Public Radio in the New Network Age
Wider Use, Deeper Value, Compelling Change

Proposals from Public Media Leaders for Investments In Online, Mobile, and Other New Media Platforms, Content, and Operations

grow the audience for public radio
GROW THE AUDIENCE is a broad-based effort to shape shared strategies, compelling goals, and results-oriented plans that will widen the use and deepen the value of public radio. The project has published research reports, essays, and *Public Radio in the New Network Age*, a draft of recommendations for local and national action.

Reports, essays, and other project materials can be found at the GROW THE AUDIENCE website:

[www.srg.org/GTA](http://www.srg.org/GTA)

GROW THE AUDIENCE was initiated and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The Station Resource Group, a membership organization of leading public radio stations that focuses on strategy, analysis, policy, and innovation, provides leadership for the GROW THE AUDIENCE initiative.

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Introduction

In spring 2009 GROW THE AUDIENCE published findings and draft recommendations of the Public Radio Audience Growth Task Force. The report, *Public Radio in the New Network Age*, challenged public radio to adopt ambitious goals to increase public radio’s use, value, and diversity and mapped strategic and tactical recommendations across broad areas of content, delivery platforms, and station operations.

As the title of its report suggests, the Task Force believes the unfolding networked environment of online technologies, mobile devices, and other new media will be of considerable importance in realizing overall public service goals. The Task Force recommended using “the network” to advance public radio’s broad mission, to extend the use and reach of its current programming, and to create entirely new ways of serving and connecting with communities and individuals.

To sharpen understanding of critical next steps, GROW THE AUDIENCE asked fourteen public media leaders to propose specific actions and investments over the next several years that would advance the new media recommendations in *Public Radio in the New Network Age*. The fourteen individuals, most with a new media focus to their work, include producers, station leaders, network executives, and consultants to the field.

To a person, our respondents are working hard toward a bright public media future in the networked space and we deeply appreciate the time they took to share their knowledge, experience, and insights. We received terrific contributions – from terse, creative to-do lists to fully-developed proposals. We have done our best to summarize and synthesize what we heard, but the full responses, which are also included in this report, deserve a careful read.

Skip Pizzi, Media Technology Consultant, coordinated the research, assembled the findings, and prepared the initial analysis. We joined in preparing the final analysis and report.

Terry Clifford
Tom Thomas
Summary of Proposals

Proposals and recommendations converged to three general targets:

- Platforms
- Content
- Operational Effectiveness

We then grouped itemized suggestions in each of these sectors, which we list on the next three pages.

We have presented individual recommendations in each area in stack-ranked form, with the most commonly recommended items listed first. Where appropriate within the generally intersecting recommendations we provide bulleted lists of differentiated details from individual respondents. With the purposely wide net cast by this study, it is not wholly unexpected that opinions might vary widely among respondents. We have attempted to summarize fairly but thoroughly all relevant contributions.

- Two initiatives stand out in their relatively broad support:
  - Develop a flexible, sharable local/national IP infrastructure for public radio content providers.
  - Explore a coordinated online fundraising infrastructure for public radio.

- There is strong support for significant investment in new media content, but a wide range of possible targets and approaches.

- Several other recommendations gained moderate levels of consensus:
  - Develop a platform serving mobile devices.
  - Support common technical standards.
  - Develop vertical content-aggregation sites ("Huffington Post or Hulu models")
  - Improve the “findability” of public media content through improved search tools

- Respondents also surfaced a number of ideas, outside the “conventional wisdom,” that warrant further discussion and exploration.
## Platforms

### Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Develop common or easily shared resources for convergent IP activity among public radio content providers.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Use proprietary and/or public APIs and shared services to allow flexible content syndication and transaction (including paid access).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build discrete, interoperable services, rather than a single, all-purpose platform. Invest $300k/year for administrative overhead of this process, and create 4-6 person project development teams for multiple projects within it, adding more projects each year (@$500k/year/team).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Further develop NPR.org as the master repository of all public radio content and archives (for news and music) via massive, comprehensive content aggregation.</td>
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<td>• Implement the Digital Distribution Consortium vision of a neutral utility for content storage, aggregation and delivery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop, support and market a coordinated Internet streaming radio offering, using both existing public radio simulcasts and new online-only channels, to create a variety of niche music, talk and news services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create a universal Public Radio Player, an embeddable slideshow and playlist-enabled web player for station and other websites, allowing access to all public radio streams, on-demand content, and localized choices from stations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Public TV online content might also be included.</td>
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<th>Fund the development of a platform serving mobile devices.</th>
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<td>• Spend $1-2M/year on developing public radio mobile platform applications.</td>
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<td>• Translate what public media does best (journalism, audio, video, interactive content) to the mobile platform.</td>
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<th>Emphasize the support of technical standards.</th>
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<td>• Enable content portability across multiple platforms (i.e., multiplatform integration) via use of consistent metadata protocols.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leverage economies of scale to maximize efficiency of funding value and impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Invest $500k/year towards pilot of metadata standards and archiving of news assets (photos, audio, text, production materials, and finished product).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Target multiple platforms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Plan for intersection with American Archive project at end of 3 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use support of standards as a requisite for approval or criterion of preference in grant awards.</td>
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| Establish a new, independent public media company that would be THE new media distributor of public radio and public television content – the third leg of the public media enterprise. Like Hulu, the company would be separate, but with close ties to legacy content creators. |

| Fund the development of public radio applications and tools that foster audience engagement, knowledge and fun. Consider both individual developers and crowd sourcing (i.e., “wiki” approach) for this work. |

| Consider outsourcing of digital asset management services. |

| Give preference to projects that include balanced on-air/online/on-demand components. |

| NPR should enhance Public Interactive support of medium and small stations’ capacity to create more robust websites without a costly outlay. |

| Support infrastructure and bandwidth costs for online radio delivery in small and medium-sized markets. |

| Explore partnerships with the tech community for donated or cost-reduced build-out and operations of local and national platform and service elements. |

| Table 1: Summary of recommended funding targets in the Platforms sector |
Content
A very wide range of suggestions reflected the diversity of opinions in this area, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provide funding for <strong>repurposed and web-only interactive content</strong> for multiplatform use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Fund experiments in developing such content efficiently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Subsidize ongoing production.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Study how online content can enhance content on traditional broadcast platforms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Consider establishing funding preferences for projects that include substantial digital-only content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Establish an SPDF-like fund for competitive new-media program-funding grants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Selectively replace the local <strong>news gathering capacity</strong> lost with the decline of newspapers, and create a presentation scheme that offers audiences an effective way to consume it.</td>
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**Develop vertical content-aggregation sites** (“Huffington Post or Hulu models”)
- Focus on subjects of public radio’s (and TV’s) existing or appropriate dominance.
- Provide high-profile “destination” sites for public radio content and discussion.
- Fund local subject teams of 2 FTEs each ($150k - $200k per topic/per market), 15 in the first year (up to $3M), 30 in the second year (with local match), 60 in the third year (adding listener and grant support).

**Update/change public radio news** production model
- Use a live, faster, younger, atomized, tagged, multi-platform approach.
- Include national-local collaboration (e.g., Argo); significant investment recommended here ($2.5M/year).
- Move away from program-schedule oriented news production toward a 24x7 online news portal content model.

Exploit public radio’s competitive advantage of blanket music rights and create an **aggregated music offering**, including **recommendation engine**, available via station websites.

Divide new-media content funding equally between: (a) a few **high-profile/impact projects**, and (b) a fund supporting a **broad range of smaller projects**. The latter grants should be in the $50k to $200k range each, and be judged on the criterion of **stimulating innovation**, without limitation to the type of entity (individual, station, network, etc.) awarded.

Devote $2.5 million each year to full-time staff positions at 50 stations ($50k each) to run **workshops that include local communities** in content creation and sharing.

Create a new, vibrant **online community** where users can discover thoughtful pieces by recognized opinion leaders, and engage in discussions about the issues.

Spend $3M/year to develop initiatives established by **MQ2 project**, whereby producers, networks and stations work together to diversify the audience, drive users across multiple platforms, and measure effectiveness of these efforts.

Invest $1M/year to fund **large, innovative projects from individual producers and independent production houses** (e.g., 10 projects/year @ $100,000); prioritize blending of traditional and digital platforms and partnerships with networks, stations and other media consortia incorporating new and diverse talent.

Invest in leading stations’ capacity to provide **regional/local/hyperlocal online services**, and provide incentives for partnering locally with new-media startups.

Build **video production capacity** at public radio stations and other content production facilities.

Establish an “**institute**” for study of wholly new content development and styles in new media delivery.

**Table 2: Summary of recommended funding targets in the Content sector**
Operational effectiveness

A more focused set of recommendations was presented in this area, with considerable convergence on the value of leveraging networked opportunities for improved fundraising practices:

<table>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a <strong>coordinated online fundraising infrastructure</strong> for public radio.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Create a networked, shared user identity – a universal, public broadcasting-wide, national membership with single log-in credentials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Develop coordinated online giving for syndicated content like podcasts, mobile, streaming.</td>
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<td>- Allow users to sign up either at NPR.org or at station sites.</td>
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<td>- Allow users to route contributions to the content or service of their choice – or to a general fund.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Build online revenue generation by developing and promoting best practices on online pledge forms, micro-donations, text-to-give and acquisition/development of online donors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Develop a set of revenue sharing policies to distribute syndication, membership and underwriting income equitably among producers, stations and networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Arrange with Apple to use its online payment mechanism to collect public media donations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Explore the possibilities of transitioning from a purely service-based (i.e., station-centric) funding model to a content-based one, for all funding sources (CPB, other grants, corporate underwriting, major giving, listeners).</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Investigate possibilities for offering online premium content to members only.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve the <strong>findability</strong> of public media content</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Develop a <strong>public media search</strong> engine/site (include radio and TV).</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Invest in Search Engine Optimization and Marketing services on behalf of leading public radio content and station sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase investment in <strong>metrics</strong> gathering and analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop national service bureau for <strong>sale of excess datacasting capacity</strong> on public radio and TV digital transmissions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop technical <strong>web/online/mobile training</strong> for personnel at local stations, particularly medium-sized and small stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest $1M/year in <strong>AIR</strong> for operational support of independent producers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grow the <strong>NPM</strong> online ad network to aggregate station and national site traffic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund <strong>R&amp;D and Innovation Lab</strong> to develop and test new user experiences of public radio content across multiple platforms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop public radio “<strong>social media toolkit</strong>,” including tools and training for stations to implement social networking initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct system-wide “<strong>technographic</strong>” research of public radio audience to inform next steps in content and platforms development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide support to stations for dealing with <strong>digital rights</strong> and other legal issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore a <strong>complete restructuring of funding model</strong> for public radio in the new media context.</td>
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Table 3: Summary of recommended funding targets in the **Operational effectiveness** sector
Areas of broad agreement

Develop a flexible, sharable local/national IP infrastructure for public radio content providers.

Tim Olson calls it “Content Depot for the Internet,” Jake Shapiro refers back to the Digital Distribution Consortium planning effort of 2006, and Kinsey Wilson headlines his detailed proposal for this space simply “Platform.” They are joined by others who see the development of a new media “backbone” as a crucial resource.

Compared to earlier discussions on this point, sentiment seems to moving in the direction of an inter-operable, decentralized infrastructure rather than a single system solution. Michael Arnold and his colleagues at PRI observe:

“There may be a benefit to identifying a decentralized strategy that allows for content partners to share digital infrastructure by region or by other shared interests within an environment that allows for more flexibility and independent innovation than a centralized model would.“

Kinsey Wilson, citing failures of the newspaper industry with single-platform systems, urges:

“A first lesson would be to build discrete, inter-operable services, rather than a single all-purpose platform. A second would be to vest control in the customers by allowing them to contract for services – rather than establishing a centralized budget that drives all priorities. A third would be to build steadily, but incrementally – with a view of the ultimate vision – showing steady progress and learning as you go.”

A shared view among those suggesting this approach is that important elements are already in place (Olson, for example, cites NPR’s podcasts and API, PBS’ COVE video player, PB Core metadata standards, the American Archive, and PRX). Several suggestions urge acquiring or outsourcing additional functions from “the cloud.”

Mark Fuerst poses a different, centralized scenario:

“I would use the money as seed funding for a stand-alone public media company. . . . If politically feasible, I would use the leadership capacity of CPB to make this company THE new media distributor for public radio and TV content, that is, the center of the third leg of the public media service. . . . modeled more on Hulu, a new company with new media responsibilities with close industry relations to legacy media companies.”

Others, without going as far as Fuerst, urge significant aggregation of content as a key strategy, with npr.org most often mentioned as the aggregation hub.
Explore a coordinated online fundraising infrastructure for public radio.
For a period of time most thinking about deriving revenue from public radio’s new media programming and services focused almost exclusively on business sponsorship models. Structure and services that would advance such revenue are reflected in proposals here, too.

But much more energy is evident around ideas for capturing revenue from individuals. Suggestions range from the optimization of public radio’s current station-centered online donation apparatus to wholesale restructuring of the public radio revenue model and a shift to content-centered giving. Suggestions include exploring giving tools and techniques used elsewhere on the web, a shared “member identity” that would move across stations and programs, and the use of subscription systems for access to premium content.

Most of those who advanced ideas in this area also note the importance of developing rules or policies for the sharing of revenue in a fair and transparent fashion.

Views are disparate enough that the operative verb in the recommendation is “explore” rather than “develop.” It appears that several parties are ready to join in the exploration and that NPR, among others, already has some experiments underway.

**Significant investment in new media content generated strong support,** but these leaders suggested a wide range of possible targets and approaches with no single, widely-shared focus or strategy. Many comments encouraged investing more in content than in infrastructure and supportive services. Respondents cited the need for a mix of experimentation to define new opportunities and high-impact efforts likely to attract significant audiences and secure a strong position for public media in the networked environment.

**Other recommendations**
Several other recommendations warrant special attention, in our view, for their innovative potential. While these generally were recommended only by a single respondent, their uniqueness or freshness of thinking may simply have caused them not to occur to others. They could gain further consensus when presented for evaluation to a larger group. We therefore commend the individual recommendations below for special, further attention as decision-making proceeds.

They are grouped into the familiar sectors encountered above:

**Platforms**
- Exploit public radio’s competitive advantage of blanket music rights and create an **aggregated music offering, including recommendation engine,** available via station websites.
- Develop a **public media search** engine/site.
- Explore **partnerships with the tech community** for donated or cost-reduced build-out and operations of local and national platform and service elements.
Content

- Update/change public radio news production model.
- Invest in leading stations’ capacity to provide regional/local/hyperlocal online services, and provide incentives for partnering locally with new-media startups.

Operational effectiveness

- Invest in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Marketing (SEM) services on behalf of leading public radio content and station sites.
- Develop public radio “social media toolkit,” including tools and training for stations to implement social networking initiatives.
- Explore wholly new business models for online distribution of public radio content.

Congruence versus conflict

Although the range of recommendations from respondents was rather broad, there was little disagreement that future opportunities abound for public radio in the networked space. Different people have different ideas on just what to do and how to achieve it, but overall the goal of using the networked environment to increase the value and impact of public radio is a strongly shared notion.

Perhaps the strongest dissent within this research involves how much change is required within the public radio industry for optimum results. Can the current production and funding models be adequately extended for successful adaptation to the networked world, or must they be substantially reworked, rethought and retooled? The degree of aggregation or centralization desired across the system is another area of some divergence.

Finally, there is a variety of non-intersecting thinking on how to best maintain and grow creativity and diversity in public radio content going forward.

Given the high stakes involved, it behooves decision makers to pay careful attention to all viewpoints, difficult as some may be to reconcile to the prevailing wisdom. The fundamental opportunity for change and improvement of public radio’s prospects and impact presented by the networked environment should not be wasted on assessments made with outmoded processes.

We highly recommend reading the full comments of the participants in this study

Implementation and general guidance

In addition to the recommendation of hard funding targets, we asked for insight on the general implementation of such investments. Here are the suggestions

- Move quickly: Current conditions provide a unique opportunity for public radio to become a significant online, local news provider with less risk than previously may have been required.
- Experiment aggressively.
• Remain flexible throughout the process.
• A collaborative spirit is required for optimum results.
• Clarity of roles, goals and objectives is critical to success in the networked space.
• Work towards increasing content choices and expanding diversity.
• Solving the “station problem” is not a prerequisite for other positive action.
• Understanding of the online environment is important.
• Utilize consumer-focused rather than station- or program-focused design models.
• Look inside and outside system for benchmarks and best practices.
• Constantly strive to improve performance metrics.
• Establish baseline evaluations of current new-media approaches in different communities to proceed democratically but swiftly toward innovation.
• Engage the Argo model – a coalition of the willing dedicated to rapid prototyping, with a centralized infrastructure that exploits local strengths.
• Lessons learned in public radio funding of new media projects can be applied to public TV.
• Issue RFPs for new online community-building projects.
• Divide new-media funding as follows: 20% to infrastructure, 80% to content.
• Take a two-pronged approach: spend some toward repurposing current programming model and brands, and the rest toward R&D of truly new content styles that will attract currently unserved audiences.
• Do one thing really well, even when doing many things is tempting.

Major players
We asked respondents to list the key actors in public radio’s networked space, and/or who came to mind as they made their recommendations above. Respondents provided both individuals and organizations in response to this query and a few signaled the interest of their own organizations in providing leadership in this area.

Responses in this area indicate that in addition to a sizeable pool of individuals and organizations inside public media, public radio also looks to role models and inspiration outside the public broadcasting system – to other media, social action, and educational organizations and enterprises. Those called out in the interviews and listed below are a small sample of potential partners and participants in the new media space.

Organizations
Networks/programming organizations:
- American Public Media
- National Public Radio/ NPR Digital/Public Interactive
- Public Radio International,
- PRX
- National Black Programming Consortium, PBS Digital Media,
Proposals for New Media investments

Stations:
- KPBS, San Diego
- KQED, San Francisco
- Louisiana Public Broadcasting
- Minnesota Public Radio
- Oregon Public Broadcasting
- Public Broadcasting Atlanta
- WFMU, Jersey City
- WGBH, Boston
- WNET, New York
- WNYC, New York

National organizations:
- Association of Independents in Radio
- Corporation for Public Broadcasting
- Integrated Media Association
- Station Resource Group

Research/consulting firms:
- Edison Research
- Jacobs Media

Other groups:
- Bay Area Video Coalition (Community/training expertise)
- El Sistema (Social Action for Music)
- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- New England Conservatory (new music education and social change model)
- One Economy Corporation (mission-minded information and services to a lower income demographic)

Individuals

Jad Abumrad, WNYC Radio Lab
Joaquin Alvarado, CPB
Marcia Brooks, WGBH
Andy Carvin, NPR
David Fanning, Frontline
Ken Freedman, WFMU
Dennis Haarsager, NPR
Dave MacCarn, WGBH

Torey Malatia, WBEZ
Angela Morgenstern, PBS
Todd Mundt, Louisville Public Media
Skip Pizzi, Consultant
Jake Shapiro, PRX
Kingsley Smith, NPR
Kinsey Wilson, NPR

Public radio’s role in education

Finally, we asked what role public radio should play, if any, in Education (K-12 and beyond).

Responses were mixed overall, with a nearly equal number of positive and negative responses. On the negative side, respondents felt that public radio has enough on its plate without attempting to incorporate educational components or that serving its core mission of quality journalism fulfilled this role indirectly.
On the positive side, respondents felt that public radio could play a role in education in the areas of presenting news for students, leveraging its journalistic resources and low-cost production skills into producing educational modules for classroom teaching, home schooling and lifelong learning, and perhaps providing ESOL training materials. Another recommended that public radio form long-term, local partnerships with schools and other youth-oriented media organizations, to deepen presence in the digital culture and build stronger ties to the “digital natives” in these communities.

One respondent with particular experience in the educational area noted that for any material to be used as essential educational components they would have to undergo pedagogical review, which is cumbersome and specialized, and not an existing or familiar public radio function. Short of this rigorous process, public radio content would be relegated to supplemental material, which while still useful, would have to compete with a massive amount of other similar material extant, so garnering attention in that noisy environment would require significant marketing effort. This respondent also noted that many students today consider radio content in an education setting to be as archaic as the filmstrips today’s adults recall from their school days, although Youth Radio may be doing something to change that.

Another respondent felt that public radio could play a critical role in education, but only if a substantial and sustained investment were made to do so. Finally, one respondent noted that any public radio ventures in this area were far better suited for online than for on-air presentation.
Interview Approach
From an initial pool of two dozen potential respondents, we completed interviews by email exchanges and telephone with fourteen individuals (see Contents for a full listing).

We focused these exchanges with the following questions:

Key funding targets and priorities
If you had unilateral spending control over a fund of, say, $5 to 8 million/year for three consecutive years, where/how would you spend it to provide the greatest benefit to public radio’s development and growth in new media? Be as specific as you can, including real recommendations for individuals and entities (existing or envisioned) whose involvement you’d propose, and their respective roles.

If you have multiple suggestions, please prioritize them as to which investments should be made sooner vs. later (within the three-year timeframe).

Implementation
Somewhat more generally, can you envision any additional specifics that could guide public radio’s implementation of any recommendations made by the GROW THE AUDIENCE project so far regarding new media? For example, tell us how you see the recommendations manifested: What are the next key steps that take public radio on the path laid out in the recommendations? How are these recommendations “operationalized”? What are the metrics and benchmarks for success?

General Guidance
Please provide any other concrete guidance you can to help decision makers spend wisely and effectively in growing public radio’s Network presence.

Key players
Who are the major “players” in your head as you answer these questions?

Education
What role do you believe public radio plays in providing education materials for schools in the new media age?
Michael Arnold
Senior Director of Content Development and Strategy, Public Radio International

[With input from PRI’s Morgan Church, Alisa Miller, Ann Phi-Wendt, Melinda Ward, and Leslie Wolfe]

PRI first pointed out key assumptions PRI believes should be considered regarding their recommendations:

- CPB funding should be focused on increasing the choices listeners/users have.
- CPB funding on digital should encourage diverse viewpoints and audiences.
- Any digital recommendations should encourage open standards and interoperability.

Key funding targets and priorities

PRI would recommend a portion of the mix to be focused on infrastructure projects (20%) as technology rapidly changes and the expense of infrastructure continues to fall. The rest of the money would be split between one or two high impact areas focused on larger scale content initiatives (40%) and on smaller projects that encourage innovative content (40%). A key area of focus, particularly in the larger scale initiatives could be on “open-ended” content verticals that would encourage and facilitate organic content collaborations around topic areas identified by the partners themselves. Smaller projects should get funding in the $50-$200K range to allow for maximum development of ideas. It will also be important not to discriminate or force institution types for digital grant making. These grants should be open to networks, producers and stations, and not be built or require entity types. Digital innovation and content creation can come from any one or all of these organizations.

CPB should consider digital-only projects that only exist on emerging platforms as well as offer opportunities for integrated projects designed to showcase ways stations and networks can better transfer broadcast audiences to digital platforms. There are indicators that broadcast has not been effective in driving audience to digital platforms, a disadvantage that ultimately could have an impact on revenue from foundations and corporate support. It would be interesting to identify how this might be done better by public media in a way that maximizes public service and takes advantage of the fact that public media has an audience on terrestrial broadcast that is seeking compelling content on digital platforms.

Infrastructure

Developing common standards (i.e. PB Core) and infrastructure to allow easy sharing of content across entities is a key first step. There may be a benefit to identifying a decentralized strategy that allows for content partners to share digital infrastructure by region or by other shared interests within an environment that allows for more flexibility and independent innovation than a centralized model would.
Another area to explore is outsourcing digital asset management to an entity outside of public media entirely as these organizations may have more expertise in assuring secure service to public media that offers more flexibility and faster implementation. For example, Amazon, Google and other companies are developing digital services that take advantage of economies of scale and large data centers with significant back-up capacity. The technical expertise and infrastructure of many of these existing companies exceed anything affordable by public media.

Finally, there are likely institution-specific digital asset management needs within organizations that will be required in this environment, whether broader infrastructures exist or not. It will be important for CPB to provide smaller grants to support this work and that these systems also have the potential to plug into larger initiatives.

**Content**

Since the broadcast reach of public radio is large now, it may be good to implement projects targeted at growing digital platforms through an integrated online/on-air/on-demand approach sooner rather than later. We should look at key programs and franchises – how can their web and mobile presence and audience base be bolstered? The GTA report has singled out some programs already; these are a likely place to start. As it was pointed out in question 1, there are funding implications if public radio/media does not quickly create a vibrant presence on these current and emerging digital platforms.

We should immediately pursue integrated public media search – NOW. For example, get the URLs, publicmedia.org, publicradionews.org, etc., and create a national gateway into the breadth and depth of all our sites and content. This should be a collaborative effort and should decidedly be generically branded (as should all of the collaborative efforts, i.e., NOT NPR’s Search Portal or PBS’s Search Portal). The goal of the service would be for people to find what they are looking for and move them to those specialty sites as quickly as possible. The strength of our system is the diversity of sources and points of view. We need to help people find them. This would be one of many places for people to find their station sites, find their favorite shows and talents and find feeds of complementary content.

Focus on driving people to the many sites and places where the depth of our content lies. This idea has been discussed for years and it is unclear why it has not moved forward. It marries the need for discoverability with listener/end-user service, while also reinforcing the other brands and sites within public media. It is a win-win. It can be inclusive of news content but not exclusively news.

It should also INCLUDE TV! We know that GTA by its nature is more radio and web focused, but in terms of innovation and serving the American people, integrated and federated search that is inclusive of at least the adult content from PBS and stations would seem to be a high priority. This seems like a first, and potentially the only step needed in answering the question whether an integrated news site is needed within public media.
The broader idea of federated search that includes the varying and large categories of our content, from news to music to performance to how-to, seems like a way to find out whether additional specialized verticals are needed or not, and could organically come based on this base of traffic and aggregation. And again, this can allow for the depth to live in places and with organizations, where this content is known best. It is about discoverability not about creating a new large organization that duplicates content, distribution, and business expertise.
**BRENDA BARNES**  
President, KUSC Radio, Los Angeles, California

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**Key funding targets and priorities**

**News**
I would use the funds to build the platform for integrated international, national and local news. Building the platform would require collaboration and a clear delineation of responsibilities among NPR, stations and others also called for in the report.

**Music**
I would bring together music stations (that truly never work together and have no relationship) to discuss how they could pool resources to create a public radio music portal. Sources for one-stop music shopping (iTunes, YouTube, Pandora, etc.) are becoming more popular. Public radio encompasses a number of music formats. It would be ideal to put them together.

Based on my recommendations, the bulk of the funds would be spent on news in the first three years with a smaller amount allocated for music.

**Implementation & major players from where you sit**
Creating an integrated news platform speaks to several of the recommendations:

- Clarity about the roles and expectations of stations
- Development of a baseline capacity and fluency
- Aggressive experimentation (the platform can be constructed to be flexible)
- Investments in pilots and demonstrations can be part of the plan
- Build public media’s online news capacity

This would involve collaboration between NPR, stations, PRNDI, independent producers, etc. In an environment that includes aggressive experimentation, it is challenging to come up with benchmarks and metrics. One possibility would be to set the project up as a test. Create a platform, populate it with content and test it with a random sample of listeners. Then continue the process until you have something with legs.

With regard to music the steps would be:

- Convene key public radio music people (Bruce Warren (AAA – WXPN), Cephas Bowles (jazz – WGO), whoever does bluegrass for WAMU, a classical music person, Linda Fahey (folk – WKSU), etc.
- Develop a public radio music portal that could be expanded to other genres. Obviously there is a lot of work to be done to determine if the platform will offer streams or operate like Pandora or
both. Plus, deciding which genres to focus on beyond the ones currently represented in public radio will be a challenge. But a small group of music personnel can take this on.

**General guidance**

I think we need to be much clearer about what is meant by extending the inclusiveness of public radio. This is about as broad as a statement can get and while I'm all for inclusiveness, I think we need to be more specific about target audiences and goals to make sure dollars are spent wisely.

**Public radio’s role in education**

I really don't think we should get into this right now. There is plenty of work to be done on the goals laid out in GTA. Let's transition public radio successfully to a new media environment first.
First let me preface this by saying that I don't have a jot of experience managing radio projects, since I come out of managing print and online outlets. So please take my comments with that in mind.

**Key funding targets and priorities**

I'd suggest that all of the recommendations that you provide really emphasize the context of **multiplatform integration**. I know this is mentioned, but I think it's important to keep reminding stations that they can no longer afford to operate in content silos. The best way to approach this is for all concerned to work to make their content portable across multiple platforms with consistent metadata protocols. Here are a few sources to bolster this concept:

- Todd Mundt's Mediavore project ([http://themediavore.com/mediavore/](http://themediavore.com/mediavore/)) offers a glimpse at such a future, although it's not currently very visually rich.


- Vivian Schiller has more recently been articulating a more elaborate vision for an NPR-centric news network. (I like Rob Paterson's take on this: [http://www.fastforwardblog.com/2009/03/06/the-vivian-schiller-vision-for-public-media-plus-flesh-on-the-bones/](http://www.fastforwardblog.com/2009/03/06/the-vivian-schiller-vision-for-public-media-plus-flesh-on-the-bones/).)

- David Fanning from *Frontline* has also been stumping the idea of an integrated online news site, but one which is not centered on one of the existing services, but is web native. I like this idea better, personally, but I understand the turf wars involved.

**Implementation & major players from where you sit**

If I were Mogul for a Day (or Mogul for Three Years, as the case might be), I'd probably draw upon a set of projects that we've been brainstorming at the Center for Social Media with partners that we see as innovation leaders in the sector. At the moment, these include the National Black Programming Consortium (specifically, their New Media Institute, [http://www.nbpc.tv/nmi](http://www.nbpc.tv/nmi)), PRX, the Bay Area Video Coalition, and WGBH. The projects, all currently in R&D phase, include:

- **The Public Media Workshop**, which would convene public media innovators working on a specific project as fellows at American University to work together for a specified period and both gain and share knowledge with one another and with the AU community of scholars, centers and students.

- **The Public Media Corps**, which would train emerging producers and then deploy them to stations to
grow the audience
Proposals for New Media investments

build content and institutional partnerships, create social media tools, and engage communities around issues. The corps members would be connected via a social network, allowing them to support one another and share best practices. There might be two tiers: paid and volunteer.

- **The New Pipelines project**, which is examining emerging distribution platforms with an eye to connecting and integrating them via multiphase content and engagement tools. These include the World channel (one of the multicast channels), the new PRX satellite channel, and content/applications designed for the National Public Lightpath. Right now this is just at the conversation stage.

- **Public Media Innovation Labs**, which would unite a series of scattered experiments across the sector (i.e., Public Radio Tuner, WGBH sandbox, BAVC's interest in developing more content for gaming platforms) under one umbrella, allowing for joint projects, joint fundraising, comparing notes, cross-sector distribution of innovations, etc. This is just a glimmer in my eye at the moment; we still need to flesh it out by taking a look at comparable labs—how they're structured, what they cost, what they've accomplished.

- **Integrated, Mission-Driven Metrics.** I'm working right now on interviewing makers, funders and metrics professionals about how to conceptualize and measure impact in the digital, participatory space, and am hoping to publish some sort of recommendations by next spring. We're also doing a pilot project with AIR's MQ2 producers to see how they are thinking about impact with their projects ([http://www.mq2.org/](http://www.mq2.org/)). Sue Schardt from AIR has been very enthusiastic about this, and would be someone I'd pull in as a consultant with the imaginary dollars you've granted us.

**General guidance**

All of these projects are designed to support and advance the entire public sector, and to build a flourishing new set of public media 2.0 practices/projects. In your scenario, though, the emphasis is on supporting radio specifically. I think in the first six months I'd focus on two priorities: recruiting the "coalition of the willing" described in the report and polling them about which of the steps laid out there are most likely/possible first, and establishing baseline evaluations of various approaches that are currently being tried out in different communities: i.e., staffing up newsrooms, creating community-based social networks, partnering with other content providers in communities, etc. Right now it feels as though there's little consensus about what works or how to move forward, so proceeding democratically but swiftly would be my goal. This is a very complicated environment, and I doubt there's a one-size-fits-all solution for stations. So having a variety of models to choose from—but emphasizing the need for innovation in each case—might help.
Key funding targets and priorities

I would encourage CPB to set aside a substantial portion of any new digital investment for funding a stand-alone public media company, for which I will use the handle "NewCo" Media, perhaps built on PRX or another media-related property. If no suitable foundation could be identified, it might be necessary to start from scratch.

There are two reasons for this: first, fifteen years of investment in the current (everybody-build-your-own-site) system have yet to provide good value. In saying this, I would use any of a range of value measurements including a reach into an identified audience, community financial support, or service to underserved populations. Second, there is a growing body of evidence that legacy media companies need to restructure their service—and not just extend service—to compete in a disruptive marketplace. Development of a separate company, tailored to the competitive conditions of the new market has been championed by Innosite, Clayton Christensen’s consulting firm, and by Chris Trimble (cited below), among others who have studied the problems of managing established firms as they encounter disruptive technologies.

NewCo would not be a service company like Public Interactive, a service that is widely adopted but still seems to lack impact. Instead it would be modeled more on Hulu, a new company with new media distribution responsibilities tied to legacy broadcast companies.

The company need not be entirely independent, and strong connections to the legacy management, assets and services may be essential to its success. Most likely, one would look for ways to connect this company to NPR and to other strong content producers, as suggested in 10 Rules for Strategic Innovators (Govindarajan and Trimble, Harvard Business Press):

What is most important is to change the discussion, to move beyond talk about how to improve station sites. We need to view new media R&D more than the extension of our legacy business.

Implementation

For convenience, one would probably locate NewCo in Boston, New York or San Francisco to take advantage of the labor force. Most important: NewCo should be run almost entirely by young new media professionals recruited from outside public broadcasting.
If politically feasible, I would use the leadership capacity of CPB to make this company THE new media distributor for public radio and TV content, that is, make NewCo the center of a third leg of the public media service.

I would ask that CPB make a public statement that: NewCo is “our major new media play.” And before making a final commitment of funds, I would try to leverage CPB support to secure additional foundation and private funding.

**Fair and universal access to capital and licensing of content**

To succeed, NewCo would need support from SRG to negotiate a system-wide "treaty," through which stations or networks would not restrict the ability of NewCo to raise money. NewCo must be able to raise major gifts and foundation money in every market, with no reservations. It would also need to secure user-based revenues in many forms from memberships to one-off sales to corporate support. Access to revenue will be essential because NewCo would be facing an enormous competitive challenge.

This is just one dimension of the broad structural set up: in giving NewCo the best chance to survive, you cannot circumscribe the market conditions of NewCo.

Ideally, NPR, PRI, APM and stations will make their content available to NewCo in same way NBC, Fox and others are making shows available to Hulu. This might be accomplished by a “mandatory license” system: that is, content produced with federal funding must be available to NewCo, and in return, if NewCo secures any revenue based on that content, it must pay the originating producer a royalty, with the rate adjusted appropriately to its state of development.

My inclination would be to have NewCo focus heavily on news; most probably it will be national in scope with no local responsibilities. But *all major business decision would be left to the professionals hired into the company.*

Finally, I would establish reasonable, but aggressive financial targets for the company with the understanding that failing to meet these targets will result in replacement of the management team—or closing the company—if it failed to meet its targets.

**General guidance and Development of Performance Benchmarks**

First, I think recommendations contained in “The Network” section of *Public Radio in the New Network Age* cannot be effectively operationalized because they present too wide a range of targets. Often it’s important to do one thing really well, even when doing many things is tempting. CPB and any other funder would run out of money before even a small portion of the listed objectives can be achieved.

Second, future new media investments need to be tied more to performance. In the current environment, we are not asking for enough ROI in online service.
Regarding benchmarks: development of performance standards is very difficult in an emerging field, but my sense is: most of our “benchmarks” are just the average of poor performance.

This does not mean that benchmarks should mean “biggest.” Naturally any benchmarks must be tailored by funding source and the intention of the creators: for example, in educational settings, where much of the money will be institutional and tax-based support, benchmark would probably focus on content use by teachers—which may have no direct ROI. On the other hand, for news and music services, where funding is likely to be dependent on the size, loyalty and generosity of the audience, benchmarks for service should measure use of content by a broad public.

In most cases, David Giovannoni’s concept that “public service = significant content reaching a significant audience” remains a very remarkably flexible and useful guide. For most of our current services the content is, almost by definition, “important.” So increasing service is often a function of increasing both the reach and frequency, both of which are relatively low for our current set of online services.

**What is Public radio’s role in education?**

Not much, if you mean formal education.

Leadership for online education must come from PTV, both from PBS and from the large number of state networks with substantial investments in educational media. They have the expertise, funding, traditions and, more and more, the technology.
What public radio needs most to support new media is not just disconnected projects or specific new media initiatives in news, music or network infrastructure. It needs a comprehensive platform to provide the technical and business infrastructure for network-wide services. A small fraction of this is already in place, but much more would have to be done to effect real change.

To support new media comprehensively, the system needs a new business structure that financially incentivizes and underwrites collaborative aggregation and new media development for the key supply side participants: content producers, stations, and networks.

At the same time it must drastically up-level the online user’s experience with public radio sites, provide appropriate mechanisms for direct user involvement, and provide the tools to raise significant new revenue to be distributed among the system participants via a revenue sharing business model.

Implementation

Key elements needed to make this happen:

Further development of NPR.org as a master portal to all public radio content and archives (i.e. massive, comprehensive content aggregation);

Further development of NPR.org as a platform via both private and public APIs and shared services to enable any level of content syndication, transaction of payments for syndicated content, and sharing of end user payments and contributions;

Further development of user services under the "NPR Community" concept, including applicable social network features;

A set of revenue sharing policies to distribute syndication, membership and underwriting income among producers, stations and networks;

A national membership program which allows end users to sign up either at NPR.org OR at any station, with the ability to route additional contributions to the entity of their choice.

When I have made the argument for business model reform to concerned members of the public radio establishment in the past, with few exceptions these ideas have been met by denial or disengagement. But no one has ever actually argued against them, except by avoiding the issues I raise. That’s a pretty good indication I’m cutting close to the bone and have identified one of the key issues in the "innovator’s dilemma" as applied to the public radio system.
(Ironically, Clayton Christiansen's description of the typical reasons for the "Innovator's Dilemma" don't apply to public broadcasting, in that making the necessary business model changes would neither work against the interests of existing customers OR reduce existing revenues with a lower-priced product. The dilemma here is the need to redesign the power relationships and business rules in the system.)

The recommendations of SRG's original "Grow the Audience" report (with the partial exception of the first one, which cites the obvious need for "organized and ongoing support for stations in developing strategic clarity about their roles in the online and mobile networked environment") as well as previous system-centric attempts at gazing into the future — are mostly bland reiterations of the core values of the public media catechism (diversity, service, inclusiveness, community, etc.), cautiously extending a +toe outside the box while continuing to view the world from inside it.

This approach cannot work, because innovation is not needed at the level of the public radio value system. Nor will modest, incremental online innovations be sufficient.

*What is needed is a new set of incentives and structural relationships between the major elements of the system and the audience that will enable and fuel an expanded set of digital services with their own logical business models.*

By looking at online and mobile networks only as a new distribution channel into which the old public radio network and station political and economic structure must somehow be fit, the system has consistently missed the revolutionary nature of the new developments, wasted money on overlapping and partial investments online, and failed to capture the share of online attention the quality of its content deserves. NPR.org should be a U.S. top 100 site: instead it ranks 324th in the U.S. and 1,178th globally.

Worst of all in my view, it has so far completely missed the new revenue opportunities that the digital network era can and should provide. For all these reasons, the policy of "incremental adaptation" has been a qualified failure, and will continue to fail to deliver the true promise of the network age.

In fact, the "Grow The Audience" slogan itself is both too obvious (of course you want to grow the audience — every media producer wants that) and too narrow — you don’t just want to grow the audience. You want to grow service and revenue as well, and create a technical and financial platform for public media in the 21st century.

So rather than tinkering with the low-hanging fruit among the opportunities that digital networks present to public broadcasters (so far: metadata standards, podcasting, APIs and other shared technical network resources, modular content syndication, and special collaborative projects), public media and public radio needs to restructure its core business models for the benefit all stakeholders.
Current Public Media Business Models

A *federated hub and branch system* of not-for-profit organizations with three central networks (NPR, PRI, APM) feeding programming and services to a diverse group of independent stations with a wide range of economic circumstances.

*Stations pay the central networks and independent producers for syndicated programming* (aka content) based on market size and other variables.

*Central networks’ business models* also include tax-based support grants from CPB, grants from public and private foundations, corporate and institutional underwriting, and returns on endowment investments, in addition to station dues.

Stations monetize their individual services in four ways:

- *Direct grants from CPB* (tax-based support)
- *Institutional grants* from their controlling entities (states, colleges, school boards, NPOs)
- *Underwriting* by corporate, institutional and individual advertisers
- *Voluntary direct memberships and donations* from listeners

The fact that the elements of this system are now over 50 years old and the current version at least 30 years old should tell you that it is at least time to take another look at the structural underpinnings of the public media system.

Digital Axioms

I take the following to be axiomatic when discussing the opportunities provided by ubiquitous digital networks:

*End users win.* Power moves from the core to the edges. End users, formerly known as listeners and viewers, gain the ability to choose from an unprecedented range of options, and to express those choices at will.

*Content originators win* by the ability to reach end users directly, without the gate-keeping and editorial functions previously exercised by intermediaries like network distributors and broadcast stations, and by the real prospect of universal access to all levels of content.

*Content aggregators win* by the extreme convenience of "one-stop" interactivity, users’ preference for minimizing the number of sites they have to deal with, and economies of scale.
Intermediaries tend to lose. They are "dis-intermediated" — rendered unnecessary by both direct network access to content, and by user preference for more comprehensive services and more refined user experiences. Local stations are most at risk in the new order and must find new ways to justify their existence.

Content scarcity is replaced by content abundance, along with a new set of abundance-related issues. Unlike broadcasting, bandwidth is effectively infinite, and there is no practical limit or shortage of content. The focus shifts to finding desired content via search, rankings, tags, recommendations, shared links and other network-native strategies employed directly by the end user.

Scheduled mass audience broadcasting is gradually replaced by on-demand use, subscription feeds and customized, user-controlled aggregation on a range of wired and wireless platforms.

Digital Business Models

If you accept the axioms above, certain conclusions follow:

Massive content aggregation is the only way to provide a broadly competitive service in the network era. This does not imply that NPR.org or PBS.org would make stations irrelevant. Public media's federated network/station structure is ideal for delivering an aggregated service from multiple "points of presence" on the network.

To meet the varying needs and desires of end users, a substantial number of customizable tiered service options, payment models, and total cost of service need to be supported. The closest model for this today are large cable TV services; online services can and should be more granular.

National memberships should be encouraged at both the network aggregator level and the local service (station) level, for the benefit of the entire system. This is where the new revenue is going to come from, but the proceeds must be shared. In fact...

Fair and transparent revenue sharing is the future of most online media. Public radio can lead in this because of its mission, history, and existing federated structure. Payments for content can flow in all directions, not just from stations to the central networks and producers. For example, in some cases NPR could underwrite or even pay stations to carry its content in order to extend the total reach of the network.

Payments to content providers should be proportional to actual usage, with minimums where necessary. Unlike broadcasting, it is possible to account for all uses of network delivered digital content. Producers should have a share in the revenue generated by unusually popular content.

These ideas are only a starting point. Building out the new relationships will require vision, commitment, and flexibility from all stakeholders, with one guiding principle:

Think Network.
Key funding targets and priorities
Annual breakout (could shift over the three years, but this is a starting point)

Content; expand the News Franchise with new approach – live, faster, younger, atomized and distributed across all platforms:
$2.5 million a year. Examples: Takeaway, Bryant Park-type program, “NPR 2”, expansion of ATC, The World into new streams/services, and inexpensive broadband video production of national radio shows for WORLD digital channel, mobile video platforms. This could also include national/local collaboration around atomized/tagged news content (e.g. Argo).

Also: Today’s breaking news is tomorrow’s history—put $500K towards pilot of metadata standards/archiving of news assets (photos, audio, text, production materials, finished product) in an archive/DAM that will, over time, yield valuable educational assets for multiple platforms (Kindle, iPhone, web, radio, video). This could converge with American Archive project at the end of the three years.

Community; training, co-creation of content and services within our communities:
$2.5 million a year: 50 stations @ $50K to fund position to set up and run workshops to include local communities in content creation and sharing. Select awards based on efforts to date in this area, success in leveraging local community groups, schools, libraries, museums etc. Set clear goals, feed the successes, starve the failures. This investment will be explicitly aimed at making public media content and processes more inclusive.

Connectivity; universal access via all platforms:
$1-2 million to fund mobile platform apps (including VRM ideas) built for mobile content. Build business partnerships with OEMs, existing major services (Google/YouTube, Apple/iTunes, Nokia, RIM) where mission and business model can co-exist.

The expansion of the news franchise can and should begin at once, in order to claim shelf space on cable (e.g. WORLD) and mobile (via family of iPhone and other mobile apps), as well as reaching younger and more diverse audiences with public media.

We will need to learn a new set of skills: how to come out of our buildings and co-create content and services with our communities. These efforts will necessarily take longer than expanding our existing expertise, so can come later and move slower (take time to go through lots of rapid prototyping, but not
lag through indecision).
Likewise, finding the business models that can support public media content will take longer than three years, but some important work can be done in that time. The answers will emerge out of the expanded audience (from the investment in content creation and expansion over platforms), discovering and leveraging the potential in our communities for content and services, (some of which will drive down costs and widen the pool of potential supporters) and our exploration of distribution deals with commercial partners.

Implementation

I think that NPR’s Argo is a good model—a modestly-funded coalition of the willing, dedicated to rapid prototyping, centralized infrastructure that exploits local strengths.

Metrics: Registrations are one key metric—prospecting, building a relationship starts here, sustaining our legacy business model as we evolve our new ones.

‘Touches’ of our content—everything from hard web log metrics to softer qualitative ones: inbound links, authority, Google rankings, etc.

Here’s a sliding scale of engagement from NPR’s David Wright:

Forrester has another useful model for engagement metrics here. They might be engaged to map our problem set to their models: Measuring Engagement, June, 2008
General guidance
Put the bulk of the money into one or two big things that move us towards a strategically sounder position—don’t chase every shiny thing, but save a small portion (10-15%) to pilot the potentially powerful ideas that will almost certainly need multiple iterations to distill to their essence.

Don’t be constrained to solve ‘the station problem’ as a precondition.

Try to aim towards work that will yield useful lessons for video/TV, e.g. business models, community inclusiveness.

Major players
Stations with operational experience and/or resources to execute successfully: WGBH, KQED, WNYC, Minnesota Public Radio, OPB, PBA, KPBS
Community/training expertise: BAVC
Successful experience delivering mission-minded info/services to lower income demo (least reached by public radio): One Economy Corporation
Major content sources: NPR, PRI, NBPC, Louisiana Public Broadcasting
Powerful new education/social change model: El Sistema. In the US – New England Conservatory
IMA as convener, thought leadership, metrics/evaluation tool

Public radio’s role in education
None, if limited to primarily audio. Educative materials must be developed that leverage journalistic resources with sound-craft/low cost production. Modules produced for classroom/home schooling/lifelong learning. Can be text/image based, game modules, broadband video (non-TV).
TODD MUNDT
Vice President and Chief Content Officer, Louisville Public Media, Louisville, Kentucky
Board member, Public Radio Program Directors Association

Key funding targets and priorities

- **Mobile services** – investment to translate what public media does best – journalism, audio, video, interactive content – to the mobile space.

- I would invest strongly in a **news-desk for the web** – using around $1 million a year to increase the number of writers and editors in Washington, and perhaps at selected stations around the country, with the goal of generating much more text national, international and regional news content for network and local sites. Through projects like Argo and through feeds, this content would be available to all stations and sites, allowing for a much more robust coverage of daily and breaking news, nationally and regionally.

- Investment in **NPR’s Argo, or similar projects**, designed to allow users to access the vast public media archive from any network or station site, as well as real-time federated search for all public media.

- **Public Interactive tools and services**, so medium and small stations can create more robust websites without a costly outlay.

- Investment in **technical web/online/mobile training for personnel at local stations**, particularly medium-sized and small stations.

- **Creation of a new, vibrant online community** where users can discover thoughtful pieces by recognized opinion leaders, and engage in discussions about the issues. This idea tries to push the NPR Community and similar sites toward the model created by *The Atlantic*, where existing content from public media mingles with work from a roster of reputable thought-leaders, created especially for the site.

- I use "site" to represent any public media website that ties into this service.


I would prioritize in the order I listed them above.

Implementation

Without getting too much into nitty-gritty, I'd like to see RFPs go out for concepts related to new community-building initiatives in areas like music genres, environment, arts/culture, etc., aggregation of content, as well as initiatives that extend public media more directly into the mobile sphere.
I think one of the best ways to operationalize recommendations like the development of new content niches and diversity initiatives, is to create working groups with deadlines, funding, and some autonomy to develop, implement, and test new concepts.

I think NPR's approach with the Digital Distribution Consortium in 2006 is helpful here. For some content and technical initiatives, after the working groups or entities have determined goals, creating a small team of 5-7 people who work together over 4-6 weeks to develop a concept, business plan, etc., can be an effective way to get projects underway.

**General guidance**
A significant mobile investment really must be at the top of the list, followed by a major investment in public media's online news service, followed by tools to improve the aggregation of public media content.

**Major players from where you sit**
CPB, PRX, NPR, PI, PBS, PRI, APM, KQED, WGBH, WNET, OPB, as well as selected thought-leaders from around the system.

**Public radio’s role in education**
Personally, this is important but not a core mission of the service. I think by providing a new kind of archive that encompasses more of the entire output of public radio journalism, we can provide better service.
Key funding targets and priorities

Three recommendations/areas

BUILD ONLINE REVENUE/SUSTAINABILITY

- **Online pledge forms: promote best practices.** Station.org’s online pledge forms are of uneven quality and rarely undergo usability testing and improvements. Basic best practices and A-B testing could be done with a few stations and shared widely. Convio and other email newsletter and online donation vendors could be leveraged as well. This is incremental improvement, not disruptive, but helps us not leave low-hanging-fruit dollars on the table.

- **Experiment, test and get a reality-check for micro-donations and text-to-give.** There is a lot of hope and hype around the potential of new types of online donations, including “micro-donations” and “text to give.” Personally, I expect that neither is a magic bullet, but just more tools that need to be implemented and managed smartly. Public broadcasting could use some advice, review of what worked/didn’t for others (e.g. Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs) and many small trials, to get some indicators about what is worth considering for more large scale system investigation.

- **Invest more significantly in ways to acquire and develop online prospective donors.** I suspect we’ll find that the most important and effective way to raise online donations, particularly from new audiences, is to build a relationship with them over time connected to the content they are interested in. One of the most straightforward is gathering prospects related to our national content. Contests (your joke on Car Talk, raffle for Carl Kasell’s bow tie, automated birthday call from Terry Gross, free PDF guide to top 100 recipes as voted by Kitchen Sisters, etc.). We don’t want to gather an email then just send them a donation request. We want to build relationships and seek points wherever we can to have an invitation with audience. On the TV side, especially, couldn’t we have 1 million teachers registered on PBSTeachers? We don’t want to get emails, then spam for donations. We want to build relationships over time.

- **Sale of spectrum wildcard.** I don’t know if there are serious buyers out there, but particularly for TV, where in many markets over-the-air viewership is in the 5-10% range, there is cause to consider renting out 49% of the data pipe local public TV stations own so that those revenues could go back into content.

INVESTIGATE NETWORKED/SHARED IDENTITY AND ONLINE PREMIUM CONTENT OPTIONS

- **Premium content/experiences for online donors.** Putting online content behind a pay wall is a much-debated issue in media today. Doing so in public media has additional issues including our public service mandate, and requirements from foundation and some major donors that the
content be made available widely. However, there are some areas we can test short of full pay walls, particularly online premiums, or levels. In TV, we might make low resolution versions available to all, and HD just to donors. We might also experiment with online premiums and gifts such as coupons for a free pass to natural history museum, free download of npr.org/music jazz sampler

- **Open ID or other way to pass registered user from site to site in public system.** Facebook Connect, Open ID, and others offer opportunity to have universal login for station.orgs, npr.org, apm.org, pbs.org and national show site.orgs. Single login would make networked based online discussions possible (user can see and comment on npr.org discussion from station.org). It would also be pre-cursor to potential premium content

**BUILD UP A “CONTENT DEPOT FOR THE INTERNET”**

As a system, we pool funds to create and maintain central satellite-based distribution systems for TV (NGIS) and radio (Content Depot). But there is no equivalent for IP distribution. There are some pieces to this puzzle: NPR’s podcast project, PBS’s new COVE video player, American Archives, PB Core and PRX, but we are a long way away from a system where producers can upload their video or audio, and enable publishing to many IP distribution outlets, both inside public broadcasting (NPR.org, station.org) and out (podcast, iTunes, Vimeo, YouTube).

- **Shared audio player.** PBS built COVE with shared video in mind. NPR.org’s player doesn’t include any audio aside from NPR (e.g. station, PRX, APM, PRI or third party). Many stations have or are building their own stand-alone player. Consider utilizing a central investment in a shared code base and standard data integration (e.g. ingest/output to/from NPR API). Player should also include functionality for corporate support and branding messages, as well as click to donate. This isn’t a full publishing system, but is a pragmatic, smaller scale project that is doable in reasonable amount of time.

- **Shared video/audio IP publishing system.** thePlatform (PBS uses), Maven, TubeMogle and others have tools to take a single piece of video or audio and ingest and publish it to web, YouTube, Blinkx, podcast, Vimeo, and dozens of others. PRX has some of this capability. Public broadcasting doesn’t have to build the whole thing, but using some home built, some acquired, and much in the cloud, we could assemble a robust solution for national and local producers.

**CONTENT SERVICE AREAS**

- **News, lifestyle and information.** As commercial news, particularly local TV and newspapers, decline, there is an increased role for public media. Trouble is, we’re structured (funding, staffing, publishing schedule) mostly around producing radio and TV news shows, not producing online news 24/7. BBC and CBC addressed this by cutting some TV and radio budgets to create a large central online news-and-information operation with regional contributing bureaus. While U.S. public radio can’t follow this model exactly, there are some advances we can make.
Proposals for New Media investments

- **Tactic: Huffington Post model – aggregation in specific subject areas.** Huffington Post has more traffic than many long established news sites, with only about 30 staff, only 4 are original reporters (so I have been told, don’t quote my data here). Public broadcasting can use this model also, particularly around specific subject areas such as environment or education. Gather a group of editors who bring perspective and voice, and have them point to some of the best stories on a subject. PaidContent.org, BoingBoing, and many others use this model to much success, including Discovery Channel’s launch of TreeHugger. Public radio has the brand and values that are attractive to producers. Seek out 2–7 of the most prominent writers/bloggers/columnists and ask them to post once or twice a week. Connect them to established public radio (and wider public media) content and producers (local and national) and link to this content prominently, but not exclusively.

- **Project Argo: this is a piece of the puzzle, building local station capacity**
- **Education: 1 million teachers, 50,000 digital learning objects (mostly TV play).** Public broadcasting has Teachers Domain and a few asset repositories focused on single states (e.g., Maryland, Utah), but we are missing an opportunity to have the #1 destination in the United States for educators seeking video/audio/multimedia assets. We have the trusted brand, a huge free promotion engine (air), and assets (though many are locked up in full length shows, which need to be re-cut/redone for specific educational use). There is opportunity for federal, foundation, and corporate funds for this. It can be a paid service to sustain it. Local stations can participate as well. Pair this service with robust professional development and training, both national services (e.g. TeacherLine) and local (e.g., KQED teacher training workshops).

- **Parents.** PBS has one-person staff for PBS Parents. There is lots of opportunity here. We could utilize the Huffington Post model above, and/or a blogger network of contributors. PBS notes the site is constantly sold out of corporate support space due to the focus of the audience. Partnerships with GreatSchools.net and other national/local data set services would enable the site to include both national and local content in every community.

- **Arts and culture verticals.** There are significant holes in coverage of arts and cultural events in local communities as newspapers continue to cut-back their coverage, as does local commercial TV.

**Major players from where you sit**

Jake Shapiro, PRX; Kinsey Wilson, NPR; Angela Morgenstern, PBS; David Fanning, Frontline

**Public radio’s role in education**

- **News for students.** See my Education paragraph above. But ALSO, public radio can provide services in K-12 schools (particularly middle and high schools) of the space Newspapers used to. Newspapers had a suite of programs for teachers and students, including student editions, and civic affairs course curriculum.
- *ESL program.* ALSO, public radio is used a lot by English as a Second Language educators, particularly in Community Colleges. Teachers use verbatim transcripts along with the audio. Students learning English read along with the audio to improve their English literacy skills. Teachers gravitate to these materials because the information is fresh, timely and relevant to the student’s lives, and it provides civic lessons. The costs to create an online curriculum center, an index of the materials available, and to promote its availability is relatively low. Not only is it a valuable service, that would likely be attractive to funders targeting immigrant populations, it is a fantastic way to bring new and diverse listeners to public radio.
Key funding targets and priorities
So hard in a vacuum. I would spend it to engage listeners and fans in the public radio process by atomizing public radio content through more digital channels. I would also transform public radio’s bureaucracy so that the stations participated in funds received through those digital assets and thus had more motivation to promote them. There are lots of sub-areas here, but Public Radio's funding mechanism – the idea that listeners sponsor stations when some may prefer to sponsor programs which no longer need stations – makes no sense as it stands. So some of this money should be spent to bring the system up to date with the times.

Further, public radio is really good at developing content and it doesn't develop nearly enough of it. And what it does develop requires the stamp of approval from program directors that don't have the proper sense of how to decide what's "good" and what isn't. They only know A) what THEY like and B) what fits (or probably fits). This is dumb. As I asked in my presentation at PRPD last year, how is it that Deepak Chopra, a public broadcasting staple, has a radio show on SIRIUS rather than public radio. This is nuts.

Implementation
Big questions. But the outline is very broad, so it's a little hard to comment without creating my own bullet points – and those should include public radio participation. See below for how to start . . .

General guidance
Think more from a consumer (i.e., listener) orientation – less of a station-driven one or even program-driven one. Too many decisions are made with the back end in mind rather than the front end. For example, these guys don't do nearly as much research as they should among real listeners. And too often when they do it, it's of the "Audience 2010" variety – huge project, huge questions. These things are too big and too scarce and too broad.

Major players from where you sit
I'm not sure what you mean by "players." But in my mind we should devote resources to questioning the fundamentals: What is "public service" today? What are our competitive advantages and how do we leverage them? Are we organized for media in 2010 or for media in 1985? Etc. I think the listener is the "player" that counts. And the one that's under-counted.

Public radio's role in education
I have no expertise here, but this is another question that's vastly better answered via digital strategies than over-the-air ones.
SUE SCHARDT  
Executive Director, Association of Independents in Radio (AIR)

Note: Schardt makes a passionate case that there is a “brain drain” taking place among public radio’s talent pool, and recommends it be stemmed with great urgency, lest public radio content become devoid of creativity.

General guidance

Breakthrough thinking is needed in four areas:

- Diversity
- Public Service
- Journalism
- Station- Network model

The discussion seems to stall at “Content” and never gets to “Creativity,” or the deeper dimension of an inspired individual maker who is responsible for content.

We are losing our talent pool – this decline is evident over last 5-6 years. In 2009 alone, ~$700k of acquisition funding (most of it going to independent producers) was eliminated with the cancellations of Weekend America and Day to Day, and the loss of funding to Hearing Voices. It’s not the producer’s survival that’s at stake, it’s public radio’s. These producers are simply going elsewhere.

Urgency: These trends are rapid – we are entering another bootstrap era, like the 1970s; greatly increased receptivity to change; a new zenith for creatives (direct-to-listener possible as well). Need to leverage this to public radio or risk losing momentum to other media.

Diversity discussions are at too high a level – white liberal educated language, motivated, perhaps, by a sense of social consciousness or obligation, rather than a roll the shirt sleeves up strategy. Need to question the assumption that we have something that is good or necessary for those “others” we are trying to attract. They are finding what they need in other places, and don’t know they need public radio. Previous/current model obviously not working

A dollar invested in a delivery platforms is not a dollar going to creative content or the producers behind it – Important to separate out the two. Both should be supported but – don’t delude yourselves that platform investment automatically draws audience or supports talent.

Stations and production are both needed – synergy of potential audience delivered by stations, and actual (“kinetic”) audience attracted and maintained by those who produce content.
AIR Membership survey, Spring 2009: Distribution: 13% of AIR producers/members distribute via PRSS/Content Depot; 87% do not (77%) or answered n/a (10%). 4% of AIR members producers/members subscribe to PRX; 73% say they use it “minimally” (55%) or “n/a” (18%).

**Journalism – we need a bold new vision of the craft,** – troubling goal appears to simply become new standard bearers...inherting the mantle lost to newspapers. The single greatest opportunity for public media at this juncture is not to simply fill the void, but to reinvent it. Sure protect democracy etc., but don’t just be satisfied simply delivering where others have failed – rethink (invest HERE); bring creative thinkers to table, not those terrified into action, but those embracing change, energized by disruption, including hands-on craftspeople who have already begun to reinvent. Recognize these individuals and call them out to serve this challenge.

**Key funding targets and priorities**

**E-mail follow-up**

- **Addressing an immediate crisis for the industry – the loss of its talent pool.** The cancellation of *Weekend America, Day to Day,* and the loss of funding for *Hearing Voices* amounts to the loss of $700,000 in acquisition fees to the producer community just from those programs alone – a tremendous vacuum in an already fragile/dysfunctional economy.
- **The best and brightest crop of producers in the industry have been fed and cultivated over the last 6-7 years** via the fees paid out and the additional editorial investments by these programs, by CPB, and by stations that paid to carry these programs.
- **This impending loss comes at a time when the industry is in most need of its most inspired and creative makers.** Facing the loss of income, producers are actively moving in other directions and taking opportunity in other media.

**The goals of any major system investment during the new era ahead must be to:**

- Secure our talent pool and set priorities that recognize that brilliant, inventive producers are critical to the survival of our industry. CPB has an opportunity to take steps toward bringing producers onto equal footing with the networks and stations, as the “third estate” that – with the audience – makes our industry tick.
- Step forward into the growth areas defined by GTA by forging new productivity between producers, the stations, and the networks. This productivity will be driven by producers and others in the systems that are actively developing new approaches to soundcraft, multi-media, and storytelling.
Specific recommendations for investment include:

- **$1 million to AIR for operational support.** This investment will be used to bring staff and operations to full capacity for the first time. It will contribute to investments by NEA, NPR, APM, and others in support of AIR’s stewardship of industry talent.

- **$3 million to develop out initiatives established by MQ2.** In its first pilot round – the first direct CPB investment dedicated to producers in 20 years – MQ2 and its broad team of advisors has demonstrated how producers, networks and stations can work together effectively in new ways. AIR/MQ2 is also beginning to work with the Center for Social Media to lay tracks for new metrics for how our work can drive audience between traditional and digital platforms. With a real commitment by CPB, there is tremendous potential for this project to:
  - Diversify our audience by turning to producers of color, income status and others who will lead stations and the networks into new communities of engagement and listening.
  - Make even more effective the investments already made in platforms such as PRX.
  - Provide scalable, measurable production activity key to inventing new metrics.

- **$1 million in a Talent Fund dedicated strictly to individual producers and independent production houses.** The major investors in public radio’s talent pool are primarily outside foundations, and government agencies such as NEA, NSF, and NEH. CPB should aspire to be a top investor in our talent. To start, solicit from producers larger-scale projects – 10 @ $100,000 – that encourage a) blending traditional and digital platforms, b) partnerships with networks and a range of stations, c) partnering with other media consortia who will bring new and diverse talent into our ranks.
Key funding targets and priorities
We need to stimulate greater “openness,” both to new producers and listeners. We still need some old-line savvy to keep it professional, however. There are two ways to proceed (not necessarily mutually exclusive): For the legacy players trying to get up to date, create a fund (like SPDF did to stimulate producers’ new use of the PRSS for distribution), and let all the regulars (or anyone) apply. If you want to flex the full muscle of the machine, though, fund an “institute” to develop new directions. It’s hard to decide where to write the check for that, however. The power of viral is hard to purposefully start from a single funding source, but it can be done – e.g., Obama campaign. The process of finding out how to do that is the first step here. This should not just be “more of the same, but online.”

Exploit content possibilities – not just making online versions of on-air. How to decide what properly producing for online (and its different core audience) really is? Not just repurposing legacy media. Challenge what the medium can really be (e.g., mobile).

How much risk is CPB willing to take? Who is the “other” audience we’re willing to reach? Is it youth, that is pretty much the same as current philosophy but younger, or is it totally different diverse groups not currently served? How much are we willing to spend to get it?

Implementation
Create a new content fund. But don’t stop there. Spend to research totally new audiences – Seeking what would drive new audiences to content sources? Let it rip. Not paralyzing research, but enabling. New stuff isn’t just Ira Glass or Jad Abumrad clones.

General guidance
Spend two ways – proceed strategically toward repurposing existing brand to new media environment, but also seed a brand new model. Reach beyond the current talent base – not just the old guys trying to reach new listeners.

Major players from where you sit
Tim Olson, Jam Abumrad, Ira Glass

Public radio’s role in education
Big problem is pedagogical review, otherwise it’s just supplemental material; and there is so much of that kind of material already available that getting the teachers’ attention above the noise to public radio material will require significant marketing effort.
Kids think of radio content being used for this purpose today as archaic as the filmstrips we used to have to watch. Talk to Youth Radio – their model seems to work against that.

Need to do our part to help US kids compete anyway we can.
Key funding targets and priorities

(Not in order of priorities)

Develop, support and market a coordinated internet streaming radio offering, using both existing simulcasts and secondary channels, and creating a variety of niche music, talk, and news services

Pandora for public radio. Exploit our competitive advantage of blanket music rights and create an aggregated music offering, offer personalized/recommendations a la Pandora, available via station and third-party sites and devices

Coordinated online giving tied to syndicated content like podcasts, mobile, streaming, etc.

Grow the NPM online ad network to aggregate station and national site traffic

Invest in Search Engine Optimization and Marketing services on behalf of leading public radio content and station sites

Fund R&D and Innovation Lab to develop and test new user experiences of public radio content across multiple platforms

Fund experiments in repurposed and digital-only content for multiplatform use

Execute on a version of the Digital Distribution Consortium vision - neutral utility storage/delivery/aggregation of public radio content, accessed through a smart API

Invest in leading stations’ capacity to provide regional/local/hyper-local online services, provide incentives for partnering locally with new media startups

Invest in new mobile applications and service development

Increase investment in metrics gathering and analysis

Develop more open source tools and ties to the developer community, e.g. create Wordpress public media widget for simple content syndication
Support a Hulu and HuffPo for public media joint tv/radio effort

Develop more open content curating approaches - a la PRX’s BallotVox - to find and present timely and relevant audio, video, and text content reflecting public media values

Work out deal with Apple to do donations using their payment mechanism

Create universal Public Radio Player - embeddable slideshow and playlist-enabled web player for station and other websites, allowing access to all public radio streams, on-demand content, and localized choices from stations. Based on PRX's iPhone app, NPR's API and Public Interactive's station data and services.

**Major players from where you sit**

The individuals and entities within the field are some usual suspects: PRX, NPR digital media, PBS digital media, Public Interactive, leading stations w/web capacity, IMA, SRG
**Key funding targets and priorities**

For starters, I think the system needs a better understanding of our specific listeners’ media usage habits. We have a pretty good sense of “where the world is going” with data from organizations like Pew and Edison/Arbitron projects. However, public radio decision makers often create new programs and new media initiatives with a lack of really understanding our customers’ needs. We need some real customer-driven research that is specific to public media.

I think a research project should be created to better understand the technological profiles of our current listeners and potential users of public media. We have a lot of information about demographics and psychographics; however, I think we’re lacking useful “techno-graphic” profiles of our audiences.

The greatest opportunity for growth in the next three years, particularly for music stations, is to invest in social networking media tools and training resources that stations can use to implement social media initiatives. For example: a “social media” toolkit (I loathe that word) that stations could utilize. Further investments should be made in online radio delivery (i.e. Bandwidth costs, IT infrastructure) particularly for small-to-medium-sized markets. Two additional areas of investment must be in mobile technology (delivery of content over cell phones) and building video capacity. I also think that, system-wide, stations need support and help in dealing with rights and legal issues which can be timely and costly.

I think there is a significant opportunity to reach a younger audience, 25-35-year-olds, through online radio and cell phones. I’d spend several million dollars here with stations to explore this.

**Major players from where you sit**

Some of the major players would include NPR and PRX and SRG. I think of individuals like Torey Malatia, Dennis Haarsager, Andy Carvin, and Kinsey Wilson who could play a role in this.

I believe research companies like Jacobs Media and Edison Research can provide some very useful contributions from the research side of things.

I’m personally excited about the Free Music Project from WFMU [http://freemusicarchive.org/]. I think they can potentially add to this conversation. Ken Freedman from WFMU is the contact there.

**Public radio’s role in education**

Public radio can play a significant role in providing educational materials for schools in the new media age. Anecdotally I can say that I have two boys, 10 and 12 and they’re making podcasts in their schools. They are experimenting with video and blogging. The digital natives are those we should be partnering...
with to deepen our presence in the digital culture and to build stronger ties to these communities. Forming partnerships with schools and other youth oriented media organizations should be a part of a continued commitment to a long-standing new media initiative.
Kinsey Wilson
Senior Vice President and General Manager, Digital Media, National Public Radio
Board member, Online News Association

Key funding targets and priorities and general guidance
I would direct the investment in three places: people, partnerships and platform.

Background
We are at a rare moment of social, cultural and entrepreneurial opportunity. Epochal changes in technology combined with the effects of a severe economic downturn have hastened the demise of the big-city American newspaper. Consumer habits are changing quickly. But more importantly, the economic fundamentals of the business have shifted decisively in favor of smaller, more efficient producers of news. Equity investors are beginning to place bets on online-only startups that will invent the next generation of newsgathering and delivery in local markets.

Public radio has seen continued growth in its audience as consumers look for alternative sources of news. But that relative strength should serve as motivation to invest in online media now – while the opportunity is ripe – rather than waiting until others have gained valuable experience and claimed a share of the funding model that historically has supported public media.

Taking each of the suggested areas of investment in turn:

People
Changes in web technology in just the past few years have completely altered the dynamic of web publishing. Where the first decade of online news delivery was dominated by big, costly destination sites, smaller, less expensive ventures are now able to attract significant audience. The Washington Post dominated online political coverage through the 2004 election cycle. But in 2008, smaller players like Politico.com and Real Clear Politics took center stage. We’re seeing the beginning of a similar phenomenon at the local level – with sites like Huffington Post, Voice of San Diego and others challenging online newspaper sites for their supremacy.

Those changing dynamics mean that public radio has an opportunity to establish itself as a significant online news provider at the local level without placing the kind of risky, big-money bets that would have been required even a few years ago.

And public radio brings to the table unique advantages that others don’t possess. They include:

- Reach. Public radio’s drive-time audience gives it a marketing power that can be used to promote its online effort (a power few startups possess).
• **Revenue.** Public radio has succeeded in firmly tying its mission to the concept of public support. It stands a better chance of applying that same allegiance to online news delivery than new entrants in the market.

• **Network.** Public radio has the capacity (as yet unrealized) to easily exchange content across its entire network – giving it exponentially greater power in the deployment of its journalism.

• **Audience.** The loyalty and trust that attaches to public radio is a unique asset that can be leveraged to great effect in a medium that relies in part on social connection for its power.

• **Scale.** This is experimental terrain. But public radio has the capacity to draw on the experience throughout the system and apply lessons-learned widely – a distinct advantage over players attempting to experiment market by market.

• **Commitment to diversity and underserved audiences.** The direction in which the Web is moving – toward smaller, specialty sites – makes it easier than ever to reach niche audiences. Commercial sites may continue to ignore these audiences if they don’t return sufficient revenue. But as the cost of reaching these target audiences drops, public radio can more realistically serve them.

This effort should start by building web-first news efforts in key cities where we believe the opportunity is ripe, based on assessment of the competitive landscape.

These efforts should be forward looking – anticipating how we think online news delivery will develop over the next 3-5 years – rather than seeking to replicate the online efforts of established incumbents.

“The job to be done,” to use Clayton Christiansen’s formulation, is to help news consumers find the information they’re seeking in the most direct and efficient way possible. To do that, we need to selectively replace some of the raw news gathering capacity that is being lost with the decline of newspapers; and we need to assemble the people and the tools to help readers/listeners sift through the growing volume of available (often uneven) content and determine what’s reliable and worth reading. In other words we need to bring the judgment that’s traditionally been applied inside newsrooms and put it in the hands of the reading public. We need to organize the information.

Rather than replicating the board-based general assignment coverage that newspapers have historically provided, we would recommend a beat- or topic-oriented approach that is better suited to the more specialized or “vertical” nature of the web.

Assuming some centralized platform and product development support, we believe it would be possible to make inroads in local newsgathering with teams of two individuals per topic – one working as a multi-platform beat reporter, the other working as a curator/blogger/community moderator.
Partnerships
At the same time we’re undertaking our own effort to develop an online news-gathering force, we also should look for opportunities to partner with the best of the startups entering the local market. Public radio does not have the capital or the talent to tackle this opportunity alone. But we offer big advantages (enumerated above) to potential partners that could form the basis of a potentially fruitful relationship. This is particularly true in the technology realm, where we lack the expertise to develop scalable news applications.

We also should attempt to tap into the loyalty that many in the tech community feel toward public radio and stage developer conferences or “bar camps” that encourage the creation of open-source applications for public radio that take advantage of our public APIs.

Platform
Much has been written elsewhere about the need for shared platforms and services that would provide economies of scale, allow for a free flow of content between public media producers, and allow us to deliver a more compelling and coherent editorial proposition to online audiences.

But one need look no further than the newspaper industry, which has repeatedly failed in its efforts to develop a single platform for disparate chain-owned properties, to understand the high cost and high risk attached to such ventures.

We have an opportunity to significantly lower those risks by heeding the lessons of those efforts and leveraging recent advances in the architecture of the Internet itself.

A first lesson would be to build discrete, inter-operable services, rather than a single all-purpose platform. A second would be to vest control in the customers by allowing them to contract for services – rather than establishing a centralized budget that drives all priorities. A third would be to build steadily, but incrementally – with a view of the ultimate vision – showing steady progress and learning as you go.

Properly managed, scalability and efficiency can be achieved without compromising innovation and speed. Among the capabilities that need to be addressed at a system level:

- **Intake.** It’s unrealistic to think that we could (or should) attempt to implement a single content management system across public radio. But we should establish a single set of standards and a single technology for getting tagged, well-structured content to all distribution points. A single “drop-box,” if you will, from which content will flow to all designated systems in the appropriate format.

- **Central repository.** A common, non-exclusive data repository where content would be archived, catalogued and stored for use throughout the system. Includes application business logic and rights management information.
• **Application Programming Interface.** A non-exclusive API that allows for retrieval of pubradio content by various classes of users, including authors, member stations, business partners, commercial entities and the public at large, based on a graduated set of business rules. If there is deemed to be value in “branded” APIs, we should examine whether branded “skins” can be developed on top of a common API to enhance the efficiency of this effort.

• **Identity management.** It remains to be seen whether a common identity management system can realistically be implemented across the public radio system; but at a minimum we should be able to implement a coordinated identity management system that streamlines the movement of registered users across the system and allows some or all of their data to be shared with qualified parties.

• **Third-party services.** Contracts with outside service and technology vendors should be pursued with opt-in provisions for all qualifying public media entities and implementation of these technologies should be undertaken in a way that allows for easy adoption by pubradio sites.

• **Integration services.** A service-oriented architecture can be used by experienced technologists to speed the development of their sites. But we also should provide for smaller sites that don’t have the technical capacity to deploy their own sites. This could be accomplished by providing a level of (subsidized?) for-hire services that would allow smaller players to take advantage of this architecture.

• **Sponsorship management.** The business needs of individual players may preclude development of a single, centralized ad-management system. But we should strive to acquire or develop a system that allows for insertion orders to be placed from a variety of related systems in order to maximize the value of these sponsorships by leveraging opportunities for (pre-emptable) national-cross property sales, while still providing a full opportunity for local sales.

• **Product Development.** One of the hazards of large, centralized technology services is that they become increasingly divorced from audience insight and product needs. Any central technology effort should include a close coupling with product development groups that can provide audience insight, editorial guidance and product definition.

• **Business rules.** Without clear business rules governing the use of content produced within the public radio system, a common platform will gain little adoption. Individual producers must have confidence that their content will be fairly distributed and that they will receive the intended recognition for that work.

• **Rights management.** Content produced within the system carries a wide variety of restrictions on its use. We should endeavor both to simplify these rules, while at the same time providing for adequate management of these rights within the system.

• **Phasing:** We would recommend that the people, partnerships and platform development be pursued simultaneously.

• **Spending:** The cost of a building out a single topical area of interest (2 FTEs) would run between $150,000 and $200,000 per topic/per market. We would recommend fully funding 15 in the first year (up to $3m). Building to 30 in the second year, but with a requirement that local stations
grow the audience
Proposals for New Media investments

find local foundation support for half the cost. That would give you 30 topics for $6 million (half from the imagined “fund”, half from local sources). Then double it again the next year to 60 – with $3 million coming from the fund, $3 million in grant support; $3 million in listener support; $3 million in sponsorship. The platform side of this would work out as follows: Roughly $300,000 for administrative overhead; $500,000 for each 4-6 person development team; one team per major project per year. These estimates give you an opportunity to scale the effort to available resources.

Roles and responsibilities: Stations should play an instrumental role in the creation of the topical areas, with support and guidance from a central group. NPR Digital Media, Public Interactive and others are “shovel ready” and in a position to begin deploying the kind of platform described here.

Investments in developing local news capacity should be made at the same time as investments in platform. They go hand in hand.

Implementation
The above covers how those recommendations would be implemented. It’s important to begin quickly with willing partners; measure success against traffic or other benchmarks; adjust and adapt the plan before proceeding to the next phase. We should also seek to incorporate the lessons-learned from NPR Music, where we have leveraged the individual efforts of the system to collective benefit.

Major players from where you sit
PBS Digital, NPR Digital, Public Interactive, PRX, KQED, Minnesota Public Radio, KPBS, others I’m probably neglecting.

Public radio’s role in education
Could play a critical role, but only if we make a concerted investment and decide to stick with it. This requires sustained effort.

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