history and has served as a consultant to the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, the Northwest Public Affairs Network, and to radio stations and community TV stations in Washington, Oregon and other areas of the U.S.

[He] also serves on the conference planning group of the Global Revisionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise Initiative. Please welcome Michael.

(Applause)

DR. HUNTSBERGER: Thank you, Mark. Just like every studio I've ever been in, the clock's inaccurate. How are we doing on time? Am I good? Okay, good.

Can I change the name of my presentation to "Mr. Wonderful Surprise?" That's the best thing

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I've heard in days. Thanks.

Well, it's been interesting to hear from NPR and 'GBH, and now I'm going to dial it down a whole bunch to the grassroots level.

Of course, one of the pleasures of listening to radio in the United States is the diversity of voices that you hear from coast to coast.

You hear these regional dialects, but you also hear these wonderful representations of daily life across the country.

So many parts of the world are dominated by these homogenous national services, but in the United States, what you get is this patchwork of local cultures. So you get old-fashioned Boston, and hard-working Minneapolis, and laidback New Orleans.

Where I grew up it was groovy San Francisco. Now I live in the Pacific Northwest, I've lived there most of my adult life, and the accents definitely are not as pronounced and the

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history of radio is a lot more obscure.

The conception of Seattle and Portland as centers of media and culture has only come into the public imagination recently.

And the cities have never had the cache of Washington, or Boston, or New York, or Chicago, or Los Angeles.

As a matter of fact, some people still have some interesting ideas about the Northwest. They think of it as this vast wilderness of mighty rivers and Douglas firs, and as Michael Palin said, lumberjacks swinging from tree to tree.

When I moved back to the Pacific Northwest from a couple of years in South Carolina, the woman who liked to call herself "my back fence neighbor" asked me if I really wanted to go back to the glaciers and the wild animals there.

And just last week, "A Prairie Home Companion" was sort of parodying our recent adventures with armed constitutional revisionists. So, the stereotypes and the misconceptions tend to

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obscure the history of radio in the Northwest.

But even more so it's the practices of Pacific Northwest radio stations to challenge historians and archivists who intend to chronicle the area's broadcasting heritage. And that's what I want to talk about today.

This project set out to uncover a part of the history of that broadcasting history that's associated with public radio, and community radio, and non-commercial radio generally.

But what it became over a period of a couple of months was an odyssey through the archiving policies and practices of stations and a case study in the difficulties that face scholars as they try to reconstruct local radio histories.

In the end the project proved to be a demonstration of how we, as researchers, can assist stations in the recovery and preservation of their audio histories.

Okay, so a little background.

Like other parts of the country, the

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Northwest is not that backwards. Radio came in the 1920s.

But the upper lefthand corner of the country has always had this sort of frontier persona. And that reputation was not entirely undeserved. There are parts of western Washington that were accessible only by wagon roads and weren't even mapped until well into the 20th century.

For those who intended to serve the public, the challenge, in fact, may have been to locate the public in the first place in order to figure out where you were going to broadcast to.

The Northwest is the home of one of the first outposts of educational radio in the United States. KOAC-AM was a project of the engineering department of Oregon Agricultural College, which is now Oregon State University.

Now, the station is one of dozens that's operated by the statewide public radio and television system, Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Like WHA in Madison, KOAC provided

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emerging radio audiences in the agricultural Willamette Valley with weather and other farm-related information.

Still in the second half of the 20th century the Northwest remained sufficiently remote that Lorenzo Milam, the bad-boy godfather of community radio, elected to start his first community radio station in Seattle. And that was KRAB and he started it in 1962.

Milam reasoned that an application for the least desirable frequency in a city that was 2,800 miles away from Washington, DC, might have a chance of getting through the FCC's application review process after a couple of attempts to get a license here in Washington, DC, weren't successful.

Published histories of radio in the Northwest take several approaches. Kramer's "History of Oregon Radio" provides a survey approach to stations around the state.

Chaisson has written a chronicle of one

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of Seattle's first licensees for both radio and television.

Richardson gives this wonderful nostalgic view of the Golden Age of radio in the Northwest.

But as our colleague Josh Shepperd Tweeted just a few days ago, it's a mistake to view the history of media as a study of a technology.

[Instead,] it's an analysis of how culture was recorded at a specific time. And it's this social history, revealed in the audio recordings of local broadcasts, that was the intended objective of this project.

The difficulty arises when you try to unearth the audio recordings.

As Don Godfrey observed, much of the content of these media were never recorded, and high preservation costs dissuaded others from saving broadcasts.

To complicate matters further, much of the audio that was recorded over the years is riddled

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with problems, either associated with access to audio collections or related to the quality and condition of the recordings that are available.

Tim Larson was correct when he compared the investigation of local radio history to listening to the scratchy story that unwinds from the brittle tape of an old radio detective drama. And this is precisely the challenge that faces researchers.

The few collections that do exist in the Northwest, such as the one housed at the Knight Library at the University of Oregon, are characterized by audio recordings of great events often associated with institutions and great leaders, mostly men, almost always men.

But insights into the daily lives of common people, that could be revealed through audio recording, are more difficult to root out.

And this reveals some intriguing gaps in radio history in the area.

Where are the audio histories of local

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radio? What holdings remain in the possession of stations? How are they documented? What policies are in place at radio stations that encourage the preservation of local programs?

As this investigation went deeper these issues, the questions that were revealed by these issues, became the focus of the project.

So, I started with an assessment of databases of radio stations in the states of Oregon and Washington. I chose those states because those are the ones I'm most familiar with and I know their industries well.

The assessment involved a cross-tabulation of lists to identify baseline characteristics for each station.

The data set was filtered to identify commercial and sectarian stations as well as non-commercial translator and repeater stations re-broadcasting distant signals. Those stations were then eliminated from the data set, and when that was done, the final set was 26 distinct

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non-commercial audio services in Washington and 21 in Oregon.

From the group of 47 stations, 6, or 13 percent, were selected for additional study through informant interviews.

The six stations were subdivided into four categories based on the size and mission of the license-holder.

The four categories included public stations licensed to statewide or multistate institutions that are affiliated with NPR, community stations licensed to independent community-based non-profit organizations and programmed primarily by volunteers, college stations licensed to regional four-year colleges and programmed by enrolled students, and vocational stations licensed to public schools and operated for vocational training purposes. Yes, we still have stations like that.

The sample then included two public stations, one community station, two college

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stations, and one vocational station.

For each station I conducted an in-depth interview that lasted at least 45 minutes, sometimes much longer.

All of the interviewed subjects were professional employees with supervisory responsibility for program direction and for scheduling and for documentation.

This sample included three program directors and three station managers.

Each subject was asked to respond at length to two semi-structured questions. The first explored the general nature and scope of the station's archive of program recordings, and the second asked what policies and practices are in place to manage program archiving.

Subsidiary to this second question, the subjects were asked which member of the station staff is responsible for overseeing and implementing those policies.

In all cases follow-up questions were

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asked to probe initial responses and gather additional information.

I then took notes of these interviews. The notes were reviewed immediately after the interviews and additional details or impressions were added as needed.

After all the interviews had been completed, the notes were reviewed, compiled and analyzed to identify patterns that addressed the issues framed by the initial questions and any other concerns that characterized responses across the sample.

The analysis revealed several patterns.

While one public radio station was founded in the 1920s, the balance of the stations were established in the heyday of the establishment of educational broadcasting stations between 1964 and 1974. So all of these stations have had four decades or more to develop and implement policies and practices for preserving their programs.

However, none of these stations had

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archiving policies, and none has designated a person on the staff who is responsible for recording, cataloguing, or preserving programming.

So, not one professional, not one community volunteer, not one student, is responsible for looking after the audio histories of any of these stations. Not even a mouse. Nobody.

In half the cases little or no historic audio from the stations exists. One of the college stations lost all of its collected audio recordings going back to 1973 in a recent move. They're all gone.

That was where I started. That's when I realized there's a bigger problem here.

Having learned from this experience the manager is now uploading the live music performances from the station to SoundCloud but those only go back to 2014.

At the vocational station, 24/7 transcription audio is stored going back six weeks

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at which point the oldest files are overwritten. This station which, has been on the air since 1971, has never archived any of its programs. They have no recordings.

So that negates the possibility of revealing any early performances by students who may have gone on to success in a profession and it negates the possibility of capturing in sound the evolving trends in daily life and pop culture that are so important to young people.

In this case the station manager who's been in the position for less than a year noted that while it's technically feasible to retain recordings going farther back because, as she said, storage is now dirt cheap, the practice reflects the licensee's priority of pedagogy over history.

Similarly, the other college station in the sample, makes no effort to preserve any of its programming.

This station casts out its entire core of on-air talent at the end of every academic term

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so that others may have the opportunity to come in and broadcast.

In this case avoiding any historical entanglements and focusing on the broadcast activities of currently enrolled students best serves the licensee's educational mission.

Among the remaining stations the state of audio archiving is more encouraging if perhaps not so orderly.

One public station has archived all of its local public affairs shows on disk back to 2006. Prior to that date, the programs are preserved on digital audio tape, the old DAT tapes, and those go back another 10 years.

And even further back volunteers donated hundreds of hours to transfer years of programs from real tape to CD. I thought great, okay, this is it. I'm on the trail.

None of these recordings have been catalogued or indexed. The PD described the archive as 1,000 CDs in a drawer, each one labeled

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with a program title and a date. No one ever touches them. So no one knows what's in there, but it's this lovely drawer full of disks.

The other public station, which is the oldest and largest organization in the sample, has reels and transcription disks going back to at least the 1950s, and those are preserved in the former licensee's institutional archive. And that facility has been identified by the Radio Preservation Task Force.

But, for the most part, at this station tapes were reused rather than preserved. We all know this practice. It was cheaper to record over the tape and reuse it than to archive it.

So, holdings at the current facility only go back to 1995, because they're on MiniDisk or on DAT.

For holdings prior to 2006 there is no archive. Since then the PD, who has been with the station for more than 20 years, has archived the program rundowns in Word and has preserved

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recordings as audio files initially on CD and more recently on server-based storage using content management tools available from NPR.

Local talk shows have been uploaded to SoundCloud since 2011. But of course this is all reasonably recent material.

Somewhat surprisingly, and Sally, you're going to love this, it's the community radio station that owns the most complete collection of recordings.

This consists of more than 45,000 items on reels, CDs, cassettes and MP3 files. The majority of the library consists of news, public affairs and spoken word shows including radio theater. But there are also thousands of hours of music programs.

Though the station has seen paid staff and volunteers come and go in a steady stream, it's somehow maintained a single Excel spreadsheet going back to 1990, the same file. So, people come and go, but they still have this spreadsheet. I love

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this.

They now have a graduate intern from a local university and they're working on -- they've got some applications in to NEA and NEH to try and turn this into a more permanent archive.

I'm going to pick this up a little bit here.

So, following these interviews, there were some really good insights that came out of this.

As one PD said, "We're more concerned about what's happening today than what happened yesterday."

The decisions that they're making aren't based on their sense of history, they're based on their sense of news value. What's timely, what's close by.

They appreciate that these recordings have historic value, but they don't have the time or the resources to dedicate to systematic cataloguing and preservation.

This suggests that stations could be

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served by the development of simple open-source cataloguing tools and recommendations, just a few recommendations for best practices for program documentation, storage and retrieval.

It's informative to note, I think, that the most extensive collection identified is the one that's recorded on the Excel spreadsheet.

So, we don't have to do anything complicated here. This is not the National Archives. But the system does work, and it's worked for more than 25 years. They do know what they have.

For stations that lack either the resources or the will to undertake a consistent regimen of program preservation there may be other approaches.

The manager at the vocational station suggested that you could simply record one day of programming every year.

Now, interestingly, this is an approach that was taken by the National Archives more than 75 years ago when Washington station WSJV recorded

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an entire day's programming from sign-on to sign-off on September 21, 1939.

That single recording captured the voices of Arthur Godfrey, "Pretty Kitty Kelly," Franklin Roosevelt, Major Bowes and his talent the whistling wizard, Mr. John Tucker from England, and also had a story about the Nazi advance into Poland.

These kinds of recordings compiled over a period of years or decades could provide researchers with longitudinal insights into cultural history.

So, while the scope of this initiative was limited, this analysis shows that there are substantial gaps in non-commercial radio history, at least in my part of the country.

And the outcomes of the project provide opportunities for scholars to assist local operators with the development and implementation of local radio history projects.

For archivists, the development of a simple cataloguing tool and a few best practices

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could help station managers and program directors to create structures that support audio storage and preservation.

Providing these services would also benefit future scholars so they won't have to encounter these sorts of organizational issues that were discovered in this project.

The analysis also reveals an opportunity for researchers to assist their local stations with labor to implement these tools and best practices.

A model approach can be found in the partnership that exists between the community station and the graduate program at the nearby university.

While this partnership reflects a fortunate intersection of proximity, availability and resources on behalf of both parties, the effort shows that researchers can gain experience and achieve measurable and productive outcomes by assisting stations to catalog and preserve their

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audio collections.

Such projects would address the gaps that now exist in our collective memory. Thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Michael. It's now our pleasure to welcome as a respondent to the panel Alan Stavitsky who is Dean, Professor and the Fred W. Smith Chair at the Reynolds School of Journalism, University of Nevada at Reno.

Before coming to Nevada, Alan was at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication for 21 years, [he] has produced great scholarship, contemporary scholarship about media policy and the digital transition in journalism, has been an advisor to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and has testified to the FCC about local broadcasting. Welcome, Alan.

(Applause)

DR. STAVITSKY: I thank you. It's a pleasure to be here and really exciting to hear these great presentations.

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I'm going to keep this short so there's time for your questions. But just a couple of comments to try to synthesize things.

I guess it's not surprising that there is not a companion panel on the program to this one that is titled "Commercial Radio and American Cultural History," though obviously there is much that we can learn from commercial radio and it has had quite a contribution to our cultural history and heritage.

But, as Chris Sterling noted in his introductory remarks today, there has been a lack of commitment in commercial radio to preservation, particularly since all the consolidation brought by the '96 Telecommunications Act.

And in my work on the task force in talking with commercial broadcasters, I was often told that our preservation strategy is that we keep seven days of programming for FCC purposes so that just in case anyone complains about indecency or the like and then we record over those tapes and

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the cycle begins again.

Fortunately public radio, with its roots in education, has an increased commitment to preservation and access, as we've seen in these presentations today.

My dissertation many years ago at Ohio State looked at the origins of WHA, WNYC and WOSU. And I very much liked Paddy Scannell's metaphor of doing archeology as much as doing history in looking at the early days of educational and public radio because of the difficulty in getting things to actually listen to. So it's really thrilling to hear these old programs. Or I should say *listen* to these old programs. Sorry, Paddy.

Just to comment briefly on each of the presentations. First, Julie and Will's presentation about what's going on at NPR -- I'm really impressed by the innovative work that they're doing.

And particularly with an eye toward the dual functions of serving both the production needs

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of the news organization as well as scholarship.

And it has the dual benefit of not only preserving the history of NPR, as a national program service, but also because of NPR's commitment to the inclusion of local voices and input from local member stations.

In many ways [they are] preserving content from those local stations that is not being captured at the local level, as Michael noted.

And, as a matter of fact, it was fascinating to hear the 1980 clip from Tom Warnock recorded at KWAX, the station in Eugene -- I spent more than 20 years at the University of Oregon, and had no idea that that existed. I looked at Michael. Same thing. So, here, you've got a couple of public radio historians and we had no idea of that. So that was really great to hear.

And it also points to the great value of the work that you're doing in serving local needs as well as the national.

Also, there were many jewels, and we

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heard just a few in Karen's presentation about the American Archive. And WGBH of course has taken a leading role in local station content preservation.

And again, you see the value of this in several ways. One of the things that I was sort of very attuned to coming as this did right after Paddy's presentation was thinking in terms of the very formal nature of radio address in some of those early clips.

So you sort of learn about that speaker-audience relationship and then can begin to trace that from then to the sort of authenticity of today's podcasters. And, so, there's very interesting scholarly opportunities there.

But then also the benefit of hearing these historical figures' voices -- Agnes de Mille, Phil Ochs and the like.

And also very interesting to hear that early example of a pledge drive to see how public broadcasters never miss an opportunity, never waste a good crisis, and ask for money.

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One archival rarity that Karen mentioned was an example of programming from the bicycle network days which is sort of a largely forgotten period in that sort of transition between local radio and then the national interconnection that came when funds were suddenly available after the 1967 act and NPR played a leading role in creating that interconnection.

So it was great to hear programming from the old NERN, the National Educational Radio Network, that WGBH played such a leadership role in that.

And, again, I would note that for the scholars out there that this is just a wonderful trove and would urge you to consider thinking about the possibilities for your work.

And there's also great value too in the convening efforts that the archive is doing in terms of encouraging other stations and facilitating their work in this preservation effort.

And the importance of that is all the

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more evident, based on Michael's remarks, about the challenges of capturing local content beyond the sporadic recordings of events and speeches.

It's this interesting feast-or-famine kind of approach where you see at some stations there's sort of a total lack of effort and commitment.

And then you see, for instance, what's going on in the community radio sector. And at some of those stations where they have the world's largest spreadsheet and there's a real effort to collect and to catalog this where at other places they're kind of throwing the disks in a box.

By the way, that would be a great title for a conference paper, right? "One Thousand Disks in a Drawer," and you know, colon whatever. So I throw that out there for young scholars. Pick that up and that would be a great BA topic. There you go, there you go.

So I'm going to wrap it up here except just to thank and commend the panelists for the good

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work that is being done.

And hopefully your efforts, and the efforts of the task force, and the visibility of this conference will raise consciousness and spur more and better preservation initiatives. So, thank you.

(Applause)

DR. STAVITSKY: Well, as long as I'm here I will be the moderator and the question pointer. So, sir.

MR. RYAN: I have a brief question. What has been pointed out is that today the committee has brought to the light the need to archive a lot of things.

And we're starting to slowly have an archive. But we have a manageable number of things that we're working with right now. Hopefully our large archive facility will be tapped into.

And I was wondering what may be the best steps to get more collections and structures involving others like Peabody and advocates like

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the Wisconsin Historical Society into AAPB and institutions and archive like this.

MS. CARIANI: So, well, first of all: funding. Most of these stations need funding. As these guys have said they don't have archivists on staff, and they don't have people available to do it. So they need funding.

Digitization in order to get them to a format that we can include them in the American Archive, for example, and they can be more accessible.

So we'll help stations with that. We'll help them with funding, we'll help them shape their projects, we'll help them hook up with other potential collaborators and make it a better, stronger project for a national funder.

And we've also got the National Stewardship Residency Program where we're placing archivists at host institutions, seven for this first round. That's funded by IMLS.

So we're hoping that the stations that

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then get those residencies will then realize the value of having an archivist on staff and will perhaps increase the practice of actually archiving, and the value of hiring somebody.

So, in terms of us doing that, I mean right now, we'll take metadata records. We'll add to the inventory and take metadata records. If nothing else that gives people a place to look to know that it exists. And then we can point them to the source.

If they have digital files, we're working with the library in terms of what our capacity is on an annual basis to digitize those files and to include them into the collection.

So, we haven't quite gotten to that point, but we're getting very close.

MR. RYAN: I'm sorry, just as a follow-up. I was just wondering ways for --

MS. CARIANI: Oh. So, the original CPB call was just for stations. But we're fully aware of the fact that there's a lot of public media stuff

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with other institutions.

So they are welcome to contribute also in the same way. We aren't limiting it just to stations.

And in fact, they probably have their material in a little bit better shape, and probably have a little bit more skills in terms of being able to write grants and raise money.

So, no, they're definitely -- we're willing to talk to them. They can be included.

DR. STAVITSKY: Bill?

PARTICIPANT BILL: I just wanted to acknowledge in the interest of historical advocacy Jack Mitchell who is -- we're honored to have here as the person -- been considered.

And Jack is really the one that made the vision come alive.

(Applause)

PARTICIPANT BILL: Jack never gets enough credit for what he has accomplished. He came back from the financial crisis and he was brought

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back to shepherd that. So he's one of the most important people.

DR. STAVITSKY: Thank you. Sir?

MR. CHASE: Really just to follow up on Bill's comment about Jack Mitchell.

(Simultaneous speaking.)

The idea though that we can provide some open source tool or spreadsheet and stations will start actually doing the things they need to do to preserve things.

I know you didn't suggest that. We're fighting against a lot of pressures, a lot of resource limitations and competition for attention.

And it's worse in the Digital Age. I think a lot of the stuff that we've saved in public broadcasting has been by accident and, in many cases, by people who did that work almost against the instructions of the station management in the sense that they're spending time and resources doing that stuff.

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So my question is, and it's a big question, if you have an answer that would be great, but I'm not sure.

Where does the advocacy, the leadership, come to enable stations to say, "Yes, this person is responsible for that and we're going to do the work necessary to preserve the stuff we're creating."

You know, it has to come from somewhere. NPR is providing some great examples. The American Archive is obviously taking the lead. But the GMs and the CEOs need to hear this.

DR. HUNTSBERGER: So, you're asking me, right? Or are you asking all the panel?

I'll give you my two cents. I think the people who are in the best position to articulate the case, not necessarily the case for funding, I think that has to come -- there's more kind of institutional muscle that goes into that.

But I think the people who have to make the case for the project I think it's the radio

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scholars who are talking about things like social history, institutional history, and the program directors who listen to this stuff every day.

And I think the program directors at the stations, they understand. They understand. They know they don't have the resources to preserve the stuff, but I think every one of them wishes they did in some capacity.

I think what I saw at the community station in Portland was this really interesting partnership between KBOO radio and Portland State University. And it's kind of a grassroots partnership.

Now, how do you sustain that long-term? I don't know. But if you're -- I can't say this for my institution because I'm at a little liberal arts college - but, you know, if you're a scholar and you have graduate students, these are great graduate internships.

And I think you can find willing program directors who will work on them. So I think that's

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the beginning.

I think the other crucial partner in this, and it's what came home to me from the station that had lost everything in the move.

They have a library on their campus. And the library has an institutional archive.

They could have taken at least some things and taken them to that archive and they would have been safe. So, there are libraries on college campuses. There are public libraries in communities. So I think the third piece is to bring in a professional who understands what preservation involves.

And I think you have to have all those pieces to make it work. And then somebody has to write the grants.

MS. ROBINSON: I'm going to add another piece to that and that is makers and listeners. We're leaving some really important people out of the equation.

I'm from WYSO in Yellow Springs. We're

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an NDSA [phonetic] host site. We're part of the original project to update AAPB.

We have about 200 hours of our materials going back to 1958 digitized and available. I'm the archive fellow at the station which means I don't really get paid very much, but I get to be involved in some of the planning and some of the work that's taking place to preserve the material.

But I'm also a maker. And I have a series that I do called "Rediscovered Radio," which is kind of a long story, but those materials that were digitized were neglected and left in boxes in a store room for many, many years.

And when our GM Neenah Ellis discovered them, rediscovered them, she knew that they were important and it just coincided with the development of the AAPB project.

So I'm here to say that there's interest out there in the work and in hearing this material that's outside of the academic community, that's outside of the scholarly work that's being done,

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that there are people who are using this material to make radio.

I'm working with a second city that's been funded by Ohio Humanities in Ohio.

And we're convening a digital humanities conference in October of this year during American Archive Month to use this collection as the focal point for other people doing work like this.

And we'd like to provide a model to small stations so they'd clearly be able to continue this work. Because not all of us are WGBH.

DR. HUNTSBERGER: Can I reply to this? Thank you. You're right, you're absolutely right.

This is actually one of the things I tried to get at in this project and it was very interesting. Because, well, if you don't have tapes, certainly you have producers. You know, we've all seen the episode of "Frazier" where he has the wall in his bedroom with the cassette for every show he's ever done, right? And I have known

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producers like that.

Who has those? The people at the stations don't know. And I thought that was really interesting.

So there may be collections that are, you know, they're in somebody's box in a bedroom.

Accessing that producer community in the network I was working with was proving to be very hard. You know, there were no lists of names. I had this general manager, you know, she's at a station. She's been there for 40 years. She has no catalog of who's been on the air there in all those years. So, there's a significant reconstruction effort.

I absolutely agree with you that I think we need to depend on producers and also on audiences. Who knows what they've preserved? But that's a whole other level of research that I couldn't get to.

DR. STAVITSKY: Well, on the audience member thing, just a quick note -- When I was first

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named to the task force, I went on our local public radio station in Reno to talk a bit about this. And I got about a half dozen calls after that from audience members who had tapes or, you know, that their father had collected.

One guy was a former DJ in the early days of Freeform FM in northern Nevada and there was some good stuff there that we're adding to the mix here. But it's very ad hoc.

We're just about out of time. Maybe we can take one more. Sir? Oh, I'm sorry, I was pointing to the gentleman in the red sweater in the back.

PARTICIPANT: I also would point at the technical specifications. As an audio engineer, I would say please consult with people that have experience in archival audio preservation.

There are a number of organizations like ARSC and IASA, and there are others -- the Audio Engineering Society -- that has a very strong component in this area.

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Especially in the digital domain, the issues are you can't believe how complicated they can become. And you throw the metadata question on top of it and it gets very complicated.

So, please consult with those that can help do a technically good job as well.

DR. STAVITSKY: Very good. Thank you, I think we're out of time. Let's thank our panel and you. Thank you.

(Applause)

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:17 p.m.)

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