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**ABSTRACT**

To examine the state of college- and university-affiliated noncommercial FM radio, a survey was conducted of all college and university stations nationwide which were identifiable through the 1982 Broadcasting Yearbook (N=670). The questionnaire requested information concerning demographics, funding, organization and structure, personnel, operation, programming, and philosophy or mission. A question to identify National Public Radio (NPR) affiliates was included to isolate and develop this subcategory. Findings are derived from 243 completed questionnaires (36.3% response rate); NPR responses equaled 51, representing 7.91% of the total population and 21% of the returned replies. Three noncommercial groups were identified--NPR affiliates, large non-NPR affiliates (over 10 watts), and small non-NPR affiliates (10 watts or under). Results indicate: (1) a majority of stations are expected to carry out fully functional operations on a small financial base; (2) NPR stations have superior budgetary bases as compared to other demographic groups; (3) non-NPR affiliate stations have inadequate technical support; (4) station format varies widely by group and institutional expectations; (5) programming covers the full range of sound, from classical to jazz to rock; and (6) the station philosophy varies depending upon station market thrust and selected format. Recommendations for improving the questionnaire and survey procedures in future studies are presented. A list of references and the survey instrument complete the document. (JB)

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A METHODOLOGY IN STUDYING NONCOMMERCIAL FM RADIO STATIONS -- A CASE STUDY

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# A METHODOLOGY IN STUDYING NONCOMMERCIAL FM RADIO STATIONS -- A CASE STUDY

## Abstract

The purpose of this undertaking was to examine the state of college- and university-affiliated noncommercial FM radio as it was today in the early-1980's. This was done by first examining the literature surrounding the background of noncommercial radio in order to develop a survey framework within which to work. The second and more immediate phase of this project involved securing data concerning certain phases of college and university radio operation and as a result, gather new and up-to-date information relative to these organizations.

This research was national in scope. It was, therefore, necessary to construct a questionnaire and distribute it to all college and university stations nationwide which were identifiable through the 1982 Broadcasting Yearbook. In order to construct the seven-part questionnaire, an examination of needed information relative to noncommercial FM college and university radio was made. Additional information was gathered by interviews with people involved in the field. Before actually sending the questionnaire, it was examined and commented upon by a committee of noted researchers, sociologists involved in this type of research, and two noted broadcast educators. A pilot study was conducted at the 1983 BEA convention with follow-up among the participants.

Comments and criticisms of the instrument are presented in this paper along with the major findings.

### Historical Content

Noncommercial FM educational radio is a huge animal that exists in a world that does not really understand it.

All radio stations, or for that matter, any mass media operation, represent an extremely complex set of interrelationships using technology, talent, and human relationships. In order for any broadcast station to function effectively, it develops its own superstructure. Yet, college and university stations must operate within a larger superstructure.

There is a constant need to update the data in this area and yet, as the literature shows, this is not done regularly. The annual National Public Radio -- Corporation for Public Broadcasting reports only deal with their own, not with the whole college and university radio scene, as do other organizations such as the Broadcast Education Association.

Research has never had an important place in educational broadcasting. Very little has been done on educational broadcast facilities. This fact was examined by Avery (1978) who concluded that more research was needed to be done by academicians and broadcast research should be stressed in undergraduate curriculum.

Twenty years ago, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters conducted a thorough study of educational radio under the auspices of the Ford Foundation. Their published, The Hidden Medium, examined the then current state of noncommercial radio.

At approximately the same time, Rashidpour (1965) surveyed educational radio stations. Two problems emerged: lack of money and lack of personnel.

Presently, there is a great deal of information available about college and university noncommercial stations affiliated with NPR. However, there is a dearth of material on nonaffiliates. It would be useful to make some attempt to help remedy this situation. Unfortunately, the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) only keeps accurate records of its own membership. Although excellent, it is not nearly complete (Caldwell & Niven, 1981).

Based on the aforementioned studies, it would appear that the area dealing with college- and university-affiliated FM noncommercial radio is one that is always ripe for additional research. The field is always changing and enlarging. It is, in a word, dynamic.

Managing a college or university station is difficult. Most people involved have little or no formal background in management. New data for reference's purpose would also be helpful to aid in planning for the future.

### The Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to present a methodological approach and resultant findings revealing the current state of college- and university-affiliated noncommercial FM radio in the United States.

The following areas of college and university radio were studied:

1. Basic description of the station as it pertains to enrollment of the institution housing the station, station operating power, licensee, age, number of other FM stations in the area, organizational memberships of the station, and unit affiliation;
2. Station funding as it pertains to operating budget and percentage

sources of the funding;

3. Organization and structure;

4. Personnel as it pertains to managers of college and university stations, technicians who maintain equipment, and overall professional, as well as, student staffing of facilities in terms of gross number;

5. Operating hours as it pertains to length of time college and university stations broadcast during various times of the year;

6. Programming as it pertains to specific formats reported, what is actually broadcast, availability of satellite technology; and

7. Station philosophy as it pertains to college and university operations in general.

### Development of Instrumentation

#### Procedures

Before constructing the questionnaire, other area-related instruments, including the NAEB instruments were reviewed. Interviews and discussions were also conducted with various professionals in educational radio and sociology to make sure that the appropriate areas would be included for consideration. A preliminary questionnaire was developed and submitted to William McCavitt of Indiana University of Pennsylvania and also to a noted educational broadcaster, John M. Kittross of Temple University, as well as Donald Lueder and Willard Clouse of Vanderbilt University. Returned suggestions lead to a refining of the questionnaire.

A pilot study of this survey took place at the 1982 Annual Meeting of the Broadcast Education Association. Twenty college and university managers were present. Follow-up interviews took place and focused upon criticism of the instrument in order to more fully refine the final questionnaire. A copy of the final questionnaire has been attached to this paper.

The questionnaire would be sent to all identified college and university stations increasing the probability of response and ultimately the confidence in results. Mailing to all identified stations also avoided possible sampling errors brought about by arbitrary sampling procedures. Simply, this survey research is treated as a descriptive study meant to "discover the distribution of certain traits or attributes" (Babbie, 1973, p. 58) of college FM radio. No value judgements are involved, only observations and summations.

The final questionnaire was printed and mailed to general managers of all noncommercial FM radio stations affiliated with colleges and universities in the 50 United States. They were asked to return the questionnaire within seven weeks. The population to receive the mailed questionnaire consisted of all noncommercial college and university stations as identified in Broadcasting Yearbook (1982) (N=670).

A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included to encourage participation. An introductory letter stated the purpose of the survey and the promise of a report upon completion of this project.

Two consent forms were also included. The first form granted permission to use any and all information provided within the narrative portion of the findings. The other consent form assured confidential use of material for statistical compilation purposes only.

#### Explanation of the Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather data on college- and

university-affiliated FM radio operations as stated in the purpose. The results were used in descriptive data analyses. As indicated, questions formulated were governed by the desired research questions and refined through extremely internal peer review.

Internal and external validity of the questionnaire was controlled in part by extensive professional reviews and through a controlled pilot test. Subsequent instrument revisions allowed for a strategy of open ended statements supported by an elaborate system of data encoding.

The instrument included six basic areas which, after the data was compiled, to provide an accurate description of the college and university radio stations. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix.

The term Faculty-Advisor-Manager (FAM) has been developed in order to cover all possible jurisdictions. This person may or may not be a member of college faculty. He or she may be a faculty advisor or a faculty manager or perhaps just a manager, or even a student manager. It was requested that the chief executive (FAM) of the station fill out the questionnaire.

Specific demographic questions profiling the FAM were included. Variables taken into consideration are age, sex, education, major fields of study, years in higher education, and academic status.

It was interesting to examine whether or not the FAM is tenured and whether or not this person is full time or nonacademic, etc. Other questions include those about length of time at institution and professional experience in radio and broadcasting. When compiled, this information provides opportunities for additional interpretation of the findings.

The questionnaire contains items asking for information about the station including enrollment, licensee, call letters, age of station, and power. It also requests information about population of listening area and some related information about FM radio in the station area. These are descriptive data important in the operation of all mass media operations. A question to identify NPR affiliates is included in order to isolate and develop this subcategory. Additional information on news service, programming sources, and station membership, would allow the development of comprehensive, inclusive lists of memberships and programming sources. Identification of parent division of source for station accountability was also requested.

Two pages of the questionnaire dealt with programming. The resulting information was used for program content analyses and broadcast operation. A music offering list was developed after consultation with musicologists and radio music directors. Questions also pertain to satellite reception-transmission capabilities.

The section on personnel examined such issues as number and classification of employees at the stations. The sections also examined technical backup personnel as a separate entity.

The funding section provided financial data on station expenditures and sources of the funding.

The last section of the questionnaire dealt with general policy and decision-making patterns and a statement of basic philosophy. Philosophy statements would be compiled and reported where consent allowed.

### Data Analyses

The analyses of the data received from this survey were done at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) under the guidance of Mark Staszkievicz, director of Institutional Research.

For initial as well as follow-up data analyses, the Statistical Package for



the Social Science (SPSS) (Nie, 1975) was used. This package allowed subgrouping into defined factor lists. Given the wide range of variability in the data and unequal cell N's, the SPSS package is very accommodating to descriptive studies. In order to identify and focus upon certain trends and patterns, means, median, modes, and ranges were computed and interpreted.

The analyses of the subgroups, as well as that of all stations, is included where large ranges exist. In a particular case, such as the FAM profile, this was not necessary due to the consistency and similarity of received data.

The major questions are, for the most part, discussed and then illustrated within the confines of numerous tables. Although certain summations and tentative conclusions are reached in this study, the inclusion of summarized raw data provides the reader an opportunity to agree or disagree with them.

This straight-forward multivariate analyses and explanations presented section by section with accompanying tables provided the greatest efficiency in analyses and improved the effectiveness of interpretation. A limitation to the survey method was the differing levels of frequency response. Where response was limited, interpretation would not be final but would be noted as tentative.

Also, in order to maintain the integrity in the reporting of the findings, the Frequency of Response (FOR) was used for comparative purposes rather than N. This FOR or percentage of N was noted. The inclusion and exclusion of missing values are treated on an item-by-item basis.

As the completed surveys were received, the data was coded and entered on-line into a Honeywell file program known as BEDIT. BEDIT is essentially a prompting data entry program which, in this case, was tailored specifically to the needed variable list. An SPSS "run" program was written which entered the columned data formatted by BEDIT. The efficiency of managing data input and analyses was thus greatly enhanced. SPSS was also conducive to the development of descriptive tables; these included items where the information was qualitative rather than quantitative. Examples of these include Format Types, Outside Programming Sources, Person to Whom FAM Responsible, and others.

Throughout the process of statistical analyses, an experienced research team from the Applied Research Laboratory, IUP, was also available for any needed assistance. The professional support helped insure that data interpretation would be relevant and accurate.

### Overview of Results

Discussion of the findings focused upon the major elements of the methodological framework in the areas of station: (1) demographics; (2) funding; (3) organization and structure; (4) personnel; (5) operation; (6) programming; and (7) philosophy or mission. For a more detailed accounting of the findings, see Leidman and Lamberski (1986).

All findings have been derived from the 243 completed questionnaires. This represented a 36.3 response rate (670 were mailed out). NPR responses equaled 51; they represent 7.91% of the total population and 21% of the returned replies. Non-NPR stations participating numbered 192, or 28.65%, of the total population, or 79% of the respondents. Of the 192 non-NPR stations, 42 were 10 watt stations. They represent 6.27% of the population, 17.28% of those replying, and 23% of the non-NPR stations participating in this study. Non-NPR stations with power greater than 10 watts numbered 150, representing 22.38% of the population and 61.72% of the respondents.

Both the 10 watt stations, as well as those with power greater than 10 watts, are included in the general category of non-NPR stations and were given their own subheadings as well. This subdivision allowed for examination of

trends among non-NPR stations as well as component parts.

For purposes of this paper, the major findings will be highlighted.

### Highlighted Findings

The investigation examined data obtained from questionnaires sent to selected FM noncommercial stations. Initial analyses of demographic data indicated these stations could be clustered into three noncommercial groups. These groups can be demographically defined as:

1. National Public Radio (NPR) Affiliates;
2. Large Non-NPR Affiliates (over 10 watts); and
3. Small Non-NPR Affiliates (10 watts or under). This third group has been ordered by the FCC to be phased out.

All NPR stations are "Corporation for Public Broadcasting Qualified" meaning they meet certain financial, facility and personnel requirements which include:

1. Daily schedules of at least 18 hours of programming per day, 365 days per year;
2. A minimum of 5 full-time professional staff;
3. An adequate (two studio) physical plant; and
4. Budget of at least \$100,000 annually.

These criteria place NPR stations at a distinctively different level of operations and planning than most other college and university FM stations. The NPR status not only identifies a station whose resources and commitment are superior to most FM noncommercial stations, but also administratively indicates continued support in order to maintain NPR affiliation.

Given this identified demographic clustering, the following rank order summary of the major findings can be presented.

#### I. BUDGET

- a. A majority of stations are expected to operate fully functional broadcast operations on a small financial base.
- b. Stations, in general, suffer from a consistent level of financial support.
- c. Sources of budgetary support vary by demographic group and inconsistency over time.
- d. NPR Stations have a superior budgetary base as compared to other demographic groups.
- e. Generally, stations suffer from inadequate commitment from parent institutions.

#### II. STATION ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING (exclusive of NPR affiliated stations)

- a. Stations have inadequate technical support.
- b. Time allotted to professional station managers is generally inadequate or split with other institutional responsibilities. Manager's time devoted to station operations appears consistently inadequate.
- c. Most stations indicate a heavy dependence upon volunteer help to operate the station.
- d. There is a consistent expectation that the station will maintain a "professional sound" even given the reality of a mostly non-professional volunteer student staff.
- e. Most stations have a lack of adequate compensation or reward system for student staff.



### III. PROGRAMMING

- a. Format varies widely by demographic group and institutional expectations. At best, the noncommercial spectrum is inconsistent in an identifiable format.
- b. Programming covers the full gambit of sound, from classical to jazz to rock, etc.
- c. Data reveals inconsistent operating times during "normal" programming periods. Particular concern was identified given the inconsistent operating time between session recesses for FM stations affiliated with academic institutions.

### IV. STATION PHILOSOPHIES

- a. Survey data indicates little consistent thought or conceptualization.
- b. Station philosophy varies depending upon station market thrust and selected format.

In summary, the findings point to vast yet specific differences for FM noncommercial stations. These differences are clearly identifiable between the three demographically defined groups. Within group variability is highly dependent upon the parent institution and NPR affiliation.

#### Recommendations

There are positive and negative aspects of this instrument. Although there is much to be said for some questions of an open-ended variety, it renders more difficult the task of coding and entering such data into a computer program. In retrospect, it probably would have been more efficient to have designed a questionnaire in which there would be an object list of alternative responses. However, this possibly would have distorted the results through a bias built in by suggested answers printed on the questionnaire. As it was, the respondents were free to fill in the questionnaire with more exact answers as it suited them. Other recommendations would include:

1. Shortening the questionnaire by listing alternatives or eliminating less productive items. Or, having an initial mailing with a second follow through mailing thus spreading the requested information over time.
2. Develop a follow-up procedure where, depending upon item responses, a selected sample of respondents would be contacted for in-depth telephone discussion and elaboration.
3. Given the identified three separate respondents, develop questions unique to those respective three areas which provide more in-depth explanation.
4. Develop an incentive system and/or check system to make sure the senior administrator fills out or verifies the reported data.
5. Provide a list of terms either before the start of the questionnaire or define terms within item stems or listed alternative responses. This is particularly important in collecting data on policies and procedures, and personnel.
6. Convert some of the categorical, open-ended items to scaled indices.

This would be particularly possible given the known pattern of responses from this study.

7. Visually improve the instrument through layout and design to increase respondent participation and motivation.

8. Develop visual questionnaire responses. For example: a time grid would have aided in the collection of music type and hours broadcast.

9. Given the pattern of responses from the initial survey, develop a branching strategy within the questionnaire so that not all items need be responded to depending upon primary responses.

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APPENDIX  
Survey Instrument

The purpose of this exercise is to gather data on noncommercial FM radio stations affiliated with colleges and universities in the United States. Results will be used in a descriptive analysis of college radio in the 1980s.

Faculty-Advisor-Manager (FAM) Information (If more than one FAM is employed, please have chief executive fill this section out.)

Age (check one)

Education (circle highest received)

Less than 30

BA, BS

31-35

MA, MS

36-40

MFA, MBA, ABD

41-45

PhD, EdD

46-50

DA, JD

51-55

\_\_\_\_\_ field

56-60

of most recent studies (last degree)

61-65

Where was the highest degree earned? \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Professional years of involvement in higher education:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

Tenured? Yes No

If no: Full-time Regular Tenure-track

or

Part-time Non-academic

(Please circle one of the above)

How long have you been with your institution? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in the FAM position? \_\_\_\_\_

Previous to your present post, how many years have you professionally worked in radio? Full-time Part-time

Previously, what was the highest professional broadcasting job you ever held? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX  
Survey Instrument

Demographic Information

University or college? \_\_\_\_\_ Overall enrollment? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the station licensee? \_\_\_\_\_

Call letters \_\_\_\_\_

Year of first license \_\_\_\_\_

Dial position \_\_\_\_\_

Licensed power \_\_\_\_\_

Effective radiated power \_\_\_\_\_

Number of potential listeners in your area (community and university combined) \_\_\_\_\_

Description of community (rural, urban, suburban) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of FM stations in your market \_\_\_\_\_

Number of other college- or university-affiliated stations (not attached to your institution) in your market \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a National Public Radio affiliate? \_\_\_\_\_

News affiliation (AP, UPI, Mutual, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Programming affiliation (Texaco, Metropolitan, Longhorn, RKO, WFMT)--List all applicable \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Station memberships (NAB, NFCB, IBS, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

To what academic unit (department or school) if any, is your station attached? \_\_\_\_\_

If none, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX  
Survey Instrument

Programming (Please include as much detail as possible)

Daily operating hours (example 8 a.m.-2 a.m.) \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Year

Weekdays (Monday-Friday) \_\_\_\_\_

Weekends (Saturday-Sunday) \_\_\_\_\_

Holidays when school is in session \_\_\_\_\_

Holidays (such as Labor Day) when school  
is not in session) \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if the above is true all year  
— round and please go on to next section.

Winter and Spring Break

Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_

Weekends \_\_\_\_\_

Holidays (example: Christmas Day) \_\_\_\_\_

Summers

Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_

Weekends \_\_\_\_\_

Holidays (example: July 4th) \_\_\_\_\_

Does your station close for the summer? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, when (approximately) \_\_\_\_\_

When do you resume operation? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your station have satellite reception  
equipment? Yes No

Does your station have satellite  
transmission equipment? Yes No

What is the title of the person(s) who  
approve specific programs or major  
programming changes? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the station have a distinctive  
format or "sound"? (Please  
specify if "yes.") Yes No

APPENDIX  
Survey Instrument

Types of Programming During Normal (Academic School Year)  
Hours of Operation

|   | Total hours<br>per week | When<br>(M-F, 5-7 p.m.) |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Music   |                         |                         |
| Classical                                     | _____                   | _____                   |
| Jazz  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Blues   | _____                   | _____                   |
| Country & Western                             | _____                   | _____                   |
| Bluegrass                                     | _____                   | _____                   |
| Folk  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Broadway                                      | _____                   | _____                   |
| MOR   | _____                   | _____                   |
| Adult Contemporary                            | _____                   | _____                   |
| Christian Religious                           | _____                   | _____                   |
| Disco   | _____                   | _____                   |
| Reggae  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Progressive Rock                              | _____                   | _____                   |
| AOR   | _____                   | _____                   |
| Heavy Metal                                   | _____                   | _____                   |
| New Wave                                      | _____                   | _____                   |
| Punk  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Retrospective rock                            | _____                   | _____                   |
| Top 40  | _____                   | _____                   |
| News  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Sports  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Public Affairs                                | _____                   | _____                   |
| Drama   | _____                   | _____                   |
| Talk  | _____                   | _____                   |
| Classroom (instructional)                     | _____                   | _____                   |
| Religious (ex. Sunday<br>morning church hour) | _____                   | _____                   |
| Other (please specify)                        | _____                   | _____                   |

How much of your programming is generated by outside sources?  
(Ex. Newsweek FM or Captured Live)? \_\_\_\_\_ hours per wk.

Please name sources and shows:

Sources

Shows

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |



APPENDIX  
Survey Instrument

Personnel

1. How many full-time, paid technicians does your station have? \_\_\_\_\_
2. If none, who maintains equipment? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who possesses an FCC 1st Class or General License and signs technical logs? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many people (both non-student, professional and students) make up your total staff for the station? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many students work at your station per semester? Full-time: \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time: \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many (nonprofessional) students receive monetary compensation? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What positions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How many students receive academic credit for working at the station? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What position do they hold? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Is it possible for a student to receive both credit and money for working at the station? \_\_\_\_\_
11. If yes, under what circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Approximately how many students work in a purely unpaid voluntary capacity at the station? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What positions are these? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX  
Survey Instrument

Funding

What is the station's operating budget? \_\_\_\_\_

From where do the operating monies come?  
(Please express in percentages)

Percentage

Specific general college or university funds \_\_\_\_\_

General college funds as administered by  
academic department or school \_\_\_\_\_

Student funds (activity fees, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Endowment \_\_\_\_\_

Grants (monies received through specific  
grant applications) \_\_\_\_\_

Donations (telethons, raffles, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Other sources: \_\_\_\_\_

Policies and Procedures

1. What is the title of the person who manages the radio  
station? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Is this person a paid professional? Yes No

3. What percentage of the total contractual commitment of  
of the manager's time is devoted to the radio station  
(i.e., release time, load reduction)? \_\_\_\_\_

If students are integrally involved, what is the student  
chain of command? \_\_\_\_\_

4. To whom is the student leader directly responsible?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. To whom is the FAM directly accountable? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do written policies and procedures on station operation  
exist? Yes No

7. Please make a statement reflecting the basic philosophy  
of the radio station with which you are associated.