



Reflections and Ideas from Making Creative Media Scholarship Recipients on PRPD 2009 [excerpts]

Laura Starecheski

Independent producer
Bronx, NY

The regular PRPD attendees seemed genuinely enthusiastic about the independents in attendance this year, but the exact relationship we might have with them didn't tend to emerge clearly. Our mission, to dream up more creative ways for independents to connect with stations and establish collaborative relationships, seems urgent and necessary.

I proposed to seek out station staff at PRPD to share information about sustainable new media training practices in public media that could bring new voices into the field, and keep them there.

Some quick background about my work in new media training: this summer I directed the Common Wealth, Common Wisdom Project at North Country Public Radio (NCPR), a multimedia intensive workshop for rural teenagers, funded by the CPB through the PMI Fund's Round Four. I was delighted to close the project with our four paid interns deeply excited and committed to a continuing relationship with NCPR as multimedia reporters. One of our interns, college freshman Chelsea Ross, was recently hired as a part-time web assistant at the station. She and the other interns will be participating in monthly news department meetings, pitching stories, and producing content for the station (both traditional broadcast and multimedia).

In a time when almost every public radio station is racing to adapt to a new media landscape, and to engage younger audiences at the same time, trainings like this could prove extraordinarily useful to stations, and engage the station more deeply with its local community. Young people adapt quickly to new technology and new modes of communication; they are the perfect new media ambassadors.

I spoke with several program directors or general managers about multimedia intensive trainings as incubators for local youth reporting and new media innovation, and received enthusiastic responses. Our curriculum will be made available to them in October when it has been completed... In general, however, the roles for independents approaching stations seemed to me to be somewhat limited by a general lack of funding for independent projects. This does not, of course, mean that interested stations and independents could not write grants together for specific projects. In fact, these partnerships seem to be mutually beneficial for stations and independent producers, and anyone at PRPD would have noticed the waves of innovative new media content pouring in from the independent sphere...

Lastly, through my general observations of the needs of stations to adapt and incorporate separate new media initiatives into their programming, it seems clear that stations need three things to succeed in the future landscape of public media: trained multimedia reporters, a deeper engagement with young audiences, and a commitment to programming that truly represents the incredible diversity in their communities. This kind of training initiative addresses all three, confirming my confidence that it is a much-needed vehicle for transforming public media.

I was struck by how distant the world of independent producers seems from that of program directors and other non-production-oriented station staff. The regular PRPD attendees seemed genuinely enthusiastic about the independents in attendance this year, but the exact relationship we might have with them didn't tend to emerge clearly. Everyone seemed to agree that the conference had more life, more attention towards innovation and creative production than ever before. Our mission, to dream up more creative ways for independents to connect with stations and establish collaborative relationships, seems urgent and necessary.

However, in considering the slow turn that public media as an institution is making towards a new media presence, the place of independents seems clear and vital. Most of us work locally. We're quick adapters. In order to survive, we've had to engage with new media individually before most stations have. We can provide links between stations and communities. We think creatively about cross-platform and mixed-media content. Stations need us, and public media communities need us. The success of projects like the Public Radio Talent Quest and MQ2, and the presence of both at PRPD, is a testament to the necessity of new voices and independent talent.

So, where to go from here? Are there other ways for independents to collaborate with stations outside of large funding initiatives? I can say that my own experience of collaboratively writing proposals and grants with a station, to best serve the needs and creative desires of both stations and independents, seems like a successful model. Most simply, I feel bolder in approaching stations for collaboration now, after seeing how rich and innovative such partnerships can be. See below for some ideas.

I hadn't considered the usefulness of meeting all the other scholarship recipients, but this aspect of PRPD proved one of the most exciting for me. I met radio producers expanding into documentary film, former Fulbright scholars, visual media producers making the turn into radio, and community organizers who double as live radio hosts. The range of skills and backgrounds was incredible. If more diverse independent producers joined forces, we could offer even more to stations and programs. I'm excited to follow up on these new contacts, who often came from outside of public media, and dream up even richer collaborations.

Just a few concrete ideas that come to mind:

- a seasoned independent radio producer joins forces with a documentary film maker to teach a workshop specifically on sound-oriented documentary video with the goal of recruiting a small group of new talent for a public radio station to draw on in producing video content for their website;
- a documentary film maker proposes a video training for public radio station reporting staff;
- an advanced college-level film class reaches out to a public radio station with a collaborative curriculum and accompanies the staff reporters in the field, drawing on their work to produce showcase pieces for the station once per semester;
- an independent radio producer joins forces with a visual artist (not a photographer, but a painter or sketch artist) to provide a series of radio stories with incredible original illustrations to accompany web versions of the pieces—the series could be featured as prime content on the station's website;
- a collaborative team including a radio producer, video producer, photographer and graphic designer pitch a year-long series on a theme (health care, unemployment, shifting urban landscapes) with an intense local focus; the produced content would include traditional broadcast elements, multimedia and video for the web, and would be featured as fodder for monthly debate on the station's public affairs show; this debate could even happen as a live taping at a station event space or local university, inviting listeners to cross the digital divide back into face-to-face community interaction.

Thank you immensely for this opportunity. It transformed my understanding of public media as an institution, and its engagement with listener communities and independent producers.

Summer Sewell

Station producer/staff at Youth Radio
Los Angeles, CA

It feels like public radio is the last frontier of journalism, of media, that is just refusing to shift into the future. It's like watching your grandfather, his hands curled around the steering wheel, taking the familiar, much longer route to wherever you need to go, because he won't listen to your younger input, and he's been "doing this for years." Stifling.

First of all, thanks to AIR for making it possible for me to attend this conference. There would have been no other way for me to get to Cleveland, or to meet such useful, talented personal and professional resources.

I'm writing this only four days after returning home from the conference, and it feels like it was a couple of months ago. I was so spoiled, for those four days, surrounded by an inspiring, cohesive atmosphere. Back home I realize I went from crawling through an innovative, collective web of radio gurus, back to toiling away on my own, as an island. That is what I think was the best part of this whole deal. I've never felt like part of a larger community, career-wise. I didn't know I was going in to a field that would separate me, sometimes for days, from co-workers, outside air, sunlight, as I sit and perfect audio in a dark studio. I didn't even know I'd steer into radio at all, but I like this place! And being among other producers, whether independent or station producers, made me feel that I was not alone. Even when I got back to that solitary studio, knowing that once a year, or whenever, we could all come together, is a slice of reassurance.

One concern I had going into the conference was that I'd feel like a brown stain on a clean white napkin. That is an extreme metaphor, but still rings true to the sentiment I'm trying to express. I know the population that listens to public radio, and they don't look like me, or my mom, or my friends. From my experience at KPFK and at other stations, I know I'm younger, and darker, than the audience that is listening to the content we all produce, and younger and darker than a lot of the people who have been producing it for decades. I also know I am the epitome of the audience public radio say they'd like to get more closely acquainted with.

I can't say that Al Letson's benediction made me feel that Mission "Public Radio Diversity" was accomplished. In fact, I felt that it seemed a bit like a desperate attempt to prove that the change we were all there to coax into reality, had already materialized in the form of a young, dreadlocked, black man, when it actually will take years to come to fruition. I can't say that Michel Martin's presentation at breakfast on Thursday moved me to believe that diversity had happened sometime between the previous night's wine and my morning orange juice. The fact that both of these fabulous talents made diversity, and the lack thereof, highlights of their presentations shows that we still have a long way to go. Or should I say, I especially, have a long way to go. I don't mean to discredit PRPD's and NPR's insight and willingness have Letson and Martin become stand-outs at the conference. I valued that experience, personally and professionally, but I feel like some of the other attendees of the conference still saw them as...the dreaded...tokens...of the conference, and herein lies the problem. To me, they were just my favorite presentations.

How can radio stations collaborate with producers to utilize new platforms? Make a new platform, and I don't mean a digital platform. I mean relinquishing old ways of programming, producing, gathering stories, pursuing stories, and welcoming, not just putting up with, a new wave of producers.

I don't think radio stations need to worry yet about building new forms of digital media, new forms of interfacing via the Internet, until they have established a workforce that reflects the new generation of media consumption.

It feels like public radio is the last frontier of journalism, of media, that is just refusing to shift into the future. It's like watching your grandfather, his hands curled around the steering wheel, taking the familiar, much longer route to wherever you need to go, because he won't listen to your younger input, and he's been "doing this for years." Stifling. Can I find a job as a young producer now? Or do I need to "ripen" (just get physically older) to make money?

Since most of the scholarship recipients were of the younger set, we could have had a panel, or some kind of space to offer our perceptions of public radio from a different standpoint than the same faces who gather, conference after conference, to talk about how they want new voices, and diversity at their stations/ for their shows, but never implement the change.

Jon Beaupré

Assoc. Prof. of Communication Studies at Cal State
Los Angeles, CA

...the collaboration...redoubled and focused...the necessity...that a full-scale embrace of new media is a must. The ability of panelists and presenters to hammer this idea home...was viewed not so much as a devastating challenge, but rather as an exciting opportunity.

For the many honored and dedicated trade groups making up the media, news, documentary, communication, and story-telling business, 2009 has been a schizophrenic year ... With the bottom dropping out of the economy, many of these organizations have had to dramatically scale back their national convention/conference/seminar because not only were the budgets of the companies who would be sending folks to these shindigs slashed, the budgets of the National Associations of Whatever were also slashed to the bone.

What the wiser of these organizations have done, however, is to subsidize folks to attend these conventions; the idea being that during an economic downturn, the place these folks really need to be is AT those conventions and power-meetings.

It was the largesse of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Association of Independents in Radio who made possible my attendance at the late September Cleveland OH meeting of public radio folks. The convention was a combined effort of the Public Radio Program Directors group (PRPD) along with the Association of Independents in Radio (AIR), and the Third Coast International Audio Festival (TCIAF), a Chicago based group that regularly oversees events that bring together some of the most brilliant and talented audio story tellers in the country...

It came as something of a sort of quiet surprise to realize full on that especially in these trying economic times that all three groups – PRPD, AIR, and TCIAF – played well with each other. The indie producers were able to respectfully challenge their colleagues in management, and those with winning pieces on display for TCIAF were able to dazzle everyone with the scope, quality, and sheer beauty of the work. Mostly, it seemed totally obvious that the interests of all three groups overlapped more than they differed. It would not be a surprise to see this model develop into a NAB-style omnibus of public media.

Also, the collaboration between these three groups has redoubled and focused national attention on the necessity of all public media content makers and managers that a full-scale embrace of new media is a must. The ability of panelists and presenters to hammer this idea home time and time again, was viewed not so much as a devastating challenge, but rather as an exciting opportunity.

That is absolutely a new attitude....

If there is one deep message, it is that the arrival of more technology won't necessarily make us better citizens, and it may not at present even be able to pay its bills. But technology has the potential to change how we see the world, how we record our history, and how we make sense of everything that is going on.

It won't be easy or fast, but it will probably be a lot of fun, and I was grateful to have been part of it.

Cassie Chew

Freelance Multimedia Producer
Silver Spring, MD

We are skilled in traditional news reporting, but we are versatile and have trained ourselves to produce audio and video, build web sites and employ search engine optimization. We like the versatility of working in multiple formats. We want to work with you and be a part of your news organization's solution for success.

These days the media industry is in such a flux that the 'citizen' journalist is now in vogue. In an effort to bring in the local and diverse news that is getting traction on the pages of Twitter as well as in the blogosphere, major news organizations are recruiting, hiring and training people with non-professional journalism backgrounds with the goal of establishing long-term relationships with them.

This is a great way to find people who have always wanted to break into the news business or advocates eager to shine some light on an issue, and it may assist a short-staffed newsroom. However, I really hope that editors don't bypass their brethren--the stable of folks who feel called to the profession and have done all of that previously required dues paying.

News organizations can achieve a better effect and more return on their investment by solidifying their relationships with independent journalists and producers, also known as freelancers. With that said I really was pleased to examine the partnerships between indie producers and stations at the **2009 PRPD, AIR, Third Coast Conference** in Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 15-18. In addition to the general sessions, I attended several breakouts, including, **Taking Public Media to the Streets MQ2, TCIAF Listening Room, Dollar Stories, Hyper Local Content Collaboration, and Journalism in the New Media Ecosystem.**

With the democratization of the news business through the phenomena of free, online distribution of news produced by publicly traded companies, blogs and Twitter, republishing via Facebook and aggregating by hundreds of pseudo news and information sites, the industry gatekeepers now seem to be a bit more willing to pursue story and content ideas that don't originate from top management and blur the lines of their traditional coverage and formats.

Everyone is seeking to tap into the vast multi-platform, online audience that goes beyond the news organization's traditional and singular target markets of radio, print or television, and is ready to try new things to capture that audience. The conference itself marked the first time the Public Radio Program Directors Association, the Association of Independents in Radio, and the Third Coast International Audio Festival joined forces to meet under one roof.

The shakeup of the media industry may provide independents the power to reengage news organization decision makers about story ideas that previously may not have been considered a feature or format that the news organization would pursue, produce or publish.

During several sessions at this year's PRPD, AIR, Third Coast conference, NPR's news director Ellen Weiss, stressed the need for news groups to experiment with story concepts and formats. For example, **Planet Money**, which started last fall in collaboration with **This American Life** to make sense of the economic meltdown, was launched with no budget. It now is a gem among NPR programming and NPR is planning health care programming based upon a similar model. It would be great if more news organizations adopt this spirit of experimentation.

The incubation and embedded nature of the relationship between stations and the MQ2 awardees seems to be an ideal model--much better for the station than setting up a system of hiring hundreds of 'citizen' journalists and seeing which ones will stick. I hope that more news organizations consider bringing in a few independents and helping them cultivate their reporting

projects. Independents would love to have the freedom to pursue a reporting project and have access to news editors, newsgathering resources and the credibility that association with a news org provides to complete the project.

Right now I am working alone on a reporting project that includes print, video and audio that I know would draw a wide and diverse audience. It would be great if I could find a news organization that would commit to distributing the pieces, provide in-kind resources and give me the credibility that such an alliance would bring to request more interviews and source documents toward completing the project.

This incubation and embedding is a new way of staffing at a news organization, as the traditional model involves offering the staffer an existing or newly created job, a salary and a desk. If editors are willing to work with citizen journalists, they should consider a relaxed relationship with independent producers. The producers of *Mapping Mainstreet*, *Beyond the Odds* and *Cyberfrequencies* seemed to work really well in the newsrooms in which they were embedded. In most relationships that I have had with news editors, the story has been assigned and I am on my own until deadline day. If news orgs are willing to invest time in cultivating citizen journalists, perhaps they might consider putting a bit more effort into their relationships with indie producers, who likely know more about the process of producing news and have enhanced newsgathering and storytelling skills. How about inviting independents to participate in planning and editorial meetings?

I don't mean to be down on the 'citizen' journalism model. It has its benefits, but speaking on behalf of myself and other independents, I'd like to say we are here and we are that bridge. We don't simply use the term "independent" or "freelancer" as a nice way to say, "unemployed" and looking. We are skilled in traditional news reporting, but we are versatile and have trained ourselves to produce audio and video, build web sites and employ search engine optimization. We like the versatility of working in multiple formats. We want to work with you and be a part of your news organization's solution for success. And, for many of us it's not just about the money, it's about the story.

Chérie Newman

Producer/Montana Public Radio
Missoula, MT

I came away from the conference with the idea that I can create, and assist independent producers in creating, multi-media content for diverse and tech-savvy audiences by pooling our unique skills. Teamwork and partnerships are essential.

From my (inexperienced) point-of-view, the conference created as much opportunity for networking and gathering information about public radio programming as a person could absorb. All I had to do was listen...

The highlight of my experience, however, was talking with and listening to other producers, and hearing/seeing their projects. That experience gave me an infusion of confidence in my ability to build larger audiences and develop must-hear content. I discovered that the key to *my* success is *us*: partnerships.

Instead of thinking about myself as one producer with only a Western-Montana audience, I came away from the conference with the idea that I can create, and assist independent producers in creating, multi-media content for diverse and tech-savvy audiences by pooling our unique skills. No one can know it all anymore, especially when it comes to technology. Teamwork and partnerships are essential.

In addition to people-partnering, producers with small budgets can take advantage of online partnerships:

Online and print newspapers with multi-media features on their websites offer opportunities to post content; using free blog and Web sites that allow video uploads, any producer with a \$30 Web cam can have an online presence; uTube, Twitter, and Facebook are easy ways to augment and promote broadcast and online content.

And — according to Bob Garfield anyway — widgets are now the “sliced bread” of the Web. Widgets can be used to attract and keep listeners’ attention. Hundreds of free widgets are available online, including some that can be customized with a bit of code manipulation.

Interacting with producers and PDs at the conference made me realize that although we at MPR have limited resources, we have practically unlimited access to people and ideas...

From a broad perspective, it’s clear that Montana Public Radio can use digital media and new technology platforms to build partnerships with *any* educational program or independent producer. What we need is to focus our intention to develop those partnerships, and then begin to build a network of resources and creative people (a good project for a producer and a couple of interns).

Thanks to you, and to my experiences at PRPD 2009, I intend to become a vigorous advocate for such a network and for multi-media partnerships.

P.S. It has begun. On October 6, I will speak to a group of 70 students about writing for and posting comments on a companion blog to one of my programs.

Marie Doezema

Independent producer and Intern, Kitchen Sisters
Norman, OK

As a journalist coming from the print medium, I was tremendously inspired and encouraged by the recent PRPD/AIR conference in Cleveland....

...Not only did I learn a great deal about the craft through various lectures, panels, and casual conversations, I was struck by the sense of camaraderie amongst attendees--both producers and programmers.

There's a lot of anxiety about the changing media landscape. Many newspapers and magazines are becoming thinner and going out of print, and public radio--while maintaining a healthy listenership--is facing funding challenges. There's the constant need to stay connected; there is a greater need than ever before to be relevant and meaningful to audiences that have endless resources at their fingertips, from blogs and tweets to YouTube and Facebook.

As an aspiring independent producer, I found some of the projects of the MQ2 recipients most striking in how they're using new media. Many of their projects are ingenious; innovative ways of connecting themselves (producers) with listeners, web users, radio stations and programmers. The Mapping Main Street project is a wonderful example of this. These are stories that can be heard on the radio and found on the web, but also have a huge presence in local communities. The community involvement that the project inspires and demands is fundamental in creating sustainable and meaningful radio projects, and can be used as a blueprint for other endeavors.

I still love the idea--and hope to work on a project related to this in the future--of connecting tech-savvy radio listeners with more Luddite-oriented listeners. I think radio is a great way to do this because of its accessibility to both groups. Listeners who don't have radios still listen over the web; and technophobes can still rely on old-fashioned radios as a source of news, connection and stimulation. The possibilities of using radio as a point of connection are very promising, and local stations (and community-based stories) are a crucial bridge.

At the end of the day, we--producers, listeners, programmers--are all after the same thing: good stories. No matter how the media landscape is transformed by new media, this remains the heart of radio. The rest--from Facebook to tweets--are just tools; ways of enhancing, not replacing. I like to think of these as facilitators: if stories are the heart, new media tools are like arteries and veins, means of circulation.

Good old-fashioned storytelling is perhaps more important now than ever. It's not a question of radio, and other more conventional forms of journalism, going extinct; it's a matter of adding new ways onto old ways to enhance them, add a different dimension. This is what people are hungry for. Yes, there's a lot of hype about twitter, texting, and other instant communication. But this doesn't need to strike fear into the heart of radio producers, so long as radio finds a way to integrate these into the broader fabric of storytelling.

Alfreda G, Beartrack

Four Directions Community Radio
Station Program Manager
Shiprock, NM

The author caught the radio bug as a young girl living on the remote plains of the Lower Brule reservation in South Dakota and has not been able to shake it since. The author spent hours listening to the radio sitting beside her grandfather fascinated by the large glowing radio tubes that pulled voices and music from the airwaves. From South Dakota to New York and on to Shiprock, New Mexico, the author's passion for music and radio led to the creation of KFDC Four Directions Community Radio and a renewed hope for the Shiprock area communities. The author indicates that every Native community should have access to radio lineage capabilities that can become a valuable contribution to the fabric of the contemporary Native community. The author also indicates that Native radio can serve as an vehicle to strengthen the social threads of these Native communities toward healthier lifestyles by using broadcasting to reconnect, redirect, and preserve Native culture and language.

The author sees a definite need more than any other time in the history of radio for collaboration between broadcasters, policymakers, independent analysts, and technologists in order to survive in the changing climate of radio within the global community. The author states the first step in this collaborated network is to fully understand what the listening audience wants and to creatively construct a means for evaluation and feedback that can enhance broadcasting toward new opportunities for value added content, improved quality and a more efficient use of the radio spectrum. The second step would be a genuine effort from established stations to mentor newly emerging stations in working toward a shared vision that is of benefit to the listening audience, because without a listening audience there is no need for a radio station. Lastly, more affordable networks that stations can turn to for advice, expertise, and support.

A key element for more effective innovation and productivity in the digital age is the formation of a USA-wide flexible public regulatory process toward policies and strategies that can protect stations while moving digital broadcasting to the forefront. Having a long term strategy in place will make certain that national, regional, and local radio will be able to: (1) Continue their delivery free of charge to the listening audience, (2) this type of flexible regulatory processes will give these radio stations confidence to embrace change, and (3) the reassurance to experiment with digital media, social marketing techniques, and innovated programming ideas to attract younger listeners.

The author gained valuable networking and programming knowledge by attending the 22nd Annual PRPD 2009 Public Radio Programming Conference. This array of knowledge will help the author as well as the other participants to better embrace programming change and to more effectively engage digital media and innovative formats. The author's ideas touched on collaboration with other radio stations, joined networks, public regulatory processes, creative and innovative platforms, and long term strategies that can help radio stations survive in a time of unavoidable change.

Edgar Campos

Associate Producer/Co-Host
 Knowledge is Power, Power 106
 Los Angeles, CA

I think that public radio is doing everything right with respect to its digital media growth.

This was my first radio conference ever, in a city I had never been too. I connected with and learned from people from all over the nation. I did learn a lot, but more important to me were that relationships that I began. I enjoyed meeting young people that were getting involved in radio like Summer Sewell from KPFK Youth Radio who was also a scholarship recipient and Evan Umberger who is getting his start on "The Appetizer" (a "new music" show) doing development work. It was also cool to meet contacts I could use immediately in Los Angeles like John from Tavis Smiley productions...

I went to this conference not knowing much about "public" radio and even less what to expect but I ended up even learning fundraising. I remember Sam Fleming of WBUR talking about harnessing digital media to get the money coming in. I even realized how much it was similar to fundraising strategies we use at my weekday job (doing Community Organizing for Community Coalition, cocosouthla.org). Second, I saw how similar it was to PAC's like Moveon.org or even the Obama campaign.

I think that public radio is doing everything right with respect to its digital media growth. There are a few old guard type people that need to understand that we can use other mediums to attract people to our medium. We should not spend time at a conference defending our medium. Like I said in my scholarship write-up, a big part of deepening connections with people is getting to them when they are young. Hip-hop mastered it and marketing hasn't looked back ever since. In being at the conference I saw how cool blog's on the station website can give an infinite life to a show topic if used the correct way. I do wish I saw more strategies for gaining a bigger audience using mobile devices. I think this can help us reach a bigger audience that's not just the "intelligentsia" and has more everyday people tuning in. The question is, have we done our proper homework and created younger, hipper shows that speak to that demographic?

Tony Field

VFH Radio at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
 Producer, "BackStory with the American History Guys"
 Charlottesville, VA

The digital upheaval means that stations are now in a position to facilitate the distribution of independently-produced work without sacrificing other components of their programming lineups.

This year, there seemed to be a change afoot, at least on the organizational level. The AIR-Third Coast-PRPD collaboration highlighted the extent to which producers and programmers are facing the same new media realities, and might benefit *equally* from continued collaborations. Again, independent producers bring a level of craft and creativity to the table that can help set public media apart from competitors in the increasingly crowded multimedia market. But – and this is the exciting part for me – the days of throwing airtime scraps to independent producers is increasingly becoming a thing of the past. The digital upheaval means that stations are now in a position to facilitate the distribution of independently-produced work *without* sacrificing other components of their programming lineups. Whereas programming time was once equal to the number of hours in a day, the internet has blown open that equation, suddenly allowing the inclusion of an enormous quantity of material under a station's programming umbrella.

This is one area where it seems to me there is a great deal of potential for station-producer collaboration going forward. Station-branded podcast streams and website build-outs are two obvious ways that stations can create space for content that didn't exist before. Already, we've seen how projects like NPR Music can add enormous amounts of value to broadcasters' existing on-air offerings. Clearly, however, there are many more avenues yet to be explored. In the area of long-form documentary production, for instance, stations might consider hosting the work of independent producers on their website and devoting on-air time to promoting those features. "Mapping Main Street" (and to a certain extent, "Story Corps" before it) is a great example of how excerpts of independent productions can be integrated into on-air programming time in engaging ways that drive listeners back to the source material online. Without doubt, new technologies will create as-of-yet unimagined opportunities for supporting independently-produced programming that isn't already part of a station's existing 24-7 schedule. In the meantime, I'd be very interested in taking part in further discussions between station representatives and producers about some of the ways that our respective assets can be combined in ways that cut through "the panic," even as they continue to fulfill public media's core mission.

Juliet Fromholt

Webmaster, WYSO
Yellow Springs, OH

Since I'm just beginning my career in public radio, I can't even begin to quantify how valuable this experience was.

In public radio, we are always looking for new ways to build our community of listeners and engage that community creatively. For me, the PRPD Conference was a chance to engage with a community of colleagues, most of whom I was meeting for the first time. Since I'm just beginning my career in public radio, I can't even begin to quantify how valuable this experience was.

One of WYSO's biggest goals for the future is to develop a community of producers and contributors in our local listening area... The PRPD Conference gave me the opportunity to learn about many projects that incorporate video, photography and other "non-radio" elements into a successful radio project without sacrificing or taking away from the audio. This combined with the technology study presentation reminded me that there are many potential audience members out there who don't have the instinct I do to turn to my radio first for news, information, entertainment, etc. These people would probably love what we're doing, but they need to make that initial connection. New media can be a powerful tool in bridging the gap between the public radio audience and all of those would-be audience members. New media also allows producers and stations to provide a wealth of supplemental material for what they're doing on the airwaves. The idea of using new media in this way is extremely exciting to me because one of my dreams is to see more radio pieces being used for education. An enterprising teacher could certainly turn any radio piece into a lesson. However, if the radio community can provide a way for students to go beyond what they can hear, the educational aspect seems even more natural.

I was excited to hear that many producers were looking to new media as a way to keep their work moving forward. As a listener, I always have that moment of sadness when a really great piece of radio has concluded. However in recent years, I've enjoyed having the ability to go online, learn more about the subject and possibly interact with other people who listened and were affected by what we just heard. Public radio seems to naturally be a great conversation piece, and new media is allowing producers and stations to keep that conversation going.

There are great opportunities for producers and stations to work together to keep the conversation going. Attending the conference gave me the chance to see an amazing willingness to adapt and experiment in both parties. It was great to be able to have conversation with producers about real ways to go beyond a station simply airing a program. The willingness to collaborate and to make those collaborations very creative to meet the needs of the stations and producers is really exciting. I can't thank AIR, CPB and the NEA enough for helping to make it possible for so many of us to attend the PRPD conference through the Making Media Creative scholarship. I've come back to WYSO with so many ideas for our future and am very excited for the work that's ahead.

Sylvia Maria Gross

Reporter / Producer, KCUR
Kansas City, MO

If all you're doing is flicking a switch to air national programming, that's a piss-poor raison d'etre.
- loosely quoted from Bob Garfield's talk at PRPD

Them's fighting words. The crisis in news reporting is hitting the hardest at the local level, where newspapers staffs are being decimated. And on most news/talk public radio stations, there's a big emphasis on national and international news. That's even while stations are dreading the future "bypass", when listeners will begin getting NPR (and PRI and APM) shows directly from the providers via streams, podcasts or cell phones, and supporting those providers directly, too. Bob Garfield said the only way for stations to survive is to become robust hobs for local news, arts and culture. Both NPR news chief Ellen Weiss, and President Vivian Schiller also said that among their priorities is to help stations provide quality local journalism and digital platforms, so that they will be part of a vibrant news system on the national and local level.

What role can independent producers play in this? First of all, most stations don't have enough reporters to comprehensively cover their own communities. Some have relationships with independents to provide regular coverage in a certain area (at KCUR, we work with freelancers for theater and sports stories). But for various reasons, a lot of freelancers would rather work with the national shows, or stations that produce national shows. From what I heard at PRPD, a lot of independents say their local stations lack "vision," or the budget to buy their work. But I also wonder whether independent producers are tapped into the kind of stories and multimedia projects that stations feel they need... Many stations are focused on how to better cover their own communities, whereas independents might have their own passions and interests, and are trying to find a home for those projects (many of which are fascinating, groundbreaking and beautiful), but don't always have a strong local focus.

Another challenge is geographic: a lot of independent radio producers are clustered in some parts the country, whereas stations are everywhere. Still, I think there's a lot of potential for stations to work with independent producers, and help answer the pressing need for more and better local news. Finding the resources to support those collaborations is a challenge.

MY PERSPECTIVE: For 4 years, I've produced and co-hosted a weekly, local newsmagazine at KCUR called *KC Currents*. The goal of the show is to amplify the voices of diverse communities in the Kansas City area; we use sound-rich features and intimate profiles to transport our audience all around the metropolitan area. I believe I've created a solid framework for a program that engages a diverse audience in local news, politics and culture. As the only full-time staff member on the show, I'm trying to make sure the show has a variety, depth and range of stories and voices. But I'd like to take the show to the next level on several fronts: Create a format for community members, young people and unemployed journalists to tell their stories on the air. Allow reporters to do more in-depth and documentary work. And create a more dynamic website that engages the audience and emphasizes multimedia. I think independent producers could play a key role in expanding *KC Currents*. I came to PRPD looking for ideas on how to do this.

Here's some of the ideas inspired by the conference:

- Magazine Show Handbook: The Talk Show Handbook, developed by PRPD and the Local News Initiative, is an incredible tool for stations to ramp up their local presence by creating or improving local talk shows. Magazine-style shows offer the opportunity to do even more original reporting, and documentary stories that evoke a sense of place and bring out under-represented voices. They also provide more of an opportunity for independents to contribute. It would be a huge resource for both stations and independents if the people who developed the

Talk Show Handbook could expand it to local magazine shows. And I would love to participate in a network of local magazine shows where we could share best practices.

- Place and Memory Project: Shea Shackelford told me about how he worked alongside a reporter at WYSO to do a story in Ohio. It seemed like a cool way to develop that reporter's skills in documentary work, and plant the seeds for more local stories along the same theme.

- The Corner at KUOW: a new kind of documentary with a strong local focus. Valuable for stations to support this kind of work, and provide an outlet for radio stories that come out of it.

- Cyber-Frequencies: Interesting collaboration between a station producer and an independent producer that has a regular home on a local magazine show at KPCC. It's not necessarily a strong local focus, except that the "online world" is a place where our audience, no matter where they are, spends a lot of their time.

- Multimedia: Many of the MQ2 projects had interesting models of multimedia projects, where there was an audio version, which would reach a larger audience via the radio. Many of these projects involved teams of people with various multimedia skills beyond audio: photography, music, academic research. I was interested in the idea of a station producer playing the role of "team leader" and convening people with different skills.

- Non-profit local news sites: with small staffs, these new organizations are giving big newspapers a run for their money in many cities. Often, they're started by laid-off reporters. There's a lot of potential for stations to work with these sites, create their own, or to become a radio outlet for existing news sites. There are opportunities for independents to bring together print, radio and multimedia here, and to provide the audio/multimedia storytelling skills that the print reporters lack.

- Collaborations with Investigative Reporting Organizations: a lot of potential here, not only for stations, but for independent producers to offer in-depth journalism with a local focus. Some of these news organizations don't know how to tell the stories they've uncovered on the radio. Radio producers do. Specifically, WNYC's news director John Keefe talked about hiring an editor who can work with local stations, and presumably independent producers, too, to connect them with research about federal stimulus projects in their area.

- Youth Radio: AIR member Laura Starecheski told me about a multimedia project she worked on at North Country Public Radio to connect young people with depression-era seniors to tell stories about entrepreneurship in difficult times. Independent producers helped young people tell the stories themselves, deepening the station's local reporting about the economy.

- Laid-off Newspaper Reporters: We've been bringing some of these reporters on the air as guests on our talk shows, though they don't get paid that way. Some of these reporters could learn to produce local radio stories, or work with an independent producer to tell local stories on the air.

- PRX: I often use PRX to pick up stories by independent producers for *KC Currents*. But the problem is, I try to keep a tight local focus in the show, and have trouble finding stories that have that local resonance. As a show producer, I don't have a budget for freelancers, but I've thought of having independent producers in KC (including former interns and employees whom I trained) post stories to PRX, where I could pick them up, and they could get paid. But the compensation is not enough to pay for the work, unless the story could have legs in other markets.

- NPR's training sessions for local reporters: I've heard a little about the Impact of War project, and the current training on economic reporting. Are these sessions open to independent

producers? Even as a station reporter, I often don't hear about them until it's too late to apply. This kind of support and training seems like it would be extremely valuable.

A COUPLE OF DILEMMAS:

- When should you look for your audience to contribute via crowd-sourcing, audience participation, etc. . . . and when is it more appropriate to pay for their work as independent producers? The line is blurring. In places where there aren't a lot of independent producers, maybe people shouldn't expect to be. But at some point, their skills develop to the point where you'll want to be paying them for their content.

- Any time a news organization works with freelancers, there's natural concern about whether the freelancers share the same ethical approach to reporting as the news organization. I think those concerns are amplified in a local market, where it's common to have ties to the people and organizations you're reporting on. I've struggled with this as I've collaborated with local writers, organizations, artists and other reporters on KC Currents, and would be interested in learning some strategies on how to deal with this from other local stations and independent producers.

Michelle Halsell

Multimedia producer
Founder, Missing Pixel
Brooklyn, NY

This was my first time attending a PRPD conference. Although I've worked in public media for at least 10 years, this was my first opportunity to look into ways to connect important subjects on the radio.

PRPD already is in touch with powerful people and powerful stories. The only item I would seek to address is how to bring more young people into the game. I'm 40 years old and African-American and still stood out in a space that should be ripe with young people eager to tell their stories. After reviewing several sites and downloading corresponding apps, PRX seemed the most likely to keep radio with the next generation of listeners. I had a wonderful conversation with the woman for classical music wondering what happens when people producing now, no longer have someone to replace them. I believe, everyone in the community is aware this is happening. I propose PRPD along with PRX start an initiative for young people to make radio programs for their iPods and iPhones. As I mentioned to Jake and to David, an app could be branded for the youth audience, they may be more likely to learn, produce, and create material that will connect this generation.

Susan Hanson

Program Director
SDPB Radio
Vermillion, SD

Radio isn't just radio anymore – and producers and programmers have to dig together as we turn up fresh ground on a new media landscape. This is what I took with me when I left Cleveland last Friday, but the specifics of how to do this are still a bit foggy to me. I'm a new program director (still in the first year of this position) and my goal in attending the PRPD conference was to simply learn as much as I could. As I process everything I learned, something continuing to float to the top is that the way in which our listeners access our content is changing – it's changing fairly dramatically and fairly fast.

Local content produced to the standard that our listeners expect of us and delivered in a variety of ways is more important than ever. And for us at SDPB Radio, creating great local content means working more with independent producers. We already rely on 3 independent producers and 2 news freelancers, but now I understand that we should expand our scope a bit in finding those good independent producers – that production “teams” with the independent radio producer as the leader are a great model, too.

We have a new tool here at South Dakota Public Broadcasting to help independent producers work with us – <http://www.sdpb.org/Producers/default.aspx>* Currently it's under the Television button on our web site, but we will tweak it as needed for Radio and I believe it will be very valuable as we start to build relationships with potential producers and collaborators.

I don't have any specific ideas about harnessing digital media and new platforms – yet. But because I went to Cleveland, my mind is now working on it and I'm confident that the ideas, collaborations and content will come. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to attend PRPD Programming conference, because without the scholarship I would not have been able to attend.

* For more information, or to contact Susan Hanson, send an email to erin@airmedia.org

Ann Heppermann

Independent producer
MQ2 collaborator, Mapping Main Street
Brooklyn, NY

I would encourage the funders of these scholarships to continue to provide them for future PRPDs and other conferences because the best way for public radio to move forward is together with everyone at the table.

This was the first time I had the opportunity to attend the Public Radio Program Directors (PRPD) conference in my nearly 10 years as an independent public radio producer... Admittedly as a producer, it is easy to find oneself wrapped up in the creation of stories and independent projects without necessarily thinking about the larger framework in which the content exists. At the same time, program directors can often forget about the vast resource they have in independent producers to help foment and develop new ideas in order to move forward into the multimedia landscape. By bringing program directors and independent producers together, I believe the Creative Media scholarship, in a very direct way, helped move public radio in the direction that it needs to go—one of new digital platforms.

I am one of the creators of Mapping Main Street (<http://mappingmainstreet.org>), a collaborative documentary platform initially funded by AIR's MQ2. Mapping Main Street was conceived as a long-term project that establishes a powerful framework for local stations, independent producers, and the general public to create and share multimedia content around a common theme through broadcast and digital channels.

My attendance at PRPD allowed me to talk with various program directors about how their local stations could contribute to the Mapping Main Street project and use our digital platform as a model for independent projects they may want to collaborate on in the future with other independent producers in their areas. Many of the program directors I spoke with seemed hungry for information about working in multimedia and wanted to know exactly what it took to create a project such as Mapping Main Street. Through formal presentations and informal conversations I discussed with them some of the opportunities and barriers that existed in the creation of a project such as Mapping Main Street.

Public radio stations, their program directors and managers are trying to figure out how new technologies and media platforms can help them connect with their listeners as well as use them as a resource for content. Throughout our presentations of Mapping Main Street, we showed conference participants how the Mapping Main Street's collaborative multimedia nature is a model by which local stations can build educational outreach programs. I spoke with many program directors about our partnership with WNYC's Radio Rookies month-long Short Wave educational program. Radio Rookies will develop an educational curricula around the project and use it as a platform to feature multimedia content (videos, radio stories, podcasts, blog postings) created by youth from Queens. This kind of partnership was an example of how these new digital platforms lend themselves to collaborations with the community and with educational institutions, which furthers the reach of the public radio stations along with making station projects more attractive to potential funders.

In the end, I think that the Creative Media Scholarship was an incredibly fruitful initiative and am thankful that AIR, CPB and the NEA provided me with this opportunity. I would encourage the funders of these scholarships to continue to provide them for future PRPDs and other conferences because the best way for public radio to move forward is together with everyone at the table.

January Jones

Assistant News Director
Community Radio WFHB
Bloomington, Indiana

It was inspiring to me to see the level of storytelling elevated...

Radio lets you see differently. The way you tune in on the audio, while letting your eyes and mind go different directions. You may be cooking dinner seeing the countertop, but in your mind you are imagining the landscape around a field report from Africa. The act of listening allows radio to create adventures for their listeners in ways that build a sense of community and fellowship. They become members, supporters and partners in exploring life around us.

The Public Radio Program Directors Conference was an excellent venue for me to learn about the inner workings of public radio. As a newly hired, community radio station employee, I have only seen how we did things at a local level... As a producer, I want to tell stories and empower people with information. Learning and understanding is a multi sensory process -- people want to see, hear and interact. We have the tools as journalists to give people all those options when we tell stories with audio and visuals. It can be a challenge for stations to adequately harness these technologies and conferences like PRPD are so important to fostering industry wide progression toward integrated media development.

I think both stations and producers should explore interaction and collaboration on multiple platforms where they can share content and distribution of their work. These options should go beyond file sharing to building in-depth content based on reports/features from multiple shows and producers. For our station, having a central depot where information, scripts and audio can be swapped out and used would be extremely helpful. We could also use email lists and forums to keep lines of communications open and create a dialog between producers.

Another need from a station perspective is filling holes in the programming schedule that is sometimes calls for varying lengths. Sometimes we need programs that are two minutes to twenty. If stations were able to describe their programming needs, producers would be able to create multiple versions of their shows to meet the time clock of more stations. Stations could also outline broad programming goals and invite independent producers to create programs that fit into these niches.

Overall, stations and producers can create more content by taking the expectations beyond producing audio stories. People want options on how to consume content whether it is in audio, visual, or interactive formats. What is important is the story and having the choice of exploring it in different ways. All that matters ultimately is the story -- if it is good it will rise to the top. This was reinforced by the people I met at PRPD and through the AIR networking sites -- I met people creating stories out of passions, without knowing if a paycheck or outlet for their work existed. It was inspiring to me to see the level of storytelling elevated and makes me want to keep seeking out new voices in our community.

Sarah K. Kramer

Independent producer
New York, NY

Just as independents pitch radio stories, there should be an avenue in which we can pitch multimedia stories.

First of all, I am incredibly grateful to AIR, CPB and the NEA for the opportunity to connect with so many talented radio producers and program directors. Without their financial support I would not have been able to attend the conference.

I found the PRPD conference to be inspiring, fun, informative, and effective. As an independent producer who is generally operating as her own agent, I found it really inspiring to meet other independents who are doing the same thing, and making it work... I found out about a number of shows that take freelance material, and met program directors who I feel I could work well with.

Likewise, I loved the session with presentations by the MQ2 grantees—those projects are groundbreaking examples of how independents can successfully collaborate with stations and NPR using innovative digital media. I truly hope that MQ2 is not a one-hit-wonder. In my view, this is a moment when NPR is well poised to expand into digital media. The fact that people are now listening to radio over a plethora of digital devices means that there should be room for more content, and particularly, more experimental content.

MQ2 is an amazing model, but it's unfortunately unlikely that such chunks of money will be thrown around often. I feel strongly that there's creative energy and talent out there for smaller scale digital media projects as well. Just as independents pitch radio stories, there should be an avenue in which we can pitch multimedia stories. (And instead of generally being one-man-bands, independents should be collaborating with photographers and video artists more often.) The expansion of radio onto digital media may require more work, more producers, and more resources, but it has the possibility to expand coverage to underserved communities, and expand public radio's listening/viewing audience as well. We really shouldn't miss this moment.

The only thing missing from the PRPD conference was a panel in which the AIR scholarship winners could share their ideas for collaboration with stations using digital media. I just don't want those essays we wrote to exist in a vacuum! But overall, the conference was really fabulous. I left with a bag full of business cards that include future collaborators, editors, and friends.

Tanya Miller

Producer and MQ2 Collaborator
CyberFrequencies
Los Angeles, CA

Change is coming and no one knows exactly what form it will take, so there's a sense of openness right now that's refreshing and exciting.

I came to PRPD to help CyberFrequencies present for AIR. It was my first time in attendance and I was told by many people PRPD was more exciting this year due to the AIR scholarships (and combining it with Third Coast).

I was struck by a couple things:

First, there were so many energetic producers with really great and surprising ideas.

Second, the program directors seemed unusually receptive to surprise and innovation.

Stations, and the program directors who represent them, seem to feel this is a time when new models of operation are key to success. Change is coming and no one knows exactly what form it will take, so there's a sense of openness right now that's refreshing and exciting.

The same holds true of producers – rather than simply putting their tiny pennies in the same old hat in the hope their copper shines brighter than the rest – independent producers are looking for new models to get their work heard.

At the same time, it seems that public radio has yet to truly embraced some of the realities of new media.

1 – The path to new media success won't necessarily come from the public radio pool. While there are many talented, brilliant people in public radio, new media (blogging, vlogging, podcasting) has its own rules, aesthetics, skill sets, players. Its pioneers are knowledgeable, experienced and battle-tested. However, I don't see public radio pulling from this talent pool.

2 – Like it or not the cost of media is becoming cheap. While it's a rude reality, it's one that old media must start embracing. Unlike the old days, programs like Pro Tools mean that you don't need a separate person to record, engineer, mix, produce etc... Still, when public radio-types talk about creating shows, the budget is generally a minimum of \$1 million.

3 – I think public radio stations and producers both need to stay open to options outside the national radio outlets. Though they're a great and trusted source of radio, I venture to say they are not where *most* the innovation will come from in the new face of radio. I'm not sure what "channel" the innovation will come from, but I'm excited to stay tuned and see.

Mahilam Palanisami

Independent producer, KFAI Community Radio and SPNN Cable Access Community TV
Minneapolis, MN

One action that stations can take to work better with producers is to have an open instant messaging conference once a month, or some kind of group Skype conversation, so new producers have an idea of what programming directors want for their radio stations...

The conference was a fantastic experience for me. It brought an understanding of public radio that I needed.

Much of what I witnessed during the breakout sessions at the conference is what I have seen on a grassroots level here in Minneapolis. Individuals, community stations, and larger non-profit media centers are integrating the different available media platforms to convey stories in new, interactive ways.

I think one action that stations can take to work better with producers is to have an open instant messaging conference once a month, or some kind of group Skype conversation, so new producers have an idea of what programming directors want for their radio stations...

By creating some kind of digital space to close the gaps of understanding between the passion of independent producers, and the daily job of the programming director, the new digital media world can still be a backbone in supporting the new digital age.

Lauren Rico

Program Director, KMFA
Pt. Jefferson Station, NY

I plan to use AIR, the MQ2 projects and other resources to expose[our hosts and producers] to the possibilities BEYOND our airwaves. The Austin audience is such a progressive one- I think our listeners are more than ready for us to add multiple dimensions to our content.

It was such a wonderful experience to attend PRPD under the umbrella of AIR! As both an independent producer and a programmer, I was curious to see how the two entities would come together at such a large gathering.

From the producers' side of the mic I heard concerns about the lack of creative vision at stations and the inability of programmers to recognize and utilize independent content. As a programmer I found myself irritated by this broad-brush comment. And then we heard from MQ2 grant recipients. That was when I realized that I don't have as much creative vision as I thought! It was a humbling moment.

The *real* epiphany, though, came during one of the sessions when people were sharing their station success stories. So much was said about social networking. So much was said about websites, podcasts, blogging and multimedia. It was then that I realized that at KMFA we do very little of those things- because we simply can't. I am so busy trying to solidify our on-air sound that there is no time- or resources- to devote to anything other than our radio broadcasts. Coming away from PRPD fired up with all these great ideas and knowing that I really couldn't implement them was frustrating. So I decided to do something about it. As of right now I am working on an extensive plan to get my hosts and producers "up to snuff" so our foundation will be strong enough to expand upon. After that initial phase is completed, I plan to use AIR, the MQ2 projects and other resources to expose them to the possibilities BEYOND our airwaves. The Austin audience is such a progressive one- I think our listeners are more than ready for us to add multiple dimensions to our content.

All that being said, here are a few of the things I would love to see at a future joint conference:

- A roundtable for producers and programmers- not just about pitching but also an opportunity for producers to better understand the unique challenges facing PD's. It's not as easy slapping a show on the air.
- More material geared toward producers of classical music content. There is a dearth of creative new projects in that genre and not every producer is a news producer.
- A discussion for PD's about how to identify and cultivate independent producers in their communities.

Thank you again for this amazing opportunity. I felt welcomed by AIR and proudly wore my "scholarship recipient" tag so everyone would know it. It was also a great conversation-starter among PD's who were interested in learning more about AIR!

I look forward to exposing my staff and independent producers to all that AIR has to offer.

Alicia Zuckerman

Co-Creator/Co-Senior Producer/Co-Host: Under the Sun on WLRN www.wlrnunderthesun.org
 Senior Producer: the Florida Roundup, Jazz Roots on WLRN
 Miami, FL

Most of the AIR scholarship recipients I met seem extraordinarily well-positioned to help stations develop and enhance their digital media components. Blogs, podcasting, social media—it's what many of us are doing as a matter of course.

It was an honor to be among the first crop of AIR/CPB/NEA scholarship recipients chosen to attend the PRPD conference in Cleveland. Introducing content producers to the people who make programming decisions at public radio stations across the country is a forward-thinking idea that makes a lot of sense. I left Cleveland inspired and invigorated about the creative possibilities for partnerships between independent producers and public radio stations and networks. I also left with some big questions about how to implement some of the wonderful ideas being generated.

I don't know whether the connection between digital media and radio has been pushed so heavily at previous PRPD conferences, but clearly it was a major theme this year. Most of the AIR scholarship recipients I met seem extraordinarily well-positioned to help stations develop and enhance their digital media components. Blogs, podcasting, social media—it's what many of us are doing as a matter of course. As one of the presenters at the PRPD welcome speech said, "Radio is a function of lifestyle, and lifestyles change." Many independent producers understand what needs to be done in the digital media realm and how to do it (or at least how to find out how to do it). A few "old media" purists may need to be convinced, but now that most station management understands that in this media climate, digital media is a vital piece of the puzzle, the question is: where does the money come from?

Budget constraints have been a problem at public radio stations for as long I've been in the business. In this economy of course, it's a heightened challenge. NPR CEO and president Vivian Schiller told us, "Digital [media] is in service of audio," and made clear that NPR sees its digital media components as critical extensions of the network's mission and brand. While the major public radio networks and some stations have been able to earmark relatively healthy funding for digital media, many smaller stations around the country struggle to address new media demands.

In a PRPD talk show session, one presenter extolled the virtues of the various free digital media tools available, and they really do hold tremendous promise for enhancing on-air content and engaging the community, even beyond the listening audience. But there's still an issue of personnel. People need to get paid to implement this technology and manage the content. Where exactly the money can come from is beyond my realm of knowledge and understanding, although I hope it won't always be, and it's something we should be talking about, amongst ourselves and with the networks and stations.

Creativity in the field of public radio is moving forward in leaps and bounds, and I believe we are in a far healthier position than our colleagues in the newspaper industry because audio lends itself seamlessly to multimedia platforms. However, content producers must remain cognizant of our own bottom line and the fact that our work—content—is what everything else is built on. People who work in public radio, especially independent producers, are so used to low salaries, fees, and rates of pay, it's an industry-wide joke. I think we need to be talking about how to solve that, and I hope that burgeoning digital media and significantly expanded uses of and possibilities for our work, can provide a pivotal moment in turning that around.

At the PRPD conference AIR meeting, some producers talked about doing whatever it takes to get their work aired, with or without compensation. It's a problematic (albeit understandable)

attitude. During the MQ2 presentation, the producers talked about how even with their grant funding, they relied on the “kindness of friends” to complete their projects. This is a refrain we hear too often among independent producers. We need to pay ourselves and pay the people who work on our projects. Radio producers are always talking about what they do as a labor of love. I myself am guilty of that because I do feel extremely lucky to be doing work that I love. When, as a recent college graduate I used to tune in to *Fresh Air*, *The World*, and early episodes of *This American Life*, radio was my dream job. And it still is. But I believe that as a group, we must become much more business-savvy. We have to think of ourselves as entrepreneurs, not just members of the creative class, or, perish the thought--starving artists.

I'm imagining entrepreneurship sessions at public radio conferences such as PRPD and Third Coast, as well as online, with accountants, attorneys, for-profit CEOs, and other business professionals sharing their wisdom, experience, and points of view. Journalism schools should offer business courses as part of the curriculum.

Independent producers especially are increasingly becoming one-man-bands (or small groups of people taking on every aspect of a project from soup to nuts, as has been the case with my *Under the Sun* on WLRN, the series I co-created and produce with a small team of producers). I certainly didn't go into radio to make budgets or negotiate contracts, but it's the reality of this media climate, and there have been some major benefits, including a tremendous amount of creative freedom.

I think that moving our thinking towards a more business-oriented perspective will serve to keep the work going, resulting in ever more creative endeavors and approaches, so that we don't lose independent producers to more lucrative fields once they decide to have families, for instance, or simply want a second bedroom. In the for-profit arena, digital media professionals are typically paid quite well. While non-profit workers have always expected less, the expectations can't and shouldn't be so bare bones that it becomes an unsustainable career.

I don't mean to put forth a "sky is falling" scenario. It's the opposite. It's a call for both content producers and station management to be realistic about this forward-march into the future of our business. And it is a business. And it's going to take money.