

AIRSPACE

The Quarterly Journal for Public Radio Producers

Spring 2004

Working with Editors Issue 2004

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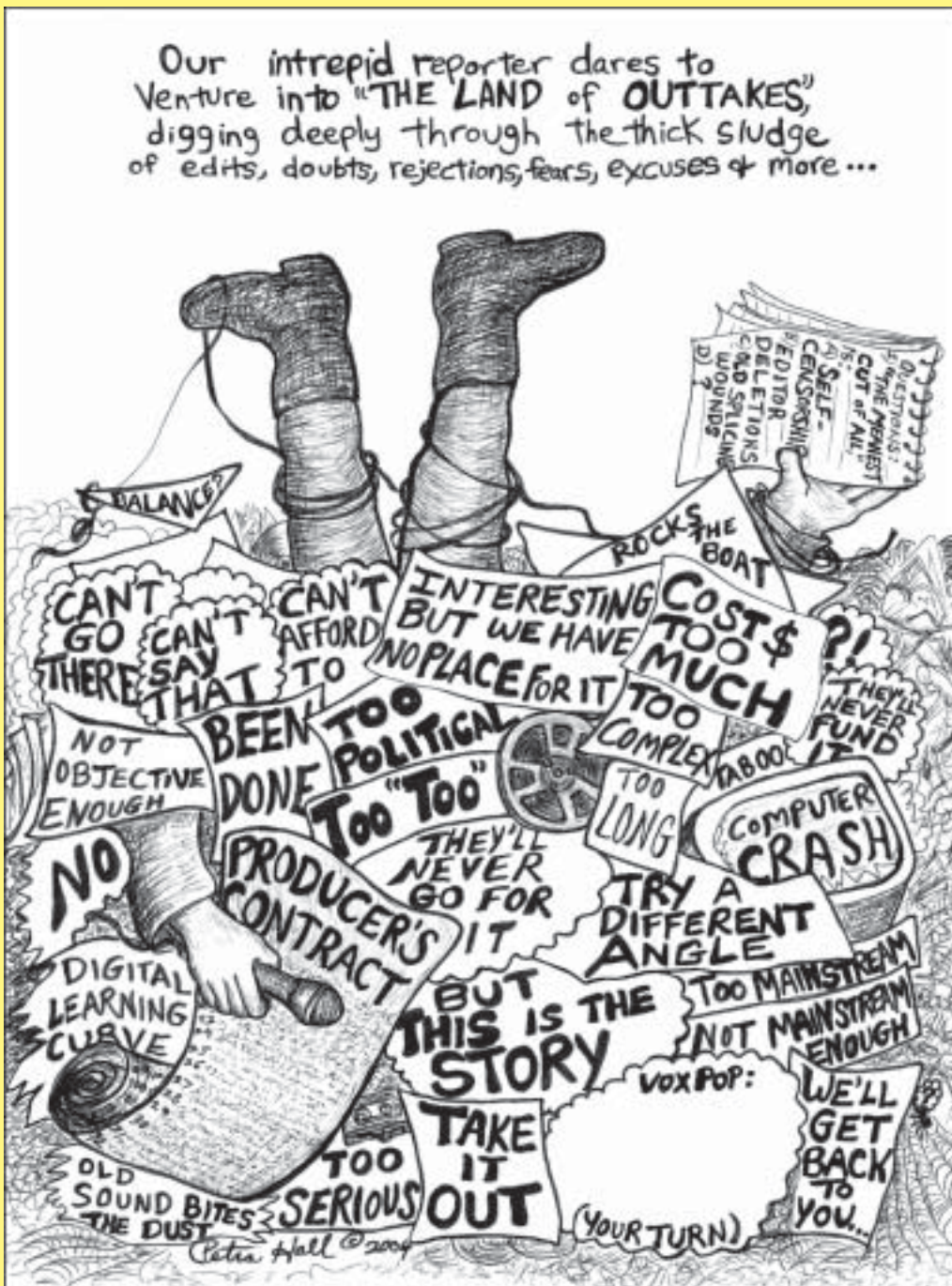
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AIRSPACE

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Censorship, Self-censorship, and Risk

By Dolores Brandon
Executive Director, Editor
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Blessed is the man

*who does not sit in the seat of the scoffer—
the man who does not denigrate, depreciate,
denunciate;*

*who is not “characteristically intemperate,”
who does not “excuse, retreat, equivocate;
and will be heard.”*

—Marianne Moore

In the early 90s I did a story profiling the poet/writer Sapphire (best known for her blockbuster novel, *PUSH*). At the time Sapphire was pretty much unknown, self-published, and doing performance art at Franklin Furnace in New York. It was the Mapplethorpe and NEA Four era. *ARE YOU READY TO ROCK*, the one-woman show I elected to cover, tells the story of a woman who makes her living as a strip-club dancer. The dramatic monologue takes the audience deep into the world of women in the sex trade while exposing facts of childhood incest and sexual abuse. The subject matter was troubling and the language definitely not anything the FCC would approve.

Although I personally found Sapphire's work hard to take, it was powerful, and I knew she had something important to say and was writing in the most truthful way she could. Although it was difficult to pull more than 15 seconds of actuality that didn't include words not permitted on public airwaves, there was nothing gratuitous or titillating about what she wrote and spoke. As an interview Sapphire was impeccable, poised, focused, and eloquent, articulating her artistic goals and purposes without a single offending word.

Obviously doing justice to her art within the strict guidelines that apply to both commercial and public airwaves was a challenge. I fully accepted that actualities I used would have to be very carefully selected (dare I say, censored). I had no problem with that. I accept the premise that some forms of expression are permissible, even welcome in the theater or in a book, but not always appropriate or acceptable on the radio. Art and journalism march to the tune of different drummers.

What I was unprepared for was the resistance of my editor to the subject matter! The core experience of the performance piece, as well as much of Sapphire's writing overall, includes stories of incest and various shades of sexual abuse. To accurately communicate who and what this artist represents was my goal.

Ironically, my editor *wanted* this story, but she didn't want me to talk about those core themes! Instead she wanted me to shift the



focus, emphasizing elements of Sapphire's experiences that were rooted in racism. Sapphire is an African-American woman, but the work I was profiling had little to do with that aspect of her being and life experience. I held firm, insisting, "I can't give the story that focus; that's not what Sapphire is writing about." I won. Or so I thought. I prepared the piece, laid down the tracks, sent the actualities in, feeling proud of the job I had done with a very difficult story and waited for the finished, mixed piece to be broadcast.

I knew every word of the script by heart. As the piece unfolded (I was listening at home), I started to realize something strange had happened. The script had been tampered with: the words "incest" and "sex" had been excised; the fabric of the piece was moth-eaten, odd holes of words dropped throughout. I couldn't believe it. Of course I was furious. What did I do? Nothing. I didn't call the editor and say, "Hey, what did you do to the story? Why didn't you tell me you were cutting out sentences that had been approved in the edit?" No, I didn't speak a word of my fury to the editor ever. I elected instead to turn down assignments and I didn't pitch another story for at least a year after.

That's self-censorship in one of its more extreme guises, but one I believe goes to the very heart of the complexities and overlaps involved in the producer-editor relationship.

I guess I've been waiting a long time for an opportunity to relate this experience. It stuck in my craw and I've often wondered, what are the stories that don't get told; what are the angles that are avoided because of the unwritten, unspoken taboos and biases we all learn not to violate? I've always been curious, do other producers withhold their work, their fury, too? Read on.

P.S. I seriously considered not publishing this story and almost trashed it. I decided instead to take the risk.



AIR Mission Statement

AIR creates opportunities for and represents the interests of audio producers across various media.

AIR fosters the development of the producer community in the service of the open exchange of ideas.

Kill Fees

Dear AIRSPACE Editor:

In Thomas Marzahl's recent article, "The Vexing Question, and Uncertain Practices, of Kill Fees in Public Radio," incomplete information was presented about Marketplace Productions' kill fees practices. What was not reported is that Marketplace also pays 100 percent of the fee if a work is accepted by the editor but never airs—which seems equivalent to NPR's kill fees policy as reported in your article.

When we revised our entire independent contributor contract within the last year, Marketplace Productions also enacted "stepped" kill fees for work done prior to "acceptance." We recognize that, once we have commissioned a story but before the editor accepts it in final form, work has been done and a reasonable amount of compensation is due. We believe we have instituted a fair practice—one that recognizes the time and effort of the many talents who contribute to our programming.

Sincerely,
Larry Hudspeth
Assistant General Manager
Marketplace Productions

The reporter responds:

Larry Hudspeth quite rightly points out that I neglected to mention in my article in *AIRSPACE* that Marketplace Productions pays 100 percent of an agreed-upon fee for an accepted and completed work. It also clearly defines an accepted work as a piece in which the script has been approved by an editor and/or the elements have been received. The oversight was entirely mine, and I regret the oversight.

However, other outlets such as NPR or Studio 360 do not clearly state in their contracts or agreements what an accepted work really is. If all interviews have been conducted and transcribed, the script has been written and submitted, short of the actual edit(s), and the piece is killed through *no fault* of the producer, doesn't that deserve more than 50 percent of the fee?

The likely unintentional use of obfuscatory language in contracts—partially begun" is a term employed by Studio 360—only serves to muddle the field for independent producers who deserve fair compensation for their work.

Sincerely,
Thomas Marzahl
AFP Journalist/Independent Producer, Paris



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Self-censorship and Balance

By Steve Rowland
President, AIR Board of Directors
steve_rowland@msn.com



I have been writing the past few issues about concepts of leadership—suggesting that all independents are, by definition, leaders. This issue of *AIRSPACE* is devoted to discussing various issues regarding self-censorship and the producer-editor relationship. Do these topics have a relationship to each other? Let's see.

For many years, my concern for the public radio system has been that it is becoming a system of rule by committee. Less and less is there room or appreciation for individual leadership and individual vision. But for independents, turning this into an "us against them" scenario would not be productive. Instead we should honor the management need to keep stations afloat, and the stations should honor the risks that independents (and our families) take in order to remain independent.

Programming decisions are often made according to what stations think will increase listener donations or develop outside underwriting. This puts independents in a tough spot. Do we produce what we believe in—what we want to say about the world, about the arts, and about the spirit? Or do we have to think about what will be most attractive to management if we want to be hired again? Already feeling marginalized, outside the system, knocking on the door, wondering if it's possible to find careers as an independent radio producers...how can we risk pursuing new ideas?

Through self-censorship and working with editors?

All of us in the system share the burden of this responsibility—the editors, the stations, the management—all of us. And it is important for independents not to assume that others are working "against" us—just that they may be looking at the situation from a different perspective. It is the tension that should make all of this work. As broadcasters, it is our job to find the balance between communicating "broadly" and presenting our own view of the world. We have the responsibility to make both things happen.

But it is also important to acknowledge that many independents are so marginalized that our voices are not providing the overall balance that society sorely needs. Perhaps always, but especially in times of social, aesthetic, philosophic and artistic conservatism, it is our duty—the duty of the independent artist, the independent thinker, the activist, the intellectual, and the journalist—to look into the eyes of the beast and describe what we see.

Yes, but it is a complicated dance—and a dance that needs to be done with the skill of a tightrope artist. Like a lot of things in life, it requires a Zen-like search for balance—a balance of working within the rules and thinking "outside the box;" a balance of leading and following; a balance of conformity and innovation; and a balance of being true to oneself and feeling what the show, the station, and of course the listener want.

Self-censorship should grow out of this search for balance. This search is the key to success. It is by looking deep within that we find the source of our work—the motivation to do what we do. And there is always a dual purpose—the need for self-expression and the desire for that expression to reach the broadest audience. So self-censorship becomes a strategy for achieving the balance.

Then we have the relationship with the editor. This presents a similar situation. We want to be leaders. We want the opportunity to speak our minds and share our knowledge. Yet, at the same time, we have to fit into an existing, and successful, framework. The magazine shows we work with are often well established and have lots of station carriage and many listeners. The job of the editor is to get new material—of high quality, fitting the show's format, and in a timely manner.

It is our job to find the balance—to be thoughtful, provocative, challenging, stimulating, and creative—and to work *with* the editors, *for* the editors. The more we can honor their position and their situation, the more we will work, and the more chances we'll have to be provocative. So what I'm seeing is a system in which the independent spirit is valued and sought after. The paradox is this: the more we see how we can be helpful to others, the more we'll be able to realize our own vision. Stations and funders should keep in mind that the independent vision is what draws many people to public radio in the first place.



AIR's activities are supported by individual and organizational members. Major funding provided by the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation** and the **National Endowment for the Arts**, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

Lula Is Listening

Dear Lula,

I was living in Japan and made a pitch to my news editor to cover the Shinto Festival of the Iron Phallus, a little known celebration not far from Tokyo. Once upon a time, there was a warlord's daughter who had a condition known as "vagina dentate"—as in, lined with teeth. The poor guys vying for her had to pass a test: surviving the night, intact. Many tried, and all were at a loss for doing so. Along comes this dude one day. Dull, bad teeth, not good-looking, and endowed with an organ, not of flesh, but of iron. Put two and two together and you understand what the Japanese have been celebrating all these years.



In practice, the festival is a purification ritual for prostitutes: to recognize their place in society, and to keep them free from disease and pregnancy. It also celebrates the pure pleasure-potential of sex, drawing all stripes of sybarite into the streets.

Beside the sound gathering potential and storyline, I wanted to shed light on a little known piece of an "other" culture. I was careful to include prerequisite pubradio elements—a sex therapist, a Shinto priest, a Japanese myth-professor—and found creative ways to describe girl the boy parts.

Well, the story made it's way through the pipeline (editor blessed) until it came to somebody higher up who declared it "unseemly for the air" and killed it dead. End of the story.

I'm not really looking for advice, but making a point that, as careful as I may try to be with controversial topics, it pretty much boils down to personal taste. And the person endowed with the bigger... paycheck...wins. And while an explanation is considerate, it is not requisite.

From down there,
Unter L. Dente

Dear Unter:

Censorship, by nature, is obstructionist, interfering, and viewed as arbitrarily, unfairly controlling another person's expression. Would you agree? But, "Mind your words!" kicks in soon after our first, "Ma-ma, Da-da, ca-ca," and anyone worth their salt working in public radio has a hyper-developed awareness of words/sounds that offend.

It does seem to be an especially frothy time right now as far as the media, what is "decent," and what is "standard." Jesus Flayed According to Mel, Madonna + Britney, Janet + Justin, and across the airwaves Howard Stern said something to offend someone at Clear Channel. Whether his alleged insult of our esteemed prez or if, in fact, those 'ol Texas Mays brothers had finally had their fill of Stern's nastiness about women (this time, black women), only their hairdressers will know for sure. But it's clear that we now have a sophisticated class of "entertainment" that has refined the art of

dancing on edges of the FCC's verboten, and of flipping Michael Powell and Co. the proverbial bird all the way to the bank.

Over here in our civilized little world of public radio, the most we muster is Mumia and Tsing-ing Loh—pretty undramatic in the scheme of all things. Shake the bush a little harder (no pun intended) and dollars wouldn't come showering down. Rather we'd likely (and unfortunately) set ourselves up for federal funding cuts and our non-comm licenses being handed over to the Sacred Heart Radio Network. I'm not saying we shouldn't try a walk on the wilder side, but the punishment for getting busted in non-commercial radio couldn't be more opposed to the rewards reaped by commercial entertainers, fines or no fines. Never you mind that the airwaves we all share are "public" and supposed to be guided by the same rules. Uh-oh. Do I detect a whine?

When will we have the Iron Phallus story online?

Love,
Lula

P.S.

Are you a cantankerous trainer? A terrified trainee? I'm all ears. Send your letters for the next issue of AIRSPACE to lula@airmedia.org. Deadline: June 1, 2004.

Lula, AIR's Advice Maven for the Chronically Kaput, is here to help. Contact: lula@airmedia.org. The rules are simple:

1. Topics may cover a wide range and should be somehow relevant to life as a radio independent/member of AIR.
2. All correspondence will be kept in strictest confidence. If you don't specify a pen name with your message, Lula will.
3. There will be no personal responses.



Hey! You with the Mic!

AIRSPACE is always looking for contributors. Drop us a line at airspace@airmedia.org (queries only, please).

IDEAS WELCOME

Self-censorship: Good, Bad, and Confusing (with Some Uncensored Notes)

By Nannette Drake Oldenbourg

Self-censorship can be at work in every communications decision. But it's hard to nail. When does editing become obstruction (e.g., in this article!)? And is self-censorship thriving now particularly? How scared are we?



Speaking personally, not officially, after obscenity firings earlier this year, Jim Russell told *Marketplace* colleagues, "In my opinion, the broadcasting industry is overreacting, responding in a crisis mode to something they ought to have paid attention to for years... Application of the law has been anything but clear. After years of laissez-fair enforcement...all of a sudden, the FCC 'got religion' on this issue... I and others [AFTRA and other performance unions have passed resolutions on this] find it scary."

"Self-censorship, at its best, is simply editing," said Jay Allison. "At its worst, it denies truth or authenticity. Its engine is fear—fear of losing your job, taking a risk, suffering rejection, being audited by the IRS. Self-censorship is the enemy of creativity. It cripples the imagination."

Jay Kernis, NPR's senior vice president for programming, agreed that self-censorship is the enemy of creativity. But he stressed the need to fit.

"Not everything we think or write should be presented to the public," he said. "It needs to be edited and shaped so it has meaning, fits into a context and makes sense... The writer or producer needs to understand the language and values of that audience." (Ironically, for space limitations I removed a sex analogy.)

Jay Allison, Milt Lee, and others have started websites in response to limitations to fitting work in.

Allison said, "At places like Transom.org, we're trying to counter self-censorship... We want to encourage work that springs directly from the sensibility of the maker to the ear of the listener."

Milt Lee explained, "I...have a strong need to express exactly what I want to express, and that's why I started my own website—realrez.com... I guess I'm lucky that way."

Others tell of working to find balance within the existing radio system. For a story on democracy, Deborah Begel interviewed an old-timer (a local politician) who was candid about being in and out of power.

"As a longtime admirer of European productions," Begel said, "I thought I might just let this man tell his story in my piece." Yet even she finally had to agree with her colleagues in New Mexico and at Minnesota Public Radio that the story wasn't balanced. "A way to balance it would have been to let the old 'patron' tell his [whole] story...and to let someone from the current administration tell his." But she didn't have the budget to produce three pieces and ended up putting all interviews into one 12-minute piece after all. Begel admitted, "the listeners lost the details of his criticisms. However, I did leave in one line in which he said the new administration is acting like the old one."

That single statement came back to haunt her when months later, the county manager brought up the "like the old one" line at another public meeting. "Now, I'm glad I didn't go overboard with the outsider critique," said Begel. "I do live in this community so I need to be

responsible to it. And sometimes that means taking care not to offend unnecessarily. Which was more interesting radio? The one that didn't air. Guess that's life." (Like Deborah, I wanted to include the whole story here. Should I have contacted the other producers?)

Barry Rueger of Community-Media.Com points out more dynamics.

"Several years ago I became part of a media organization in a fairly conservative rural town," he said. "If your work was approaching the boundary, one person or another would suggest 'I don't think the community would like that'... Because no one could define 'the community' or what 'the community' believed, it was not possible to debate or even discuss the issue."

Rueger worries that public radio will spend its time reacting to a minority of vocal listeners, while the rest of their community is ignored.

"One of the reasons we [independent producers] are vital to the public radio system...is our ability to tell important stories, to examine challenging themes, and to hold up a mirror to our communities," he said. "That means we sometimes have to tell stories 'the community' won't like. And it means public radio has to be brave enough to broadcast them."

Nannette Drake Oldenbourg writes about media and leads writing workshops on Cape Cod. For a longer version of this article, including 2,000 words of producers' stories, or to send comments, contact her at nannette@cape.com, subject: self-censorship.



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EDIT THIS! . . . Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Editor

By Joe Bevilacqua

When I decided to become an independent radio producer in 1999 after 19 years working for various public radio stations, I had one major obstacle to overcome—I had never worked with an editor. I had always been my own editor. I never had to pitch an idea. I just did what I did and it aired.



At first, I was leery about handing over any creative control of my baby, but I soon discovered a good editor is just there to be a second set of ears and make suggestions. Overall my work was the better for it.

Each editor has a unique way of working and each has different tastes and needs. Tom Cole, NPR's arts unit editor, sees great value in working with independent producers and both freelance and station reporters. "They tell me about artists and events that the major papers don't cover," he said.

Art Silverman, senior producer for *All Things Considered*, tries to find creative people—folks whose ideas would not fit neatly into the "desk" system. "I try to bend the rules as far as I can," he said, "without violating fundamental ones in order to get new voices, and new approaches, on the air."

It was Silverman who took a chance on a personal story about my search for a long lost childhood friend—an unusual subject for a magazine known for its emphasis on hard news reporting. In fact, the biggest obstacle I face every time I pitch a story is that I am not a news reporter but something more akin to an audio artist.

No matter how a particular editor works, I have my own methods that need to be only slightly adjusted for each. Here are a few of those:

- **IDEAS, IDEAS, IDEAS**—I am constantly brainstorming, jotting down ideas when they occurred to me. Everywhere I go, every person I meet, and everything thing I see or hear about is a potential story. I wind up only pitching maybe 1 percent of those ideas, which amounts to about ten or 20 stories per month, out of which an average of one or two actually get selected and make it to the air.
- **RADIO IN THE ROUGH**—When an editor chooses one of my ideas, I go out and gather my sound and do a rough mix before ever writing a script. This is not the case for most freelancers who usually submit a script to the editor for approval before producing anything. I then have the editor listen to my rough mix over the phone (the best way to get an honest response because if the piece plays well under tinny conditions, it will play well on even the best audio equipment).
- **TWENTY IS MY LUCKY NUMBER**—Although I have never had a bad experience with an editor, some edits have been grueling. The arts features I do never go through more than two or three edits. Personal stories, on the other hand, have taken me as long as 20 phone-edit sessions, not a pleasant experience because I'm paid by how many minutes are broadcast, not by how long it took me to produce those minutes.
- **DON'T TOUCH!**—Finally, when the editor gives me the thumbs up, I deliver a fully mixed version of the piece, either mailed on CD or more often as an MP2 file that I upload to NPR's FTP server. It is standard procedure that I also have to

deliver all the individual sound elements, because, as Tom Cole explained, all pieces must be passed through NPR's engineering quality control and most often they need to be remixed. "The most frequent problem is level discrepancies between different elements," he said.

The thought of anyone touching my baby is quite distasteful to me, which is why I have worked extra hard to persuade any editor I work with that my own mix does not need tinkering. Editors now trust me enough that they rarely ask me to submit the individual sound elements at all.

- **IT'S A HARD KNOCK LIFE**—Many days I have nearly chucked the freelance life in favor of the safe nest of a station. But then I look out of my home office window at the Shawangunk Mountains of rural New York or take my dogs for hike on the wooded acres and waterfalls behind my house and I know the lack of a steady paycheck or health benefits is more than worth it.

Joe Bevilacqua is a veteran award-winning public radio documentarian and humorist. His work can be heard on such NPR programs as All Things Considered, Weekend Edition, and Day to Day. He also hosts a weekly radio comedy series for XM Satellite Radio's Sonic Theater Channel (163). Check out his work online at: www.npr.org, www.prx.org, and www.comedyorama.com.



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Sentences and Sensibility

By Deborah George

First, I have a confession to make. I was late turning this in. I'd known it was due for two months. So, I really shouldn't open this by telling you that the main thing that makes editors crazy is reporters or producers who *don't meet deadlines*. But I will anyway. Please don't blow off deadlines. Do whatever you have to do to be ready for your assigned edit time, even if the story isn't perfect.

On the other hand, don't bring me a mess. Go over your work with a cold eye and a dispassionate ear. Make sure there's logic and clarity in the way you've chosen to tell the story. Is your reporting solid? Have you checked everything out? Don't make the editor have to correct your grammar and syntax. Don't leave holes and tell me, "Then, here, I'll say something kinda like this..."

I've been with American RadioWorks for four years. It's a rare and somewhat ideal situation. For the most part, I work with a small team of producers and correspondents whom I know well. We often have several months and sometimes even a year or more to develop a story together. I like to think that, as time goes by, we'll continue to learn from and inspire each other.

Once a relationship is established, I'm willing to give a lot. There are some producers who are allowed to call me in the middle of the night. And I'll listen to their messes, but that's usually far along in the relationship. So like a good marriage, it takes work. But, there is such a thing as chemistry, and when it happens it's wonderful. Your sensibilities are similar. There's a shared sense of "rightness." You both agree when a story's done or if it needs more work. You develop a shorthand way of talking to each other.

I asked a producer I've worked with for many years to comment on this. He wrote, "Editors...hmmm, let's see. All the things that drive editors nuts are the things I usually do to you: postpone, work late at night, right up to deadlines, etc."

He went on to say that the most important part of the relationship of course is trust. "I think it has always worked well the way we give each other options and suggestions rather than demands. Rather than instructions, we convey opinions—sometimes opposing ones—and hash it out."

He says beyond common sensibility, it's important to have that common purpose. "I have always felt 100 percent that you are working toward making my pieces the best they can be. I think less fortunate producers have to work with editors who are trying to get the piece in on time, make it conform (length, style, etc.), and just make sure there is nothing that will embarrass the editor or the organization."

According to stereotype, editors are frustrated desk jockeys who have forgotten what it's like out in the field. They're nitpickers, careful fuddy-duddies, intent on ruining a good time and a good story.

There's some basis for these stereotypes. That's why it's important for editors to take reporting and producing breaks as frequently as they can. It's particularly important in radio because reporting and production skills can atrophy and the technology we use changes all the time. I couldn't do my job if I didn't understand the challenges facing producers who are telling a story in radio.

On the other hand, a successful partnership between editor and producer relies on the very differences in their respective roles. And this brings us to the misconceptions some producers have about what

an editor can or cannot do to make a piece turn out.

My long-time producer friend said, "It's like tape. A good engineer can make tape sound better but [he] can't create something that was never printed on the tape to begin with. A reporter can't just gather and hope the editor will make something of it."

"I imagine that's the hardest thing about being an editor. It's frustrating to be asked to make a story into a story. It's much more fun to take a solidly structured and conceived piece and make it tight and elegant and beautiful."

Deborah George is the editor of American RadioWorks, the national documentary unit of Minnesota Public Radio. She's based in Washington, D.C. You can contact her at dgeorge@npr.org.



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Giving Ear, Giving Voice

By Jon Miller

"Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice."
—Polonius, from *Hamlet*

It's always tricky to quote Polonius, a foolish old man whose advice to Hamlet is supposed to sound pompous and trite. But in this case I think he makes sense.



For the last year and a half I've been executive producing a documentary series about cultural change. The idea is to present stories of ordinary people facing momentous decisions—decisions about tradition and choice, rootedness and mobility, continuity and change. What does cultural identity mean for an individual or a community? When does tradition ground us, and when does it weigh us down? What does cultural diversity mean for humanity? The pieces, reported by wonderfully talented independent producers, come from all over the world—places like Bulgaria, Borneo, Canada, Chile, Sri Lanka, and South Korea.

Overseeing all this has made me think hard about voices. If the stories are truly to be about people's struggles to chart courses through rapidly changing cultural landscapes, then the voices we hear should be those of the people themselves. The last thing we want is reporters parachuting in, interviewing experts, gathering color, and pontificating on what it all means.

Early on, I toyed with the idea of asking the producers collaborating on *Worlds of Difference* to do their pieces without narration. But that's asking a lot of people who don't necessarily have weeks to devote to gathering sound and working with tape. (Telling a complex story in the amount of time allotted by most shows now is challenge enough.) It's also asking a lot of listeners, given that the subjects of most of the pieces are non-English speakers. So my instructions have been, "Let the stories privilege the voices of the subjects. Let them be about what they think, not what you think."

But how do I get those voices to a national audience? In meetings with editors, I've been told to avoid pitching whiny pieces, pieces about victims, or pieces that sound "too public radio." No portraits or polemics—the stories must be *stories*, driven by conflict and character. All of which is good—that's the way I learned to do journalism. But breaking through the skepticism barrier has been harder than I expected.

That's in part because, as a newspaper editor once told me, Americans have little patience for stories about "weird people from weird places." When I proposed a musical, sound-rich piece about Baka Pygmies in Cameroon, the idea was met with laughter. A British "Afro-Celtic" band was helping them build a house devoted to the recording and performance of their haunting music, in an effort to raise their standing in a society that looks down on them. "It's like a caricature of a public radio piece," one editor said. When I proposed a story about middle-class people in Wales learning Welsh, it was accepted without discussion. I guess Pygmies are weird and the Welsh are not.

There are many reasons why some ideas make it and others don't. I field pitches, too, and I'm learning this firsthand. Do I know the producer's work? Have we done something similar? Does the story have some twist or hook to make it memorable? Most of all, is there likely to be drama, tension, and a narrative arc? National shows

aren't community bulletin boards. As even the most established producers know, no one—no story—has an automatic in.

The challenge, I think, is to learn to think like an editor. I wish I were better at it. I've written my share of news-pegged pitches and pitches tied to domestic issues ("If Americans think they have problems with obesity, consider the Tubbi of Fattland"). But some of the best stories don't sound promising at all at the proposal stage. Others only become clear when you're in the field reporting them. Getting these through the system is hard. But we mustn't give up. And—crucially—when we do get a chance, we have to make it good. One of our privileges as radio producers is not just to meet people with great stories to tell, but to share their voices with the world.

Jon Miller is an independent producer living in Ithaca, New York. He's currently working with Homelands Productions on the documentary series Worlds of Difference: Local Culture in a Global Age (<http://homelands.org/worlds>).

AIR's Monthly Member Spotlight

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How to Earn First-name Status at Marketplace!

By Cheryl Devall
Senior Editor, Marketplace



I've heard the grumbling on the public radio grapevine. Yes, I tend toward formality in my initial contact with would-be contributors to *Marketplace*. Don't be surprised if the, "Hi, Cheryl," in my inbox elicits a civil, "Ms. Smith," when I reply—especially if I've never heard from you before.

There's a reason. From the get-go, I wish to establish that *Marketplace*, *Morning Report*, and *Sound Money* are serious enterprises—not merely those wacky, irreverent business and personal finance shows. We're about real journalism, diligence, and attention to craft. Independent producers earn familiarity with the shows by offering original insights in their pitches; exercising care and creativity in their storytelling; and turning around timely, well-produced features.

Through trial and error—and guidance from the many independent producers I'm honored to call by their first names—I've tried to establish high, yet attainable, standards. Often, enforcing those standards means saying, "No." It's not personal. It's about maintaining our editorial integrity.

Here are some ways to warm up to a first-name basis with Marketplace Productions.

Before you pitch, have some notion of what it'll take to produce and transmit your completed story. The more production you can manage on your own, the happier we are.

When you pitch, e-mail. Everyone in our shop is involved with daily or weekly production; we can't always respond to phone calls right away. In your communications, aim for complete sentences, clearly expressed thoughts, correct spelling, standard punctuation, and capitalization. Editors compile—and, too often, clean up—pitches for distribution to the show producers at a weekly meeting. Keep in mind that the pitch represents the first impression many of you will make with the people who determine whether you have what it takes to deliver.

Send a concise description of what you think the story is about—not as a topic but as a story, with narrative, characters, voices, and scenes; why you believe it belongs on our programs; and how quickly you might get it done. For our purposes, "concise" is no longer than one paragraph and "quick" is ten days to two weeks max. Weekly feature pitch meetings are usually Thursday mornings; I compile and distribute the pitch lists Wednesday afternoons. The show producers decide which ideas get commissioned and which don't. For courtesy's sake, we e-mail independent producers indicating whether the shows have accepted their pitches.

Most of our feature material runs on a particular day for a reason. Try to think as far ahead as you can—*never* backward to something that happened in your area last week or even last night. If you're in Boston, right now isn't too early to pitch ideas pegged to this summer's Democratic National Convention. Conversely, December 20 is not the time to send us your pitch about the business of Christmas tree farms (and *tsk, tsk* to the five of you who did last year!). If you're pitching a local story, explain why anyone beyond your area should care.

Listen to the show or search its online archive. If an idea is so

much in the air that everyone's talking about it, chances are we've covered or dismissed it.

If we accept your idea, your editor will arrange to discuss assignment details at a mutually convenient time. We can assist with some production, such as locating and paying for studio time or double-enders to avert the use of phone tape. Once we assign, we neither expect nor require status reports about work in progress unless we ask. A good test to determine whether you might appear in need of too much handholding: before you hit send, ask, "Does this sound as if I'm bugging her?" If it does, please refrain.

When you're ready to edit, e-mail the editor your script with your actualities transcribed in full *and* ready to play over the phone. We'll schedule a read-through. Be organized—elements in order, no missing essential information, and no excuses. During the edit, think with your editor. Assume she's listening and be just as willing to listen. To an editor there's no bigger turnoff than getting what's supposed to be the final edited version of the script or elements without the recommended revisions.

Bring to the process a thick skin, a respect for the collaborative process, and a sense of humor. Know that your editor is similarly equipped, is just as human as you are, and is eager to present your best work on the air.

The writer, a veteran newspaper and National Public Radio correspondent, is Marketplace's gatekeeper for domestic features. Pitch directly to her at cdevall@marketplace.org or to her fellow domestic editor Vic Sussman at vsussman@marketplace.org. Foreign feature pitches go to Karen Lowe at klowe@marketplace.org.



Are You on the AIR Daily?

AIR maintains a private daily e-mail list for our members. Hosted by Jay Allison, the AIR Daily is a great way to keep up with what's going on. Everything from politics to equipment, gigs to gossip. More than 400 members stay in touch this way every day. Many producers feel its one of the most useful benefits of membership.

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Editors, Self-editing, and the Audio Dramatist

By George Zarr

Unfortunately, many audio dramatists approach editors as if they're walking into some sort of death-match competition. The collaboration is viewed as "Me Versus Them." Or maybe "Me Trying to Pull One Over on Them." It might be "Me Protecting My Priceless Work from These Know-nothing Philistines." Another favorite is "Me as the Artist Up Against the Dimwitted, Axe-wielding Butchers of Literature."

You get the idea—great ways to release pent-up anxiety, but not very productive.

In reality, the writer is dealing with someone whose job is to make scripts seaworthy for production. It's certainly true that not all editors are equally endowed when it comes to intelligence, taste, style, understanding, clarity of communication, or soothing bedside manner. But there they sit. And there you sit. The editor is placed between you and a production of your script. You can play ball with them, fight with them, or grab your script and walk away. Choice number one is not always easy, but choices two or three will probably result in a non-production.

I am an experienced writer who deals with editors. I also have an extensive history as an editor, senior producer, gatekeeper, contest judge, and programming manager. That means on any given project, I might find myself seated on the writer's side of the desk or on the other side of the desk. In this case, knowledge is truly power. I find my writing experience makes me a better editor and my editing experience makes me a better writer. I'm aware of how the other half lives—mainly because I *am* the other half.

Understanding where an editor is coming from certainly helps. Chances are that your work needs to fit into some pre-existing series, format, or concept. The editor's job is to make sure your script fits. And one of the worst things you can project to an editor is that you don't have a clue about his existing series, format, or concept. "Well, uh, then what are you looking for?" the huffy author might ask defensively. If that question is posed *after* you've written and submitted your script, it's a little late. It fosters an idea in the editor's mind that you haven't taken the time to listen to or study up what he's doing. You've given the impression that you don't care or that you're too busy, disinterested, or disorganized to do a little research. My advice? *Research your market.*

As far as involvement in the editing process, it varies by editor and project. Sometimes the clock is ticking or the volume of submissions is so great that she just takes your script away from you and makes it work. Or he might simply dictate the changes to you. Or she might give you an idea of the necessary revisions and leave you to figure out implementation. Or an editor might invite discussion and compromise over a cup of coffee. There's no one way, so be prepared for anything.

This naturally leads to the topic of self-editing—or in the pejorative way of looking at it, "self-censorship," choosing what material stays or goes before an editor even sees it. One end of the spectrum has the writer so paranoid about rejection that he leaves out anything challenging, creative, or different. And at the other end, the writer-as-provocateur creates an extreme script and challenges the editor to accept it. Think of it as trying to match your vision with their needs. But you know your vision, so what are the editor's outlet's needs?



The answer? *Research your market.* Notice how this phrase keeps popping up? For example, you'd like to get something on public radio. All right, that's a little broad; let's narrow that general concept. Are you talking about a local station? Which one? In which market? Or are you thinking about a national distributor? Which one? Now, honestly, have you actually listened to or read up on this outlet? Did you check to see if someone could send you a guide describing what her outlet is looking for?

After all this research, what if your target outlet is looking for something beyond what you can create, or worse yet, is totally at odds with what you believe in? Don't waste your time. Do your research, find a compatible project or market, and move on to where you can do your best work and find inner satisfaction. The rest usually follows.

George Zarr is an award-winning producer, writer, composer, and director who has participated in more than 100 audio productions, which have been distributed by National Public Radio, SCI FI Channel's Seeing Ear Theatre, Pacifica Radio, Audible.com, Dove Audio, and Highbridge Audio. He will direct his musical comedy The First (and Last) Musical on Mars, which originated as an audio play, for the New York stage in Fall 2004.

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Public Radio Has Game

By Nancy Greenleese

Blame Frasier Crane for the lack of sports on public radio.

Television's favorite bon vivant adores caviar and opera, Plato's philosophy and the philharmonic. He does not own a single foam finger. Years ago, a frustrated sports editor grumbled that this espresso-sipping psychiatrist is the model of the typical listener for many public radio executives.

Frasier has absolutely no game. He has a checkered knowledge of sports and no desire to fill his Mensa mind with such drivel. I believe it's time we drown this image of our listeners in a sideline shower of sherry.

Public radio listeners make up a diverse team. Many attend ball games, tapping their toes to ballpark organs then cranking Maria Callas on the drive home. Even more catch events on television. I'll wager that far more watch the Super Bowl than opera on PBS. After all, this year's championship game attracted nearly 90 million viewers.

These public radio listeners hear business, political, and arts news on their stations. Sports, however, are largely scratched from the lineups, forcing them to tune into ESPN or scan their local papers. These games people play are news.

The sports pages detail crime stories, ranging from Kobe Bryant's sexual assault case to corruption within the International Olympic Committee. Business stories pop up, including the economic impacts of hosting major sporting events. Health and wellness stories abound—look no further than news about steroid-fueled baseball players.

Even so, I've had to jump over many hurdles to get sports stories onto public radio airwaves. The one that slugs all others involves former San Diego Padre Tony Gwynn. The veteran was inching towards his 3,000th career hit, and I called an editor at an unnamed public radio program.

"What's the big deal about 3,000 hits?" he replied. "You said yourself that 21 other players have done it."

Ted Williams melts and sports fans cry when I recount this tale. After a lengthy discussion, the program's editor realized the story's importance and aired it.

I've learned, however, that my race isn't over with a story's acceptance. A few years ago, an editor saddled with another baseball story tossed out a confession.

"I'm not really into sports so you're going to have to wing this on your own," she said, matter-of-factly.

Substitute a leading story of the day into that sentence and you'll want to revoke her press pass.

"I'm not really into CEOs who embezzle money from their companies so you're going to have to wing this on your own."

Fortunately, public radio has a few souls fiercely dedicated to sports news. NPR's lone sports reporter Tom Goldman is a journalistic ultra-marathoner covering stories across the country. NPR's *Day to Day* airs some stories. WBUR's *Only A Game* is a mini *SportsCenter* of in-depth features. However, it's nearly impossible for the program to break news because of its weekly format. *She Got Game*, the groundbreaking and lively women's sports program hosted by Tandaleya Wilder, had to scale back to periodic specials

because of a lack of funding.

Too often the sports we hear on public radio come in the form of commentaries or interviews with sportswriters. Frank Deford, Stefan Fatsis of *The Wall Street Journal* and Ron Rapoport of *The Chicago Sun-Times* are among a bevy of reporters heard regularly. They don't file reports; they simply comment on stories. A few months ago, NPR conducted at least seven interviews with sportswriters about the NFL playoffs but didn't air a single playoff feature.

Turning to outside reporters reveals a great weakness in public radio. Either we think we're too highbrow or too incompetent to cover sports. I doubt NPR would ever choose to interview *The Washington Post's* Supreme Court reporter about a story, instead of dispatching Nina Totenberg to cover it.

Sports stories resonate on public radio more so than any other medium. Natural sounds abound—the crack of a bat, the whirl of a fly fisherman's reel, and the panting of a distance runner. Listeners want us to take them there.

This requires dedication on the part of stations and programs. When I was a reporter with KPBS, management allowed me to cover sports regularly. At first, I struggled to even get press passes. Public radio was viewed like a 25th-round draft pick: untested and not worth much trouble. By showing up repeatedly in locker rooms and at competitions, I proved to the athletes, owners, and media-relations directors that I knew this beat. Slowly, they began offering colorful quotes, story ideas, and the occasional leak.

The listeners soaked it up, praising my sports stories much more frequently than other stories and were always asking for more.

With *Frasier* going off the air, public radio has a chance to find a more sports-friendly spokesperson. On the other hand, a well-produced feature on croquet might just keep Dr. Crane saying, "I'm listening."

Nancy Greenleese sweats over her sports stories in Denver. During the past decade, she's interviewed her fair share of nearly naked baseball players, maniacal street lugers, and spiritual surfers.



Nancy interviewing a horse? (Hmmm!)

Rates Watch

Peggy Girshman responds to a series of questions and comments sent to the AIR Daily prompted by her NPR Update column in Winter AIRSPACE. You may recall in that column she announced a new rates structure in the works at NPR. (AS Editor)

I have read several posts about my article in AIRSPACE. I find the comments a little premature. Dolores had asked me to outline some of our early thinking and I was happy to oblige (emphasis on the "early").

The concept of the new system is to fairly reward the amount of work that goes into a piece, something I think we all agree upon. Right now, the per-minute rate doesn't make a distinction between a piece that is short turn-around acts and tracks with phone tape and a piece that involves travel and field production. Of course, we would continue to pay travel expenses in circumstances in which we ask the reporter to travel. When we talk about reporter or piece "qualities," we are thinking that, for the first time, we would have in writing the criteria that can determine how we pay you for your work. Right now, the per-minute rate can feel arbitrary, with no way for you to say, "I/my pieces meet these qualifications, therefore I deserve a raise." We're talking about paying different rates for different types of pieces (field sound vs. phone sound) in addition to paying for the level of skill of the reporter, as we do now with the per-minute rate, except in a more well-defined way.

I'm struggling a bit to understand how there can be objections to this general concept. Of course, the policy hasn't been finalized. But after all this time of our friendly online relationship I am disappointed that there hasn't been—at least so far—a more constructive way for some of you to express your concerns without making worrisome assumptions. I'm always willing to listen.

Cheers,
Peggy Girshman
Assistant Managing Editor, NPR News

Dale Willman responds:

I'd like to try to answer some of your comments. But let me first say that having known you for some time, I know that you are trying hard to be fair to independents. However, here are a couple of quick thoughts from our side of this fence.

You address the comments of AIR members in this fashion:

"I find the comments a little premature."

In what respect are they premature? As you state in your AIRSPACE article, a decision has already been made to move away from the per-minute model. And while you say the overall proposal is in early-draft stage, it seems from your writing that all but the final details are already in place. You've decided it will be a per-piece rate, based on two major criteria, which you outline. What remains in "early draft," apparently, are the details of the "tier system" you outline, and little else. All the rest appears to be settled, and with little or no consultation in the process with independents, who will be greatly affected by any decision. So when would comments not be premature? When it's set in stone and the checks are being cut?

No offense intended Peggy, but in my time on the AIR listserv, that "friendly relationship" has been very paternal; the fatherly (or motherly) NPR holds our hand and politely but firmly tells us how things will be. Then questions are answered, but generally after

decisions are made. I think it would appear more constructive if AIR were an actual partner in the development of the new rates, and other similar issues for that matter. After all, it's our livelihood at stake. If NPR chooses to make these decisions without any real input from the independent community, then NPR should be prepared to answer questions when pronouncements, such as the rates article, are suddenly released.

For instance, two AIR members spent a great deal of time coming up with what most AIR members found to be a fair rate schedule. It's one that addresses many of the same concerns you mention. And yet, it appears NPR completely ignored that well-researched possibility and chose a different option. Of course, that's the network's right, but wouldn't it have been a much more collegial response to let us know why that option was apparently not acceptable to NPR?

"Right now, the per-minute rate doesn't make a distinction between a piece that is short turn-around acts and tracks with phone tape and a piece that involves travel and field production."

We're aware of that, which is why the research was done for an alternate pay structure. In fact, I doubt NPR would be going through this process if it had not been first raised by AIR members.

"I'm struggling a bit to understand how there can be objections to this general concept."

Again, perhaps because your description is more than a "general concept;" you have described a very specific structure that is raising concerns among AIR members. So it makes sense for those objections to be pointed out.

Peggy, again I do believe you have the best intentions of independents at heart. So I ask you, why not have a more open dialogue with this list about the rates, and what would be a fair structure? I know that will bring dissension among the ranks because like any independent-minded group we don't all agree. And as the primaries are showing us once again, democracy isn't always pretty. But making us a part of the process, rather than telling us about the plan after the fact, would go a long way toward avoiding the concerns now being expressed.

All the best,
Dale A. Willman
Field Notes Productions
dale@willman.tv

NPR Update

Liaison to independents hired!

By Margo Melnicove

Dear Members of the AIR Community:

As you may have heard by now, I've been hired as NPR's liaison to the independent producer community. My start date is April 5th, and Dolores asked me to introduce myself, so I'm sending this letter as a way of reconnecting with old friends, and saying hello for the first time to what I hope will be many new ones.

I started working in public radio in 1977 as a volunteer at KRBD in Ketchikan, Alaska. (This is supposed to be only 500 words so I can't get into it here, but should we meet, ask about my debut on *The Woman in Your Life Is... You!*) I've also worked at KTOO-FM & TV in Juneau, WBUR and WGBH in Boston, Monitor Radio, and previously at NPR as the Diversity Initiative's producer/trainer and as a newscast editor. I've taught broadcast journalism at the college level in the Boston area (where I live) since 1994, and I've worked as an independent for many years, including stints as producer of two weekly radio series, TV correspondent, co-producer of two jazz portraits for WGBH and a mini-series for *Marketplace*, managing producer and editor of *She Got Game*, and freelancer for NPR and other outlets.

I've been a reporter, producer, editor, newscaster, anchor, mentor, and coach, and I am excited about the liaison position because it will allow me to put many of these skills to use. This position is a first for NPR, so there will be a lot of opportunity to invent and create. And I feel great about being able to give something back to a community that has given me so much. In short, I can't wait to get started.

My primary purpose is to help independent producers set and achieve realistic goals for themselves, and find the appropriate outlets for their work.

You can count on me to be direct, so let me say up-front that I am not a gatekeeper. I will not pitch stories to NPR editors on your behalf, or function as your lobbyist.

Here's what I will do:

- Be a liaison between not only NPR, but all of public radio, and the independent community.
- Spot talent, especially in journalism, production and storytelling.
- Help guide indies in ways that allow them to maximize their potential.
- Help producers shape their pitches so that when they decide to pitch, they can do so effectively.
- Provide training materials and information about training opportunities, and in my role as mentor, coach individuals in specific skills (as time allows).
- Be an informal link to resources at AIR, NFCB, PRI, PRNDI, PRX, Transom.org, and other outlets for independents' work, etc.
- Be a resource to as many people in the independent community as I can possibly connect with.
- Help independents answer the question, "How do I get started?"

I expect to work closely with AIR every step of the way. You can help me get started by sending your questions, concerns, and suggestions to mmelnicove@hotmail.com, or give me a call at (508) 651-1309. (I'll call you back on my dime.)

I look forward to working with all of you. Thanks for listening, and stay tuned!

Sincerely,
Margo Melnicove

Sound Advice

I began the process believing I'd get a good four-hour shot in the arm as I ventured into the wide world of radio production. Instead, as I reflect on the past few months, Deborah's mentorship has led me way beyond the beginner's level I began with. I now have a state-of-the-art in-home production setup, a solid repertoire of good-quality pieces that I can be proud of, and technical production and editing savvy that I thought would take years of incorporating into my skill-set...all due to Deborah's encouragement and guidance and, of course, to AIR's generous mentorship program. I cannot begin to imagine where I would be now, as a new professional in radio production, without having gone through the mentorship.

—Angela Taylor, Mentee

The mentee, a skilled audio journalist, wanted to understand how to sell print versions of stories already written for radio. He just needed to understand how to approach newspapers. His print writing skills needed some sharpening. I helped him write query letters, reshape the story for print, [and] find an appropriate newspaper. It was fun seeing how quickly he grasped the concepts and adapted. I taught journalism for ten years at the university level and still get great joy from the success of my students.

—Reese Erlich, Mentor

The AIR Mentor Program

It works both ways. It can work for you. And it's a free benefit of AIR membership.

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Made possible by grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About Marketing: Beta Tests Help the Program Creation Process

By Ken Mills

Too often editorial and marketing plans are out of sync, hurting the success of a creative project. It doesn't have to be this way.

Some producers are like the chef who puts countless hours into the menu but forgets to turn on the sign at the restaurant. Make the most of your projects by getting useful marketing input with beta tests.



Dominowski of Market Trends Research and Al Bartholet of WKSU-FM, the toolkit was funded by CPB.

Ken Mills has been involved with public and commercial radio program syndication since 1987. He owns and operates the Minneapolis-based Ken Mills Agency, specializing in programming development, marketing, and assessment. For more information, go to <http://kenmillsagency.com>.

Beta testing can provide important early feedback about the program name, key messages, treatment of the topic, and perceptions of the producer. Such testing can tell you what elements of a program will be appealing or disliked. Getting this kind of feedback early in the production process allows you to fine-tune the presentation of your work.

My company does this kind of work as do several other AIR members. The costs for these projects run from the hundreds to the thousands of dollars.

If you can afford this research, buy it. If you can't afford it, create beta tests yourself. Here's how:

- Determine the specific items (program name, host, etc.) you want to test.
- Choose an associate to implement it. It's vital that someone other than you and your core team performs the test.
- Create a one-page capsule description and/or short audio sample. Then, construct a short list of questions (maybe five) that will get people talking. Good questions include:
"After reading this title, what do you think this program is about?"
"Would a program with this title be something you might listen to on the radio? Why or why not?"
"What adjectives come to mind when you listen to this program sample?"
- Now, the most important step—make certain the associate conducting the test tells the people to be surveyed that their comments will be anonymous. In other words, the people participating in the test can give feedback without having to look you in the eye.
- Ask your associate to perform the test with at least five people who listen frequently to public radio and routinely choose public over commercial radio.
- After getting the responses, have your associate arrange the comments into clusters of similar replies. Note the most frequently used words. Look for opinions that several people share.

From this feedback you'll get outside points of view on your project. The responses not only provide early indication of objections you may hear later from gatekeepers, but also help you identify the "headlines" and most appealing aspects of your project.

Don't "broadcast" your results: this kind of test is not scientifically reliable and should be for your own internal use only. You can't cite it but you can learn from it. Be open to early, honest marketing feedback to help you "turn on the sign" for your work.

MARKETING TIP: Check out the Listener Survey Toolkit, <http://www.wksu.org/toolkit/>, a free website that is a guide to research for people who are not research experts. Written in 1997 by Peter

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Welcome New AIR Members

David Adox
Jersey City, NJ

Patricia Anderton
Berlin, NH

David Barasoain
Loganville, GA

Kevin Cruickshank
New York, NY

Emily Downs (WPIR Pratt Radio)
Brooklyn, NY

Dianne Finch
Gloucester, MA

Ira Flatow (Science Friday)
Stamford, CT

Stephen L. Gilbreath (Big Band's Alive)
Hueytown, AL

Henry Howard
(Atlanta Radio Theatre Company)
Stone Mt., GA

Angela Huffstutler (Putamayo Music)
New York, NY

Elizabeth (Ella) Kearney
Minneapolis, MN

Miranda Kennedy
New Delhi, Delhi

Diane Cameron Lawrence
Louisville, KY

Simon Marks (Feature Story News [FSN])
Washington, D.C.

Margo Melnicove (WSHU)
Wayland, MA

Hawk Mendenhall (KUT)
Austin, TX

Peter Michaels
Tucson, AZ

Jeremiah Moore (JM Kitchen)
San Francisco, CA

Peter Payette (Interlochen Public Radio)
Interlochen, MI

Vince Pearson
Alexandria, VA

Francesca Rheannon
S. Hadley, MA

Benjamin Shaw
(Columbia University Graduate School)
New York, NY

Shirley Skeel
Berkeley, CA

Gabriel Spitzer
(Alaska Public Radio Network)
Anchorage, AK

Christopher Springmann
(Health Rhythms)
Pt. Reyes, CA

Tennessee Watson
Rochester, NY

Anne White (New York Festivals)
New York, NY



It's time to submit. (your work)

STARTING MAY 1, THE THIRD COAST INTERNATIONAL AUDIO FESTIVAL WILL ACCEPT ENTRIES FOR OUR 2004 RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION COMPETITION.

ENTER your documentaries and features of all kinds: from sound-rich stories to investigative reports; from quirky personal histories to revealing community portraits. **WINNERS** receive monetary prizes from \$1,500 and \$6,000 to support their future creative efforts. **VISIT** www.thirdcoastfestival.org to read guidelines and regulations, hear past winners, or download an entry form. **SAVE THE DATES!**

Plan a trip to Chicago this Fall for the fourth annual Third Coast Festival Conference, October 28 – 30.

CONTACT info@thirdcoastfestival.org w/questions or to request an entry form by mail.

The Third Coast International Audio Festival is made possible with lead support from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, major corporate support from the Sara Lee Foundation and additional funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

www.thirdcoastfestival.org



A New Partnership for Independent Radio/Audio Producers: AIR and IBS

By John Murphy

Chair, IBS National Board of Directors & General Manager, WHUS Radio—University of Connecticut

New opportunities for independent radio and audio producers were explored recently, as part of the 2004 National Conference of IBS, the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System. Expanded program distribution opportunities and mentoring/training programs for producers at IBS stations were identified as priorities for development in the year ahead.



Almost 700 people participated in more than 75 workshops during the weekend of March 12–14, 2004 in New York City. AIR Secretary Matthew Payne provided important support for an excellent producer panel with AIR members John Barth, Kerry Donahue, and Steve Rathe. It is our hope that IBS and AIR can establish new partnerships for mutual support of both memberships.

Founded in 1940, IBS is a nonprofit association of radio stations based at schools and colleges across the country. Nine hundred IBS members operate all sizes and types of facilities including FM and AM, Internet/webcasting, closed-circuit, AM carrier-current, and cable.

Many stations that were previously limited in broadcast coverage by spectrum availability and interference issues have been reborn and reinvented as webcasters. As radio moves into its second century, our stations are adapting to survive and serve in the new digital world order.

Many IBS stations function as hybrids of the community and campus models, combining the human energy and collective creativity from each source, rather than focusing on institutional differences and incompatibilities. One objective of an enhanced collaboration with AIR members is to help us raise the bar for technical quality of production and programming. Our hope is to focus more attention on presentation, individuality, audience awareness, and localism. Another hope is for stronger program and station promotions to build audience and include community service as an integral component.

IBS sponsors national and regional (one-day) conferences. The 2004 schedule will provide AIR members with excellent opportunities to meet staff and managers at IBS member-stations as well as other media professionals involved with our unique kind of radio. There will also be possibilities for participation in the development of specialized mentor and training programs for new producers at IBS stations in the following metropolitan regions:

- Chicago—October 30, 2004
- Boston—November 6, 2004
- Los Angeles—November 13, 2004

I appreciate this opportunity to share some of the plans for IBS as our stations prepare for the next generation of radio. Many AIR members share the same roots, values, and traditions of radio that have been the foundation and the heart of the IBS mission since 1940. We have more in common as radio cousins than meets the eye, now perhaps more than ever.

The old perceptions and judgments about college radio as a “campus sandbox” need a reality check and must be re-evaluated in response to the last 25 years of growth in the life cycle of many IBS members. These stations developed significant local service and support for programming that consistently reaches younger/alternative and culturally diverse audiences.

Now with the Internet there are more ways than ever for producers to get their work to interested independent stations, especially those not connected to the satellite system. When you walk the walk of a producer, you must try every door, and IBS can provide new options and new possibilities in a rapidly reconfiguring media environment. Please feel free to contact me with any comments or suggestions for ways that IBS can work with AIR and its membership.

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Telephone: (845) 565-0003
E-mail: ibs@ibsradio.org
Website: www.ibsradio.org

On March 13th, a group of IBS members gathered in the Board Room of the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York to speak with four panelists on all aspects of being an independent radio producer. Steve Rathe, Ellen Kamhi, Kerry Donahue, and John Barth answered questions from an enthusiastic standing-room-only crowd. All in all, ten AIR Members (including AIR’s Executive Director) showed up that day: the energy in the room felt great, and people busy chatting about independent radio issues had to be shooed out of the room when it was time for the next session to begin! A great session—just the sort of solid connections we’re hoping to form with the IBS and its members.



Matthew D. Payne
Independent Producer Forum Coordinator



AIRWARES

Audio and Other Products by AIR Members

Compiled by Nannette Drake Oldenbourg

nannette@cape.com

New listings of AIR members' audio and other products available for retail sale, alphabetized by producer's last name. See the Producers Directory at <http://www.airmedia.org> for information about producers' professional services and radio programs available for broadcast.



From Karen A D'Andrea:

The Homelessness Marathon: In its 7th year, this 14-hour national broadcast focuses on the issue of homelessness and poverty in America. The *Marathon* is broadcast from the streets of a different city each winter to dramatize the plight of people with nowhere to go.

Interspersed with experts from organizations such as the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and the National Coalition for the Homeless, the *Marathon* is the only broadcast of its type to feature voices of homeless people.

Each *Marathon* has been archived into complete boxed sets of either cassette tapes or CDs. To purchase or for more information, go to <http://www.homelessnessmarathon.org>. Karen is at WMFG Community Radio. Her site is <http://www.soundecology.org>.

From Matthew Cowley:

Best of Offramp: An improvised program of surrealism, comedy and music from Soundstage Audio Theater. Winner of two Awards of Excellence at the 2003 Communicator Awards. Twenty-three of the best sketches from *Offramp's* first season of half-hour episodes on one CD. This series has been the best-received show we've aired during the radio theatre slot at WMNF Tampa. Also airs on WYSO Dayton and KUNM Albuquerque. Improvisation in the tradition of *Firesign* and Christopher Guest, not the *Whose Line* games and one-liners. More information at <http://www.offrampinfo.com>.

Sixty Second Radio Hour—Vol. 1 and Vol. 2: A series of vignettes, sketches, and audio dreams, ranging from one-liner comedy to drama and odd sound pieces. Winner of several Communicator Awards for writing and production and a Gold Medal at the 2002 New York Fests. Two CDs available, more than 70 minutes each. "Darn good, and some were absolutely brilliant."—Tom Lopez; "Little gems of insurrection, chaos, joy, humor."—Joan Schuman

All CDs \$15. More info and online ordering at <http://www.radiosoundstage.com>, or send check or money order to Soundstage; P.O. Box 10112; Tampa, FL 33679.

From Dmae Roberts:

Now available MediaRites/Stories1st latest CD!

The Breast Cancer Monologues: A one-hour collage of women's stories produced by Dmae Roberts and the Breast Cancer Radio Arts Project (including AIR member Miae Kim). Intricately woven from interviews, readings, and dramatizations about how breast cancer has affected the lives of women in America. Original music by AIR member Maria de los Angeles Esteves.

Only 5-to-10 percent of breast cancers are linked to genetic history, yet there is little research as to the cause and the

treatment can be as deadly as the disease.

Most everyone in America knows someone who has struggled or is struggling with this disease, and one in eight women in this country will develop breast cancer within a life expectancy of 85 years. But breast cancer is still misunderstood and often a taboo subject even among women because of fear and lack of researched information.

The Breast Cancer Monologues address myths and misunderstandings while giving voice to the women who know firsthand the effect of breast cancer.

CDs are \$10 plus \$3 for shipping. For more info, go to: http://www.mediarites.org/store_BC.htm.

Remember...

AIR NOW offers four online directories at **AIRMEDIA.org**

Need a Producer, fast (For tape synchs, collaboration, advice)?

Check out the **AIR Producers Directory**: the most comprehensive list of independent talent working in public radio

Got a hot show?

You deserve an award! Search AIR's **Awards Directory**: the most complete "radio" specific awards listing available.

Want to get your latest comedy series on the air?

Go to AIR's **Local Station Directory**. Find out who to call, what PD's want from independents.

Got a yen to do something exotic?

Discover opportunities in AIR's all **new Fellowships Directory**

AIR Directories © are unique, exclusive resources designed to help you make the professional connections you need to be a success in today's competitive public radio world.

RadioCollege.org

a project of the
Association of
Independents
in Radio

AIR's online learning center!

With an ever-evolving collection of “how-to” articles and links, plus regularly scheduled interactive seminars on both the art and business of radio production, Radio College exists to offer insight and inspiration to producers at every stage of their careers.

Field Recording & ProTools Editing with Tony Dec

From the basics to advanced issues—AIR members join Tony Dec for a month-long extended online discussion in the techniques of field recording & mic'ing, editing, file management and more. We'll share ideas and present solutions to smooth your workflow and calm your nerves while making technology work for you.

Begins April 5th @ RadioCollege.org

Archive available @ RadioCollege.org



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