COLLEGE RADIO SURVIVABILITY: EMERGING BUSINESS MODELS AND THE CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGICAL CONVERGENCE

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A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis addresses the overall survival of college radio as an American institution, employing the convergence paradigm. Analysis was carried out using a case study of the two radios stations at Bowling Green State University, WBGU-FM and WFAL. Interviews were carried out with past managers and advisors of the radio stations. A business analysis was also done using the Accessibility, Content and Revenue (ACR) framework. This thesis will also use a content analysis of 50 webcasting college radio station websites to enhance and contextualize the case study data.

BGSU is a mid-size Midwestern university with a unique radio station facility. Its two radio stations WBGU –FM and WFAL have two different identities and historically different purposes. By examining these stations as a case study and utilizing a new business framework the thesis identifies specific areas that can be improved upon, such as, devoting more resources to content production, and establishing a continuity agent to improve the cyclical nature of college radio. It develops a model for effective sustainable management, programming, and revenue creation while balancing the unique qualities of college radio as an institution, and enhancing college radio’s position as a community media outlet. This thesis makes the argument that college radio station survival is contingent upon strong management that effectively addresses the challenges of technological convergence.
To Allison and my Parents, John and Mary.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how college radio stations can survive in today’s economic and technological environment. College radio stations face many challenges, including rapidly changing management structure, the financial health of college radio, and its sustainability as a viable medium for attracting new listeners, while providing valuable training for students to enter the working world. In pursuit of that idea, the author embarked upon a path of study to find out what college radio was doing to maintain sustainability. The first step required examining how stations were utilizing internet and webcasting. In the fall of 2007 the author conducted a qualitative study in which eight college radio managers were interviewed about their stations’ use of webcasting and webcasting’s relationship to five paradigms of convergence identified by Wirth (2005), including convergence as complements (synergy) or substitutes, convergence and consumer demand, convergence and strategic management, convergence and consumer culture, and Rolland’s (2002) claim of convergence as means of value creation.

These findings were presented at the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) conference in 2007 with the paper "College Radio and the Challenges of Convergence: A Qualitative Application of the ACR Framework for Emerging Media Business Models." This study found that college radio stations embrace the internet to complement and enhance terrestrial broadcast offerings, and that stations were increasingly aware of their role in a global society. This paper was adapted for a practical presentation at the Collegiate Broadcasters Inc (CBI) conference in 2007 titled "College Radio and the Challenges of Convergence." The response to the
presentation was overwhelming, with station managers and faculty advisors clamoring for more information on how they could enhance their websites and improve their webcasting efforts.

The problems faced by these station managers included offsetting cuts in station funding, waning audiences, and mere survival as a viable media entity in this rapidly changing environment. This thesis is born from the research conducted for the foregoing presentations and the need to find financial solutions for college radio as expressed by academic colleagues and a broad base of college radio station managers whose desire it is to ensure college radio's survivability.

*Significance of the Topic*

College radio is a microcosm of unique personalities and opinions that are passionate about being heard. It is one of the last bastions for independent thought and expression in a crowded media landscape. The sustainability and promotion of college radio is vital to the health of the radio industry as a training ground for new talent to enter professional media outlets, and as one of the country’s most important media outlets for the promotion of democratic dialogue.

In 1912, the University of Wisconsin began the first college radio broadcasts on its experimental radio station 9XM (later to adopt the call letters WHA) (Sauls 2000, p. 10). By 1922, the Universities of Wisconsin and Minnesota (among others) had obtained official broadcast licenses. In the early years of radio, many stations were on the air for less than three years. The failure of these stations was attributed to several factors including financial difficulties, novelty engineering experiments, and formidable commercial opposition (Sauls 2000, p. 10). Importantly similar problems are observed in today’s college radio environment. For example, college radio stations are currently under great pressure to develop alternative methods of
financial sustainability. This is due to a general decrease in funding for public institutions and an increase in competition for available resources within the University structure. The new digital, technological environment provides many challenges to station managers, and the overall financial health of radio as an institution is in question.

The majority of college radio programming originates from local outlets, meaning that most programming is developed and distributed by the station itself. Local radio relays real-time information such as sports, news, and weather as well as connecting a community around area events by providing immediate coverage to these activities. College radio has been part of media access philosophy since the 1920s. Losing this aspect of college life will create setbacks in professional and intellectual student development, reduce voices and opinions, and negatively impact young people’s participation in the democratic process.

Stations that operate at the junior college or technical school level are normally structured to train students to enter the commercial workforce immediately upon graduation. However, radio stations at four-year institutions can also be an activity that enhances the student’s extra curricular college experience. College radio has typically served a niche audience through musical programming that is often overlooked in commercial radio. With the growth of the internet and increased competition from new outlets such as web radio and podcasting; however, the profile of college radio is changing. Some student programmers at host institutions are opting to start their own ventures into online media, free from institutional oversight. These, combined with the popularity of digital music distribution services, are eroding niche audiences of college radio stations. This forces college radio to explore new distribution outlets, and new avenues for sustainable audiences as a means of survival. To succeed, college radio stations must come to understand how the relationship between themselves and their local community has
evolved – how the local community embraces them as listeners or as volunteer workers for the station. This is of particular significance to the future survival of WBGU-FM, the FCC licensed non-commercial radio station at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and its campus-oriented sister station, WFAL.

WBGU-FM has been at BGSU since 1947 and WFAL has existed since 1970. Both stations are valuable training grounds for students to enter the professional work place, providing experiences in either a commercial structure (WFAL) or a non-commercial structure (WBGU-FM). The survival of these stations has greater implications for the community of Bowling Green, Ohio, because they are the only stations that have studios located within Wood County, Ohio. Several commercial stations are licensed to Bowling Green; however, these stations are part of larger commercial clusters within Northwest Ohio and have their studios centrally located in Toledo, Ohio. The survival of the BGSU radio stations is important as an outlet where ordinary individuals can contribute to the community and the broadcasting of local voices and ideas. The community relies on the stations to provide representation at community events and to serve as forums for civic engagement; therefore, the survival of BGSU college radio is significant as an avenue for the future of community involvement and the democratic process at the local level. Any plan for improving chances of survival of college radio at BGSU, requires an examination of the management, technology and financial structure to see how they can be improved to ensure sustainability.

*Motivations: Personal and Intellectual*

College radio has been one of the author’s passions for the last six years. In these six years the author served various roles including General Manager, Program Director, Operations
Manager, Underwriting Director and Webmaster. These positions granted the author insight to the many tasks, responsibilities and difficulties that college radio faces as a sustainable entity.

**Context of the Study**

The college radio environment is a complicated one with many unique personalities, ideals, and philosophies about how stations should be programmed, and operate within the University are contested. Philosophies often differ among the major actors at college radio stations: Station managers, students, community volunteers, and university administrators must work to accommodate these differences while holding onto its core educational mission. In theory, university administrators should support the stations and their management teams, but sometimes they do not. Several recent cases are illustrative of problems that arise when differences in ideals between a station and the university create controversy. For example, at Rice University, (“High Volume” 2001) university administrators and the student radio station staff clashed over the direction of the station. The University demanded more sports programming, while the radio staff felt that an active sports initiative compromised the station identity. A lockout of the staff ensued and after intense negotiations, a professional manager was installed to balance the demands of the university and interests of student personnel (“High Volume” 2001).

College radio serves as an example of a special type of media organization providing unique content to an important audience. How stations are operated may be considerably different, from programming philosophies to management structure, views on sponsorships, underwriting, and depth of training new volunteers. These variables all determine how the stations will be positioned for a sustainable future. BGSU stations serve as examples. Both
stations have been faced with several difficult issues in recent years. These issues include declining audience, inconsistent funding allocations from the University, and greater demand from the institution to serve as a recruitment tool.

Through the author’s years of involvement with the BGSU radio stations he has been deeply involved with the stations development and personally witnessed the stations struggle to keep current with industry standard technologies. Some of this struggle is linked to inabilities to afford updated equipment. Another important element is a general lack of knowledge about the new methods of distribution and marketing that are being used to attract and maintain new audiences. The survival of college radio stations such as the ones at BGSU lies with the ability to adapt to the changing world of technology. On the station management side, this means attracting new volunteers with creative programming ideas. They must be able to adapt strategies to reach audiences that are increasingly listening to programming through internet outlets and mobile media devices, such as cellular phones and Mp3 players.

**The Research Problem**

This thesis attempts to answer the question, “How can college stations survive given the difficulties of the emergent technological environment?” It proposes that strategies involving technological convergence and innovative management techniques should be embraced to ensure the survival of college radio. Through strategic implementation of ideas based on the understanding of management styles and approaches, and the emergent technological environment, it is possible to open up college radio’s potential, as a socially and culturally relevant educational institution. This will expand the possibilities of college radio, including avenues for content distribution, content offerings, and creative solutions for generating revenue.
A crucial part of the strategy for survival is identifying new opportunities on the one hand, and educating university administrators about the benefits of convergent technology, (including educational opportunities, public relations and revenue generation) on the other. By so doing, college radio can enhance its university profile and develop a vision that is embraced and supported by the host institution. Thus, in order to ensure station survivability, one needs, through the history of college stations, to examine the status of their technology, their business or operational plans, their programming and marketing strategies and the implementation of emergent technologies such as websites.

One core problem to be addressed is the ways in which college radio stations are funded. This includes looking at college radio’s revenue streams at times of reduced funding from higher education, Another core problem is the growth and usage of new technologies including mp3 players and how this technology impacts audience listening practices (Albarran, 2007). Solutions to this problem will require exploring trends in internet radio and podcasting usage. For example, it will also require examining the legal concerns and limitations of web streaming and podcasting. These technologies offer the potential for new revenue streams that convergence offers college radio. Understanding the relationship these technologies and new streams of revenue require improved education in the public radio environment about the meaning of the convergence concept in practice.

This thesis considers these problems and the concept of convergence through several lenses. First, the ACR Framework for Emerging Business Models (Ha and Ganahl, 2004, 2007) will be utilized. This will be addressed through a multi-faceted approach that includes an exploratory content analysis of college radio websites to examine college radio business practices. Second, a case study of the two BGSU radio stations has been undertaken. An
autoethnographic examination with interviews of station managers and department advisors that controlled station operations between 1963 and 2008 was conducted.
College Radio – Experimental beginnings

There have been relatively few studies about the future of college radio and the direction it will take in the coming years. An accurate depiction of college radio necessitates a brief discussion of its beginnings and development through the years, from experimental transmissions to alternative programming. As the medium of radio has evolved, so has the institution of college radio.

Initially college radio stations were developed as experimental stations, operating on college and university campuses including two-year institutions (Sauls, 2000, p. 9). Before the commercial model of broadcasting was molded in the 1920s, there was an alternative non-commercial system composed of radio stations at institutions of higher education. State supported universities especially formed an important set of pioneer radio stations. By the mid 1920s, over 100 stations were licensed to institutions of higher education (Slotten, 2006, p. 486). During the four-year period before the United States entered World War I, the Department of Commerce issued special experimental licenses to at least 20 major public universities in 16 states and at least 15 private colleges and universities (Slotten, 2006, p. 488).

Earle Terry, a Professor at the University of Wisconsin, is credited with starting the first experimental station 9XM in 1915 with a group of students, known as the ‘wireless squad,’ in charge of operations (Slotten, 2006). The most notable of these students was Malcolm Henson who became the radio engineer for Admiral Richard E. Byrd’s first Antarctic expedition (Slotten, 2006, p. 488). During these first years the University of Wisconsin and 9XM assisted with radio experiments by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army Signal Corps. Because of the extensive
experimentation during the war, 9XM was well prepared to begin public broadcasting when the ban on civilian transmissions was lifted in 1919 (Slotten, 2006). The Department of Commerce assigned this station the call letters WHA in January of 1922, one year after the station initiated a regular broadcasting program (Slotten, 2006).

After the early years of assisting military experiments, state universities became socially aware, and their leaders tended to share the view that radio was an important part of a progressive agenda that was meant to educate and bolster the moral fiber of society (Wall, 2007). The progressive agenda of the early university stations had difficulties surviving in an environment in which federal policy tended towards a ‘corporate liberalism’ that viewed audiences as commodities and benefited larger corporations. (Streeter cf. Wall 2007). Putting the survival of college radio in perspective Wall (2007, p. 37) states:

There is another set of dimensions to the issues that were as important for the early college radio stations as they are 80 years later. State universities and land grant colleges seemed most successful in keeping their licenses, perhaps because of their collective commitment to a progressive mission of education, cultural ‘uplift,’ economic and technological development and the modernist aspirations of senior staff.

This commitment to the educational mission has been critical to the survival of college radio, from experimental beginnings to the modern institution it is today.

*College Radio – Evolution*

“College radio” as a volunteer student operation, as distinct from university-based professional non-commercial radio stations now typically known by their National Public Radio (NPR) affiliations developed in the 1960s. To some scholars it paralleled the growth of FM radio as a technical method of transmission and as a style of music format (Wall, 2007, p. 39). Both the expanded college stations and the for-profit stations explored new forms of presentation
and music programming aimed at a rising, young and increasingly wealthy middle class population that saw itself as part of a music-centric counterculture (Eyerman and Jamison cf. Wall, 2007). The presenters, (usually referred to as DJ’s) as represented by their choice of music, were actively constructing an alternative offering to commercial AM pop radio. Their presentation styles of longer music sets were particularly appealing to college students who adopted many of the practices at their campus stations (Wall, 2007).

In the 1980s the association between college radio and certain forms of rock music became so strong that the term “college rock” was coined (Wall, 2007, p. 35). This resulted in a solidified strategy by the music industry to order the experimental forms of college radio into a more organized radio format. Wall (2007, p. 44) argues that in college radio there is a

…sense of an alternative music culture built up out of a series of discursive practices around music, which are then reinforced in the programming and presentation of the music on-air through remnants of the ideas of cultural uplift, progressive politics and counterculture that have pervaded not-for-profit radio in the United States.

*College Radio – More Than Just Music*

To fully understand the challenges faced by college radio today, it is necessary to examine some of the other influences and factors that are a central component of successful college radio operations. Wall (2007) conducted a case study of three east coast college stations and concluded in part that these stations survived economically mainly because of the in-kind subsidy of the university host and the free labor of the staff. Furthermore, Wall proposed,

More important than a simplistic sense of ‘college music’ as alternative rock, it is the themes of progress, cultural uplift and alternative lifestyle that have threaded throughout the development of American education and broadcasting and they continue to play an important role in the discursive practices of college radio today. (p. 51)
College radio is very much a local centered media outlet. There is growing pessimism, however, that it does not have a sustainable future as a terrestrial broadcast medium. A Delphi study conducted by Tremblay (2003) surveyed 13 college radio advisors and proposed five dominant trends in college radio: (1) Decreasing prestige of college radio advising within the college and university communities, (2) a decreasing amount of direct institutional financial support for college radio, (3) a necessary move towards digital production and transmission, (4) a changing composition of students participating in college radio, and (5) a continual reliance on locally produced alternative music and sports programming. Tremblay (2003) noted:

“Localness” and student narcissism may be critical variables for understanding college radio programming” (anonymous, as cited in Tremblay, 2003). I’m afraid college radio is dying off a bit, particularly if it is backed by journalism schools, at least the over the air stations will see a drop in participation because many students may elect to start their own “net” radio. (Anonymous, as cited in Tremblay, 2003)

The “localness” that Tremblay speaks of is a key component to successful webcasting for terrestrial stations to embrace as an approach to strategic media management.

The Significance of “Local Radio”

Local radio serves the purpose of relaying real-time information, like sports, news, and weather. It also serves to connect members of a community around area events by providing prior notice and immediate coverage of community activities. This networking function can also be an effective income generating strategy. For example, across the United States the radio industry is beginning to realize that local strategies should not be passed over for efficient national models. Stimson (2006) states: “To the extent that someone comes along and takes listenership and makes (radio) not a local medium they risk losing their source of revenue, which is local advertising.” Stimson (2006) notes the local advertising business in 2005 was $104
billion dollars across all media including radio, cable and TV, while national advertising business was $93 billion.

This localness strategy has had a successful foundation in international radio broadcasting, particularly in Europe; therefore, in looking for answers on how to effectively address the local public broadcasting nature of college radio, it is worth looking at the development of radio in Europe where many nations have a thriving public broadcasting model. Corominas, Bonet, Guimera and Fernandez (2006) in their historical analysis of radio’s development in Spain, make an argument that is applicable to public broadcasting in the United States, especially college radio. They make the case that public radio faces the challenge of finding the proper balance between professionalism and voluntary participation. They argue that the key to community radio is surviving and reinventing itself on limited resources, and strategically positioning itself in the context of a new “communication framework” that is emerging at a global and local level. These authors also suggest the term “proximity” as a synonym for local. In the context of local radio they identify proximity as “localism achieved through content” (Bonet, 2001, as cited in Corominas et al. 2006).

**College Radio and Growth of Internet Broadcasting**

The college community is increasingly dependent on new communication technology for entertainment, information and social networking. The growth of the internet has resulted in a significant increase in the amount of time people spend online, whether it is for entertainment, business or interpersonal connectivity. This practice has led to a change in the habits of how people consume media, from newspapers, to television and radio.

“Digital Radio” as an all-encompassing term for webcasting, podcasting, and HD radio,
is foremost amongst the new audience transforming technologies. Although there is argument as to which of the foregoing terms best describes digital radio, of these, internet broadcasting (webcasting) has been vital to college radio’s attempts to develop and sustain their audience. For college radio, webcasting connects students, alumni, and community members and serves as the portal to a global audience (Merrill, 2007). As a medium in itself internet radio is a complex set of connective technologies. Since there are multiple types of internet radio, it is important to categorize these services in order to see which aspect of internet radio is better served by college radio.

Ha and Ganahl (2004) identified three types of webcasters in their study titled “Webcasting Business Models Of Clicks-And-Bricks And Pure-Play Media: A Comparative Study Of Leading Webcasters In South Korea And The United States”. Their study looked at both online audio and video providers, all three popular types of Internet radio available today. They identified webcasters as pure-plays, internet service providers (ISPs,) and “Clicks-and-Bricks”. Pure-plays have no offline presence. Examples of larger pure play companies are Real Networks, the Music Genome Project and Live365. Some college radio stations do not have a terrestrial broadcast signal a couple of examples include VIC Radio at Ithaca College (vicradio.org) and BGSU’s WFAL which no longer transmits an AM signal. ISPs are radio services provided by companies like AOL/Time Warner, and SBC Yahoo Music! These are popular services often utilized by service subscribers. Clicks-and-Bricks are webcasters with a terrestrial presence, including many college radio stations as well as NPR affiliates and commercial radio properties.

Chan-Olmsted (2005) states that terrestrial radio stations typically regard their online presence as a way of adding value to their offline content. Internet only stations are not able to
do this. Often, they must find innovative, multiple revenue sources based solely on their online content (Palumbo 2002, as cited in Chan-Olmsted, 2005).

Chan-Olmsted (2005) states that internet radio’s impact on traditional radio stations can be evaluated from two perspectives, its influence on audiences’ radio usage, and it’s impact on terrestrial radio’s advertising revenue. The author argues that the development of internet radio changes the competitive nature of the radio market in three ways: (1) It adds new competition that appeals to certain niche audiences with greater diversity and personal appeals, (2) it adds another dimension for competition for traditional radio stations (with online content being utilized as a tool for marketing and adding value to the stations offline content), and (3) it adds more choices for radio audiences in general. Chan-Olmsted also observed that these changes do not decrease local audience shares, and therefore do not affect advertising revenues for local stations, The author concluded from this that webcasting should have minimal effect on college radio advertising and underwriting efforts.

McClung, Mims and Hong (2003) advance a different argument, stating that the cost of streaming by stations outweighs the potential benefits and additional new audiences that streaming would bring, because web audiences are a minimal portion of terrestrial college radio audiences. Since their study was conducted, however, the rise in popularity of pure-plays and ISP radio offerings, as well as satellite radio, has necessitated the adoption of webcasting in order to sustain offline brands. Non-commercial station operators view the incentives of webcasting from its non-revenue perspectives. This follows some principles of Wirth (2005) and Rolland’s (2002) convergence paradigm in which associated cultural attributes create value.

Internet streaming by terrestrial stations has grown tremendously since the mid 1990s (Chan-Olmsted, 2005). The pace of internet radio growth has been steady since 2002 when the
market faced uncertainty over royalty rights payments (Accustream, 2006). The “Small Webcaster Settlement Act,” passed by the U.S. Senate in November of 2002, paved the way for substantially reduced licensing fees for webcasting by college radio stations, independent community stations (McClung, Mims, and Hong, 2003) and other “mom and pop” terrestrial radio stations. Accustream, a company that specializes in streaming media research, projects that tuning (actual listening) hours for the top ten webcasting sites is estimated to have reached 360 million hours in 2006. Combining Arbitron and Webcast Metrics data, it is estimated there are over 700,000 average quarterly hour listeners to online stations (Accustream, 2006).

Some believe that internet radio’s biggest advantage over satellite radio is as an emerging medium. This gives college radio stations with a webcast an edge, because its consumers do not need to purchase new hardware in order to listen in (Pizzi, 2005). The rapidly growing worldwide broadband penetration has greatly increased the value of internet radio for college, professional non-commercial and commercial terrestrial radio stations for those with ready access to computers. There are more computers in use today that can access internet radio today than there are satellite or HD receivers (Pizzi, 2005). Furthermore, the growth of mobile media devices such as the iPhone which can stream internet webcasts enhances the value of stations streaming audio on their website. The argument is made that Internet radio has the competitive advantage because of its high degree of flexibility and scalability. Real time streaming audio is only one mode of service available on Internet radio. On-demand streaming, downloads and podcasts have been provided free, ad-supported, through a-la-carte purchase or subscription services. These models have all been used to support the various forms of emerging distribution methods discussed above (Pizzi, 2005).

In reference to the potential for deployment of webcasting by community radio stations,
which often resemble college radio stations, Mitchell and Jones (2006) advance the concept that web radio, can be effectively deployed to serve the community. For example, webcasting is often integrated with other platforms for multimedia access such as providing text services and video programming. Furthermore, the authors argue that commercial and public service stations use the web to increase audience reach and supplement their analog or digital transmissions both nationally and internationally. Stations use the web as a vital part of overall station visibility in an increasingly global information society. Similarly, community stations and college stations, especially those with lower power transmitters, may use the web to better serve the terrestrial audience whose listening experience may be compromised because of legal and geographical limitations, structural interference or station competition in a dense metropolitan area. This has been the experience of the BGSU station, WFAL.

Podcasting lags behind webcasting as a broadcast medium. The growth of podcasting, however, has allowed broadcast outlets such as NPR and other national media companies to adopt it as a medium for producing supplemental content to on-air broadcasts, and repurposing a direct copy of the on-air broadcast. Podcasting has garnered both praise and criticism, although it appears to have established enough sustainability to continue for a long time. Many college radio stations are slow to fully adopt podcasting, because there is no legal framework to govern it. Because of the uncertainty about recorded material performance royalties, podcasting has been most adopted by terrestrial radio stations, from college to commercial outlets, for the repurposing of spoken word programming.

There are two reasons why spoken word content seems the best choice for podcasts. First, mp3 players already contain listeners’ favorite music, so it makes little sense to try to compete with onboard content. Second, spoken word programming has fewer royalty and
performance rights obligations and has faced fewer lawsuits (Careless, 2005). Podcasting offers the consumer control of the broadcast schedule of the content listened to. It has been argued that this, so-called, “McDonaldization” of commercial radio has precipitated the fall in listening by the “wirefree” generation as audiences move from commercial radio, to public radio, streaming web stations, and podcasts (Berry, 2006). Because college radio is experimental by nature, more willing to innovate and to take risks, it can position itself as a vital medium by developing innovative, university based programming distributed through these new technologies.

In the previously mentioned study by Tremblay (2003), respondents were in consensus that digital production and transmission would gradually diffuse to college radio and could change the way college radio stations operate. Significant changes would likely occur in student participation, professional training and musical experimentation. They agreed that with the growth of online music consumption, college radio faces new challenges in attracting audiences.

Some college radio stations with a tradition of strong terrestrial listenership such as WUOG are finding a larger audience online. In February 2006 over 2,200 people listened to WUOG online with hundreds downloading podcast content (Read, 2006). Station officials at WUOG want to improve the way they stream the signal online. They believe that making it available as an mp3 stream instead of Real Audio would allow listeners to tune in via a variety of software programs including iTunes (Read, 2006), thereby increasing listenership.

Moody, Greer, and Linn (2003, p. 260) surveyed ten NPR station websites and their users. They found that listeners used the website most frequently when there was content on the site relevant to the stations live broadcast. Because of the connectedness of the site content to live programming, visitors also frequently listened to the live broadcasts online. They found that
listening online was negatively related to information seeking, but positively related to entertainment and relaxation (2003). This would indicate that web listeners do not use the site to find out more about the programming the way that terrestrial listeners do. They state that listening online may be better at gratifying affective needs than cognitive needs (2003, p. 261). Their findings are not unique to NPR, but applicable to college and community radio overall. Moody et al. (2003) suggest that NPR stations consider separate web designs for streaming and information seeking to better serve the different types of site visitors, the ones that come to listen and the others that seek information. College radio stations could adopt this online strategy to maximize the listener experience while improving usability for individuals only interested in music reviews or searching the program schedule.

Randle and Murdock (2002) conducted a content analysis of 126 home pages of news/talk radio stations and studied their strategies for web content delivery. They found that Media Logic (which refers to the assumptions and processes for constructing messages within a particular medium), as a principle suggests that news/talk, (and other traditional media), will present on the internet what they feel most comfortable with in a non-internet medium. This means that radio stations with a terrestrial presence will approach the web with the same broadcasting principles such as linear programming strategies they employ in their terrestrial operation. They explain that station culture and format significantly drive content. Consequently, rather than approaching the web as a new medium, terrestrial media is satisfied playing the web with its traditional format, values and culture. In order to be an effective innovator, college radio stations should approach the web with an experimental attitude, to maximize potential offerings of accessibility, content and revenue.

With the adoption and adaptation of new and emerging technologies, radio is evolving
from a growth medium to a mature one. Several factors are clearly noticeable in the shift, including audience fragmentation, increasing competition from satellite radio, internet radio, podcasting and cell phone broadcasts (Stimson, 2006). The capital investment firm Veronis Suhler Stevenson (VSS) predicts that between 2006 and 2010, total broadcast satellite and online radio spending will increase 5.3 percent to $22.01 billion in 2006 and expand at an annual compound rate of 5.4 percent from 2005 to 2010. They stress that growth in satellite and online radio will augment slower growth in broadcast radio (Stimson, 2006). VSS forecasts that broadcast radio can improve the industry outlook if it moves beyond the large-scale consolidation strategy, employed by Clear Channel and Cumulus Broadcasting for example, which has occurred over the last five years. Instead they should invest in HD radio, internet radio and podcasting technologies (Stimson, 2006). The same can be said for college radio.

*Understanding Convergence and College Radio Operations*

Convergence is a hybrid means of communications and technology. Convergence allows media producers to expand beyond the traditional channels of communication to reach new audiences and provide new products to their existing audiences. The internet serves as the essential platform to facilitate this transformation. For example, no longer are daily local papers relegated reporting yesterday’s news. Now they can update readers in real-time about breaking news on their website. Convergence allows electronic media outlets such as college radio stations, new opportunities to engage with their audience through means of communication. Examples include blogging by on-air personalities, or writing reviews of new records that the station has received for airplay. Additional examples of convergence driven offerings include television stations that package their video content for their website and mobile media devices.
Taking convergence into this practical context, this study uses the principles of convergence that are presented by Wirth (2005) and Rolland (2002).

The principles identified by Wirth (2005) are: (1) Convergence as complements or substitutes, (2) media industry structure and convergence, (3) convergence and strategic management, (4) convergence and consumer demand, and (5) convergence and culture. The principle advanced by Rolland that this study will utilize is that convergence is a means of creating value for media companies. This study expands upon Rolland’s concept by making the case for the creation of value more than one of economics. This is true especially, in the case of non-commercial media, where value can be created through accessibility and alternative content.

The five principles identified by Wirth need further explanation because they are complex principles. First, Wirth considers convergence in complements – adding to the current offerings of the media company, in this case college radio stations – and substitutes – the replacement of the current offering such as a terrestrial broadcast for a webcast. This principle provides a useful way to determine if the boundaries between industries are coming closer together (i.e. converging) and if they are, whether this can be expected to lead to increased market competition (convergence in substitutes) or in new products and or markets (convergence in complements).

Second, Wirth examines media industry structure and convergence. Wirth (2005) notes that previous studies have focused on two primary areas: the notion that convergence is transforming the media and telecommunications industries from vertical businesses into horizontal segments, including the strategic implications of this transformation, and the impact of convergence on media and telecommunication merger and acquisition strategies.
Third, convergence and strategic management is explained. Here, Wirth presents the work of Liu and Chan-Olmsted and their identification of two primary strategic management research studies. The concept of the industrial organization (IO) view linkage between strategy and the external environment – and the resource-based view (RBV) that utilizes a resource-based approach to analyze firm strategy and performance resulting from the unique resources possessed by the firm. This is applicable to college radio in the greater sense of student media, when organizations such as the college radio station and the student newspaper are struggling to provide a quality multimedia product as individual organizations, there can be a strategic convergence of resources. Wirth presents the 2003 study of Liu and Chan-Olmsted that in a strategic alliance television networks will provide property resources and internet companies will provide knowledge-based resources (Wirth 2005, p. 455).

Fourth, Wirth looks at consumer demand, and presents the work of scholars such as Dowling, indicating that convergence-based consumer need/demand issues will be even more important in the future as television moves “away from mass communication to more user specific communication.”

Fifth, Wirth discusses convergence and culture. Wirth notes that many media economics and management scholars are interested in the impact of convergence on media culture, such as the development of content for distribution across different media channel forms and the repurposing of media content (Jenkins, as cited in Wirth, 2005.)

**College Radio Survivability**

In the previously mentioned study by Tremblay (2003), respondents were relatively negative about the future of student radio financing. They cited concern about reduced university
hard funding and the need for increased reliance on outside funding such as underwriting and fundraising. Necessarily, funding is often at the center of concerns about sustainability; this has been noted several times in the work of Brant (1981) and Sauls (2000), two authors who have published extensively on College Radio. In 1981 Brant wrote:

“College radio as a whole is presently experiencing growing pains as well as a major rejuvenation, primarily among those stations that are close to dying. It seems that many stations have been in a state of suspended animation for a number of years because of seemingly insurmountable odds - most notably funding.”

Brant further suggests that as part of future sustainability, college radio stations should take on the role of producing content for external agencies. This could bring needed revenue to help offset operating costs (1981).

Sauls (2000) classified college radio as an auxiliary enterprise recognized as a vehicle for attracting and retaining students, faculty and staff. Retention of personnel is an important factor to consider for providing continuity and success with an operation such as college radio that has a high turnover of personnel on a yearly basis. Brant (1981) speculates that in the future college radio, will either succeed or fail, there is no alternative. Brant states that the concerns of technology, funding and program content are secondary issues in the scope of survival. He believes that the fate of a station rests with public perception and the efforts of the broadcasters involved with the station. Thus, survivability of college radio is related to institutional priorities and perception at the university level.

Other important considerations are the costs associated with webcasting for college radio stations. Non-commercial stations including those run by colleges that attract smaller online audiences must still pay a minimum $500 per year fee to SoundExchange (Carnevale, 2007). Webcasting does not generate much revenue for college radio stations, as Komando said, “don’t
expect to generate big bucks by jumping into webcasting at this point in time. For now, look at webcasting as an investment in the future” (Komando 1997 cf. Sauls 2000, p. 158).

Read (2006) presents other financial concerns in a profile of WUOG, the student run station at the University of Georgia. Read noted that stations such as WUOG intend to podcast more once they can afford it, consequently the cost of bandwidth is the chief reason WUOG has asked University of Georgia’s Student Activities Group for a significant subvention increase.

In another instance, Carnevale (2007) offers examples of stations such as WZIP, at the University of Akron that capped its web audience at 100 users to guarantee that the station does not pay more than $500 per year for webcasting. While creating such a cap could limit growth of an online audience, Carnevale cites one General Manager whose view was that “for web listening, that is the number a small operation is going to get anyway.”
CHAPTER III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study focuses on the problems of how college radio stations can survive in the current social, cultural, and economic environment. Within the scholarship of college radio the technological convergence (defined below) paradigm has proven to be especially useful. It is through these lenses that college radio’s survivability is viewed in this study. Encompassing more than college radio, the convergence paradigm offers a broad based appreciation of what the term new media means in application and practice.

This study also attempts to get beyond technological concerns and address issues arising from the accommodations that must be made by college stations in order to overcome the challenges of operating as economic and social entities. Some of these concerns involve the actual station operation, and station managers, perspectives on programming, generating revenue, providing access to audiences and understanding audience characteristics.

In order to gain some perspective on the foregoing concerns, Ha and Ganahl’s ACR (Accessibility, Content, and Revenue) Framework is used. First, since this thesis deals with terminology that relates to new media technology and college radio, the definitions, and approaches for these terms are presented in the following section.

Definition of Terms

Convergence:

Convergence (or technological convergence) is the confluence of different technologies to form hybrid patterns of communications. This includes the state of current information technology whereby technologies used for traditional informational products are now used for additional
products traditionally used by other technologies. An example of this can be the repurposing of terrestrial radio signals through station websites, content aggregators, and mobile media devices (iPods, cell phones, etc).

*College Radio Stations:*

These are terrestrial stations that receive financial support from a university, four-year college, two-year community or technical college that does not have any substantial programming affiliation with a commercial network or National Public Radio (NPR). College radio stations often rely on volunteer student and community member programming to fill the program schedule. The stations are historically found on the non-commercial frequencies between 88.1 and 91.9 FM (Sauls, 2000). These stations often emulate many of the fund raising techniques of NPR stations including underwriting and listener supported telethons.

*Webcasting:*

It is the transmission of audio or video content via the Internet with the intent of immediate consumption. This can include real time online transmission or streaming on demand. Webcasting can be accomplished through various outlets such as University provided servers, subscription service commercial offerings (i.e. Live365.com) and many popular transmission file types. The most popular are mp3, Real Audio, ogg vorbis, Windows media and Quicktime.

*Flash:*

This is a technology that is trademarked to the Adobe Corporation. It is a technology that is rapidly improving with greater integration into popular internet browsers. Commonly used as a
platform for various visual and audio presentations, Flash is a leading technology that is quickly becoming synonymous with webcasting and streaming media. This is due in large part to the increased popularity of YouTube.

Podcasting:
This is content packaged for user consumption at a later time on an iPod or other mp3 digital music device. Podcasting is growing as a medium for stations and individuals to produce content for later consumption. Many stations that are adopting podcasting are using low to no cost programming such as talk programming, interview segments or local music broadcasts. Podcasts are an ideal avenue to utilize for sponsorships. Many podcasts are distributed for free, while other podcasts are available only via paid subscription.

Clicks and Bricks:
These are webcasters with an established offline presence (Ha and Ganahl, 2004, 2007). Many college radio stations are Clicks and Bricks stations.

Pure Play:
These are webcasters with only an online presence. Pure play radio stations have a lower upfront cost and can be established without any concern for FCC approval. With very few terrestrial frequencies available many universities that have been void of a radio station but are now interested in establishing a station are setting up pure play stations, at least until frequencies become available.
The ACR Framework

Ha and Ganahl’s (2004, 2007) framework can be used for examining webcasting businesses, and how webcasting contributes to a companies’ business model. The framework can also be utilized within the convergence paradigm. The framework addresses three components that are critical to all complete media firms success: Accessibility (A), Content Strategies (C) and Revenue Sources (R) (Ha and Ganahl, 2007, p. 14).

One of the accessibility factors in webcasting is the multimedia file transmission method(s) webcasters adopt: These could be, (1) live streaming, (2) on-demand, that may be streamed or downloaded, and (3) push. Each method provides a different format for consumer use of content (Ha and Ganahl, 2007, p. 15). The foregoing authors note that live streaming closely resembles the [traditional] terrestrial broadcast, and on-demand downloading allows the consumer to store a media file on a hard drive and access it at a later time. They note that push is a technological delivery method which content is automatically delivered to the consumer. This technology has seen a revival with the creation of Real Simple Syndication (RSS) in which users can request automatic feeding of content from the content service provider to the user’s computer. Ha and Ganahl state in the same work that the content strategies used by media organizations are based on the continuum of the scope of the offering, the acquisition cost, and the track record of the content (Ha and Ganahl, 2007, p. 16). The authors also state:

Media organizations can choose between a diversified offering of multiple genres and a narrow focus of a certain genre. Usually a more diversified offering can attract more users than a narrow focus offering. But a narrow focus is easier to build media brand recognition and audience loyalty. (Ha and Ganahl, 2007, p. 16)
Ha and Ganahl identify six common revenue sources for webcasters: (1) advertising/sponsorship, (2) e-commerce, (3) content syndication, (4) corporate or government funding, (5) subscription, and (6) pay-per-use/view/download. They mention that the first four revenue sources all assume the audience will not pay for the content or that the payment would be negligible in terms of producing enough revenue (Ha and Ganahl, 2007 p. 17). It is worth noting that the referenced authors recognized that sites receiving corporate or government funding approach webcasting as a public service or a means to promote the company, not as a profit generating enterprise. They note that online advertising dollars are concentrated on those sites with the highest traffic and that the top 20 most visited sites receive 80 percent of the online advertising revenue! (Pastore, as cited in Ha and Ganahl, 2007)

This framework has an obvious utility in the college radio context. Many college radio stations, including WBGU-FM and WFAL utilize new computer based transmission technologies to broaden their bases of operations, reach computer-centered audiences, and to maximize their financial support. Legal allowances make webcasting (for the time being) a promising source of access, content diversification, revenue generation, and management innovation. The following diagram (next page) is the ACR Framework as presented in Ha and Ganahl (2007) applied to leading global webcasters, and later adapted to the college radio experience for this study.
The ACR Framework is a flexible analytical framework that can accommodate quantitative or qualitative research methods. The framework allows for a quantitative coding scheme for content analysis, which can be designed to interpret factors of accessibility, content and revenue. Furthermore, it is also very flexible and appropriate for conducting qualitative research. Detailed but holistic data interpretation is an important aspect of this study, in the task of understanding the problems confronting college radio stations in the current, complex media business world.

For this study the ACR Framework has been adapted to address the unique qualities of college radio stations (see diagram next page). This will include an examination of the terrestrial or offline strategies as well as station online strategies. The ACR Framework as adopted for college radio by the author of this thesis is presented below. The adaptation tries to account for important variables in business models of college radio stations, focusing on the role of webcasting and the technological convergence paradigm. ISP’s are not included in the adapted model because college radio stations do not provide internet service to consumers.
When examining college radio stations’ accessibility it is necessary to first examine stations offline transmission methods. Some newer college radio outlets may be web exclusive but through the years college radio has utilized the technologies of FM, AM, carrier current, cable, and cable FM. Slowly the technology of FM-HD is emerging and being adopted by college radio stations. However, the high cost of installation and licensing HD is an obstacle for many stations with small operating budgets. Such stations will not be able to acquire this technology without the assistance of grant funding and a serious financial commitment from their respective host institutions.

Podcasting and on-demand content is typically repurposed of content that available from
the station’s webcasts and terrestrial broadcasts. Podcasting allows the listener the opportunity to access content that has already aired or to provide access to surplus content. Podcasting allows users to access audience favored content at their convenience. It can be used by stations to build listenership and programming loyalty without concern for building direct listenership for live broadcasts.

Interactivity is an essential function for college radio sustainability. To survive, college radio needs active engagement with its audience because student audiences require more attention. Therefore, they promote audience participation by as many means as possible. For this study, interactivity is measured by the presence of open technological and interpersonal communication channels. On a station’s website this can be the active visual promotion of the studio request line, a visible email requests and comments function, and the promotion of live chat applications. Two examples of the latter are AOL instant messenger and Yahoo messenger. Other channels of active communication include a live playlist on the website of what the DJ is playing, studio webcams to provide the experience of watching a live DJ, and message boards and blogs for DJ’s and audience members to discuss music and issues in the local community that are important to the station’s mission.

Additional Content Strategies

Because college radio relies on volunteer labor for the majority of its on-air talents, be they students or members of the community, by nature, college radio offers a highly diversified programming schedule, often providing different music genres and a smattering of special interest talk and public affairs programs. When analyzing content strategies, it is necessary to examine the originality of local content, or syndicated programs produced by other stations and individual media producers. The latter may include programs provided to stations as part of a
subscription service, or material provided free to any station that desires the service. A high reliance on syndicated programming can indicate several things about the operation of a college radio station: (1) the station is airing syndicated content to make up for a lack of original content, (2) station management is airing syndicated programming to craft a professional air sound, or (3) station management is airing syndicated programming as a response to community demand.

Sports are a central programming element for many college radio stations. Providing coverage of university athletics can attract a significant audience to the terrestrial broadcast and webcast. Such programming often attracts students, alumni and the local community. Sports programming often attracts a higher profile within the administration and campus. Providing coverage of sports can also procure additional revenue from the university administration, and it provides an attractive product for potential underwriters and advertisers.

It is also important to analyze the role of news programming in college radio because with college radio’s educational mission and service to the local community, news programming should provide a continuous connection between campus and community. The news format can provide essential student training in journalistic, investigative research methods and social skills. News programming can also provide a central link to other college media such as the university newspaper, television services, publicity apparatus, public safety and security departments, as well as instructional courses of journalism and telecommunications.

Additional Revenue Strategies

Expanding upon the revenue factors identified by Ha and Ganahl (2007) it is worth examining the individual channels of revenue that are a necessary or desirable part of the general operations of college radio stations. Institutional funding – referred to as corporate funding in the original ACR model - is an important aspect of college radio operations. The level of
institutional funding and the source of such funding within the institution can greatly impact station operations, from the adoption of new technology, potential influences in programming and even a shift in station management structure – such as eschewing student leadership and installing professional management.

The level of institutional funding may also affect the creativity that stations employ to generate additional revenue. Logic would suggest that college radio stations that are financially deficient would employ more aggressive underwriting / advertising strategies and attempt to use more non-traditional revenue channels.

Underwriting and advertising can be a lucrative source of revenue for college radio stations. Often this can make up the difference in a proposed budget that may have been only partially funded by the university. Underwriting and advertising in college radio can provide a valuable training service for students interested in a career in radio sales and may provide quality tie-ins with instructional departments, internship opportunities, and business networks.

Event and content services are channels of external revenue that can be tied into the community but don’t involve the sales staff. Event services can be particularly beneficial for college radio stations to offer because there is significant demand for DJs at parties and social functions on and off campus. Content services can run the gamut from receiving money for distributing university sports to other outlets, to producing content for syndication, to recording live events that may never have a broadcast function, such as archiving guest speakers’ presentations.

The complementary research framework used here is a case study of college radio at BGSU, a mid-sized, Midwestern state supported university. In this case study conducted in 2008, the researcher employed an autoethnographic interpretation of in-depth interviews with ten college radio overseers from student managers, executive staff members, mentors, station faculty
advisors, and telecommunications department chairs. The respondents cover a 45-year period from 1963 to 2008.

Interviews were conducted via telephone and in person over a three-month period from May to July in 2008. Data was gathered and analyzed from these interviews in accordance with the ACR framework with an appreciation for the convergence paradigm.
CHAPTER IV. EXPLORATORY CONTENT ANALYSIS

Premise
This content analysis serves as an exploratory look into the current practices of college radio stations. It was conducted to establish a baseline from which to determine the web-based new media business models of college radio stations nationwide in a convergence driven media environment. It illustrates how college radio operates in the new media environment and what business models they use to ensure their survivability.

Research Design
This exploratory content analysis of 50-college radio station websites was conducted during the spring of 2007, between February and April. These stations were selected randomly using a random number generator, from a national sampling of college radio stations listed on radio-locator.com – a search directory for radio stations – that had a working website and webcast. For this study two coders were used to establish inter-coder reliability. The entire station websites were analyzed using a coding sheet based on the ACR Emerging Media Framework (Appendix A, pg, 97), for the factors of accessibility, content, and revenue. This study was conducted under the direction of Dr. Louisa Ha, one of the developers of the ACR framework. A comparative analysis of the categories and corresponding relationship to the types of station ownership was conducted using the Pearson Chi-Square test with a two-tailed significance level of *p < .05.

Inter-coder reliability was calculated using the Perreault and Leigh (1989) inter-coder
reliability coefficient\(^1\). The Perreault and Leigh (1989) inter-coder reliability coefficient was used because it is the best measure of reliability of nominal categories controlling the chance of agreement. The overall reliability is 0.787. Typically 0.7 is the threshold used as acceptable reliability. Since the reliability is 0.787, the coding can be considered reliable. This exploratory analysis provides meaningful insight to how college radio stations operate in a convergence driven media environment. The analysis is a critical illustration of college radio operations via information publicly disclosed on the station website.

There were four types of stations identified within this analysis: (1) University owned, student operated stations, which meant that students handled on-air and day-to-day operations; (2) University owned, media department operated stations, which meant that students did a lot of on-air operations while specifically integrating the objectives of the media related department into programming, with some clearly identified direct management from the department; (3) Community college, department operated stations, are identified in the analysis as a community college with a radio station operated by a media department, likely for vocational training; and (4) University owned, professionally staffed stations, at four-year universities or community colleges. Non-student professionals staff these stations with less reliance on volunteer programmers, and student involvement is primarily through internships.

**Accessibility**

This analysis examined the means of accessibility that each station employed to reach potential audiences, including each station’s terrestrial signal (AM / FM), the file format used within the webcast channel(s), whether the station made podcasts of programming available, and the overall interactive nature of the site. Of the 50 stations sampled, 49 stations were equipped

\[
I_r = \sqrt{\left(\frac{p_a^2 - 1}{C}\right)\left(\frac{C}{1-C}\right)}
\]
with a terrestrial FM signal. This is most likely due to the dominance of FM radio as a viable terrestrial signal, especially suited for music programming, and the decline in usage of AM radio. The transmission methods of college radio stations were examined for strategies of live streaming, podcasting, on-demand streaming (archived content, not downloadable), and push distribution (Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds). As part of this analysis the websites were checked for whether stations required registration for listeners to access the webcast. This was included to determine whether stations gathered demographic data about their online audience, this information could be used to develop strategies to reach target audiences.

The online audio transmission methods as a multiple response variable were examined using crosstabs, looking at the ownership of the webcast (Table 1, p. 39). All but two stations were actively streaming the terrestrial signal. One station had voluntarily disabled the webcast due to legal uncertainty over webcasting royalty rates then (2007) being actively debated on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Examining the transmission methods individually in relation to the webcast ownership revealed an important result, Chi-square = 8.77, degree of freedom (df) = 3, \( p < .05 \), \( (p=.033) \) that radio stations owned by community colleges were less likely to offer live streaming. One possibility for this is that stations serving community colleges may not be as technically developed as stations serving a four year institution and that due to the fact that community colleges have little to no residential student population, less effort is expended to deliver content to an audience that is not locally based (i.e. family and friends in a distant city).
Table 1
Live Streaming and Podcasting by College Radio Stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Live Streaming</th>
<th>No Live Streaming</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Podcasting | No Podcasting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Podcasting</th>
<th>No Podcasting</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College – Department Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01

The data revealed that stations are experimenting with podcasting of programming (Table 1). This is an avenue of accessibility to programming at a time that is convenient to the listener. Stations run by media departments were more likely to offer podcast content (50%). The podcast content was not necessarily produced for digital distribution; rather it is often repurposed from the terrestrial broadcast. Normally, this is with minimal editing or enhancements. While it is evident that stations are experimenting with podcasting, the analysis revealed that there is no significant difference in podcasting efforts between types of station ownership.

The file extension of each channel in the webcast was examined (Table 2, p. 40). A wide variety of formats were offered to access each station’s stream. This would indicate that there is not a standard platform for streaming college radio stations. Within the analysis several proprietary file types such as Real Audio (n=18), Windows Media (n=13) appeared frequently on station sites. This is often because the station uses the software under a blanket license the host institution buys for general usage. The category that was coded as other (n=30) returned the most results. This was typically a combination of .m3u and .pls file extensions that are easily
compatible between media players and frequently are provided free to anybody who wants to establish a streaming audio outlet. The greatest diversity of file formats was with stations that were university owned and student operated. The analysis indicates that percentage-wise, community college and media department operated stations were more likely to use proprietary software such as Real Audio or Windows Media as their webcast platform. These file extensions were examined for importance in relationship to webcast ownership and a positive result was returned with Chi-square = 8.58, df = 3, p < .05, (p = .035) (Table 2, p. 40). This illustrates that community college radio stations are more likely to use proprietary streaming software, especially Microsoft’s ASF/WMA streaming media format.

Table 2
Streaming Media Formats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Microsoft Streaming ASF/WMA</th>
<th>No Microsoft Streaming ASF/WMA</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College – Department Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College – Department Operated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Formats (m3u, pls)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College – Department Operated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01
Content Strategies

The college radio stations examined in this analysis had for the most part one thing in common, a wide diversity of musical offerings and some university sports coverage. The offerings found on college radio included Indie Rock, Loud Rock (Metal), Jazz, Blues, Classical, Techno, World, Hip-Hop, Local Affairs programming, and a wide variety of specialty programs ranging from discussions on gender to Broadway musicals. A look at webcast / terrestrial content strategies revealed a wide variety of different programs types across all types of webcast ownership, “a checkerboard” (Sauls 2000) programming approach. It is worth noting that all types of stations had some form of public affairs programming. For stations offering public affairs programming. It is speculated that this type of programming came as a directive from the host institution. Many other offer programming as a service to the public interest. The presumption is, this is done because of an awareness of the need to serve the public interest or to continue the mission of college radio stations established in the 1920s, of providing programming for cultural uplift. Further analysis of individual programming genres in relationship to webcast ownership revealed that university stations that are classified as student run stations are much more likely to program “indie music” than community college radio stations, Chi-square = 16.96, df = 3, p < .05, (p = .01) (Table 3, p. 42). This is likely because more community college radio stations are set up as professional training grounds and want to familiarize students with commercially viable programming.
Table 3

Indie Music Programming and Public Affairs Programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indie Music</th>
<th>No Indie Music</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Operated</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Operated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Affairs</th>
<th>No Public Affairs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned –</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Operated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned –</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Operated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned –</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College –</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Operated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01

To enhance the station websites additional content strategies are often adopted to increase user participation. The coded content strategies are displayed in (Table 4, p. 43). A crosstabulation analysis indicated that university owned student operated stations are more likely to experiment with additional content strategies than community college stations. The table indicates that university owned, media-department operated stations also have a diversity of additional content strategies. This could be due to a high level of involvement by student programmers or the directives of faculty that specialize in new media. These content strategies were examined individually for significance. While college radio stations use a large variety of experimental content strategies, no statistical significance was observed due to the ownership type.
### Table 4

**Additional Content Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Videos</th>
<th>No Videos</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Student Operated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>University Owned - Student Operated</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Department Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interactive Games</th>
<th>No Interactive Games</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Student Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Department Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Message Boards</th>
<th>No Message Boards</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Student Operated</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned - Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Department Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01

**Revenue Strategies**

Revenue strategies of college radio stations were analyzed. Several sources of these revenues are displayed in (Table 5, p. 44). The analysis looked for advertisements on the website, means of e-commerce (i.e. sale of station merchandise), solicitation of donations, and any reported external means of revenue creation such as offering DJ party services and recording
services. Each type of station ownership was represented with advertisements on the website. This advertisement may be a graphic banner or a text advertisement on the website. Advertisements may serve as an additional revenue source or a value added incentive for terrestrial underwriters. The analysis showed that University-owned, student-operated stations have the most diversity in revenue sources. This analysis further shows what appears to be a greater willingness to experiment with multiple revenue channels by stations operated at four-year universities. All stations indicated some level of college funding. The degree of disclosure varied between stations; some stations appeared completely transparent, reporting exact amounts of university funding disbursed to them, while others simply acknowledged the fact that they receive funds from the university student government or some other funding source associated with student general fees. The revenue sources’ relationship to the station type was examined for statistical importance; however, the results displayed relative uniformity and did not return an important result.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Radio Revenue Strategies</th>
<th>Website Advertising</th>
<th>No Website Advertising</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3.47</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Dept. Operated</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td>No E-commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
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<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>No Donations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Revenue (Event Services, etc.)</td>
<td>No Other Revenue (Event Services, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Student Operated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Dept. Operated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Owned – Professional Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College - Dept. Operated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01


Discussion

From this analysis it is evident that there are many different strategies in play for college radio in the avenues of accessibility, content, and revenue. It appears that many stations are currently experimenting with various methods of transmission and are poised to increase accessibility as technology improves. This will gradually occur as software manufacturers realize that as compatibility across operating systems is demanded by customers’ accessibility on multiple browsers and media players will be of utmost importance to digital media producers. This study appears to support the claims made by Ha and Ganahl (2007) that webcasting and websites of non-commercial media entities such as college radio use websites and webcasts as a means of promotion, with less effort put forth to develop the website as its own revenue generating entity. Therefore, college radio station managers should realize the potential that the station website and webcasting brings to enhance station offerings as the consumer society shifts its habits of consumption and embraces new media technology. College radio stations will need to embrace new technology because younger consumers are growing up in an on-demand culture, which will dictate the adoption of a business model that adequately addresses the complexity of convergence. By adopting such practices college radio stations can maintain a strong level of relevance and sustainability for many years to come. By so doing they will be expanding their educational mission as a broadcasting institution that is innovative and committed to providing an attractive and useful learning environment for future media professionals.
CHAPTER V. CASE STUDY OF BGSU RADIO

Introduction

The following case study of BGSU’s radio stations examines the development of WBGU-FM and WFAL by utilizing the ACR Framework to examine trends of station operations. Both stations at BGSU are university owned, student-operated stations, as identified in the exploratory content analysis in chapter three. WFAL is an unlicensed station; the FCC does not recognize the call letters of WFAL. WFAL has been referred to as WFAL-AM for many years in its history, however WFAL disconnected the AM transmitter in 2008 so the association is no longer applicable.

This case study was accomplished through detailed interviews with ten former station leaders and chairs of the oversight department, previously known as the Department of Radio, Television, Film (RTVF), but now the Department of Telecommunications. Interviewed respondents were actively involved with the operations between 1963 and 2008. This case study also takes into consideration the active involvement of the author in the development and operations of WBGU-FM between the years of 2002 to 2008. Additional factors to consider in this study are the role of student leadership, the interrelationships of BGSU’s two stations, WBGU and WFAL, and the relationship of these entities to the University and other student media operations.

BGSU is a Midwestern university with approximately 20,000 undergraduate students, located in a community of approximately 30,000 year round residents. BGSU as a university is unique because it houses and supports two fully student-run radio stations. These stations have an extensive history at BGSU, serving as a practical training ground to develop industry professionals and as an extracurricular activity for any interested student seeking an opportunity
to experience college radio. It also provides an avenue for community member involvement as on-air talent.

The stations of WBGU-FM and WFAL have each experienced periods of prosperity and need through their storied histories. Each station has been an integral part of the collegiate experience for alumni that have gone on to successful careers in radio, television, media sales, acting, musical performance and production. The future success of these stations will be vital to the success and visibility of media program studies in the School of Communications Studies at BGSU. Within this case study the author may refer to situations and experiences at WBGU-FM and WFAL as a personal reflection to emphasize key experiences and comments of respondents that connect themes that have been central to the evolution and operation of the stations at BGSU.

**WBGU-FM – The Early Years**

The beginnings of radio at BGSU date back to 1947 with the wired-wireless (similar to carrier current) station WRSM. The first broadcast of this new station was a men’s basketball game versus the City College of New York in New York on November 17, 1947 (WBGU-FM, n.d.). This broadcast would come to signify the beginnings of a rich radio tradition at BGSU. The wired-wireless system – also referred to as carrier current – provided programming from WRSM to the campus dormitories, the Commons, the Nest and numerous campus buildings. The wiring was run through the university tunnels, but by 1949 listening by carrier current was complicated because renovations to the tunnels disrupted the transmission (Wheeldon, 1954).

On November 29, 1951, BGSU was granted a Federal Communication Commission (FCC) educational FM license to broadcast at the power of 10 watts at the frequency of 88.1 megacycles (1951a). From 1951 to 1959 WBGU-FM broadcast from studios located beneath the
university auditorium. By 1955 this station had three studios and a smaller broadcast announcing booth. One of the studios was used for news programs, live programs, and classes. The other studios were used for music shows and engineering operations (1955). During the first decade of operation the station enjoyed significant support and visibility within the University. The medium was fresh and experimental, and the station served as a laboratory for speech students to learn radio techniques in programming and engineering. The greater goal was for a wider participation by departmental and other groups on the campus and in the community that would contribute to a growing program of cultural and educational programming (Stone, 1953).

During the 1950s WBGU-FM was an integral part of the University’s communications efforts. In 1952 WBGU-FM was the only radio station in the region to broadcast live election results (1952a), and the station was part of the U.S. Air Defense Warning System in the early 1950s. In 1953 under the direction of industrial arts instructor C. Edward Schumaker, students installed a relay unit of the U.S. Air Defense Command. This relay would automatically inform the WBGU-FM staff if an air raid warning had been issued, and they would alert the campus in case of the emergency (1953).

In the summer of 1959, WBGU-FM was granted a significant power increase from 10 watts to 1000 watts, a signal strength that was intended to cover a 30-mile radius (1959b). WBGU-FM has been at 1000 watts ever since, although the 30 mile radius has diminished to approximately 20 miles because competing radio broadcasts by Christian broadcasting companies in nearby communities are interfering with WBGU-FM’s signal; thus, the signal in 2008 is penetrating only the southern half of Toledo. In 1959 WBGU-FM moved its studios to the fourth floor of South Hall (1959a). At this time the concept of a television operation was being investigated and would subsequently be launched in 1964.
The early years of WBGU-FM marked an experimental time in broadcasting at BGSU. It was the only electronic media outlet on campus until the TV station went on the air in 1964. At that time, WBGU-FM operations were directed from the faculty level so it was not really a student run college radio station; rather, it functioned more as a public service operation with limited original programming and limited hours of operation. Much of the programming was classical music and syndicated programs from the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) and limited coverage of university sporting events. During this period, the 1960s, FM radio was not as popular as AM radio, and AM radio was widely accepted as the popular broadcast medium. As one respondent who was a Department Chair and Faculty Advisor said:

“There was no popularity of FM at all, you could give away FM stations when I was first around here and so nobody, wanted them. Sometimes they just duplicated programming or whatever, and then FM broke out sometime in the 70s, probably more in the middle of the 70s and at that time WGTE [in Toledo] upped their power and they had the NPR shows and we couldn’t get them” (respondent R).

WBGU-FM had some programming that aired as part of the agreement with the NAEB and some core programs for National Public Radio including *All Things Considered, Options, Folk Festival U.S.A., NPR Theater, and American Composers Alliance* (Sammet, 1975). The shift of direction at WBGU-FM from a station with a mission of “cultural uplift” (Slooten, 2007) and classical music – as respondent DK referred to it, the “ivory tower” – to a station with independent music and alternative youth programming would coincide with the beginning of a new voice on campus, WFAL.

*WFAL – A New Voice*

WFAL has been a student run college radio station since it officially began in the fall semester of 1970. It has been said, though unsubstantiated, that the station first began as a pirate
operation in a student dormitory of the Harshman Bromfield Hall the year before (WFAL, 1992). However, according to respondent R, Duane Tucker, Chair of the Department of RTVF, and a founding father of WFAL, was pushing in the late 1960s for a closed circuit radio station for professional student training. In September of 1970, WFAL was founded, courtesy, of a $7,654 University grant for purchasing equipment. From the beginning, the mission of WFAL was to provide students with professional training and to provide additional opportunities for broadcast majors and others who were interested in electronic media but were unable to work for WBGU-FM due to a lack of available positions (Schmidt, 1971).

The early years of WFAL positioned the station as a fully functioning business operation, going beyond “professional” on-air training with innovative avenues of engagement such as the electronic classifieds, where students could place a free on-air ad for anything, from finding a ride to another city or selling a used textbook (WFAL, n.d.). During this time the station relied solely on advertising revenue to fund operations (Schmidt, 1971).

Changes – a New Direction for Radio Broadcasting at BGSU

From 1970 to 1975 BGSU had two radio stations positioned for different objectives. WBGU-FM – the only licensed non-commercial educational FM station in Northwest Ohio that was receiving federal aid from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) (Bensman, 1975) and WFAL – the unlicensed carrier current AM station designed for the campus student audience, sustained solely by the advertising efforts of the student staff. 1975 marked the year for a new relationship between the stations and a new direction that defined the course of college radio at BGSU.

2 Duane Tucker was also the founding General Manager of WBGU-TV at Bowling Green State University; the Tucker Center for Telecommunications is named in his honor.
In 1975 WBGU-FM lost its status as a CPB qualified station, subsequently losing all federal aid and its affiliation with National Public Radio and the programs provided by the young network. This was the result of refusal by the University Provost to hire an additional fulltime staff member and would have kept the station CPB compliant (Bensman, 1975). This decision was based on a report by the Broadcast Policy Committee, a faculty senate committee that is known in 2008 as the Broadcast Advisory Committee, citing that it would be most cost efficient to sever the relationship with the CPB (Bensman, 1975). Considering the role of the CPB in the sustainability of Public Broadcasting in 2008, it is conceivable that WBGU-FM could have taken on a dramatically different role, considering that WGTE in Toledo which replaced WBGU-FM as the CPB qualified station is today the flagship of NPR in Northwest / North central, Ohio and Southeastern, Michigan with three translators covering 26 different counties (WGTE.org).

In 1975 General Manager Frank W. Baker said, “it’s really a blow for the station, the University and a tremendous loss for the audience” (Bensman, 1975). Severing ties to the CPB was a short-term solution to correct University budget shortfalls. As Vice Provost Dr. Sheldon Halpern said “WE FOUND (sic) that with tight budgets, extra money that goes into one thing cannot go into something else” (Bensman, 1975). At the time of this decision there were only 170 CPB qualified public radio stations out of 700 total radio stations operating in the United States (Bensman, 1975). This move would force WBGU-FM to find a new direction in operations. According to respondent R the University was on the verge of abandoning WBGU-FM completely around 1975, in order to conserve resources. Thinking quickly, respondent R and another faculty member approached an assistant to the Provost with a proposal to use WBGU-FM as a station for student training, with financial support of approximately $1000 a year. Once the proposal was accepted, “we started taking the Graduate Student… and putting them in charge, pretty much, and they began to build an organization” (Respondent R).
In discussing the evolution of broadcasting at BGSU over the course of time from 1975 to 2008, one of the most important elements identified by respondents are the unique identities of the two radio stations. The stations have historically different origins and missions. While they both reside in the care of the Telecommunications Department, their purpose and identities evolved at different rates. Each station experienced swings in identity from periods of “radio-centrism” where the station objectives are heavily business oriented; and, at other times the identity focused around being a social club for music fans, with less attention paid towards generating revenue and maintaining balanced records. In the authors’ personal experience, the years of radio-centrism experienced the most growth and prosperity and the years with a managerial emphasis on the promotion of an elite musical culture created a void in forward development. As respondent E said:

“I know there were some phases where they were very apart almost competitive, petty jealousies of turf and programming structure as well… I think there are still cultural differences between WBGU and WFAL that will probably last for a long time because the formatting of WFAL is different, the personnel and personalities are different, their broadcast structure is different, their technology is different, their requirements for broadcasting are different…”

As several respondents indicated, the stations thrived as separate entities with more innovation with greater differences between the respective identities. During the authors’ time with WBGU-FM, WFAL was engulfed in the footprint of WBGU-FM. This led to some animosity and ultimately, mediocre efforts to establish a unique identity for WFAL.

These differences as noted by most respondents created a certain rivalry, whether it was positive or not depended primarily on whether the strengths of the organizations were equal enough to put them on level terms. As one Department Chair respondent said when his son asked him what he did for a living, he said: “Jeffrey, I’m a fireman. I go in there everyday and
put out fires” (respondent R). While there were enough rivalry and identity conflicts through the years, the former leaders interviewed for this study really knew what the identity or brand of the station meant. The brands established by the stations indicate an important site of their identity—when the stations had strong internal brand awareness they were more likely to do innovative things to maintain the brand.

This section of the case study discusses the first component of the framework—accessibility. The accessibility factors include, the stations on the web, podcasting, and stations interactivity.

*Matters of Accessibility*

Through the years WBGU-FM faced fewer technological hurdles allowing the station to build visibility because the FM technology has been consistent and remained relative for local radio. WFAL experienced success with its carrier current system in the early part of its history because AM was a popular technology for music broadcasting. As one respondent said,

“We knew our audience pretty well in that we had very few men listeners except for the Wednesday night talk show because carrier currents are a technologically poor delivery system. The men had the fancy stereos and big speakers, the women at the time no, they had the clock radios and we sounded just fine coming over clock radio” (Respondent J).

While WBGU-FM had the fortune of many years to build upon the assigned frequency of 88.1 FM, WFAL on the other hand had switched AM frequencies several times beginning as 680 AM in 1970 and holding the position for the better part of 20 years. However, during the early 1990s the carrier current transmitters that were erected on the residence halls in 1970 to transmit WFAL began to gradually fail. There were no immediate efforts in place repair failed transmitters. As the carrier current transmitters failed and maintenance stopped, the carrier current audience that listened to WFAL through AM clock radios faded, and WFAL faced the hurdle of transferring an audience to listening through the cable access channel. In 1987 WFAL
and the department of RTVF negotiated with Wood County Cable to air WFAL as the background music on the community bulletin board channel provided by Wood County Cable. This deal would carry over through careful negotiation with Time Warner Cable when they became the Wood county cable provider. While the cable channel has been a reliable outlet to hear WFAL, this channel has been difficult to market because it shifts channel positions almost every time the cable company shuffles its lineup; in the past, it has been on channel 7, 14, 15, and now 21. WFAL’s terrestrial transmission woes continued into the 1990s. As the station’s carrier current transmitters broke, or were removed from University buildings, the students worked up a plan to establish a low power AM antenna to supplant the carrier current system. In 1999 a small tower was erected on top of the Business Administration building in the middle of campus as an effort to reach all corners, however according to one respondent:

“If it was boosted too much it went way off campus and we would get some complaints about that but if we turned it down it would barely reach the corners” (Respondent P.)

With the technological issues that WFAL had to overcome in establishing a consistent broadcast, the advent of the internet and the potentials of webcasting were primed to be the technology that WFAL could embrace as a sustainable platform.

The Web: the Next Horizon

The Internet is a platform all respondents identified as the next important avenue that both stations need to fully utilize to maintain relevance in the coming years. The websites have the potential to serve more listeners than would access the stations by terrestrial means. New technologies in streaming and podcasting are evolving at an exponential rate and have the potential to transform the stations. However, the current state of webcasting for both entities is far from cutting edge. WBGU-FM began webcasting in 1999, trying affiliations with several
upstart services, first Web Radio, then Nibblebox. These companies were similar to aggregators such as Live365.com but both services folded quickly, forcing WBGU-FM to resort to alternative means of webcasting directly through the station website. WFAL charted a slower route to the web, but by 2005 both stations had settled on streaming using QuickTime broadcaster. This service was provided courtesy of the University television station WBGU-TV that accommodated the stations on their streaming video servers. There have been periods when the stations offered the streams for dialup and broadband users with a 48 kbps and 128 kbps stream. For a time both stations offered only the 48 kbps stream. This was unpopular with the on-air staff because of the noticeable reduction in broadcast quality. At the beginning of summer 2008 both stations opted to go with a 128 kbps stream to improve stream quality, and because of a desire to better serve the broadband audience. The use of QuickTime via the television station was a convenient solution to the stations webcasting dilemma. It provided a more consistent channel without paying expensive third party costs for software licensing and bandwidth. Some of the issues with QuickTime were that the format would work inconsistently with different computers and listeners and staff members complained about the lack of compatibility with some older internet browsers and operating systems.

At the time of this writing the stations are working with the television station to install new webcasting software, which will allow for greater functionality on native media players that come installed as a standard function in computer operating systems. This will account for the integration of real-time playlists that display track information in-line with the webcast.

Podcasting

Podcasting and on-demand streaming is an accessibility strategy neither station has taken advantage of for any of their programming. One program on WBGU-FM offers their talk show
as a podcast on a private server and personal website but it is not integrated with the overall efforts of the station. There have been few efforts to establish podcasts on the station websites. Some programmers have discussed the possibilities of what podcasting offers, but the barriers to effectively doing so are a lack of expertise and time devoted to developing an organized infrastructure. Interview respondents and current station leaders have identified podcasting as a top priority for establishing a better web presence and building audience loyalty.

*Interactivity*

The level of interaction with the respective audiences seemed to hinge on the efforts of student management. Speaking with former leaders it was apparent for both stations that there were several criteria used to define interactivity. This would usually mean the number of bands, brought in to have live appearances, giving away tickets and prizes regularly on the air, and conducting live events on campus or at local establishments. Depending on individual student personalities the stations sometimes engaged in call-in shows. This was a way to directly engage the listening audience. In 2005 WBGU-FM changed the studio request line to the extension – 8810 to increase visibility and make the number memorable. Both stations actively use the instant messenger chat clients of AOL and Yahoo to connect with listeners. WFAL promotes this service more than WBGU-FM; however, neither station relies on the chat feature as the primary means of engagement. That feature serves a complimentary role to the request line and email requests.

The next section discusses the content strategies at the BGSU stations. This includes the content strategies of WBGU-FM, the content strategies of WFAL, the role of sports, and the role of news programming.

*Content Strategies – WBGU-FM*
WBGU-FM has embraced its position as a hub for music that has been overlooked by mainstream radio since the early 1970s. The claim of serving an underserved audience has grown through the years as commercial stations consolidated playlists and increased automated programming. In 2008 the genres of music that were regularly featured on WBGU-FM were considerably diverse. They included Indie Rock, RPM, Metal, Punk, Jazz, Blues, Country, Industrial-Gothic-Experimental (IGE), Latin, World music, local music and a variety of special interest talk programs. Most respondents identified the diverse musical offerings as one of the greatest strengths of WBGU-FM, with some expressing a desire to see quality music shows offered as a podcast.

WBGU-FM embarked upon a new venture in morning programming in the summer of 2007 by implementing a local news morning show that would focus most of its efforts on what is happening in the Bowling Green community. This also included some national headlines, sports and vital information such as daily weather forecasts on the quarter hour. This program was developed in conjunction with the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce with professional local talent hosting the program. A commercial station based in Fostoria, Ohio formerly employed the talent installed in 2007 to host the morning program. This station operated a satellite station in Bowling Green, Ohio. This program has carried over an audience demographic from the commercial station. Though loyal, this older and more conservative group presented a challenge for station managers in maintaining the traditional WBGU-FM brand. Therefore, there was some uncertainty as to whether the program contributed to the number of listeners to the rest of the station programming. This is because the style of the Morning Show is in stark contrast to the rest of station programming. Since the program has only been with WBGU-FM for approximately one year at the time of this writing, there is some optimism that all parties involved in the production of the program and station management will gradually see eye to eye.
and make the necessary tweaks to ensure program compatibility. The hope is that with minor modifications the program will flow well with the rest of the station’s offerings. The old pop music selections used in the morning show did not conform with WBGU-FM’s identity branded as a station dedicated to underserved music and ideas.

Content Strategies – WFAL

WFAL has a strong history as an Album Oriented Rock (AOR) station. This has evolved over the years to be a more Modern Rock (commercially recognized as Alternative) station. The established role as a commercial station serving the general BGSU student interests has evolved over the years losing focus on the mainstream format of AOR or Modern Rock. Gradually, WFAL siphoned and adopted some of the extreme identities of WBGU-FM. These extremes included genres such as Metal, Hip-Hop, Punk and Indie Rock. A direct comparison of these musical genres representations in 2007-2008 on WBGU-FM would look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WBGU-FM</th>
<th>WFAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre – Artist</strong></td>
<td><strong>Genre – Artist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal – Converge</td>
<td>Metal – Converge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip-Hop – Black Spade</td>
<td>Hip-Hop – Lil Wayne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punk – Black Flag</td>
<td>Punk – Black Flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indie Rock – Ted Leo</td>
<td>Modern Rock – Ted Leo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2008 the artists represented here are not represented on mainstream radio.

In 2008 Lil Wayne is one of the best-represented rappers in commercial radio.

Since programming is a vital part of identity, adopting the extremes of WBGU-FM and mainstream artists within the genres used by WBGU-FM was a poor way for WFAL to build quality brand recognition. As such, the content brand of WFAL suffered as it lost its uniqueness, thereby jeopardizing its future sustainability.
In the late 1980s and early 1990s WFAL was affiliated with the Cleveland Cavaliers. When WFAL launched its affiliation with Wood County Cable in 1987 they carried Cavaliers games, and the affiliation buoyed station visibility at the same time as it lost audience on carrier current and relied more on cable broadcasting. Today, sports programming is an important element of both station identities and programming philosophies. However, they are uniquely different.

*Sports – A BGSU Radio Legacy*

The historical role of sports programming has been mentioned in the context of the early years of programming WBGU-FM. However, in 2008 sports was a booming area of interest for programming on both stations. At BGSU, the radio interests are divided into four entities, WBGU-FM, WFAL, and two organizations that provide specialized content for the stations, the Bowling Green Radio Sports Organization (BGRSO) and the Bowling Green Radio News Organization (BGRNO). BGRSO has always been the more active organization covering major university sporting events and doing some journalistic reporting, although that role of BGRSO was curtailed dramatically between the 1990s and 2008. Since 2002 BGRSO has provided flagship coverage of women’s basketball and men’s hockey on WBGU-FM while also covering football and select men’s basketball games. Other sporting events that have been covered by BGRSO include BGSU baseball and softball and area high school football games. The tagline that BGRSO affixed to the WBGU-FM around 1999 was “covering more games than any college station in the nation.” This distinction has given greater prominence to the role of sports broadcasting at BGSU and has caused some conflict within the staff. First, the training requirements to get an on-air assignment for BGRSO aspirants are fewer than for long form program hosts. Second, there is perceived favoritism for broadcasting of all sporting events
because they pre-empt other programs. This has caused some staff that felt they are too often pre-empted to leave the station.

In 2006 the integration of Sports on WFAL was a joint initiative by BGRSO and WFAL to increase student participation with WFAL as they experienced several years of weak recruiting for music DJs. This led to the creation of a sports talk program block on WFAL. Seven days a week BGRSO members are on WFAL providing sports talk about a variety of sports using ESPN radio as a model. In 2006, the relationship of BGRSO and WFAL really sprouted into a fully functional partnership when the organization purchased a new Comrex Matrix remote broadcast system that allowed them to move the old Comrex hotline remote broadcast unit into the WFAL studios. This made it possible for both stations to easily broadcast University sporting events, subsequently offering more opportunities for students to get involved in sports broadcasting. The installation of remote play-by-play capabilities in WFAL allowed for BGRSO to offer more live sporting events and reduce demand for airtime on WBGU. The flagship service for men’s hockey and women’s basketball remains intact with WBGU-FM, but some men’s basketball, and other sports will be broadcast on WFAL.

BGRSO has benefited from the success of several high profile alumni who are lead personalities for ESPN, the Miami Heat, and the New York Islanders. This allows the organization to recruit new talent on a yearly basis partly because of historical connection and provides inspiration for future sports broadcasters.

The Role of News

Local news coverage is an essential element of local radio, whether it is local updates on the hour or community focused long form news programming. At BGSU there is a dedicated
news organization known as BGRNO. BGRNO was established in 1976 by the department of Journalism to serve both stations.

The amount of news in programming depended on the availability of personnel to handle the tasks. According to different respondents the quality and quantity of news programming from BGRNO went in dramatic cycles from plentiful to non-existent. Some of the responses when asked about BGRNO were:

“News was virtually non-existent…” (Respondent J2)

“You had a pretty good group of folks, people that would play dual roles they would have an airshift but they would also be part of the news organization…” (Respondent DM)

“News was actually going through a bit of a crisis, when around about [1999] to 2002. I think the big problem was if I remember correctly is they couldn’t actually find somebody to manage, a student to manage news. So, their stuff was incredibly intermittent. I don’t remember them having the student resources or the power to cover stuff in a planned regular way. It was very irregular, they were definitely the weakest student organization when I was there.” (Respondent P)

During the author’s time involved with WBGU-FM the struggles of BGRNO were clearly evident, as noted before there were periods of inconsistent leadership and low student involvement.

For the majority of the years it was difficult for BGRNO to provide news updates even twice a day, five days a week. The lack of production did not help BGRNO attract new talent and the isolated nature of the organization made it difficult to effectively collaborate with courses in Journalism, or the university newspaper, or even carry out objectives developed by the direct management of WBGU-FM or WFAL. It is the hope of WBGU-FM and the Department of Telecommunications that the Morning Show on WBGU-FM can be an effective foundation on which BGRNO can build a program base, and can practice developing the art of gathering and disseminating news content. After one year of the Morning Show the vast majority of program
content is still developed by the program host with virtually no content developed by BGRNO. A change, which would engage and involve students in news production, would be welcome. One way to improve the content offerings is to have a consistent revenue base with which to invest in content production. One potential source could be provided in part by the financial arrangement that WBGU-FM established with the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce.

The next section discusses the final component of the ACR framework and that is the revenue sources and strategies that have been a part of the operations of the radio stations at BGSU.

Revenue

Before 2008 each radio organization received its own funding line from the University student fees as part of the collective pool for student organizations. In spring of 2008 WBGU-FM and WFAL lobbied successfully to present their yearly budget request to the head of student affairs and the Dean of students. This effectively removed the stations from the process of submitting budgetary requests to an arbitrary student body known as the Student Budget Committee (SBC). The SBC is the successor to the Advisory Committee on General Fee Allocation (ACGFA), a committee formerly responsible for distributing yearly allocations to over 300 student organizations. The significance of this achievement is that the stations have now joined ranks of the Graduate Student Senate, Undergraduate Student Government and University Activities Organization as select student organizations that do not report to the SBC hearings. This should provide stability in the amount of yearly funds each station receives. For example, in 2006 while the author was General Manager, WBGU-FM was approved for $22,475 in University support. In 2007 WBGU-FM was only approved for $9,900 of University Funds.
The current arrangement will adjust the latter figure upward and stabilize the annual disbursement.

In the past, both stations experienced periods of substantial financial support. A notable period in the history of WFAL was the years of 1976 – 1979. As Respondent J1 said:

“We got a sales staff of five or six people, the station billed $8,000 the year before I came… the next year we billed $21,000, my second year we billed $28,000, the next GM followed me and they billed $40,000!”

The remarkable thing about that period was WFAL received no financial support from the University and the station did not receive any until 1991, when it would receive its first annual budget from ACGFA. According to several respondents, the push for WFAL to receive university support was in large part because students felt it was unfair that WBGU-FM received University support on a yearly basis. WBGU-FM received its largest budgets to date from ACGFA between the years of 1998 to 2001. As Respondent J2 said:

“In the [1998]-[1999] school year we had a budget of $27,000, in [1999]-2000 we had a budget of $30,000 and in 2000-2001 we had $31,500 and it took a huge drop after that.”

The stations have substantial histories of different efforts to solicit advertising and underwriting with periods of success and years where advertising was non-existent. The early years of WFAL were the most lucrative in securing external funding from advertising, but there were several factors in play then that are not in play today. In the 1970s and 1980s carrier current was a viable technology and AM radio had a greater share of the national radio market. Radio, in general, had a much greater role in people’s media consumption. Television and cable had a lower profile and the internet was a non-factor. This meant there was greater potential to successfully sell the benefits of local radio. Today there is intense competition for available dollars from local merchants and from the many media outlets utilizing a broader range of electronic media. WBGU-FM has done sporadic underwriting through the years, but the
underwriting efforts have largely been contingent on the interests and aspirations of student leadership. As respondent J2 said:

   We did minimal underwriting. We were very selective as to who we took on as underwriters. We prided ourselves as a non-commercial station and as such we didn’t want to gum up the works with a lot of sponsorships so the sponsorships we did go after were like Madhatter (a former record shop) and some of the tattoo shops. We were basically going after the kind of businesses our DJ’s hung out at and our listeners hung out at… We never felt seriously constrained by money, we never had enough money to do all the things we wanted to do, really nobody does but…we didn’t seriously go after underwriting because we didn’t feel it necessary.

As respondent P said about the role of advertising and underwriting in relationship to the larger picture of revenue creation.

   I don’t remember any of that being a central concern. I think they knew there was a budget there and I think that conditioned the importance of any of that stuff. I think it is really important that students understand the reality of the economics of something, I always was grateful that the money was there too because at the end of the day what is the point of a college radio station? They should know about this economic model but I’m not sure the-be all end all is that they have to go raise money. I mean I understand it’s important but there were more important things, I was kind of in line with the students that there were more important things like the content.

   In 2005 WBGU-FM began an annual tradition of an on-air fund drive. Each spring semester since, staff members have taken to the air in a manner much like NPR listener supported fund drives, pitching the benefits of the station to the community and asking for listener contributions. Each year staff members dedicate several minutes per hour of programming to ask for support without resorting to extreme measures of taking programming hostage. These drives have been a considerable benefit to the overall funding of the station. While the revenue raised in these campaigns pales in comparison to the on-air fundraising efforts of some college stations in more affluent and densely populated areas that raised upwards of $125,000, the gross pledged amount has been equal to 10 to 15 percent of the yearly budget
allocation. This allowed WBGU-FM to install new equipment and overhaul some of the production equipment that directly benefits the operations of all radio organizations.

In discussing non-traditional revenue sources with respondents, the consistent answer was contingent on individual leadership style and innovativeness to implement any non-traditional revenue sources. One source that would be utilized frequently by both stations was the sale of station apparel. Items like stickers and pens were distributed as part of the overall promotions campaigns, but t-shirts were commonly used to generate revenue. PA rental and or event hosting was another revenue strategy discussed with participants. In the earlier years, WFAL DJ’d social functions and offered DJ talent for additional event services. Between the years of 2003 - 2008, these services were virtually non-existent. For WBGU-FM these non-traditional revenue sources have grown organically through word of mouth advertisement and visibility at events. In 2007-2008 WBGU-FM generated over $2500 from event services such as providing entertainment at sorority events and other community functions.

Student Leadership – The Piece That Makes It Work

In discussing the operations of the BGSU radio stations with respondents’, one variable constantly mentioned as part of the equation was the quality of student leadership. It is a sink or swim proposition. Without quality student leadership the stations suffered, or at best achieved mediocrity. Through the years some managers and their executive staffs have embraced the role of student leadership and others have slipped and created difficult situations for their respective stations. As respondent E said:

Management has been striving for independence, individuality and innovativeness, and that has gone through various phases depending on the personalities involved, they drive to succeed in the context they were made leaders in the stations.
For the better part of the author’s involvement with WBGU-FM, the individuals in management were acutely aware of their role as a station leader, making sure they were reasonably accountable for their actions in the execution of station objectives. During the year after the author served as General Manager there was some turmoil within management because the General Manager at the time was dealing with a debilitating illness. There was great concern among some of the staff that the operations of the station would spiral downwards and lose positive momentum. The station had recently renovated its facilities to have greater appeal for attracting prospective students and this showed that the station was aware of its role in attracting students to the respective academic departments and programs at the university. That year, and in subsequent years, the executive staff leaders supporting the General Manager worked diligently to foster an environment committed to progress and developing the station as a resourceful site for student development. The biggest struggle from that year was a minor loss of continuity in that the new management had to learn everything from the beginning, making many of the same mistakes as their predecessors. According to respondent J2, “it seems to me that it’s always kind of cyclical how people get involved with the station.” This observation illustrates the way a single class of students can dramatically change the course of a stations operations, with both success and failure. During the author’s time with WBGU-FM the station experienced success. At the same time, the progression of WFAL was going the other way.

WFAL has struggled significantly with problems of visibility from the 1990s through 2008; however, while they experienced many of the same cyclical patterns as WBGU-FM, WFAL experienced many more valleys. In speaking with several community members that have been involved with WBGU-FM since the early 1980s about the trends of leadership at both stations, several mentioned that the decline of WFAL began in the mid 1990s. This coincided with the creation of Videobank. Videobank was a student organization whose mission in the mid
1990s to about 2004 was to provide a local music video program, which aired on the campus access channel. The structure of the Videobank program mirrored the content produced by MTV. They speculated that with a decline in technological infrastructure for WFAL, the prospects and glamour of a new outlet on television really attracted the dynamic personalities away from WFAL. These were students who could be quality leaders and carry the station through challenging times.

Student leadership has always been responsible for the overall success of both stations. Student leaders are installed to provide guidance and utilize their dynamic personalities for the future sustainability of the stations. For student management to work properly the leaders must be passionate about their responsibilities, as Respondent K said:

If your management is passive and they’re not 100 percent behind the station, no, it’s not going to flourish or trickle down to future generations of students. I think your core group of people, your leaders, your executive board, has to be passionate about it. They have to want to make it work and they have to treat it like it was top priority. Your General Manager is getting paid essentially to be there and needs to carry a big chunk of the weight just because they’re getting those monetary benefits. I think that’s why they get the monetary benefit because someone in the past felt that effort you’re putting out for the station is worth in dollars what you’re actually gonna get and that’s pretty unusual…

Role of the Department – Essential Facilitators

The historical role of the department overseeing the campus radio stations be it RTVF or Telecommunications is one that has been central to the progress of the stations and their continued development. Respondents indicated that the involvement of the Department was as important as the dynamic student leadership. Through the years the role of the Department and faculty and their relationship to the operation of the station experienced a dynamic shift. Some respondents indicated this greatly influenced communications between the Department and the stations.
There has always been a delicate balance of student autonomy and the objectives of the Department in the operations of the radio stations. In the early years the Department chair for all intent and purposes served, as the Faculty Manager that could professionally balance the student initiatives and make sure they would not run afoul of university administrators. In the station’s organizational structure a student that served as General Manager of day-to-day operations and carried the burden of authority. He/she was recognized as such by students, community volunteers, and the Department. The GM carried out almost every progressive initiative and handled internal conflict as well. As Respondent P said:

“I made it clear that I really didn’t want to hear about conflict unless it was something that couldn’t be resolved and I could step in but I really wanted to encourage the students themselves to resolve differences.”

While promoting student autonomy it seemed from the respondents that the atmosphere fostered by the department in the early years of operation was one that was very open and organically symbiotic. As several respondents indicated, the department was a positive presence that facilitated the operations of the stations in relationship to real world objectives, while promoting a personable atmosphere.

“We certainly encouraged anyone who came in as a major to work for one of the stations, you know even work for news, work for the television part. We just drummed it in from the first meetings we had with new students, how important it was it getting jobs later and how important networking was. When we did Communications Week we would bring back several students and do sessions everyday.” (Respondent R)

“The student leaders and the department professors and the chair worked very closely together…there were definitely no communication gaps, you felt as comfortable going to the chair of the department as you did your roommate, so there was a very good relationship…you spend all your time at the station, always working to improve the technology the promotions, always trying to one up the last thing you [did]. Whether it is an event or a giveaway…the faculty was always working hand in hand helping out.” (Respondent K)
“Maybe it was the kind of people there or maybe it was the time but in the late [1980s] early [1990s] …there was a cohesive group not an us and them relationship. When we would have parties the faculty would come and I think that says a lot about that socialization and that carries over to your work environment too.”

(Respondent K)

According to Respondent B, by the late 1990s the Department shifted its focus from practical training in broadcasting which it nurtured during its RTVF days, to a Department of Telecommunications with greater emphasis on scholarly research. They focused less on directly fostering the practical student environment and more on theory. As respondent B stated:

“When I became chair we hired people like (names omitted) and they did not have media experience. I think for example when I was a student there the faculty there did have some kind of broadcast experience. It’s funny I never gave it much thought to realize that… When I first came there to teach Journalism and Radio TV and Film were put in the school of Mass Communication and (names omitted) “the directors” tried to make it a little Michigan State and all of a sudden they expected the faculty members to be like a Big Ten school and producing all kinds of research and they drove us all nuts because not only were they expecting us to be good teachers but also to do good research and each of us had like 80 advisees so it was nuts.”

“It was a round hole with a square peg trying to put Journalism and Radio TV and Film together. Because, Journalism was a totally undergrad program and RTVF was part of speech and we had one of the first Ph.D.’s in the country so the faculty in RTVF was used to having a Ph.D. program and doing research whereas the Journalism department, all of them had worked in newspapers or magazines… Again I don’t think many of the Journalism faculty had much interest in broadcasting… when I was there besides one professor, I think everyone was print journalism or possibly PR but not broadcast…and not broadcast news I should point out, at least for the radio stations.”

In 1999 the role of Faculty Advisor was officially established to manage the student organizations and to address concerns from within the Department that there was an increasing gap between the station and the Department. At the time the direction the stations were taking seemed to be different from the Departments mission to play a greater role in achieving the university’s academic goals.

Around the time that I was chair in [1999] and then as the following chair took over, there was some concern that we did not have a faculty member that was an
adviser. Someone who would try and encourage the radio stations to somehow be more involved in reaching academic goals and that was a tension in fact that was such a tension that the guy we ended up hiring, “Advisor #1”, in his interview process we actually allowed the student organizations to be part of the interview process so they could interview candidates about how they… would go about advising a station. (Respondent P)

According to several respondents the relationship between the stations and the telecommunications department has matured under the current structure. As respondent J2 described it, there was a certain period adjustment that strained the relationship between the stations and the department.

“The time I was an undergrad…the first few years the relationship between the station and the TCOM department was what I would describe as the department had a laissez-faire attitude towards the station which is not necessarily a good or bad thing as far as I’m concerned. I think the TCOM department kind of let WBGU do what it wanted, be what it was and there weren’t any real expectations or any benchmarks for anything and it was kind of a live and let live relationship with the department. For the most part I think that kind of benefited the station a lot. It seemed like there was a more creative vibe around the station when there wasn’t a lot of departmental handholding (or) any tense relationships between the department staff and the station staff” (Respondent J2).

Then I think it was the year I was GM and “Advisor #1” took over the advisorship and it seemed like the department, it might have been just “Advisor #1” but there was an effort on either Advisor #1’s part or the departments part to kind of reign in WBGU a little bit. I’m not entirely certain why and that’s not something that I can back up quantitatively but kind of the mood around the station shifted a little. But, it seemed like there was a lot more interaction with the department on a day-to-day basis (Respondent J2).

It wasn’t so much teaching, it was critiquing, there never really was an outreach from the department to help the station correct the things that they thought were not up to par but there was always critiques of what the station was doing, whether it was the on-air content, or our disciplinary policies or anything that we had in place. Basically to me it seemed like “Advisor # 1” came in with an agenda that he wanted the station to follow and he and I pretty much butted heads the year I was General Manager cause my vision of the station kind of clashed a lot with his, it lead to a lot of disagreements between the two of us…” (Respondent J2)
Referring to approximately the same period Respondent E described the vantage of the department as one focused around building collaboration.

“One of the important roles that we tried to do was, from the department’s perspective to foster collaborative spirit instead of a totally independent group running the station. We felt the department had a vested interest in the facilities and in the engineering team because they were hired for the department (not the student organization), and the plant facilities are a departmental plant. Our responsibility is under the department and the maintenance of the license is also a departmental responsibility so we thought it would be better to have a collaboration with students; so, since 2001 (or maybe 1999), we have been trying to work with student leadership and I think it has evolved progressively and positively since then.”

As a former student General Manager, the author notes that as time progressed the tensions between stations and department eased, and the relationship became more collaborative.

While the relationships between the stations and the telecommunications department have improved it has also been altered by personnel changes above the department level at the school level, in the upper administration.

The School of Communications changed directors three times in a span of five years from 2003 to 2008, and during this period the profile of the stations – especially WBGU-FM – grew to one that more administrators were aware of as a potentially valuable resource. Hence, while the stations were incrementally expanding the collaborative efforts with the Department of Telecommunications, there was an increased awareness by the department that the stations were on the radar of the administration as an avenue that had the potential to generate revenue and contribute financially to the bottom line of the School of Communication Studies. There was also recognition that the stations were contributing little, directly, to the performance review of the School of Communication Studies. This has resulted in an unspoken strain on the relationship between the department and the station with the department setting additional buffers of accountability –namely the station policy advisory board - to deal with overarching issues of
policy and station directives. The board also assisted in appointing the station managers and serving as a closer-knit body to immediately address issues of station operation. Some students have felt this action to be an imposition on student autonomy that will stifle creativity and implement radical changes in programming. From a practical perspective the creation of a policy board is in place to maintain the relationship of the telecommunications department as the department with direct oversight of the stations and the related organizations of BGRNO and BGRSO. The creation of the board is a direct link with the Broadcast Advisory Committee – a Faculty Senate Committee – this committee is responsible for overseeing all broadcasting on campus. It is one of the strongest links to increasing awareness about issues the radio stations and PBS television station have when it comes to funding issues and recommending the funding of future technological upgrades. An early incarnation of this committee was responsible for the report that effectively ended the relationship of WBGU-FM with the CPB (Bensman 1975). The new policy board was established to be a link to the upper administration and station and student interests. As respondent E explained:

That is sort of a link to policy makers [in the upper administration] in a sense, so we, in concert with them, have the chance because we have representatives from the Department and the radio station(s) on the committee. So if we link the operations filtering through them with an expanded committee at the departmental level for oversight it would include the student GM’s and representatives from the department and [so] the community and the policy group is linked to the membership of the stations. …Information could filter up from the student body to the station membership and be discussed at the policy level moved through to the Broadcast Advisory Committee and moved through [them to the] Faculty Senate…that would be one way up…having a nice collaboration with the contending interests there…because the issues have to come from below, generated by the [student] membership and [station] needs and the day workers [in] the stations, people that are involved with it everyday.

…The role of the oversight people would be [in] the financial accountability in management because…the University has that legal responsibility and oversight, there is no escaping in a tightly run ship the accountability factor. [So to maintain student independence I think for sentimental as well as practical reasons,] practical reasons are that it would be too costly to staff that station with
professionals, so they won’t do it and I don’t think they have the resources to do it or the social will to do it… so we have volunteers and students and their own interests in voicing their student-ness and that’s the way to do it.

While the relationship between the stations and the Department has evolved and changed from what it was in the early years of operation, there maintains a degree of independence in all radio organizations. This is an admirable situation for people who are adamant about organizational purity. However, in an increasingly convergent media environment it is inefficient and impractical for student news organizations of radio, press, and television to not share resources or promote the others’ services. When student media are competing with professional media to attract listeners, readers, and viewers, student media would be better served by working collaboratively to find synergy and maximize audience, rather than working in competition or parallel, so to maximize audience for all media outlets.

**Student Media – Roles and Relationships**

During the author’s time with WBGU-FM there was little to no collaboration between the radio stations and the other student media outlets, the BG News (newspaper), and BG24 (television news). With the web, each organization established and maintained its own unique website with no substantial crossover in production of content and distribution. WBGU-FM and WFAL were featured several times in articles for the BG News and for a brief stint WBGU-FM provided a top ten albums played list for publication in the Friday entertainment section of the newspaper; however, the publication of the top ten was sporadic and the relationship was short lived. Communication between the organizations to trade ad space in the paper for underwriting and promotional consideration on the stations was an annual discussion; however, it was often not warmly received by the sales staff of the newspaper, and promotional collaborations fell through. In recent years BGRSO negotiated arrangements with the BG News to advertise
coverage of the game of the week in exchange for on-air underwriting within the game
broadcast.

Collaboration between the radio stations and the student television news program BG24
News was virtually non-existent in the sense that the radio stations never ran promotional spots
for the student newscast. In 2008, BG24 newscasts air on channel 6, the BGSU cable access
channel. In turn, the newscast never ran promotions for the radio stations during program breaks.
In the spring of 2008, BGRNO, through the urging of the Department of Telecommunications,
began communicating in a limited capacity with BG24 News, and used one of the student
anchors to do a daily segment of campus news for the morning show on WBGU-FM. This
initiative has been viewed as a positive step towards collaboration between these two
organizations, as an important move to improve BGRNO as a sustainable organization.

Technology is rapidly changing the way the industry is producing and distributing news
and original content. Consumer demand indicates that information must be kept relevant and
fresh for repeat audience. Once it was acceptable for media entities to operate without a website
and news and information were delivered via traditional avenues such as the morning paper.
Today, it is now unacceptable for major newspapers not to have a website updated with breaking
news, much the same way that local television news stations dynamically update their website to
reflect the newscast and breaking news during regular programming between the traditional
newscasts. In today’s consumer driven information culture, as a media outlet, if you do not have
a website you may as well not exist. If your website does not provide relevant content that is
updated regularly, you barely exist. This is the challenge facing WBGU-FM and WFAL in
effectively utilizing the web to be a reputable contributor to the converging media industry.
A Model for Future Sustainability

Former student leaders of WBGU-FM and WFAL, and department chairs were interviewed about the historical operation of the stations and for their expert opinions on developing a sustainable future for WBGU-FM and WFAL. The questions utilized the ACR framework for emerging business models by Ha and Ganahl (2007) and adapted for college radio for this study. Based upon his research, the author proposes that another essential element be incorporated into Ha and Ganahl’s model, as it is adapted for the college radio business model. This element is management. Management structure will determine how the other components of the ACR model are effectively implemented. The model with the element of management added follows:
Explaining Components of Management

The three primary elements of management are administrative, student and external. The Administrative level includes departmental and higher administrative organizations within the University. Student management consists of the student managers and executive staff responsible for daily operations and on-air programming. External management can be an advisory element which includes community members and local business leaders. This element can provide checks and balances for the other two elements of management. The student management is equivalent to local management and external management is equivalent to community standards boards.

The Role Of Accessibility In Future Operations

As consumer culture becomes increasingly on-demand, consumers will dictate that media companies always have products immediately available for their consumption. The top down flow of information and media consumption has reversed to the point where consumers control the flow of information. Everything, from access to content, to where and on what platform it will be accessed, will be dictated by consumer demand. These are the conditions radio stations at BGSU must fulfill to be successful.

Today, the web is the determinant component of the radio stations operations, from accessing the live webcast to learning information about station operations. The imprint of the website should be at the forefront of any radio station’s promotional effort and campaign to establish visibility. As Respondent DM said, “today if you don’t have an internet presence you’re dead.” The webcast should be offered as multiple file formats to maximize compatibility with native media players on different computer operating systems. The webstream should also be made available through multiple channels of distribution. The benefit of using a service such as Live365 or being listed within the iTunes catalog of streaming radio stations is that there is a
built-in user audience on those platforms. This can offset some of the cost demands for promotional efforts to attract listeners to the radio stations home page. For WBGU-FM and WFAL the website becomes an evermore important part of the communications chain. There are several reasons for this, (1) the terrestrial presence for WBGU-FM has diminished due to competing radio operations in Monroe, Michigan that broadcast to Toledo, Ohio on the frequency of 88.1 FM, encroaching on the radius of 30 miles established for WBGU-FM by the FCC in 1951. (2) With the decline in AM listenership and the subsequent instability of low-power AM, WFAL disabled its transmitter because it was prone to lightning strikes that subsequently damaged studio equipment. (3) Fewer students are bringing radios to campus, opting to listen to radio online or not listen to radio at all.

The websites of the stations should be compatible with all browsers and comply with current web standards. The stations should develop a version of the website that is easy to navigate with portable media devices such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDA’s, also referred to as Palm Pilots) and cellular phones with internet browsing capabilities. This is one way for stations to meet demand for content that is available for mobile media devices. Another avenue for the stations to make their content available is to offer the live programs as an on-demand stream of archived (previously aired) programming. Some stations are utilizing Flash technology to make archived content available on-demand, but it is not as accessible for downloading programs. Concerns about the legal ramifications of downloading music content are giving stations reasons to pause about offering past programming as a download. However, some stations are embracing the infinite nature of the web and are providing programs for download as a podcast. Some stations offer talk programs as downloads because the legal requirements for the distribution of these downloads are usually easier because there are no royalties attached. It is much more difficult for clearing the legal hurdles of copyrights and
performance royalties associated with musical performances. For some respondents the belief is that new media technologies will take over and completely alter the current broadcasting power structure. As respondent JS said:

> With new media it is my belief that IP will take over. That internet protocol over the next five years will obviate terrestrial radio and [make] obsolete terrestrial radio as we know it in many ways because you’ll be carrying around a device that is a telephone and an IP receiver, much like the iPhone and I think you’ll be able to get all broadcast, cable, web radio and television on that device and I think the interesting challenge for broadcasters is to figure out what to do with their electromagnetic spectrum bandwidth.

One of the newest emerging technologies, HD radio, provides considerable benefits and challenges for current radio operations. HD radio is the nationally standardized digital broadcast technology developed by the Ibiquity Corporation. HD radio provides FM quality broadcasts for AM-HD stations and CD quality broadcasts for FM radio stations, and the possibilities of utilizing the available spectrum to provide additional channels. To use WBGU as an example, WBGU-FM would be able to broadcast up to three different program streams from the frequency position of 88.1 with WBGU-1, WBGU-2, and WBGU-3 as different broadcast streams. The benefit is that the station can offer additional programming and better address a larger, and more diverse audience. The implementation of HD radio would allow WBGU-FM to “license” the programming of WFAL as one of the subsequent HD streams. An example of this is that the formerly internet only station woxy.com is offered as the HD2 stream of 91.7 FM WVXU in Cincinnati, Ohio (woxy.com). However, there are several drawbacks. HD radio is an expensive technology that requires a lot of new equipment, from transmitter to studio. WBGU-FM is currently exploring the installation of HD, but the stark reality is that HD installation will require a considerable accumulation of resources. The latest approximate estimate for converting to HD is $120,000. Licensing the HD technology for WBGU-FM cost a one-time fee of $15,000. Fortunately for the station, the University administration purchased the Ibiquity license for the
station before the June 30, 2008 deadline that marked an increase in the one-time licensing fee from $15,000 to $25,000. From the consumer perspective the drawback to HD is that for HD radio a special receiver is required, and it is costly, with tabletop models costing approximately $100 - $400.

When interviewing respondents about future practices of accessibility, several respondents felt the stations were not doing enough to enhance the accessibility of the stations through the web and other means, noting the important role of the webstream and the benefits of podcasting. These respondents were enthusiastic but pessimistic as to the viability of HD radio.

As respondent D stated:

One of the things that I think neither station is taking advantage of is emerging technologies… certainly if HD is the way to get an FM signal for WFAL, that’s fantastic. Podcasting is just exploding so being able to put your show in a podcast, how wonderful is that for a potential DJ in that they can really easily make an aircheck of a their show in a podcast.

As respondent P stated:

“Podcasts and other delivery systems are great but only works when you’ve got content that is interesting and content that you can’t get anywhere else… I think at the end of the day all of the distribution technologies that we are talking about is great if you’ve got the content.”

“My take is that if HD makes a huge difference to the listening experience and that starts to become the norm people will have less patience for those that are not that. To be honest the ones out here (in the west)…I’m not picking up that great of difference right now… I suppose if there was a significant difference that would be one thing. That certainly doesn’t have enough to differentiate, it enough to make it worth it. But maybe further down the line it will improve.”

Respondent J2 was more adamant in the need to address new online strategies that embraced podcasting.

The best thing that could possibly happen right now would be a regular WBGU podcast. Podcasting any shows you can legally get away with…any program that warrants downloadable programming. I would say downloadables are very important, I would say over the air’s kinda dying in my personal opinion, I don’t
listen to over the air radio except for satellite and chances are WBGU and WFAL aren’t gonna end up on satellite.

Discussing HD radio respondent J2 stated:

I love the idea about it, I won’t speak too much for it, but if it’s a technology that can be made to be on-demand, that’s probably the best thing that can happen to terrestrial radio because we live in an on-demand society. I don’t watch TV shows when they are on the air, I watch them when I feel like it and I think that’s why downloadables are very important… I don’t know exactly, but to my knowledge there is not an on-demand function for radio.

Respondent JS was much more pessimistic about how HD will impact terrestrial broadcasting.

I think it is too little too late, frankly I think it is kind of stupid. I think radio much like the recorded music industry missed the digitalization, what is called the digital revolution. Radio, which has consistently been a class full of C students with the exception of guys like DK, they just totally missed it and will arrive way too late at the party the way that record labels allowed their business model to be disintermediated by the internet…

Respondent E was optimistic about the increased potential for HD radio.

“If we’re broadcasting HD and the whole digital revolution takes place at WBGU with multicasting and different platforms and all that I think what we can do is offer lectures [via] podcasts [for] departments. I think we could link up with the school of music and broadcast certain programs, I think we can link up through the theatre department and do plays on radio, I think we can link up with the visual arts and do stuff with them. I think the revolution will have to be comprehensive, it will have to be educational, also I think it will be something that will have to bring in some revenue for the station.”

When discussing accessibility, the element of interactivity must be considered. The role of audience participation and connecting with listeners is one of the most important aspects radio stations must consider. Consumers are using participatory media at a greater rate than ever before. The popularity of YouTube, Facebook, Myspace and other social networking platforms allow consumers to be part of the content generating process.

As respondent DM stated:

“You look at people like Rover in Cleveland where he’s made his website into a community. You’ve got profiles and chatting, all this stuff you can do there. They’ve got videos posted, I think that’s probably one of the untapped ways the
radio stations can really hit people is make it a place for people to come, a resource and something fun and find ways you can tie in Facebook and Myspace and all of that. I saw that WFAL had a Myspace page so make it cool to be involved in that and with Myspace and Facebook if you can start a campaign where you get as many people on campus on part of their network I think that’s a great way to reach out.

It will be important that the radio stations of WBGU-FM and WFAL maintain visibility through online interactions that extend beyond a static website that provides the repurposed terrestrial or cable signal. It will be important for radio stations to carefully balance online interactive efforts with live appearances at local events. As long as radio stations serve a local audience in any capacity, it is important that the DJs, Personalities and Management are accessible to its listening audience through active civic engagement. When an important civic issue occurs, local stations should be able to respond to the issues either as active opinion makers or as on-demand contributors to democratic dialogue. Any studio with a digital music catalog and a knowledgeable personality can duplicate music programming. However, informed personalities that can uniquely respond to local issues cannot be replaced in principle and application by satellite services and pre-recorded wire reports. As respondent K emphasized, the web is only one element of a balanced operational plan.

I think it’s important that you don’t lose sight of that three-dimensional aspect (of interactivity) where it’s not just the web. It’s getting out in the community it’s getting out in their faces and making a presence out there. I do think we all get wrapped up in this web-centric world that we live in… I think there’s a lot to be said for public interaction and I think you take more away from experience when you’ve been there done that than just experiencing it on the web…. Having both is important and you’re touching on lots of different senses that way. You’re gonna make more of an impact that way (Respondent K).

Content is King

When discussing future sustainability with the panel of respondents many focused on the role of content in maintaining station relevance as part of a changing media climate. The roles of radio stations are changing, as Respondent JS stated:
If you keep in mind how media is changing you will come to the inevitable conclusion that distribution power will give way to content power but it will all be distributed on the internet…

For most respondents a major concern was establishing unique content strategies for both stations. Respondents stressed that the innovative nature of college radio needs to be promoted in every aspect of the programming, from on-air execution to the recruitment of new talent. While embracing innovativeness, it is important to create content that fulfills a need within the desired community, as respondent DK indicated:

You’ve got to make sure that people understand that whatever you are doing, whether it is FM communitywide stuff or whether it is common carrier student focused stuff, that you understand who you’re talking to, (establish) what their needs are, and the product you develop is focused on meeting those needs… As long as the stations can do that and obviously attempt to develop a product, that would be attractive to the largest segments of the markets they’ve identified, then I think they are most likely to be judged as relevant and gain the listenership and support they (the stations) desire.

Respondents favored strategies that tied into the history of the two stations. For WBGU-FM it means maintaining the strength of the diversity of terrestrial programming with alternative music that does not have mainstream commercial radio exposure and increasing the offerings of the community oriented programming. This could be generated in house or, if the resources are available, obtained from American Public Media or Public Radio International. For the future of WFAL, respondents felt that the station should narrow its focus in a direction that runs completely opposite to the programming strategies of WBGU-FM in an effort to strengthen the brand identities of both stations. Historically WFAL was a “classic rock” station; however, as audience tastes change, it is important for WFAL to define what audience it is attempting to reach. If it is to truly embrace the moniker of “Falcon Radio” it must be representative of the student body or strive for mass appeal for a collegiate audience. To do this WFAL needs to do
research with the BGSU student body to see what type of programming the student audience desires, and program the station accordingly.

As WFAL strives to utilize the web as its primary means of access, it should consider the larger possibilities of non-linear programming, which means developing multiple channels of on-demand programming. The station may provide a live stream of variety programming like it currently does in order to provide students with practical experience. As WFAL embraces the web as the primary delivery platform it should account for listeners that are less likely to access a website for specific time based programming. Online listeners are more likely to listen live for a real-time event such as a sporting event or live interview with a notable celebrity with whom listeners may ask questions via telephone or online chat. Both stations should explore the feasibility of non-linear programming; however, WFAL would benefit most from such expanded programming strategies. As Respondent J1 suggested:

I think WFAL in a digital world, in an iPod world, would be for the WFAL umbrella, to clearly…have 4 or 5 or 6 streams out of WFAL, whatever it is going to be, maybe it’s WFAL H, - that’s Hip-Hop, WFAL T, - That’s WFAL talk… talk, sports and sports talk, WFAL C, and that’s WFAL country, but if that’s going to be it, stay true to that format, and I think that’s how you can find a niche in it, but [continue to] make it student run.

As online strategies become more important some respondents feel the stations should do more to offer user generated content as part of the web presence and for the stations to look beyond audio as the only type of content, expanding into video and text based content.

The challenge for WFAL would be to be extremely innovative …if we’re talking audio on the web, pretty soon you are going to be talking video so I think that you have to just talk through what the audience is going to demand (Respondent E).

Providing podcasts and videos or building out some kind of YouTube-ish system where you’ve got maybe a little more control… You’ve just got hundreds of bands from people in dorms and off campus… but as far as web functionality, everybody can record an album now, it’s really easy, same thing with the videos there’s just a lot more of do it yourself stuff, so providing that online and providing some kind of community forum, whether you end up having profiles for
For the future operations of the BGSU radio stations to be very successful there will need to be exclusive content that has value to the community and the university. To fully maximize the potential of the radio stations the quality of productions will need to be improved. There are two ways to approach content production strategies: (1) improve the local content, or (2) produce content that is appropriate for national syndication to other radio stations. This is accomplished via independent distribution to other community radio stations or by way of a service distribution mechanism such as Public Radio International. Several respondents emphasized that creating content for syndication should be a goal for both BGSU radio stations. They believed that establishing quality content makes podcasting more beneficial as a distribution means and is the single greatest attribute upon which to build the profile of BGSU radio stations. As respondent J2 said:

You’re either going to have very local programming with no universal appeal or the complete opposite approach… [Being universal] you end up being like a KEXP in Seattle or a WFMU or a WOXY. Somebody that sets the bar high for being standards bearer in music, live performances by huge touring bands, quote on quote professional DJ’s… [The other way is] you take the other approach and try to dominate your local market with what is unserved and underserved in your market…You’re either gonna be the biggest thing in the world or the biggest in thing in your fishbowl. Both are equally difficult, because right now it is a lot easier to be universally accepted because of all the technology we have for proliferating the programming.

Because of WBGU-FM’s local terrestrial license and presence there is an inherent need to promote localism with the majority of the content while developing several programs of syndication caliber. Several respondents expressed a desire to see WFAL shift its focus and resources to producing syndicated content. The justification is because as a station they are not legally obligated to serve the Bowling Green community. If WFAL produced nationally
syndicated content it would enhance the greater visibility of BGSU and could be used as a tool for student recruitment.

As part of the effort to create exceptional content, several respondents mentioned the need to invest greater resources into programming. There are several ways to do this: (1) dedicate more direct support in developing daily content from the expert staff within the university. Through direct involvement, for example, the Department of Telecommunications, or Journalism, can foster “professionalism” in the content produced by students. As respondent P indicated, it is possible to build professionalism without completely imitating mainstream media, but it is necessary to establish the parameters of what constitutes professionalism. In this sense respondent P stated:

We don’t want professionalism that we see in the mainstream media. I think it means that you have people, for example in a talk show you have people that do their homework, that can be articulate and who can ask probing questions and are not afraid to ask questions that are difficult…I think another thing is you take advantage of the faculty that are experts on campus in other areas.

(2) Several respondents felt that to establish quality programs, monetary resources should be invested in students. This means, to some extent that the stations, need to establish consistent programming within weekly dayparts. To do this the stations and the university should consider revising the allocation of available programming slots and build some on-air consistency with talents that work a consistent daypart. Through experience and practice the station can develop talents that are industry ready. Such a programming initiative would require a considerable investment of resources, and a significant time commitment by the students involved. This would mean the stations would need to allocate some dayparts for “paid on-air talents,” and balance them with the volunteer on-air talents of the other parts of the day. This would allow for the stations to build in additional accountability for the “paid programmers,” provide incentives
to perform well and have paid student staff personalities that the stations could use as part of broader marketing campaigns. As respondent J2 stated:

The first step would be hiring DJ’s, that sounds terrible, but especially when you’re talking about a student organization but…who’s to say you couldn’t hire students as long as you hire the right ones…you know it could like any other campus job. If you work in food services for 10 hours a week you could do 10 hours of airtime as long as you’re the right candidate for the job.

To fund paid programs would take considerable investments and require the stations to potentially seek additional arrangements with outside resources. This could include a partnership as the local Chamber of Commerce to secure sustainable underwriting and or advertising. As mentioned previously, the FM station at BGSU forged a relationship with the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce, and led by a professional host, provides a local news program Monday through Friday from six AM to nine AM. The program through one year of operation has generated a stable morning program upon which the rest of the day can be built. There is some hope that one day the program can be fully hosted and directed by students. Successful operation of a morning show hosted by students could greatly enhance the cohesiveness of the radio entities of the station, radio news organization, and radio sports organization. It could be an opportunity for the department to offer internship credits that would fulfill internship requirements that all students in the Department of Telecommunications and the other departments under the School of Communication Studies umbrella are required to fulfill for graduation. This would be similar to a credited internship opportunity that was regularly provided as an option to undergraduate students in the 1970s and 1980s. Successful operation of a morning show with student talents and producers could invert the cost of programming from high cost to lower cost programming. As respondent E stated:

“If you basically have a mature core group of students that does what the [Chamber of Commerce morning program] host does on a “volunteer basis” and
you’re paying only internship wages then you can pay only $10,000 to the students, [and] be very happy with that while $55,000 would go to the station.”

Revenue – Strategies for Financial Sustainability

A key theme emerged among respondents when discussing strategies for generating revenue. The view was that generating revenue takes innovation and resolve by students, faculty and interested community members or volunteers.

While sustainable for current operations, the amount allocated each year will not be enough to establish a fund for future operation and maintenance of an HD station at a proactive level. At the current rate it would take about six years of accumulating a budget unspent to afford the conversion to HD. In other words, the budgetary outlay to launch HD at BGSU would be six times the current annual budget. The conversion to HD will require the administration, the students and the external policy board – known as the Broadcast Advisory Committee – to meet and discuss how to strategically fund the conversion. Theoretically this could be achieved through a combination of administrative funding, external grant funding, student fundraising initiatives and substantial underwriting initiatives. The stations will need to establish a plan to monetize station services in all aspects of operations, with resources for recording, broadcasting and providing event services. The stations will need consistently mature innovative leaders to push fundraising initiatives and promote the benefits of radio’s public service mission to the University.

Several respondents identified the web as having the greatest potential for generating revenue for the radio stations; however, having a website doesn’t automatically translate to revenue. Some of the ways to incorporate advertising on station sites are banner ads, ad words, commercial messages that pre-roll the webcast and embedded commercials for downloadable content. When applying ads to the station website several parameters need to be recognized.
Speaking with other college radio station managers and advisors at conferences, it was found that there is insufficient awareness of how stations are allowed to advertise on their websites. Many leaders expressed to the author that they felt the site was restricted under FCC underwriting guidelines for non-commercial radio stations. However, as long as the message is transmitted only through the website, the structure of the sponsors message is not regulated by the FCC. This means stations can offer wider underwriting and sponsorship packages that will in turn attract new advertisers that may have been weary about just underwriting non-commercial college radio.

To make larger revenue goals a reality, from underwriting and listener supported drives to program syndication and grant funding, the stations must develop strong appealing content strategies. Several respondents indicated that the stations’ first responsibility should be establishing quality content, that once quality content is established and an audience is established, the revenue should be easier to produce. As respondent J2 said:

“The traditional models for bringing [in] radio revenue is on-air ads, and nobody wants to underwrite programming they don’t like or is competitive. In the current model…it would be tough to pitch that to anybody [and] say pay us [X] dollars a week to sponsor a show that is terrible…and nobody does or ever will. [College radio is really the same as] any business; your product has to be good before you can make any money at it. If you don’t have a unique marketable product you are never going to be able to make any money on it. Selling underwriting is no different than selling a car or scented candles or whatever.”

*A Sustainable Future*

Several conditions and considerations must be established to ensure sustainability. These considerations go beyond the ACR model, including its management component, and beyond discussions of distribution and content creation. College radio is driven by the power and innovation of many volunteers and the talents of several paid faculty that are consistently balancing responsibilities of teaching, research and external and internal university obligations
and services. The successful operation of the college radio station requires individuals that are dedicated to innovation, and experimentation, and committed to the success of the station. Their contributions must be in balance with the rest of their professional and academic obligations. Regarding future operations, respondents brought forth several important requirements: (1) the establishment of a continuity agent, (2) an increase in departmental support and resources for the development of content, and (3) greater collaboration between student media organizations.

*The Continuity Agent*

The need for a continuity agent stems from the cyclical nature of college radio. In college radio normally, there is a regular turnover of station management, air personalities and, to a lesser but still noticeable extent department and administrative personnel, Respondents’ thought that to maintain station continuity there must be established a position separate from the faculty advisor that could serve as a continuity agent and effectively share knowledge through generations of student leadership. Recommendations for a continuity agent include the appointment of a faculty member that has a mix of new media and broadcasting experience. This position could effectively provide direction in establishing innovative convergent broadcast and web-based strategies of engagement. This could also be achieved by appointment of a graduate student with a similar skill set, although the time frame involved here would also create difficulties. If the continuity agent were to be a faculty member or graduate student appointment, it would be particularly valuable that he/she possesses the interpersonal and practical skills to bridge generational communication gaps. The continuity agent would be an advocate for student interests and initiatives while objectively analyzing the feasibility of initiatives, providing stability for yearly operations and reducing the learning curve of student
The continuity agent may also be installed through a strategic plan that transcends personalities. As respondent DK stated:

I think that at some point the agent may be, the continuity agent you are talking about, may be personnel based, and it ultimately has to be from an execution standpoint. But, there could also be some practices and policies and procedures that are put in place based upon a planning process that reflect the thinking as of the time they are created for the stations… and they become a way of documenting what it is the people who develop the plan saw from a vision standpoint for the stations. That can become kind of a manual or guidelines around which the people who…execute the vision for the stations and develop a programming strategy and so on…. They should be a kind of living document that changes as marketplace changes occur, as technology changes occur, as taste changes occur, etc. etc. But at least you can develop some threads of continuity throughout the years…for those properties.

The Department As Content Resource

Respondents felt that the Department of Telecommunications and even the other departments in the School of Communication Studies should take a more proactive role in developing quality content. This role can range from coaching personalities in the best ways to present on-air for all programming, to developing content for newscasts, long form programming, sports play-by-play, and the production of pre-recorded announcements. Greater involvement will foster professionalism, increase active engagement between student organizations and departmental committees and classes. This strategy and objective can be facilitated through course projects and credits, and by providing expert material support. By so doing, the profile of the stations and the department as a valued university resource will be increased. Some of the respondent opinions are as follows:

I think college kids, radio kids, or music kids are not typically the kind of people that put together 5-year plans with goals for the University [to] back them. I would say more likely than not the ideal role of the Department of Telecommunications would be probably to provide material support for program creation in lieu of revenue. [You need this at least] at the beginning of any plan…you need revenue, you need experience, and support, and probably most
importantly you need the department to advocate for the station goals. If the goals of WBGU are to be the next WOXY, the department needs to sell (his objective) to incoming students, to alumni, to... just about anybody. If you want them to create a station that is braggable, the department needs to pre-emptively brag about it. There is a cheerleading function that I don’t think has ever existed. (Respondent J2)

To me it’s a natural integration that should occur, again that opinion is offered without any knowledge of how the faculty have been recruited what the roles of the faculty members are, whether or not the resources exist for a strong tie between the faculty members in the department, and the media properties... I’d like to think whoever is running the Department or whoever is kind of making the strategic decisions about usage of faculty time and the integration of course work that students are taking – undergraduate and graduate – with the media properties I would like to think that someone is giving some thought to these kinds of matters because to me the ties should be strong, the linkage should be very obvious. In my mind it expands the knowledge of the faculty members as they see how the media on the campus needs to change and see how they interact with the communities and marketplaces they serve and so on. It expands the richness of the students because they are getting some hands on experience with yeah, okay maybe not WNBC or WABC or WCBS in New York city but their versions of those things in that local community. It also gives students a chance to find something that they really love that perhaps they could make a career out of as a result of the experience they have on that campus. (Respondent DK)

**Greater Collaboration Between Student Media**

The changing media environment is ripe for greater collaboration between media organizations. This means the operations of WBGU-FM, WFAL, BGRNO, BGRSO BG24 News and the BG News should embrace the possibilities of convergence for all media organizations. Collaborative efforts would strengthen the properties as they operate under the umbrella of BGSU student media. WBGU-FM and WFAL should provide the BG News with reviews of new albums that are released. At the same time the radio stations should involve the BG News and BG24 News reporters in the process of gathering content for BGRNO newscasts.

The stations should utilize their web presence to deliver the daily newscasts of BG24 News, and BG24 News should use station talent for covering events that are suited to the
strengths of the organizations. For example if BG24 News produces a video package about the University Football team, BGRSO should be involved in developing the story. The migration of all organizations to develop a web presence should provide opportunities for the stations to work together to build awareness about the efforts of student media. This could be established by developing a web portal or personal computer desktop widget – a computing interface – that would aggregate the latest news and content from all student media properties. This would potentially include individual station webcasts, links to new podcasts, breaking news and video vignettes.

**Case Study Conclusions**

The basic principles of college radio, of experimentation in music programming, volunteerism, and public service to the community and university have remained relatively constant. Stations with an educational FM have staying power because FM is still a reasonably strong consumer technology and universities that have funding to support those stations should choose to do. However, with the changes in the media industry, media consolidation in commercial broadcasting, and the increasing popularity of new media platforms for example, programmers, managers, and faculty must think outside the bounds of traditional radio strategies to maintain relevance. As Respondent E stated:

I think the most concern for sustainability is not money, its talent and quality of student. With low quality and low number of students the station is going to struggle and they won’t be able to sustain programs, ideas or anything. That is today’s basic bill, without any funds the station could continue at a menial level…

As Respondent JS put it:

The keys to failure are doing nothing and being too married to the status quo and becoming irrelevant…. You don’t want to get relegated to the trash heap of history, and there is no reason you should…
The radio stations at BGSU need to establish a plan for continuity and need to increase the collaborative efforts with departmental courses and need to critically engage with the other student organizations to assess the roles of the organization and how they can harmonize with all relevant entities in the near future. This means they must address their historical roles, and newly developed strengths and work together to establish quality programming that attracts new talent. It means increasing overall visibility and finding synergy with the efforts of those organizations producing electronic media at BGSU. The internet is the platform that equalizes all media and removes barriers of radio to produce video, or video to produce radio or press. Thus, through effective management and proper investment of resources in the production of sustainable content, the radio stations can maintain relevance. Then, by embracing emerging technologies the stations can chart a course for future sustainability.
FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This study has focused on the survivability of BGSU’s two radio stations, WBGU-FM and WFAL. Its aim was to look closely at their means of survival in present day economic and technological challenges and came up with strategies to ensure their survivability. To do so, first a nationwide content analysis of college station websites was conducted. This analysis provided the technological context in which the stations operate today. It offered comparative insight into the structure and performance of BGSU college radio vis-à-vis other college radio practitioner’s sites.

The analysis established three insights to the operations of college radio stations that are worth mentioning here. (1) Stations that are operated by community colleges are less likely to offer live streaming of terrestrial programming than stations operating at universities. One possibility for this is that stations serving community colleges may not be as technically developed as stations serving a four year institution and that due to the fact that community colleges have little to no residential student population, less effort is expended to deliver content to an audience that is not locally based (i.e. family and friends in a distant city). (2) Stations that are operated by community colleges are more likely to use proprietary streaming software. This could be attributed to stations relying on software that is covered under general campus wide usage licenses, in efforts to save costs and or a lack of knowledge about other streaming software that has greater flexibility and compatibility across browsers and operating systems. (3) Student run stations at universities are more likely to offer indie programming than community college stations. This is likely due to community college stations programming commercially viable music in an effort to acclimate students to professional formats.

Second, an in-depth case study of BGSU radio was conducted through a critical autoethnographic account, historical analysis and in-depth interviews with station leaders, i.e.
General Managers, Advisors, Department Chairs and Executive staff members. This case study found that the stations at BGSU were most successful when the stations and their respective leaders understood the complex identities of the stations and promoted them with unique offerings that tie into the historical roles of each station. For the future operations of the BGSU radio stations to be very successful there will need to be exclusive content that has value to the community and the university. To fully maximize the potential of the radio stations the quality of productions will need to be improved. Respondents felt that this could be achieved by accessing additional Departmental resources, be it financial or expert services, and professional guidance or increased collaboration between student organizations that deal with electronic media. Several respondents emphasized that creating content for syndication should be a goal for both BGSU radio stations. They believed that establishing quality content makes podcasting more beneficial as a distribution means and is the single greatest attribute upon which to build the profile of BGSU radio stations.

The development of an appropriate business model for college radio that effectively addresses the challenges of convergence is critical, as well as intricate. For college radio the challenges of convergence will be ever present in the quest for relevance and sustainability. For college radio to survive in a convergence driven media environment several attributes must be recognized.

The first attribute that must be recognized is that college radio stations by their very nature are cyclical. They will experience periods of success and failure, growth and decline. It is important that college radio stations maximize the successful periods by utilizing available resources to their fullest capacity, be it knowledge based, financial, or physical labor. By so doing they can minimize their cycles of decline.

The second attribute is strong leadership. It will attract the necessary talent to make
college radio stations successful as long as they are equipped with the skills to manage a constantly evolving talent pool and be forward thinking in response to technological changes.

The third attribute is college radio’s ability to effectively address technological convergence. This means adopting new media distribution platforms such as webcasting, podcasting, HD and other technologies that are on the horizon. Stations must recognize that the internet offers an alternative distribution channel for media products. College Radio stations must understand that this can strengthen the existing station’s position within the audiences and at the same time compete with the traditional media for consumer attention and resources (Chan-Olmsted, 2004).

College radio stations should constantly examine their operations and address technological convergence in ways to improve station accessibility, content offerings, and means to generate revenue. In essence, strong management that effectively addresses technological convergence is the one-two punch that solidifies the survival of college radio.
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APPENDIX A: CODING INSTRUMENT

College Radio Webcast Analysis Sheet (REVISED FINAL VERSION, FEB 7, 2007)

Coder Name: __________________
Site Name: ____________________
URL: __________________________
COUNTRY: ____________________
Coding Date: __________________

I. Site Nature:
___ Web version of the on-air counterpart (Terrestrial, brick-and-click) [1]
___ Stand-alone non-ISP provider webcasting service (Internet only, Pure-play) [2]

Ia. College Station Ownership / Operation structure
___ University Owned / Student operated (owner) [1]
___ University Owned / Media Department operated [2]
___ Community college / technical school / student operated [3]
___ Community college / Technical school / Media Department operated [4]
___ College owned / Professional staff [5]

II. Audio Transmission Method (Check all that apply)
___ a. On-Demand Downloading / Podcasting [0/1]
___ b. On-Demand Streaming [0/1]
___ c. Live Streaming [0/1]
___ d. Push [0/1]

III. What types of contents are available on the site (Check all that apply)?
___ a. video/movie [0/1]
___ b. audio [0/1]
___ c. text [0/1]
___ d. graphics [0/1]
___ e. animation [0/1]
___ f. interactive games [0/1]
___ g. chat rooms/message boards [0/1]
___ h. other (Please specify) __________ [0/1]

IV. What file format does the webcast service use (check all that apply)? Look the extension of the file name when playing the webcast.
___ a. AIF [0/1]
___ b. AU/SND [0/1]
___ c. AVI [0/1]
___ d. ASF/WMA/WMV/WM [0/1]
___ e. ASX/WAX/WVX/WMX/WPL [0/1]
___ f. MID/MIDI/RMI [0/1]
___ g. MOV/GT [0/1]
V. What types of radio program genres are available on the station (check all that apply)?
___ a. Indie music [0/1]
___ b. Metal / hardcore / loud rock [0/1]
___ c. RPM / house / techno [0/1]
___ d. Blues / Blues Rock [0/1]
___ e. hip-hop, R&B, Soul [0/1]
___ f. Jazz / Big Band [0/1]
___ g. Country / folk [0/1]
___ h. World music [0/1]
___ i. Classical music [0/1]
___ j. Specialty programs (includes in studio performance oriented programs) [0/1]
___ k. public affairs programs [0/1]
___ l. business (business news/speech/conference) [0/1]
___ m. news clips/interviews (non-business) [0/1]
___ n. talk shows [0/1]
___ o. sporting events [0/1]
___ p. education/instruction (with explicit learning goals) [0/1]
___ q. religious content [0/1]
___ r. other (Please specify) ____________________________ [0/1]

VI. Sources of the media content? (Approximate % of each type listed below. Should add up to 100%)
___ a. Original (Exclusively shown on the web site)
___ b. Repurposed (Previously shown in other media such as RADIO)
___ c. Simulcast (shown at the same time as the broadcast)
___ d. Unknown

VII. Origin of content (check ONE only)
___ All student produced, independent of instructional assistance [1]
___ primarily student production, with a little instructional assistance [2]
___ Half are student production, about half are community member productions [3]
___ Primarily community production [4]
___ Primarily instructional productions [5]
___ Primarily professional local production [6]
___ All professional production, using external source for primary content [7]
IX. Total number of channels offered by the webcast service: _____ (in a webcast that uses different designated channels. If no channels are specified, just write 1)

IX. What type of business revenue source does the site use (can mark more than one):
___ a. Advertising/Sponsorship [0/1]
___ b. E-Commerce [0/1]
___ c. Subscription [0/1]
___ d. Pay Per Use/View or specific charges [0/1]
___ e. Content Syndication [0/1]
___ f. Tip Jar/Voluntary contribution [0/1]
___ g. College funding
___ h. Other (please specify) ____________________________ [0/1]

X. If the site displays advertising, how many ads did you find on the home page (including pop up ads, buttons, banners, paid text links)?
______ (0= no ad)

XI. If they have e-commerce, what types of products are being sold (check all that apply)?
___ media/entertainment related products/services including charges for downloading third-party content [0/1]
___ station merchandise (t-shirts, mugs, pants, etc) [0/1]
___ Other commercial products services [0/1]

XII. Is registration/account-set up required to open the webcast content?
___ No [0]
___ Yes [1]

XIII. If registration is required, what type of info is collected? (check all that apply)
___ a. Identity and Contact (name, addresses, phone, etc.) [0/1]
___ b. Billing info e.g., credit card number or bank account number [0/1]
___ c. Other demographic info (e.g., gender, income, occupation) [0/1]
___ d. Psychographic info (content preference, life-style, shopping preference, etc.) [0/1]
___ Other (please specify) _________________________ [0/1]

XIV. Troubles Receiving the Audio/Video File/Stream using broadband connection (Check all the apply) :
___ a. Garbled Images [0/1]
___ b. Incomprehensible Audio [0/1]
___ c. Broken Transmission [0/1]
___ d. Other problems (please specify) _________________________ [0/1]

XV. Connection speed choice in displaying webcast (e.g., 56k, 300k, etc.)
___ More than 3 choices [3]
XVI. Which media player can display the site content (check all that apply)?
   ___ a. Real Player [0/1]
   ___ b. Windows Media Player [0/1]
   ___ c. Quicktime Player [0/1]
   ___ d. Other proprietary player (please specify) __________________________ [0/1]

XVII. Additional Software Required to Use the Site Content (Check all that apply)
   ___ a. NO additional software [0/1]
   ___ b. Flash [0/1]
   ___ c. Chat [0/1]
   ___ d. Other proprietary software of the webcaster [0/1]
   ___ e. Other software (please specify) ________________________________ [0/1]

XVIII. Text description of the content of the video/audio with ID3 tag, estimated file size, or playing time.
   ___ all [5]
   ___ most of it (more than 60%) [4]
   ___ about half of it (41-60%) [3]
   ___ part of it (10-40%) [2]
   ___ less than 10% only content or estimated file size, but not both [1]
   ___ no file size and playing time info. [0]

XIX. Specified target audiences of radio station (check all that appear)
   ___ Alumni [0/1]
   ___ Students [0/1]
   ___ Community [0/1]

XX. Means of participation that are used on the website (check all that apply)
   ___ Station request phone number easily accessible [0/1]
   ___ Email form for requests [0/1]
   ___ Instant messenger communications on the site (AOL / Yahoo IM etc) [0/1]
   ___ Bulletin Boards or discussion portals [0/1]

XXI. Are internal search engines or directories of content available on the webcast?
   ___ No (0)
   ___ Yes (1)

XXII. Comment on the quality of the content of the site.
XXIII. Comment on the usability of the webcast services (ease of navigation)

XXV. Comment on the comprehensiveness of the site content.

Remarks/Other Observations: