



Future of Media and the Information Needs of Communities

Public and other Noncommercial Media in the Digital Era

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Last month, the *Project for Excellence in Journalism* released its annual *State of the News Media* report. Ever year it's a hotly anticipated document – and at 700 pages, a pretty comprehensive look at our business. Usually it's interpreted like tea leaves. This year – it came like a blow to the head with a 2x4.

Here are a few phrases I pulled verbatim from the “state of the media” report:

- “Enormous losses”
- “Grim revenue numbers”
- “Continued declines in audience”
- “Continued declines in revenue”
- “Continued declines in staff”

And this REALLY cheery observation:

- “The losses suffered in traditional news gathering in the last year were so severe that by any accounting they overwhelm the innovations in the world of news and journalism,”

...“The losses in journalism overwhelm the innovations” ??? -- Yikes!

The report begins with two words -- “What now” Well.... “What now” indeed!

We at NPR and pub radio have not suffered at the same levels of commercial media. Yes, we were hit by the recession– but our diversified revenue sources protect us from the kind of will swingers - loses - that our two-revenue streams brethren n newspapers have suffered.

And we've not been hit AT ALL in audience, In fact all time high – 34mm a week...8 hours a week medium.

That's serious engagement and a heck of a large audience, more than the paid circulation of the top 100 newspapers combined. This is no niche - we reached across the political and geographic spectrum. Almost 800 stations reaching nearly 100% of the US population in over the air broadcasting – many of them the only locally owned and operative news organizations in their community

So here's the 'what now' for us: we consider that the full scale dislocation of the news business illustrated in the Pew reports is a call to action: A call to action to do whatever it takes to fulfill the information needs to of the American citizenry.

And that's what I here to tell you today: That PUBLIC MEDIA may have many – not all, mind you – but MANY of the answers to the growing information void that this report to painfully describes.

How will we do that? **Innovation** and **partnership**.

In three areas:

1. More original reporting - foreign, investigative, breaking news of course, but more so analysis of complex issues like health care, finance reform, energy and climate change. Local accountability journalism. Partnership with stations, others in public media,

2. Reaching more diverse audiences to reflect changes in age, race and ethnicity as the demographics of the country change.

3. And full embrace of new platforms and technologies to better serve our audience. I'd like to focus there in my remaining minutes:

- Sure, we've been focusing as you would expect on our website (which won a Peabody this year); iPhone and iPad (1 in five users have downloaded the NPR app) both of which are driving readership and listening to stations. These are imperatives in order to reach new audiences (where the median demo in 30's). Innovate in our storytelling by offering multimedia, and have a robust presence as everyone goes pay. We will always be FREE to our audience, the consumer.
- But in addition to these consumer facing services, we also have an opportunities to *fundamentally reinvent the distribution of quality content in this country* with the creation of a Public media Platform.
- With initial funding from CPB and in partnership with the other big public broadcasting players APM, PRI, PBS and PRX – our aim is to make ALL public media available on a common platform . Eventually we hope the platform will expand to include content other not for profits, plus data, archival information and

other material. All of which will be indexed, searchable and made available to publishers and – especially to the legions of genius software developers who will create valuable ways to understand information that we can't even imagine. This is the ultimate expression of universal access - -of public media's value to future Americans

NONE of this activity comes at the expense of broadcast. Radio is our heart and soul, and with a growing audience to boot. It's where we invest most of our time and resources. But our embrace of new platforms is undertaken as an extension of everything that NPR and public radio represent today.

So “what now”? Many of you testifying today are public media. We all share the same singular propose - to serve the information needs of the American people. We must commit to partner, and while we embrace the sprit of competition that is inherent in journalism. We must commit to innovate. We must commit to spur innovation – inside and outside our ranks. And in doing so, we will fulfill our public mission in ways we could never have dreamed of, allowing ever willing Americans to become active and informed citizens of this democracy.