

THE COLLEGE RADIO HANDBOOK

BY BILLY G. BRANT

THE COLLEGE RADIO HANDBOOK

BY BILLY G. BRANT

TAB **TAB BOOKS Inc.**
BLUE RIDGE SUMMIT, PA. 17214

Dedication
to
John Bob Hall

a teacher and friend whose guidance and encouragement has been a positive influence on those studying the broadcast media .

FIRST PRINTING

FIRST EDITION

JANUARY—1981

Copyright © 1981 by TAB BOOKS Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

Reproduction or publication of the content in any manner, without express permission of the publisher, is prohibited. No liability is assumed with respect to the use of the information herein.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Brant, Billy G

The college radio handbook.

Includes index.

1. College radio stations—United States. I. Title.

PN1991.3.U6B7 791.44'5 79-17664

ISBN 0-8306-9763-2

Preface

The radio station on the college campus, whether it be AM, FM, or carrier current, is potentially the best public relations tool for the college as well as a vital communications service to its local community. Past history has shown that with few exceptions this potential is rarely realized. The reasons for this discouraging fact are many: lack of sufficient funding, limited manpower, antiquated equipment, lack of a basic operational philosophy or a goal.

The college radio station has always been looked upon with contempt by commercial broadcasters. Many think of a college radio station as a place where "kids play at being broadcasters." In isolated instances this might be an honest estimate but it is definitely not an accurate evaluation of all radio stations operated by colleges and universities.

For too long, those in "educational" and college broadcasting have accepted the scorn heaped on them by their commercial counterparts. By not making their achievements known and not fighting this humiliating and distorted concept, they have been giving tacit approval of the lowly status given to college radio. Whether they realize it or not, college radio stations have, to borrow a phrase from a popular advertisement, "come a long way, baby!" And it is time everyone realized it.

This book is designed to investigate and provide a guide to college radio broadcasting. Throughout this work reference will be made to "college radio." The term is used to include AM, FM, and carrier current stations that are operated by colleges or universities. Although all three of these types of broadcasting stations have specific problems and advantages, they all face certain kinds

of obstacles and barriers. Of course each will be discussed separately when necessary. Also references will be made to "educational" and "non-commercial" broadcasting. These two terms will be used synonymously throughout the text of this book.

In short, the purpose of this book is twofold. First, to survey the history and development of college radio in the United States. Secondly, to provide practical suggestions concerning programming, promotional work, public support, management and operations, thus giving the reader a foundation to base his own creative and unique genius upon.

The above may sound like a crusade than a purpose, but the writer firmly believes that college radio is a potent force that has been ignored and left somewhat undeveloped. Development is essential for growth and, without it, college radio will wither and die.

I am indebted to numerous people and organizations for the information, material and pictures that are included in this work. Some of them are: Dave Dary, at the University of Kansas; John W. Pettit, General Counsel, and William A. Kehoe, Chief of the Administrative Law and Treaties Division, both at the Federal Communications Commission; Jack Deskin of IBS; Lawrence Myers, Jr., Chairman of the Television-Radio Department at Syracuse University; Dr. John Bittner, Director of Broadcast Communications and General Manager, WGRE-FM; National Association of Broadcasters; Association of Public Radio Stations; National Public Radio; Intercollegiate Broadcasting System; the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; stations WHA, University of Wisconsin; WGRE, dePauw University; WEAR, Syracuse University; WCCR, Purdue University; and KANU, University of Kansas; National Center for Audio Experimentation; and EARPLAY. Special thanks must be given to Thirk Holland who took many of the photographs in this book and whose advice on all of the illustrations for this book was greatly appreciated.

Perhaps the one who has contributed most to this endeavor has been my wife Patty. She has advised me in the writing of this book, edited it and typed the manuscript. She has been the backbone of this project and without her encouragement and confidence in me, this book would never have been finished. Patty and my son Arthur have also been my source of diversion from the burdensome task of continuous writing. To these two very special people I owe more than can be said.

Billy G. Brant

Contents

Introduction	7
1 In the Beginning	11
AM Stations—FM—New Motivation—National Public Radio Network—Other CPB Innovations—The Present—Carrier Current—The Intercollegiate Broadcasting System	
2 The Many Variables of College Radio	30
Carrier Current—AM/FM Broadcasting—Commercial—Non-commercial—Student Run Stations—Professional Operations—Student Apprentices—Commercial Professionals vs. Non-commercial Professionals—Educational Radio Becomes Public Radio	
3 Why College Radio?	43
Entertainment and Informational Service—Training Future Broadcasters—Provide Educational or Instructional Programs for Schools—A Station's Primary Purpose	
4 Programming for College Radio	50
Local Origination of Programs—Programming from Strength—Free Programming from Outside Sources—Programs from Outside Sources that Require Fee Payments—News—Music—Public Affairs—Call-in Programs—Drama—Responsibility and Ethics—Programming Sources	
5 College Radio, Who Pays?	80
Funds from the College or University—Selling Commercial Time—Underwriting—Listener Booster Clubs—General Public Support—Other Outside Sources	

6 The Selling of College Radio	95
The Promotional Department—On-Air Promotion—Station Publications—Outside Station Publications—Commercial Advertising Agencies—Station Image	
7 The Sound of College Radio	107
High Quality Sound—Quality Control—The Engineering Department—Establishing A Station	
8 Staffing the College Radio Station	123
Station Manager—Program Director—Business Manager—Chief Engineer—News Director—Production Director—Promotional Director—Development Director or Commercial Manager—Music Director—Support Personnel—Faculty Advisor—Versatility	
9 The Future of College Radio	145
The Metamorphosis—Programming Trends—SCA—Related Services—Success or Failure—Who's Responsible?	
10 Case Studies	158
Carrier Current—10 Watt FM—Higher Power FM—AM Station	
Appendices	166
A. Public Broadcasting Act of 1967	166
B. National Association of Broadcasters, The Radio Code	179
C. Preamble	198
D. By-Laws of the Association of Public Radio Stations	211
E. National Public Radio Purposes	220
Additional Reading	221
Index	224

Introduction

"You want to be a *WHAT?*", demands an outraged father.

"A Disc Jockey, Dad . . . a D.J.", his son replies in a rather tentative voice.

"Aw son, wouldn't you rather be something worthwhile like a doctor or a lawyer or even a grocer? But not a D.J. All they do is play records and make insane chatter. You've got more inside your head than a voice. Where's your ambition!"

"But Dad, D.J.'s make money . . . a lot of money. And there are girls who go crazy over you. People recognize you on the street. You have glory and excitement and money."

While the foregoing scene is imaginary, it no doubt resembles real life for those individuals who announced one day that they wanted to become a broadcaster. The scene also dramatizes two misconceptions about broadcasting in general and radio in particular.

The first misconception is that working in the broadcasting field is not work at all but play . . . a time consuming hobby not worthy of a sane person's consideration. In recent years this misconception has diminished but it still persists. Of all the industries and professions in the world today, none makes as great or as lasting an impact on the lives of every individual as does broadcasting. Think about it. The living room is usually centered around the television set. People arrange their work schedule to listen or to view their favorite programs. Fifty six per cent of all Americans get their morning news from radio. Most cars are at least equipped with AM radios and many have AM/FM stereo units. A few even have television sets built in. Ninety eight per cent of the households in America have at least one radio and almost as many have television sets. Day in and day out the broadcast media entertain, inform and instruct the American populus. What could be more

worthwhile than serving the public in such a diverse manner? Communicating ideas, facts and opinions to be ingested, evaluated and judged by the public is the corner stone of American democracy and that is precisely the function of the broadcast media. In those terms broadcasting becomes one of the most worthwhile of all professions.

The other misconception is usually held by the neophyte who thinks he or she wants to get into the broadcasting field. To them, broadcasting is simply being a "D.J.," one who plays the latest records and has tantalizing tidbits to say between commercials. These "babes in the woods" see the D.J. as a symbol of success. They see his recognition, hear of his fabulous salary and are overwhelmed by the supposed attraction with the opposite sex. In short they are overcome with the glamour of broadcasting. But the glamour is only a thin veneer that covers the grueling work and study necessary to be a broadcaster. There is much much more to broadcasting than being a Disc Jockey. In fact, in most radio stations the D.J. does a lot more than spin records. He sells time, covers and writes news stories, helps produce commercials and even helps clean up the station when necessary.

In radio broadcasting, which is the scope of this particular book, there are numerous positions open in addition to that of the Disc Jockey. There are sales positions, news, management, production, programming, traffic and engineering. All require different skills and all demand *hard work*.

Probably the most frequent question asked of a professional radio broadcaster is "how do I get into radio?" The answers to that question are as diverse as those to whom it is asked. But there seems to be three main avenues used by most professionals to break into the field.

The first and the simplest is to go to the nearest radio station and apply for a job doing anything. The local radio station is always open to local talent. By applying, one expresses his interest and desire to work in the field of radio. Usually the Program Director or Station Manager will interview the applicant, have them fill out an application and do an audition tape. The audition tape is extremely important. It consists of a recording of the applicant reading some news and commercial advertisements. The main thing being considered by the Program Director is the applicant's voice . . . how he sounds. If the Program Director likes what he hears, he may offer the applicant a job consisting of almost anything. The important thing is that not the job itself but taking an important step toward

learning about the inner workings of the station. By getting the job, he gets a chance to be around the equipment and the people who use it and to see how it all operates together. This enables the novice to practice and to concentrate on doing other things at the station, eventually moving up to bigger and more responsible duties.

A second avenue is to enroll in one of the many trade schools for broadcasting such as the Columbia School of Broadcasting (not affiliated with the CBS network). For a fee these schools give concentrated training on how to be an announcer. After the course is completed some of these schools even help the individual find their first job. It is important to remember that these schools only teach how to become an announcer. They do not claim to prepare for any other type of duty.

The final avenue and perhaps the most prevalent one today is that of attending a college or university that offers a major in Mass Communications or Radio-TV-Film. This is a four year academic program that only gives the basic training in announcing and audio board operation but also delves into the history, current trends and theories involved with the broadcasting industry. In addition, most of these programs require or at least encourage every student to participate in an internship for a semester. The internship is a program wherein the student receives academic credit for working at a professional broadcast station performing duties under the direction of a professional broadcaster. The internship allows the student to experience the pressures, demands and joys of being a broadcaster prior to his emergence into the field on a full time basis. At the end of the four years, the student receives a Bachelor's Degree.

Regardless of which of the above three avenues an individual pursues, there are no guarantees of a job in the broadcasting industry. Only one thing will really help to land a good job and that is hard work. Anyone really interested in the profession of radio broadcasting continuously tries to polish and refine what talents he possesses. These talents are what interest an employer, not a degree or a certificate neatly framed.

There are a number of things that can be done to help in this refining process. One is to read books about broadcasting in general and the specific area of individual interest. Many of these books are in the local library and offer helpful hints on how to accomplish tasks efficiently and easily. The second and most important thing is to seek professional criticism. Ask professional broadcasters for a personal critique of your voice and other talents. Then consider their criticism no matter how blunt or abrasive it

may be. The professional critique will pinpoint, usually objectively, many of the flaws and will suggest ways of overcoming them.

The one prerequisite for the individual seriously considering professional radio is commonly referred to as the third class tickets. Officially called "The Third Class Radiotelephone License". This is a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission which enables the holder to operate most of the broadcast equipment at the average radio station. The license is issued after an individual has successfully completed a test given by the FCC. The test covers information presented in elements one, two and nine of the FCC rules and regulations.

In order to obtain a third class FCC license the following steps should be taken:

- Write the nearest FCC office and ask for a license application blank and schedule of exam dates in your particular area. The address can be obtained from your local radio station.
- When the FCC replies, fill out the application indicating your wish to take the tests for the third class Radiotelephone license and Broadcast Endorsement. Return the application to the FCC office.
- Study elements one, two and nine. A number of study guides are on the market and the Government Printing Office also issues one. It might be wise to ask the engineer at the local radio station which study guide he recommends. He might even be willing to supervise the study sessions.
- The FCC will send a notice stating where, when and at what time the test will be offered. On that date, take the test. A score of 75 percent is necessary in order to pass. The FCC will issue the license by mail within four weeks.

In many instances the possession of the third class ticket can prove the final determining factor in the decision of whether to hire an individual or not. Anyone planning to work in radio should invest the time and money necessary to obtain this license.

The radio broadcasting profession, while demanding a lot in terms of energy, skill and hard work, is extremely rewarding and challenging. Many individuals get a taste of the profession at the radio station on the college campus. That is often the place where the challenges and the rewards as well as the hard work begin.

Chapter 1

In The Beginning

Attempting to trace the history of college radio is like trying to follow the classic "Who's on First" comedy routine of Bud Abbot and Lou Costello. In general the early stations were established by the electrical engineering or other physical science departments on the college campus. Radio being a rather new development, it seemed natural for science-oriented personnel to take charge of it. After this initial splash, it is apparent that the interest waned on the part of engineering departments but increased by the speech, journalism or extension departments. The assumption can be made that it took scientific-minded people to build and operate a radio station, but as soon as the operation began to stabilize, other departments on the campus wanted access to this new electronic marvel. The challenge for engineering students ceased after a station was constructed. It then passed to those who saw still other areas in which radio could be an effective branch of their teaching process.

Speech and journalism departments saw opportunity to expose their students to a new and potentially expanding profession called "broadcasting." Students could utilize the skills they had learned in other courses of the department to polish their own personal ideas and theories. In these cases, little thought was given to the audience. The radio station was considered a working laboratory for use by students. College extension offices saw that through radio, college courses could be broadcast to many people

over large geographic areas. This started a tendency to use broadcasting for strictly educational or instructional purposes. Many colleges and universities had "School of the Air" type of programs that were extremely beneficial both to the listener/student and to the reputation of the sponsoring college or university.

Today some of these tendencies still remain. Most college radio stations are operated under the auspices of a speech, journalism or extension department. Some of these radio stations are still considered working laboratories and a number of stations continue to broadcast educational or instructional materials for students. But the main emphasis of the majority of college radio stations, whether AM, FM, or carrier current, is to serve their respective audiences. The word "serve" is interpreted to mean supplying the audience with the entertainment they demand and the information they need. The programming of these stations is diverse and, at times, unique, but this will be dealt with in a later chapter. The important thing to remember is that all college radio stations sprang from and exist in an educational environment which has either enhanced or retarded the stations' growth.

AM STATIONS

Experimental broadcasting in one form or another was conducted as early as 1908. In most cases it was curious individuals or experimenters who first became involved with this new gadget called "radio." It wasn't long until faculty members and students of different colleges tried their hands at radio broadcasting. Cornell University at Ithaca, New York, first began radiotelephone experiments in 1910. In 1912 after the adoption of the Radio Act of 1912, St. Joseph's College of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, began operating station 3XJ. This station was granted the first experimental license issued by the United States Department of Commerce and the license bore the serial number 1. 3XJ was permitted to use 2,000 watts of power and continued operation until 1924.

In 1915, 9XM was licensed to the University of Wisconsin. 9XM was the forerunner of WHA, considered by many to be the first educational radio station in the United States (Fig. 1-1). The University of Iowa at Iowa City was granted an experimental license in 1919. The station, 9YA, is believed to be the first radiotelephone transmitting station broadcasting on a regular schedule west of the Mississippi. Of course these were not the only experimental stations in the United States. Numerous ones fol-

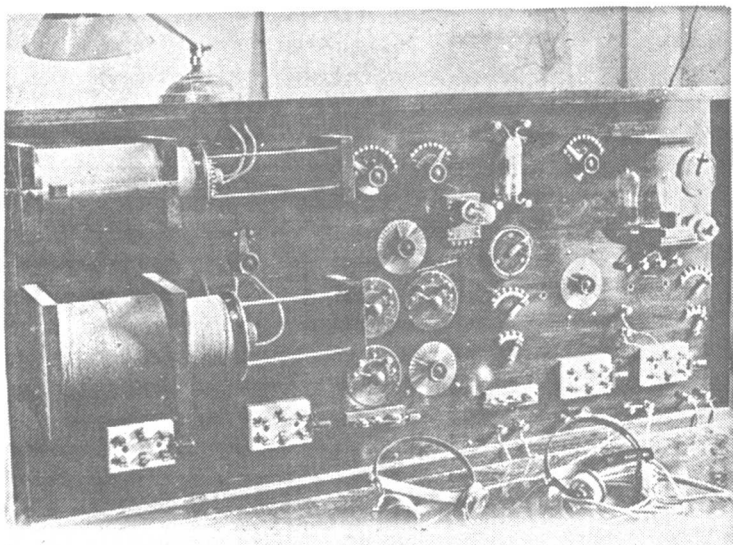


Fig. 1-1. Radio receiving equipment used at W9XM, the forerunner of WHA, in 1917 and 1918 (courtesy of WHA).

lowed: 9XJ operated by the University of Illinois at Urbana, 9YI at the University of Iowa, Ohio State University, Purdue University and Tulane University, to name only a few.

Experimental broadcasting bore little resemblance to what is commonly known today as radio broadcasting. Much of this early experimentation was point-to-point communication, like ship-to-shore messages. But it points out the fact that colleges and universities were literally on the ground floor of the development of what is now referred to as radio broadcasting.

On November 2, 1920, KDKA began "regular" radio broadcasting and thus fertilized the ground from which sprang a multimillion dollar industry. A fact that has become hazy in the modern commercial concept of broadcasting is that regular radio broadcasting from 1920 until sometime in 1925 was virtually all noncommercial. In fact, it was originally thought that to gain money from broadcasting was prostitution of the media. Commercialism is a departure from the original concept of radio broadcasting. The educational noncommercial stations are continuing in the tradition of broadcasting that dates back to the second day of November, 1920. But as we will see, it was economic conditions, primarily, that caused many of those early stations licensed to colleges or universities to be released to commercial ventures.

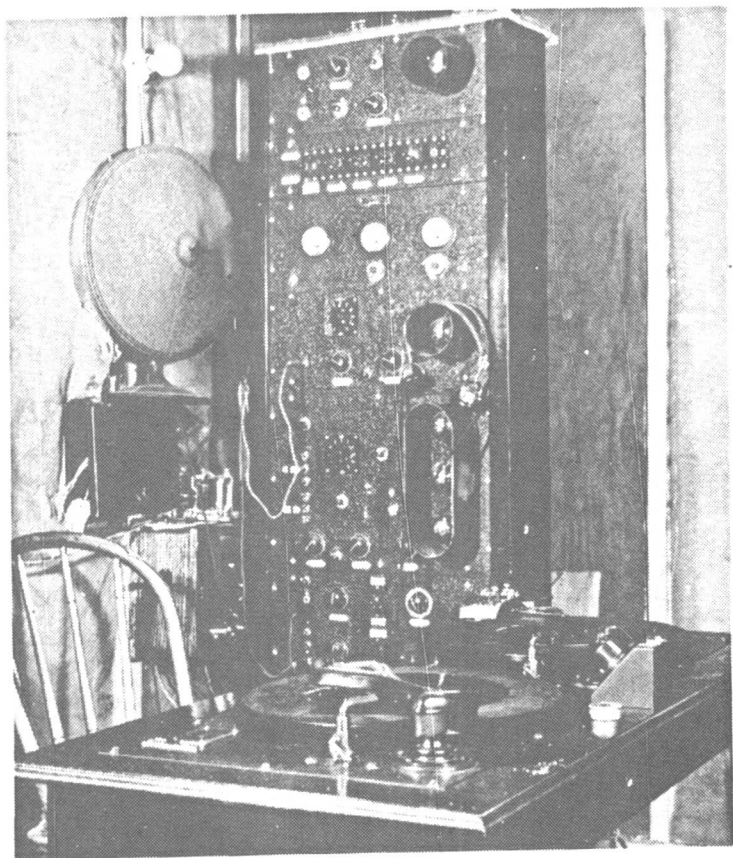


Fig. 1-2. WHA's combined studio-control room office in Sterling Hall, 1932 (courtesy WHA).

As noted earlier, WHA, licensed to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, is considered by most authorities to be the first educational non-commercial radio station in America. As S.E. Frost in his book *Education's Own Stations*, published in 1937, stated, "On January 13, 1922, some four years after the first successful telephonic broadcast, the University was granted a license to operate a broadcast transmitter on 360 meters (834 KC) with 4,000 watts power for unlimited time. Call letters WHA." However, there seems to be a discrepancy about which station was actually first licensed to broadcast as an educational station. It seems that files held at the Latter Day Saints College of Salt Lake City, Utah, revealed that this college was granted a broadcast

license by the Radio Division of the Commerce Department sometime in 1921. The station was assigned the call letters KFOO. Interestingly enough no corresponding data appears in the Radio Division files now part of the Federal Communications Commission files. There has yet to be any supportive evidence that challenges the KFOO documents. The only other information bearing on this is that KFOO, although licensed for unlimited time, actually only broadcast periodically on an intermittent basis (Fig. 1-2).

WHA can still claim to be the first officially licensed educational noncommercial radio station to broadcast on a full-time regular schedule. It is the oldest such station still in existence. Since its beginning WHA has led the field in the development of programming ideas and technical equipment for both commercial and noncommercial radio stations. Today WHA is considered the mecca for noncommercial educational broadcasting professionals (Fig. 1-3).

WHA was one of 202 AM broadcast stations licensed to educational institutions from 1920 until 1936. However by January 1, 1937, only 38 stations were operating on college campuses. The other 164 licenses were allowed to expire, were revoked, or were



Fig. 1-3. Master Control Room of WHA-AM-FM housed in Vilas Communication Hall, 1973 (courtesy WHA).

transferred to commercial interests. The primary reason for this abandonment was economic in nature. The colleges and universities considered the cost of operating a radio station too high for the public relations value derived from it. This, by the way, is a controversy that stations must confront today as well. But the economic factor was not the only reason for the decline of campus AM stations. It must be remembered that during this period, 1921-1937, the regulations governing all forms of radio broadcasting were very tenuous. Up until 1927 very little regulation of radio broadcasting was done aside from the licensing of stations. When the Federal Radio Commission was formed in 1927 it attempted to sort out the mess that had resulted from a laissez-faire attitude toward broadcasting. In essence the FRC was interested in technical matters. Seven years later in 1934 the Federal Communications Commission was formed. Although these regulatory agencies were needed by radio broadcasting in general, they held no sympathy for the educational radio stations. During this fluctuating time, educational stations were shuttled from frequency to frequency. Time allotments and power seemed to change with the whim of some bureaucrat in Washington. The educational station was fair game when looking for a frequency to repossess. Many of these non-commercial stations were forced to share time on the same frequency with a commercial station. In most cases the educational station had the frequency first but was commandeered by the commercial enterprise. This constant shifting and bickering were two other reasons why so many colleges gave up their stations. The paper work and general harassment were too much to bear.

It became obvious early in the game that the educational broadcasters were and would be in the minority as far as the field of radio broadcasting was concerned. In order to survive and compete with the growing commercialism in the industry, representatives from colleges with radio stations banded together. It was during the Fourth National Radio Conference held in 1925 that the Association of College and University Broadcasting Stations was formed. This organization was to act somewhat like a lobby group and a mediator between government agencies, commercial broadcasters and the stations owned by colleges. It must have been depressing for the members of the Association to watch their stations fall before the all-mighty dollar and governmental insensitivity. The association struggled on until 1934 when it regrouped its forces. In September of that year the reorganized group adopted the name "National Association of Educational Broadcasters." The NAEB,