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Luxury with a broadcast twist

The new Cambria Hotel in downtown Detroit embraces the history of radio station WWJ.

Election-year prep

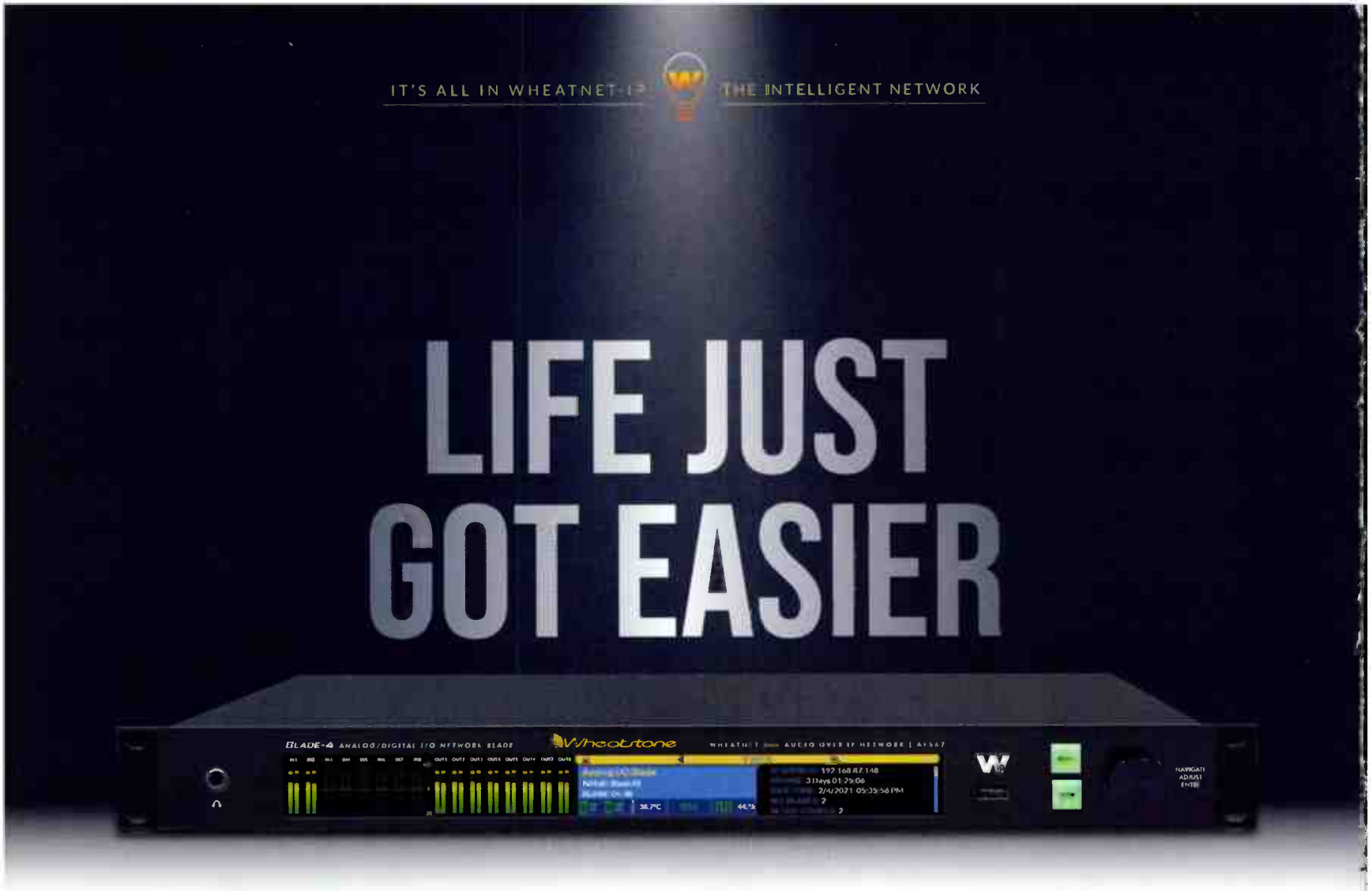
Gregg Skall lays out what managers should know about political issue advertising.

Found in translation

Mark Bohach talks about the ongoing appeal of FM translators.

Not spooked about AI

Buc Fitch has pondered the implications of artificial intelligence and finds himself underwhelmed.



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Get right with your metadata

New handbook from the NRSC is a boon to streamers

Paul McLane
Editor in Chief

A new publication from the National Radio Systems Committee provides metadata guidelines for streaming audio.

Steve Shultis of New York Public Radio chairs the Data Services and Metadata Subcommittee; he told me in November that the 116-page "NRSC-G304: Metadata for Streaming Audio Handbook" is the most extensive publication of the DSM subcommittee to date.

"In today's highly visual world of streaming audio, metadata, its implementation, execution and management is a crucial aspect now within the wheelhouse of today's broadcast engineer," he said.

"We went into this project to provide a guideline to help engineers provide the best metadata possible to their streaming products to support the radio industry's need, in general, to maintain the competitive advantage that radio has inherent in its audio programming in this media landscape.

"This highly talented working group of experts executed not only that goal, but added to the scope along the way to include deep-dives into related technical aspects such as signal flow, control and encoding as well as a rich and exhaustive compendium of terms and definitions that, together as a handbook, will serve the industry well as a useful reference for years to come."

Consultant David Bialik, chair of the Metadata and Streaming Working Group, added: "Metadata isn't only 'now-playing' information."

The drafting group consisted of Bialik, Jeff Detweiler, John Kean, Frank Klekner, Scott Norcross, Greg Ogonowski, Robert Orban and Shultis. Also contributing were Donna Detweiler, John Passmore, Dean Mitchell, Sam Sousa and Conrad Trautmann. Ogonowski and Orban developed the major portion of the text.

The group pointed out in the handbook's introduction that thanks to ubiquitous mobile broadband and smartphones, consumers can access a cornucopia of audio programming.

"Many radio broadcasters provide audio streaming versions of over-the-air radio station content and pure-play streams. Text and image metadata have become an important part of a radio station's OTA and streaming offerings," they wrote.

The guideline provides best practices for radio broadcasters and netcasters using metadata with audio streams.

"It focuses on the HTTP live streaming (HLS) and Dynamic Adaptive Streaming over HTTP (MPEG-DASH) methods of audio streaming because these are modern, reliable, efficient and standards-based. Correctly implementing these modern segmented streaming formats requires a completely different workflow than previous legacy ICY methods (SHOUTcast and Icecast), but pays off with much higher reliability and

THIS ISSUE

richer, on-time metadata. There are many additional benefits ... to switching from ICY to HLS or MPEG-DASH streaming."

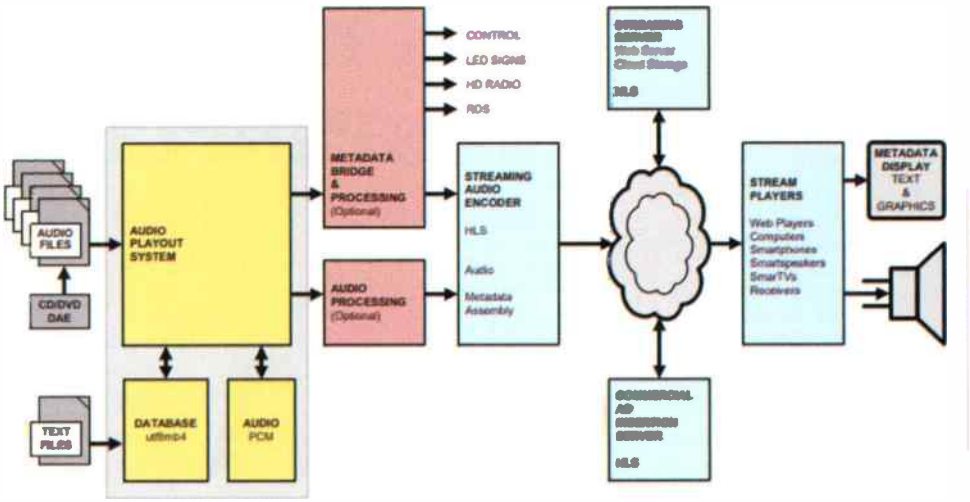
The authors wrote that the subcommittee hopes the document will be useful to streamers and broadcasters who want to exploit current technology and that it will be a valuable reference to the terminology, acronyms and jargon associated with streaming.

They added that while much of it will be useful to non-specialists, a knowledge of computer file structures and text encoding is needed to understand some of the examples.

Sections are devoted to fundamentals of streaming media and metadata; how to get started in implementing metadata in a facility; the role of HLS and MPEG-DASH; metadata encoding; and text encoding.

You'll also read about how to control timing; an ID3 overview; metadata for HD Radio; interstitial content insertion; other relevant standards including AES3, USAC/xHD-AAC and XML; and various types of audio media files.

The authors add that as broadcasters shift their focus to content creation for delivery across multiple distribution platforms, many have developed protocols to include video along with every audio segment they produce. "This document focuses only on the audio parameters, as video standards have their own unique requirements."



Above
An image from the NRSC guidelines showing the "typical streaming audio system metadata format flow."

You can find the document under the Standards/Guidelines tab of the NRSC website, *www.nrscstandards.org*.

The National Radio Systems Committee is a joint initiative of the National Association of Broadcasters and the Consumer Technology Association.

FM translators remain useful tool to expand reach

Mark Bohach helps broadcasters navigate the translator landscape

Writer

Randy J. Stine

Radio World's lead news contributor profiled consultant John Broomall in October.

Mark Bohach's opinions about FM translators are well respected. His comments were cited in the FCC report and order that led to filing windows for AM stations to apply for cross-service translators. And Bohach was invited to speak at the 2023 Midwest Broadcast & Multimedia Technology Conference this fall in Columbus, Ohio.

Radio World followed up with him to seek his tips on getting the most out of this type of FM facility.

Translators, which rebroadcast the signal of a primary station on a different FM frequency, have become an important part of radio's spectrum strategy toolkit. Many commercial and noncommercial operators are using translators in ways previously unimagined, not only supplementing local coverage of an FM primary station, but leveraging them to gain a more lucrative footprint on the dial for content that originally airs on AMs or on FM HD Radio multicast channels.

The earliest translators were licensed in 1970 and meant to provide supplementary service where signals were limited by distance or terrain. The first were limited to 10 watts. FM translators are now allowed a maximum of 250 watts.

Bohach is co-owner of WLOH Radio Company in Lancaster, Ohio. WLOH(AM) has four FM translators.

"Our AM signal is quite limited. WLOH is at 1320 kHz and uses 500 watts daytime and only 16 watts at night. FM translator service was a lifeline for us to remain competitive considering the entertainment space we operate in now," Bohach says.

WLOH Radio obtained two FM translators in 2010 and another in 2018 as part of AM revitalization. It purchased its most recent one in 2022, nearly doubling the station's total coverage footprint.

Right
Mark Bohach

> **You only have so much RF energy, so you want to center that and put it over the highest population you can.**

RW: What has been the business impact on your company of having four cross-service FM translators?

Mark Bohach: When you look at the period in which we have operated them since 2010, and all the changes that have happened in broadcasting and with the increased competition from streaming audio, those translators have been a tremendous help. I couldn't imagine competing with a standalone AM.

We have been able to maintain a local AM service that is viable in our local community, but the other half of it is the ability to increase sales and grow our company thanks to the FM signals. We have grown listenership and revenue while keeping up with inflation.

The FM translators also added legitimacy to advertisers, like automobile dealers. We couldn't reach them before but they have turned into loyal customers.

RW: What is the secret to stretching out the translator signal as far as legally possible?

Bohach: A fill-in translator, which includes all those FM translators being used by AM stations, has no specified maximum height of the antenna. If you can make a contour fit interference-wise, so that you are not causing interference, you can specify any height you want. One of

our translators operates at 350 feet above average terrain. That's very tall, and with the full 250 watts I'm able to cover my entire county.

The key for us was having the correct engineering help to maximize height and power of the translators to give us solid coverage.

For those searching for an FM translator, how important is it to get good technical advice from a consulting engineer?

Bohach: Quite honestly, we wouldn't be where we are without the services of Bert Goldman. He is one of these people who eats, drinks and sleeps RF. I would go to Bert and asks him the craziest questions about moving this or that around, and he finds a way. So finding a qualified broadcast engineer has been crucial to our success.

What are some of the tips you offer for those searching for a FM translator?

Bohach: The first thing you want to try to be is non-directional. You can use whatever antenna you think best and orient it anyway you like. You want to be as tall as possible. And getting up as high as you can within reason while making the interference contours work.

The other thing is you want to concentrate your RF power into your principal community. In other words, try to build your translator site right in the middle of a population or in the middle of the area you want to serve. You only have so much RF energy, so you want to center that and put it over the highest population you can. It will penetrate buildings well and have better mobile coverage, perhaps reaching 15 to 20 miles.

What's the easiest way to run afoul of the FCC when operating a FM translator?

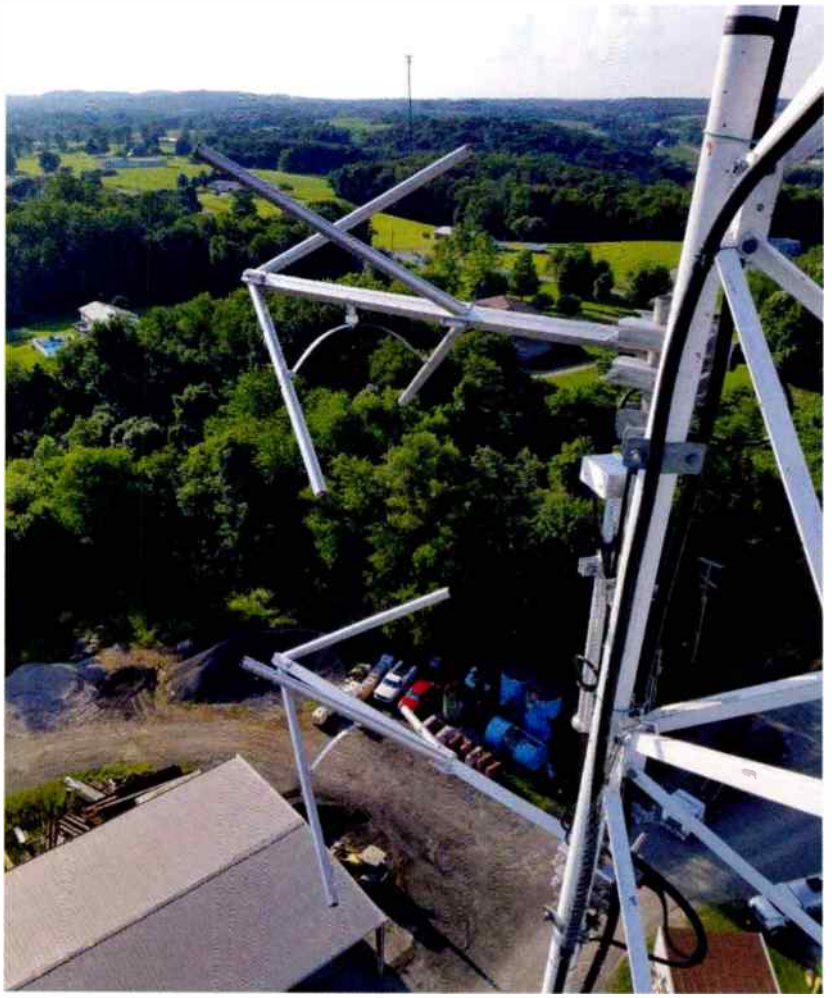
Bohach: Well, it's very easy if you don't do what you say you are going to do. The first thing: Make sure you are not interfering with anybody. That will trigger a complaint and then an investigation.

Follow the basic technical rules. Make sure the antenna is in the right location and [know] if your license specifies a directional or non-directional antenna. Make sure to put a modulation monitor and power meter on it so you know if you are operating as authorized.

It's also critical that you properly identify that FM translator, either over the air or using a Morse code FSK [frequency shift keying] key built into the translator transmitter.

The FCC was expecting strong demand in the December LPFM filing window. It feels like it's been "LPFM vs. translators" in a battle for spectrum real estate for a long time. What should translator licensees know?

Bohach: You need to be aware if somebody applies for an LPFM near your frequency; you need to be on the lookout for any possible interference. Remember, LPFMs and translators are considered secondary services by the FCC. You'll want to watch if someone specifies that they are using a directional antenna — or anything else they specify. You need to pay attention.



Above
A Nicom antenna that translates WLOH(AM) onto 102.9 MHz in Somerset, Ohio. This is configured as a half-wave, "off-the-shelf" directional antenna.

How should the licensee of a FM translator operator handle an interference complaint?

Bohach: That's a big deal. You have to be mindful you cannot cause any interference with a full-power FM station

> **You need to be aware if somebody applies for an LPFM near your frequency; you need to be on the lookout for any possible interference.**

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even if they make a change, but they can cause interference to your FM translator. You have to be a good neighbor.

What about the recently revised interference rules adopted by the FCC?

Bohach: Thankfully the FCC revised the interference rules in 2021. They specified that the full-power stations are only protected down to the 45 dBu contour, or the .177 mV contour.

Also, there was a time when one registered complaint could take an FM translator off the air. Now you have to have multiple complaints against a translator before the FCC will take action.

In addition, now if a full-power station has an interference complaint, they have to get with the offending translator station first and try to mitigate the issue. If it gets to the point where they file a complaint, they have to sign a certification saying that the full-power station is operating within parameters and operating legally.

Any concerns on your part that the expansion of FM translators has led to overcrowding in the FM band?

Bohach: I have concerns. Because again, what happens on paper sometimes doesn't happen in the field. The FCC has to enforce the rules, first and foremost. The rules are specific. Crowding is always a concern. We want to make sure we don't cause so much RF that we invite more problems than we need or want. There are practical limits, but not all operators are going to play within the rules. That's why enforcement is so important.

Might we see an FM translator filing window anytime soon?

Bohach: I don't think so. With the new LPFM filing window, it's going to be interesting to see where spectrum can be carved out. In rural areas there is still plenty of room for new LPFM and translator service. I don't think you will see a new window in five years. Perhaps a decade down the road there might be. If there will be one, it's way down the road.

Above
This nondirectional Nicom BKG77 antenna serves translator W283BO in Lancaster, Ohio.

You've dubbed the cross-service translator ruling "The Great Translator Land Rush," and you obviously benefited. Are there other steps the commission could take to help translator operators?

Bohach: There is one condition in the FCC's Minor Change rules that often prohibits the movement of a translator. That rule requires some part of the translator's proposed 1 mV/m contour to overlap the existing contour. This limits the distance a translator can be moved to not more than 15 to 20 miles and forces stations to compromise on selecting optimal antenna patterns because they have to satisfy this condition.

If the FCC were to relax this rule to allow a bit more distance under the minor change rules, that would add flexibility in finding and moving translators. My proposal would be to set a mileage limit, perhaps 30 to 35 miles.

If someone wants to go hunt for an existing FM translator to purchase, how should they go about it?

Bohach: I would start with a consultant or broadcast engineer who can do a channel search to find a FM translator. You need to find one that can fit and be moved with a minor change. You're going to be looking for a translator within 20 miles of where you are. It has to be nearby. You can then prepare a list and contact the license holder.

So start with the engineering, then find out if it's available and at what price. Then do the feasibility study. A broker can also be helpful.

What is one thing a lot of folks don't know about fill-in FM translators?

Bohach: The licensee of an FM translator can change the primary station being rebroadcast without prior authority from the FCC. And translators rebroadcasting an AM station can add RDS. There are no rules prohibiting that.

By the Numbers

FM translators have become a lifeline for many AM stations in the United States; the commission allowed the first cross-service FM translators in 2009. But strong interest in translators didn't start then.

According to FCC data gathered by Radio World, in 1990 there were about 1,850 licensed FM translators and boosters. Ten years later that number had grown to 3,250. After another decade, in 2010, the number had leapt to 6,170. And as of the most recent report, there were 8,928.

The commission reports the number of translators and boosters in aggregate, but most of them are believed to be translators rather than on-frequency boosters.

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John Bisset
CPBE
The author is in his 33rd year of writing Workbench. He handles western U.S. radio sales for the Telos Alliance and is a past recipient of the SBE's Educator of the Year Award.

Tune in to tips!
Workbench submissions are encouraged and qualify for SBE recertification credit. Email *johnpbisset@gmail.com*.

The way it used to be — roll your own!

How John Andrews and his boss avoided buying a costly transformer

John Andrews worked for WTAG(AM), Worcester, Mass., from 1970 through 1996. In the early 1970s, the station's main transmitter was an RCA BTA 5-H, installed in 1959.

One day, the RCA went off the air and would not respond to overload resets via remote control. With the station itself still comfortably broadcasting with a 250-watt backup transmitter and antenna at the studio, John went to the transmitter site and found that the neutralizing transformer for the 5762 PA finals had arced and burned.

Now, with the RCA 5-D-1 auxiliary transmitter on the air at full power, John could take time with the repair. But the cost of a transformer replacement from RCA was just shy of the GNP of many nations, so John and his boss decided to repair the existing part.

Their inspection disclosed damage to the Teflon rib as well as burnt insulation on one of the windings.

Using a handsaw and some scrap Teflon, they replaced the rib and rewound the burnt section of the winding. With some trepidation, they reinstalled the repaired transformer and applied power. All worked fine, and the rig was put back on the air that night.

John's boss was not satisfied, though; he felt they should have a replacement transformer.

The first photo shows the result. Over a week or more, they located a 6-inch length of 4-inch phenolic tube, and cut eight ribs from some very old maple. To combat moisture, John's boss boiled the maple ribs in beeswax. Then they wound the transformer using some 22-gauge double-cotton-covered wire they had on hand.

They laid the first winding down directly on the form, and then lacquered it. They used brass hardware to assemble the ribs onto the form, and added the other windings. Then they lacquered the whole thing and, just to be safe, hi-pot tested it.

During a rig maintenance session in the following days, they installed this homebrew replacement. It worked identically to the original.

John reinstalled the original transformer and put the "new" one in a cabinet.

The RCA 5-H eventually became an auxiliary transmitter, serving into the early 2000s. When John came across the homemade spare, he couldn't throw it out. Today it sits on a shelf, right above his ham rig.

If John's name sounds familiar, you may have encountered him in his days at Comrex. He now is retired.

Right
A home-brew neutralizing transformer.

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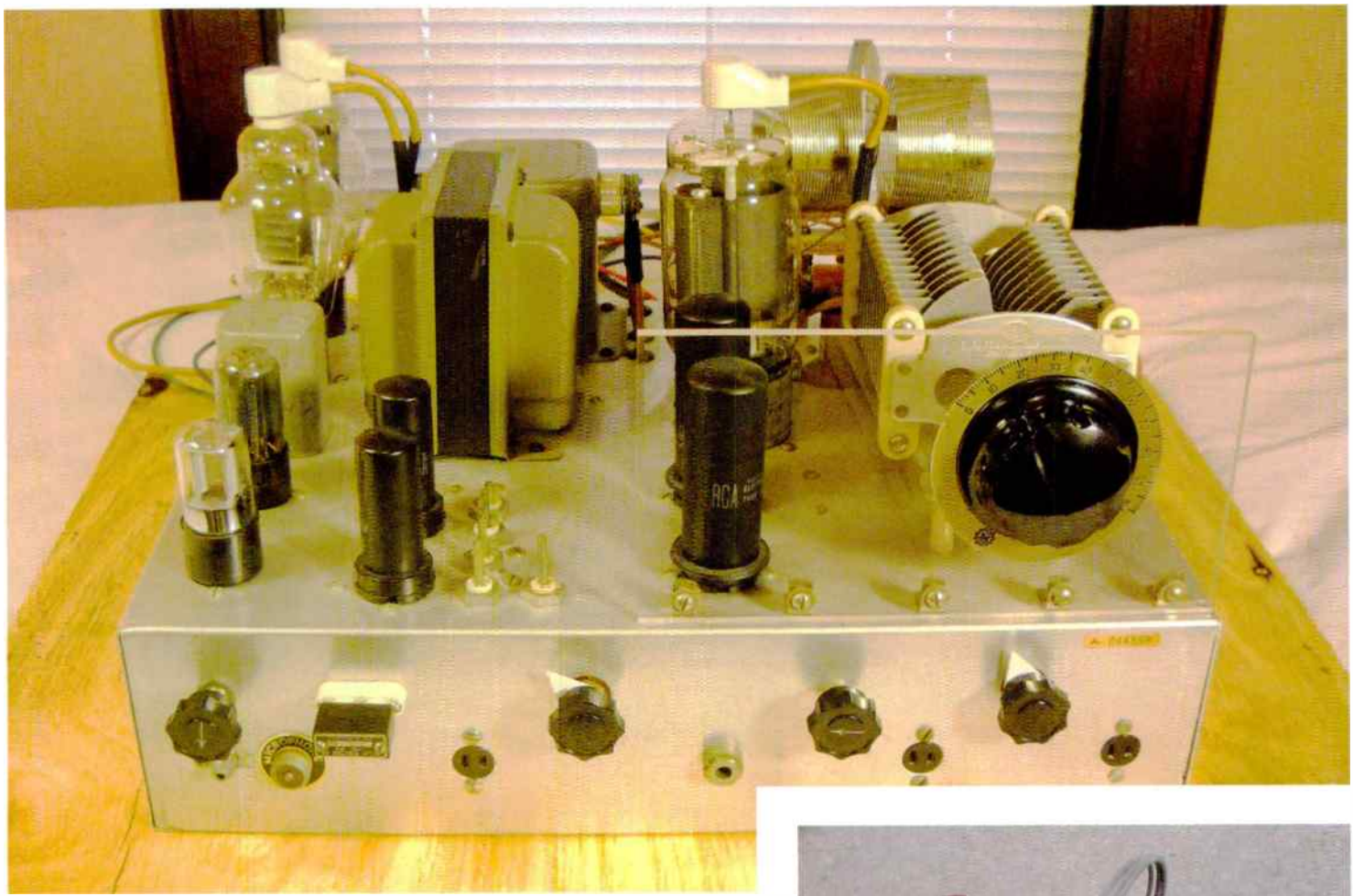
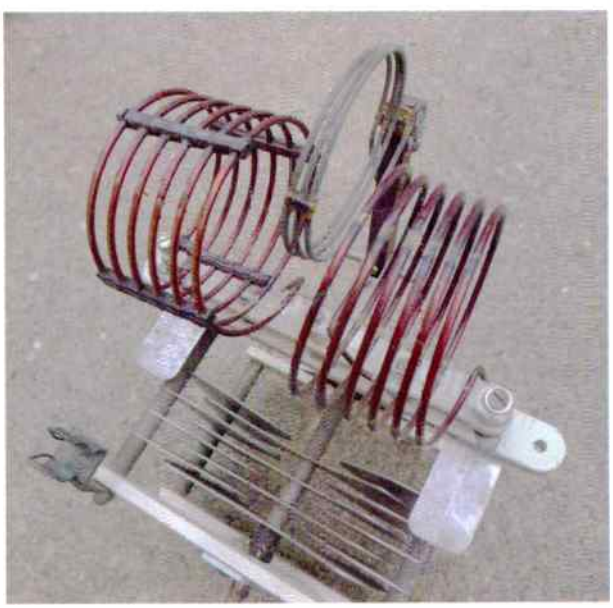


Above
A refurbished Eldico TR1.

Right
We mentioned this variable coil assembly in the Oct. 25 issue.



We have a match

In the Oct. 25 issue we showed an interesting picture (right) of what many hams have identified as a Barker & Williamson link-coupled matching network.

Rob Atkinson, K5UJ, was one of many who wrote that the components were used as the output network for a push-pull Class C RF power amplifier. The PA is loaded by moving the swing link jack bar in and out of the center of the coil. The balanced feedline attaches to each end of the swing link coil.

Back in the 1930s, Rob writes, ham bands were changed by swapping plug-in coils (only when the rig was powered down, of course). Some hams pulled arcs from the coils using screwdrivers as a way of showing off. If you pulled the longest arc in town, you had the most powerful rig.

What happened to these rigs? Television!

TV interference forced hams to adopt new designs with lots of shielding, necessitating band-switching from safer front-panel controls.

Rob has been working on resuscitating a 1949 Eldico TR1. Shown above, it consists of a single 813 modulated by 811As. The power supply employs two 866A mercury vapor rectifiers.

This rig consisted of two chassis: the RF and audio chassis, shown in the photo, and the power supply. It was sold in kit form and was intended to run with the open chassis sitting on a tabletop with the power supply and AF/RF (audio frequency/radio frequency) chassis side by side, out in the open (with 1500 volts exposed!). Rob got a laugh when he discovered a "UL approved" sticker on his unit.

Thanks to all who responded.

Lumos! Give me some light!

Replacement wattage numbers can be misleading

Writer

Karl Zuk

The author is retired from a 52-year career in engineering and management, including work for ABC Radio Networks, ABC Television, NBC Television, CBS News and Encompass Digital Media.

During the summer I had occasion to refresh neglected lightbulbs around our summer home. Those wonderful and warm incandescent bulbs were burning out.

But I was pulled into the 21st century like an uncooperative dog on a leash. As of August, retailers are no longer allowed to sell incandescents in the United States. The bulbs are no longer sold.

Use one of those new LED lightbulb imposters?! Begrudgingly, I had no choice.

And I have discovered that manufacturers have completely different standards for brightness than my old eyes once knew.

My collegiate degree was in theater lighting. I will always be attuned to specific color temperature and luminescence. I know what to expect and exactly how it should look.

I had to laugh when I delved into the world of LED home lighting, though I admit things have come a long way since the beginnings of "efficient" light mercury-filled curlicues that would poison you with the slightest break and make your eyes wince from foul-looking light colors.

Today's LEDs seem to be much improved, with low RF noise and a resemblance to the simple filament lamps of the past.

But I was trying to match the brightness of two 40-watt lamps hanging above a dinner table. One was a surviving incandescent. The 40-watt LED "replacement" I had on hand was a weak excuse for that level of brightness.

The package of the LED bulb at least was honest about what lay inside, but you have to read very, very carefully.

You need to concentrate on the most important specification. While "watts" is a measurement of used energy, "lumens" tell the real story: exactly how bright the light is going to be when you turn it on.

Right
The GE bulbs at upper right, marketed as 60-watt equivalents, produce 800 lumens, compared to the 840 lumens of old. The Great Value brand produces even less, 620 lumens.

I went back to my old schoolbooks and found these memories: General Electric sold the most popular A19 size lightbulbs in yellow corrugated sleeves. Its legacy Soft White series produced light with a warm and appealing color temperature of 2700 degrees Kelvin. Here are the claimed luminosity levels for each wattage they offered at the time:

15 watts = 100 lumens
25 watts = 210 lumens
40 watts = 490 lumens
60 watts = 840 lumens
75 watts = 1170 lumens
100 watts = 1690 lumens
150 watts = 2680 lumens
200 watts = 3405 lumens

> **"The package of the LED bulb at least was honest about what lay inside, but you have to read very, very carefully."**

By comparison, a modern GE LED A19 60-watt equivalent produces 800 lumens, down from 840 lumens. Buy a Great Value LED 60-watt equivalent at Wal-Mart and you go way down to 620 lumens.

The moral of this story: Read your lightbulb labels carefully and use the number of lumens as your guide. The "replacement wattage" figures can be inaccurate and even misleading. Caveat emptor! May the buyer beware.

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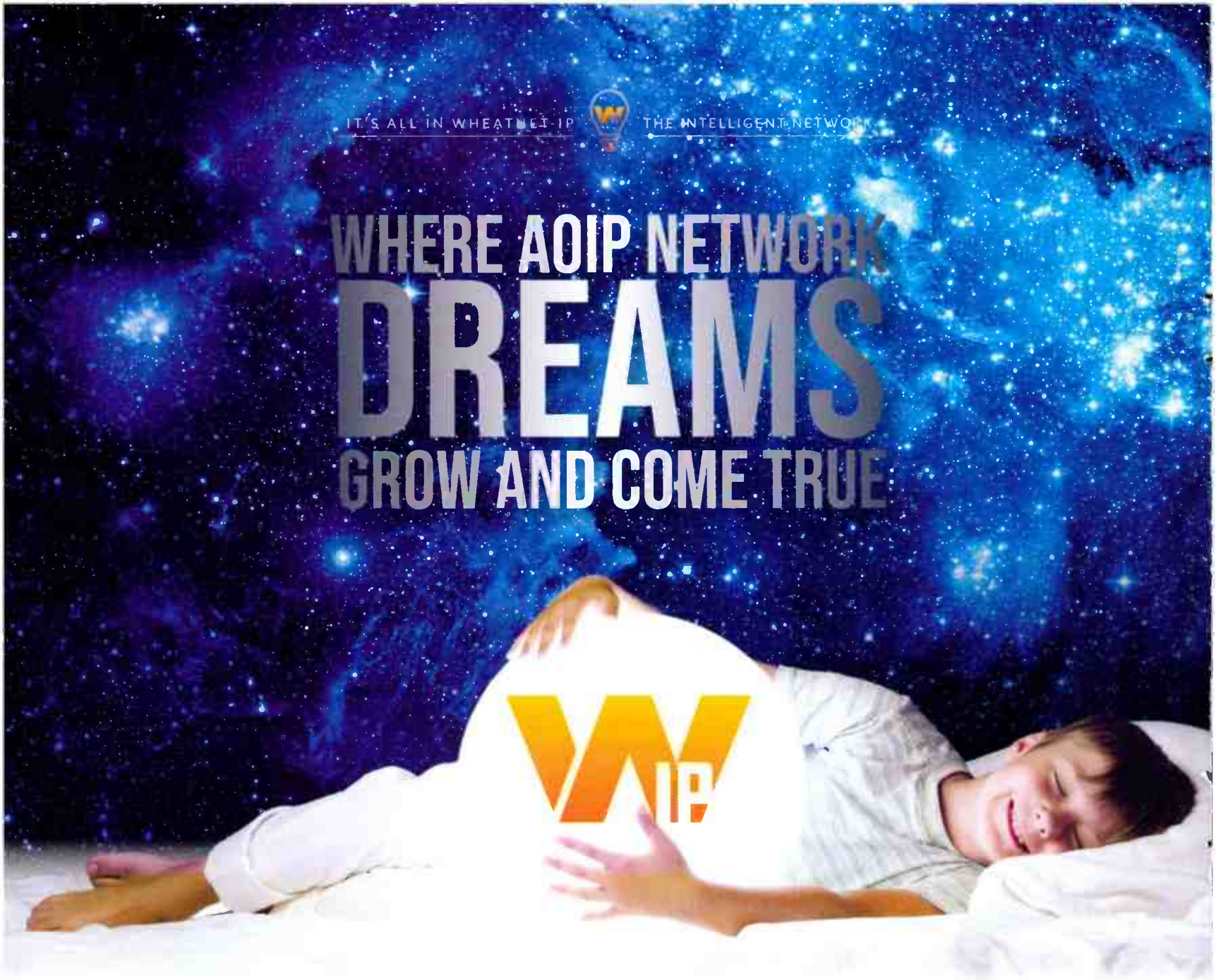

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Political issue advertising: The blessing and the curse!

Here's an important story for radio managers prepping for the coming political year

Getty Images

Writer

Gregg P. Skall

Telecommunications Law Professionals PLLC

The 2024 primary season is about to heat up, with predictions of record-breaking spending of over $10 billion, according to news reports.

While such revenues may be a boon for broadcasters, the political season can be a minefield, necessitating a refresher on the importance of record-keeping and timely, proper posting to the station online political file.

The FCC monitors this closely. The 2022 mid-term political season saw more than 220 consent decrees issued to stations for failure to comply fully with political recordkeeping rules (and this despite the consideration the FCC gave to stations suffering from staffing shortages and technical issues as a result of the pandemic).

The consent decrees provide some guidance on the commission's expectations regarding information required to be placed in the station's political online public file and deadlines. With Covid now causing far fewer staffing emergencies, we can expect a less tolerant agency that recognizes fewer exceptions and forgives fewer transgressions.

Therefore, it is critical for stations to understand the rules and policies and follow these procedures for compliance with FCC requirements.

Every station should: (1) ensure that all key staff members are aware of and understand the FCC's political file rules; (2) designate a senior staff member to be responsible for ensuring station compliance with the political advertising rules; (3) adopt a procedure to screen political ad buys; and (4) provide regular training sessions to staff to ensure they know the relevant internal procedures and FCC requirements. Stations should ensure their staff know which ads the rules apply to and what needs to be done if the political rules do apply.

Definitions

When is the public file requirement triggered?

The requirement is triggered when the station receives a "firm inquiry" for political advertising, whether candidate or issue advertising. This does not include general inquiries about availabilities or about political rates on the station. A "firm inquiry" has been referred to by commission staff as an inquiry for a specific date, time or schedule and rates for that time or schedule.

What constitutes issue advertising?

Stations are not required to upload information related to every single ad they sell. The Communications Act at §315(e)(1)(B) states that a station must maintain a political file for requests to purchase broadcast time: (1) made by a legally qualified candidate for public office; or (2) that communicates a message relating to any "political matter of national importance," including a national legislative issue of public importance.

At a minimum, "political matter of national importance" includes:

(1) References to legally qualified candidates for federal office (the commission has noted that this refers only to federal candidates, although some ads concerning state and local candidates may qualify as raising "political matters of national importance") or, although placed by a local or state candidate, the ad may refer to a political party slate that includes a reference to a federal office or the party's candidate for that office; (2) any reference to a federal office (for example "our next senator" or "our person in Washington") and any reference to an election to federal office; or (3) a "national legislative issue of public importance."

A "national legislative issue of public importance" is any matter that is the subject of controversy or discussion at the national level; the term is narrower than a "political matter of national importance." It includes issues that are the subject of federal legislation that have been introduced and are pending in Congress at the time the request for airtime is made.

In considering context as to whether an advertisement constitutes a "political matter of national importance," analyze whether the message is both "political" in nature and of "national importance," having significance on a national level. To trigger the disclosure obligation, the broadcast message must satisfy both requirements.

Another important distinction is whether the issue, though possibly relating to a national issue, is really only a statewide or local one.

An example might be abortion, particularly since the Dobbs decision overturning Roe v. Wade. While reproductive rights are certainly discussed on a national level, various states are passing legislation or placing the issue on state ballots as a referendum. To the extent that the advertisement addresses only a state referendum or specific state legislation that may be voted on only by the residents or legislators of that state, the FCC may consider that it addresses only a state issue and not a national legislative issue or national political issue.

When considering such an order, listen carefully to the ad and consult your station lawyer if it raises the question.

Political File Disclosure Requirements

Once a station determines they have accepted a political ad, they need to comply with the FCC's rules and recordkeeping requirements. The following is required to be disclosed by the station:

1. All Issues and All Candidate References

For each request to purchase time that relates to the political matter of national importance, licensees must disclose in the station political file ALL political matters of national importance mentioned in the ad. The disclosure must include any mentions of any or all of the following: the names of ALL legally qualified candidates and the offices to which they are seeking election, ALL elections for federal office (with or without a candidate name), and all "national legislative issues of public importance" referred to in the communication.

"All" is emphasized here because in the past, some stations reported only the principal issue discussed in the ad, or only the candidate primarily addressed in the ad, even when others were mentioned. This has now been clarified to make certain it is understood that all such issues and all such candidates must be identified in the public file posting.

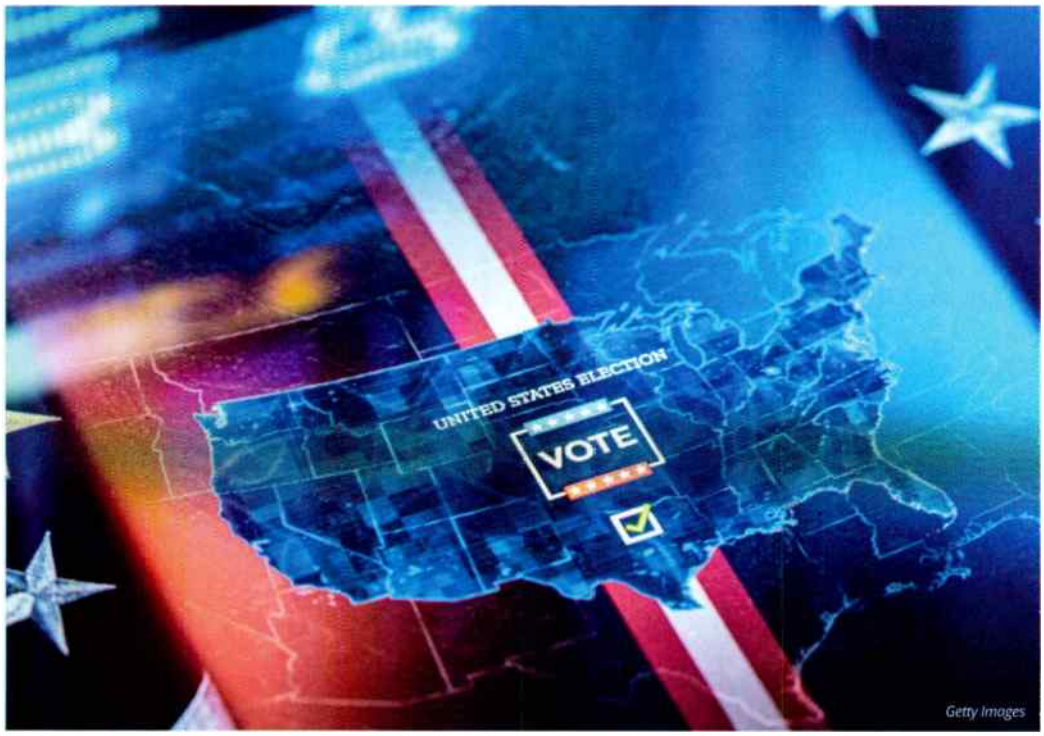
2. The Required Political File Information

The station must place in its political file (a subset of its online public inspection file) the following information:

- Whether the request to purchase broadcast time is accepted or rejected by the licensee;
- The rate charge for the broadcast time;
- The date and time in which the communication is aired;
- The class of time purchased;
- The name of the candidate to which the communication refers, the office to which the candidate is seeking election and the election to which the communication refers;
- The issue or issues to which the communication refers (remember, *ALL* issues discussed must be listed); and
- In the case of any other request, the name of the person purchasing the time, the name, address and phone number of a contact person for such person, and a list of the chief executive officers or members of the executive committee or of the board of directors for such person.

Although candidate ads are not specifically addressed in this article, note that for a request made by or on

"The 2022 mid-term political season saw more than 220 consent decrees issued to stations for failure to fully comply with the political recordkeeping rules."



Getty Images

behalf of a candidate, the name of the candidate, the authorized committee of the candidate and the treasurer of such committee must also be included in the political online public inspection file.

Importantly, for each ad that references a political matter of national importance, whether or not it is designed or placed for a candidate PAC, the public file information must also include: the respective offices to which all such candidates are seeking election;

- The names of *ALL* candidates for federal office referenced in the broadcast message;
- The respective offices to which all such candidates are seeking election;
- *ALL* elections referenced in the broadcast message; and
- *ALL* national legislative issues of public importance.

3. The Sponsor

The Communications Act and FCC rules also require that, whenever the station broadcasts ANY political matter or a matter involving a controversial issue of public importance that is paid for or furnished by any entity, the station must obtain and place in the public file a list of the chief executive officers or members of the executive committee or of the board of directors and make it available in its online public inspection file.

A problem that frequently occurs in the political online public file materials is when the ad buyer provides only one name or a short list of names. This is not sufficient. If you have a reasonable basis for believing that the provided sponsor information appears to be incomplete, the station has an affirmative obligation and MUST inquire further, at least once.

For example, whenever the name of only one official has been supplied, the station must make further inquiry. The obligation to inquire will be satisfied by making a single further inquiry to either the organization sponsoring the ad or the third-party buyer of advertising time acting on the organization's behalf. But it MUST make the inquiry.

While the response is not required to be placed in the public file, it should be obtained in writing and provided to the station manager or station political advertising official and maintain it in a safe place to document the station efforts should a later inquiry be made.

In summary, make certain that anyone wishing to place such advertising with you provides complete information to satisfy your requirements.

Timing for Compliance

Section §315 (e)(3) of the Communications Act states that the information is to be placed in the political file "as soon as possible" and shall be retained by the licensee for a period of not less than two years. The commission has defined "as soon as possible" as the next business day. In the prior election season, which occurred during Covid, the commission did try to take into account the extraordinary situations that occurred due to the pandemic. Licensees should not rely on such relief as this season faces a much different situation, and stations must diligently ensure all uploads are completed by the next business day.

Conclusion

Political campaigns recognize that broadcasting remains one of the most important and potent means of effectively communicating their message. The 2024 cycle is likely to be highly partisan, addressing some of the most critically important issues America has ever faced. It promises to be a good one for broadcasters and their revenues. It is equally important that broadcasters embrace their historic role in contributing to a properly informed electorate and understand the rules that apply to their role.

This column is provided for general information purposes only and should not be relied upon as legal advice pertaining to any specific factual situation. Legal decisions should be made only after proper consultation with a legal professional of your choosing.

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Art Deco WWJ studio building becomes Cambria Hotel

The Cambria cherishes its roots as a broadcasting icon in Detroit

Writer

John Schneider

Read more of the author's articles at *www.radioworld.com/author/johnschneider*.

The owners of the Detroit Cambria Hotel have taken an outmoded building designed for live radio broadcasting and adapted it to modern 21st century needs. Here's how that came about.

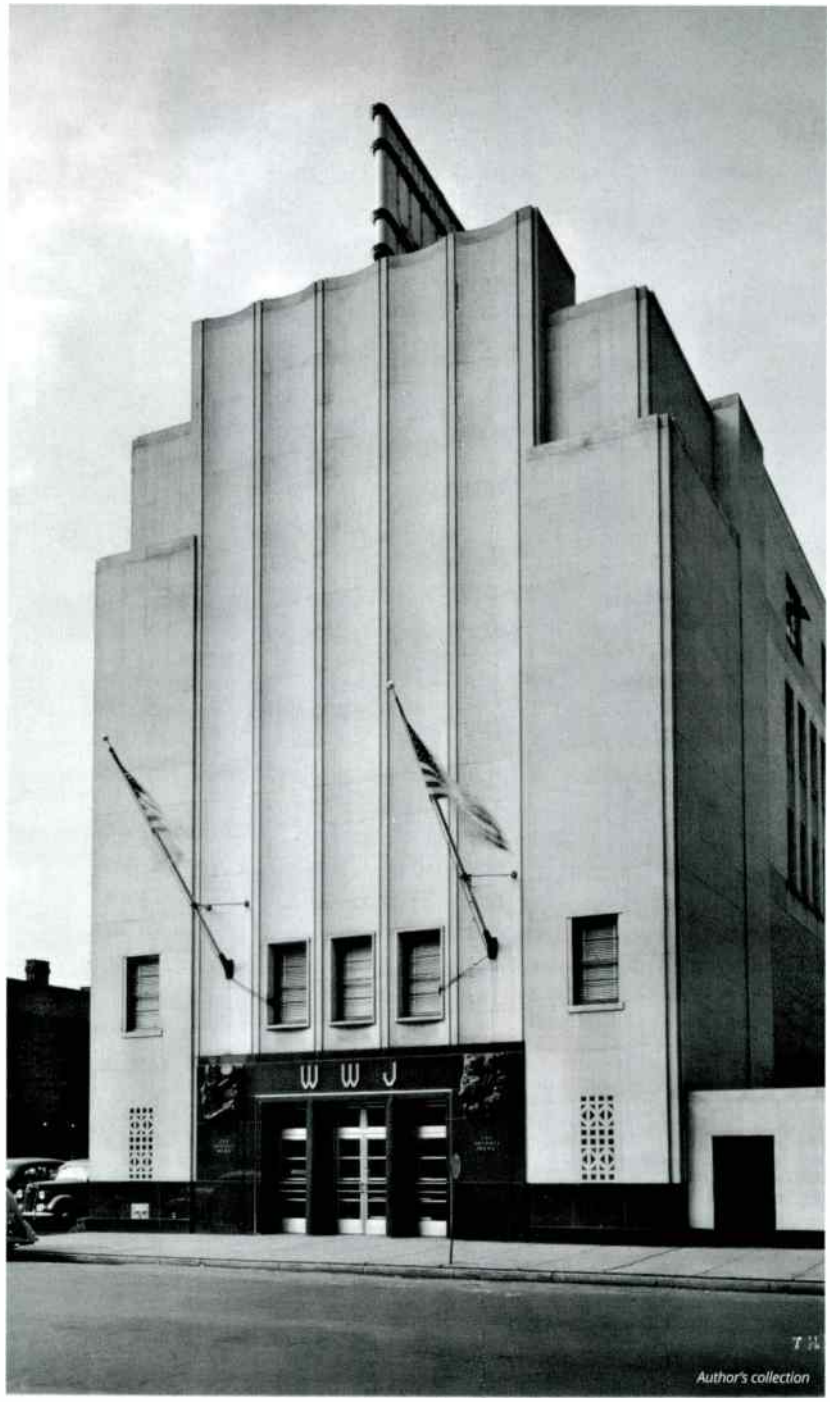
Detroit's WWJ was one of the nation's pioneer radio stations, first broadcasting in August of 1922. It was owned by the Detroit News, a Scripps Family newspaper. The company never spared an expense to make WWJ a first-class operation.

Its first studios were in a few small rooms on the top floor of the Detroit News building, but by 1936 broadcasting had become a big business and WWJ had outgrown its limited space.

The solution was to build a dedicated studio building at 600 West Lafayette Boulevard, directly across from the News building.

Cost, it appears, was not an object. A five-story Art Deco steel-and-concrete structure was constructed, designed by the noted Detroit architect Albert Kahn. Its 70-foot-tall façade was faced with Indiana limestone, with black granite surrounding the main entrance. Two sculptured-granite emblems graced the front of the building, created by Swedish sculptor Carl Milles. A tunnel underneath the street connected WWJ with the News building.

Inside the 55,000-square-foot space, a large



Author's collection

Right
This was how the WWJ building appeared at the time of its dedication in September, 1936.

This 1951 addition to the studio building was the home of WWJ(TV).

Author's collection

auditorium studio occupied most of the first floor, with seating for 350 people. Studio A on the second floor was two stories in height, and could hold an audience of 80. Also on the second floor were two smaller studios, master control and several offices. The third floor contained a sponsor's viewing room, another small studio, a rehearsal studio and additional offices. There was a large exhibition area and a kitchen in the basement.

In 1951, a major expansion was added to the north, housing the studios and offices of TV station WWJ (which is now WDIV, unrelated to the present WWJ television station). The windowless façade of the new two-story addition continued the use of limestone facing but had more of a mid-century modern appearance.

In 1985, The Gannett Company bought the Detroit News but was required by the FCC to sell WWJ/WJOI. The stations were acquired by a group of local businessmen. In turn, they sold the stations in 1989 to CBS Radio, whose lineage can be traced to the present ownership by Audacy Inc.

After WWJ vacated the studio building, it became the headquarters of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). In 2019, the building was purchased by local developers, who planned

> **“We had a chance to wander the building and observe how the developers have converted an obsolete radio studio building into a state-of-the-art hotel.”**

This large auditorium studio occupied most of the first floor.

The old WWJ auditorium studio has been converted into the Sala Ballroom as seen from a mezzanine balcony.

Author's collection

to demolish the building and replace it with an 11-story condominium building.

Fortunately, that project failed to attract financing, and so their Plan B was to convert the existing structure into a luxury hotel building.

A new structure, built over an adjoining parking lot, contained the hotel rooms, and the original WWJ radio and TV buildings were converted into public hotel area. The marriage of these three structures became the new Detroit Cambria Hotel.

We get the tour

The Cambria's grand opening was held in October. Radio World was invited to attend the private opening celebration. We had a chance to wander the building and observe how the developers have converted an obsolete radio studio building into a state-of-the-art hotel.

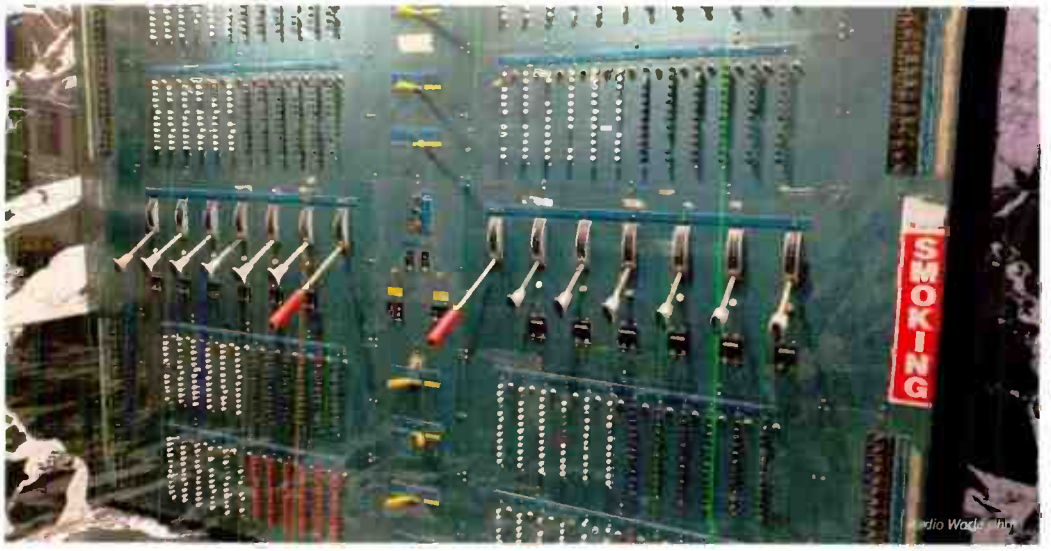
The original auditorium studio has become

the Art Deco Sala Ballroom, while the adjoining original TV studio became the Balla Ultra Lounge. Meeting rooms and two restaurants — one upscale and one casual — occupy the remainder of the first floor.

On the second floor, the former studio spaces now house the check-in desk, an elegant lobby bar and a rooftop patio lounge.

The Cambria's 154 hotel rooms are all accessed down a ramp leading out of the lobby area. The basement now contains "5-Iron Golf," an indoor high-tech golfing and bowling experience.

While Cambria is the luxury brand of Choice Hotels, a national chain, the Detroit Cambria is locally owned. According to Koucar Management partners Joe Caradonna and Chris Kouza, the $80 million project took four years to complete. Many obstacles had to be overcome to convert a building built for radio, with its 3-foot-thick walls and lack of windows.



Above
The original WWJ(TV) light board is on display at the entrance to the Balla Lounge.

The sloping floor of the main auditorium studio posed the biggest challenge, according to Caradonna: "We thought that was just bleachers built on top of a flat floor, but it was all concrete, so we had to literally jackhammer the floor out, redo the floor with all new steel and reinforce it. We do a lot of automotive commercial and convention events, and they want to be able to pull a vehicle in the space, so we had to make it strong enough for a vehicle."

Caradonna expressed his admiration for the sound isolation of the rooms. During the grand opening, although a live band was performing at ear-splitting volume in the

The entrance retains the granite figures sculpted by Carl Milles.

Courtesy Cambria Hotel

Radio World photo

Above
Historical WWJ photographs adorn the walls in the lobby; the hallway at left leads towards the guest rooms.

Sala Ballroom, the adjacent Balla Lounge was quiet.

We were pleased to note that the original façade of the radio studio building was left intact, including the artistic sculptures depicting the transmission and reception of radio broadcasts.

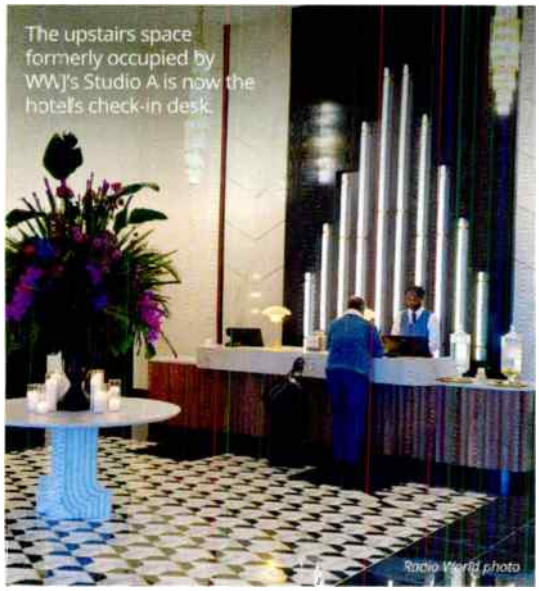
Moving through the hotel, one can't help but notice the many touches that pay homage to its broadcasting heritage. In the entrance to the Balla Lounge, the original TV station lighting board is on display behind a lighted glass window; on the ceiling, the lighting tracks and catwalks are still in place.

Throughout the hotel there are framed historical photographs of WWJ's early years. In the guestrooms, one wall is papered with an artistic representation of a sound wave, and there are framed depictions of radio broadcasting on the walls.

According to partner Chris Kouza, "The idea was to take an historical building such as this, be able to convert it and modernize it, and to be able to take damp spaces like the basement and convert them into a Five-Iron Golf. I relied on my partner Joe to be able to convert the HVAC systems. In the basement, you don't feel like you're in a basement; it feels lively, not clammy. That's where the money is going — into the infrastructure that nobody sees."

He added, "The city of Detroit is unique in that there is no direct competitor to Cambria in this market. It's a truly unique product in that it's affordable luxury, it's a business class hotel and it gives you a sense of place and a sense of space."

He said Cambria allows the developer to put his or her



own touch on the property.

"The one in New Orleans is not going to look and feel like the one in Detroit, it's going to have its own local spin. However, you still know your sense of place, you know where the check-in is, you know how to get around and mill about, but you're getting that local flair, that local flavor that no one else can give you except for people who are from that locale.

"That's why we had the attraction to Cambria, because they really allowed us to be creative in our development phase."

Right
Co-owners Joe Caradonna, center, and Chris Kouza, right, cut the ribbon to inaugurate their new hotel.

A historic structure was saved from demolition, a fate that other classic broadcast facilities have sadly met. Even in its new life, the Cambria continues to be an important icon of radio and TV broadcasting in the Detroit area. Broadcast executives who have a need to visit Detroit will certainly find the Cambria Hotel a comforting and familiar place to stay.

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BROADCAST EQUIPMENT EXCHANGE

Writer

Charles S. Fitch
P.E.
Longtime Radio World contributor

Only we can change the landscape of radio

Frankly, artificial intelligence is somewhat underwhelming

Radio World's Paul McLane recently shared with me the 2021 book by Mo Gawdat, "Scary Smart: The Future of Artificial Intelligence and How You Can Save Our World."

Having read that tome as well as various recent articles and comments about the possible impact of AI, please excuse a seasoned and senior's opinion, but I think that AI vis-à-vis broadcast radio is all very underwhelming.

Just a few nights ago I had a vivid dream about being on the air jocking and rocking in El Paso on KELP(AM) — halcyon, salad days never to reappear. In the intervening 55 years, we and the industry have gone through a sea change in both business and programming environments.

Most of the change has been stimulated by tools given to us (by the FCC and in commerce regulations) or that we've devised ourselves (automation, satellites, RPU, digital storage). And after all the hype, I think AI is just another tool in the toolbox, one that we can use either effectively or destructively.

I certainly don't see it as a panacea, the great next big thing that will lead to radio's salvation. Nor do I think it will destroy us.

At the end, it's all about audiences and billings. So how will AI help or hinder us?

AI as a technology is basically a special sort of (somewhat) intuitive algorithm. It starts with our own thinking and progresses to the edges of permutation. Our fear of the ghost in this machine is that the progression will order up extremes — such as the AI that suddenly realizes the transmitter is off and turns it back on, overriding every software-based safety stop, while you're inside, changing power supply components.

As with Asimov's Laws of Robotics, which included a sort of a Hippocratic oath that robots should do no harm, we'll have to put limits on AI. The machine might hear swear words in and around the station, but we need to teach it a list of nine verboten words so don't go there (thank you, George Carlin).

Will AI develop the sophistication to concoct narratives of the quality of those never-ending shaggy dog stories by Jean Shepherd? Will it be able to synthesize empathy, compassion or emotion in general? Will it be believable, detectable, acceptable? Who knows?

A half-century ago, stations were programmed so tightly that for quality control they used what were essentially flip charts, a series of pablum intros and outros that kept the voices on the stations within the guardrails of "sound personality" and format.

Can AI deliver a synthesized voice modeled on a winning personality to cover this task? Absolutely. Imagine the sound samples in a Yamaha keyboard taken from the world's best-sounding Steinway applied similarly to a voice. AI even at this moment can take text or voice input and transmute that directly into the distinctive tone and cadence of one of the legends like the unique great Derek Farlei (whom rumor suggests might be the air name for a certain Radio World contributor).

One wonderful upside to this is that all your AI air personalities will never die or ask for a raise or a day off.

But is any of this good or bad? We're back to Buc's mantra: It's not what you got but what you do with it that counts.

AI can and undoubtedly will be used for many tasks in radio. How well or poorly is up to us. It has become another tool in the toolbox but will not change the landscape of radio. Only we, the real genius, can do that.

sdecoret/Getty Images

Above
Roger Lanctot

Legislation won't fix it

I've seen several articles by Roger Lanctot, director of automotive connected mobility in the Global Automotive Practice at TechInsights. He has a long title but he is a brilliantly observant individual.

His guest commentary "Cars: Radio Is Out! TV Is In!" (*radioworld.com*, keyword Lanctot) explained the whole issue of AM/FM in the dashboard.

It's as evident as the nose on my face. If someone wants to park their vehicle on my driveway for free, I can choose to accept or reject it. If the next person comes along and offers cash to park on my driveway, I'll more strongly consider their offer. Then it boils down to "How much and for how long?" I might even consider throwing the "free" parking person off my property.

Broadcast radio has had a wonderful free ride in vehicles, but with digital streaming services and satellite radio and you-name-it in the digital world of 2023, a service can push out that freeloader with the right price. While the FCC "controls" AM/FM, it doesn't (and never will) control the RF platform that AM/FM is heard on.

Consolidation and Wall Street involvement in broadcast radio was an exercise in simple accounting: Get more signals, get more revenue. Trouble is, that coincided with Sirius, XM, their consolidation, the internet and thousands of other audio choices. The iPod. Smartphones.

If broadcast radio doesn't come up with a workable model to battle the dashboard carpetbaggers and their bags full of cash, they'll be left out in the cold. All of the legislation in the world won't help.

AM/FM, you're being pushed off the dashboard, replaced by apps and services that will help fill the coffers of the carmakers and streaming services, the labels and copyright holders. If anyone really thinks their technological excuses make sense, I'll be happy to sell you a money deal with the Sultan of Smashburgers.

As Earl Pitts would say, "Wake Up, Uhmerica." In 2023 the money is talking, and its voice is louder, and more lucrative for carmakers, than ever. It's all legal and it's gonna continue.

Dave Mason

How to submit
Radio World welcomes comment on all relevant topics. Email *radioworld@futurenet.com* with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject field.

"Noncom" means just that

Radio World reported that an LPFM station faced a potential $15,000 fine for airing commercials for almost eight years. I find it horrifying that it took so long for the issue to be addressed and am surprised that a relatively small fine was proposed for something so egregious.

Purchasing a commercial broadcast license is a financial transaction. Money is paid to the government for the frequency allocation in the expectation that the buyer will make more money operating a station than was paid for the license. This is reasonable and fair.

But given the very limited number of slots available, noncommercial stations are different. Although some money is involved, they are a public trust, with the expectation that the stations will be operated without profit, for the public good. Violating this trust hurts everyone.

I know that the LPFM in Colorado is by no means the only station engaging in this practice. Tuning across the band, I hear "Christian" stations with noncommercial licenses airing network broadcasts with original network spots in them. I had thought that Jesus kicked the moneylenders out of the temple, but here they are coming back in again in His name.

I hear college stations airing spots for local businesses. I even hear the occasional underwriting spot that pushes the limits of appropriate use and verges into sponsorship.

We need to be taking this seriously because if noncommercial stations start acting like commercial broadcasters, there will be no reason to retain the noncommercial allocations. That would be bad for everyone concerned.

Scott Dorsey
Kludge Audio
Williamsburg, Va.

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