LOCAL RADIO NEWS AND THE MICHIGAN BROADCASTER

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL RADIO NEWS
AND THE
MICHIGAN BROADCASTER

by Joel B. Fleming

The history of radio news gives a picture of steady growth and advancement over the years since the first news broadcast. The hypothesis was forwarded that on the local level this growth and perfection may not be the case, and that the news function of a station is generally considered one secondary to all other station functions.

A 27 question survey was developed and distributed by mail to the news directors of all the radio stations in the state of Michigan. It contained questions about the individual station, news policies, handling of the news, and the personnel. The answers to these questions were compiled to give a picture of the position news holds in Michigan radio.

Each station broadcasts an average of 25 newscasts each weekday, with over three-fifths of these programs five minutes in length. Over half of the newscasts heard in Michigan are prepared and presented by the personnel at the local stations. Although most stations attempt to seek out their own local news there is still a great deal of dependence upon the two major newswire services. Since over one quarter of the stations depend upon the wire for over 70% of their news

material, there is a great sameness to the news heard on most stations throughout the state. Adding to the sameness is the fact that many stations present this material exactly as it comes off the wire, without re-writing any of it. About a quarter of the stations make no visits to local news sources to supplement the news from the wire service.

The majority of the stations include recorded voice inserts in their newscasts, indicating an attempt to get away from the straight reading of news. Almost a third of the stations are equipped with mobile news units to aid them in the gathering of the news.

Throughout the state there is an indication that the news function of the station is not entirely relegated to the hourly straight news broadcasts. All but a fifth of the stations present some sort of special or public affairs broadcast in addition to the regular schedule of newscasts.

On the other hand, over half of the stations present no editorial opinion on the air.

Probably one of the most encouraging facts to come from the study is the high formal education level attained by the newsmen of the state. Ninety-five per cent of them have completed high school and almost a third of them have a college degree.

The majority of the newsmen have been in the business for over five years and most received any training they have in an on-the-job situation.

Over-all the news departments of Michigan Radio Stations are well equipped to research and present the news to their listeners. The stations are well staffed with qualified personnel and are well

organized to search out news, although many personnel not trained in news are presenting news on the air.

There is, however, a strong dependence upon the news wire service to supply a great deal of the news, tending to eliminate local emphasis and make most stations' newscasts sound alike.

LOCAL RADIO NEWS

AND THE

MICHIGAN BROADCASTER

by

Joel B. Fleming

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The writer would like to acknowledge the encouragement, aid, and patience offered by his wife, Suzanne, his parents, and his faculty advisor, Professor Arthur Weld.

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CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RADIO NEWS

> "On August 31, 1920, Michigan held primary elections. Nothing unusual about that.
>
> "That evening in some hundreds of livingrooms, bedrooms, basements and garrets in the Detroit area, amateur wireless enthusiasts sat before their home made receiving sets. Headphones pinched their ears. Their fingers fiddled with tuning coils as they picked up the Arlington Time Signal, or the 'eep eep' of Morse Code whistling among the ham senders or between the lake ships and shore stations.
>
> "Suddenly into their headphones came a static ridden human voice. It said something like: 'This is station 8MK. The Detroit News brings you early returns from today's voting. . .'
>
> "That was unusual. Regular broadcasting of news was born that night. Westinghouse set up a broadcasting station in Pittsburgh and on November 2, opened it with the news of the day's Harding-Cox presidential elections, obtained from the Pittsburgh Post.
>
> "Each of these broadcasting pioneers had chosen a news event, one sure of public interest, as the occasion for the station's initiation."[1]

Since those early efforts radio news has had a long and steady growth. Many things have influenced it; and the public's attitude has changed greatly in the intervening years.

Naturally, broadcasters were eager to experiment with their new medium, and growth in the early years was quite rapid. At this time little attention was given to the position that the broadcasting of

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[1]Mitchell V. Charnley, News By Radio (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948) p. 1.

news might play in the over-all programming, if indeed programming were even thought of.

There were good reasons for slow development of radio news. At that time the newspapers were the principal sources of news. Because of this the newspaper publishers were very powerful. At first they were tolerant toward radio; however when it became apparent that radio was important, they became less cordial.

> "Even though many of the early stations were owned by these publishers, they were afraid that radio news might cut their circulation or even replace their newspaper. Because these men were able to withhold basic news sources and the press wire services, they had a powerful weapon against the growth of radio news."[2]

At first the radio men did not fight this, or even realize that a fight was in the offing. In its infancy radio did much the same as more recently we have watched television do. A large part of early programming was devoted to the covering of elections, conventions and sports events. Thus special events is the oldest area of news programming. Because they were denied the service of the press facilities, some of the larger stations set up their own local and independent news gathering staffs. In 1933 two news gathering agencies designed specifically to serve the radio stations were formed. Trans-Radio Service and Radio News Association were both operated as news gathering and dispensing organizations, and others soon followed their lead. In 1935 the United Press and the International News Service began to service radio stations and the Associated Press soon followed.[3]

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[2]Carl Warren, Radio News Writing and Editing (New York: Harper Brothers, 1947) p. 4.

[3]Ibid.

Slowly news became a common part of programming. But on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a new era opened in radio newscasting. Without a doubt radio news really came of age during World War Two. Radio was flexible enough to shift its emphasis from entertainment to information, and in this way could become a stronger than ever competitor to the press. The immediateness of radio news reporting, which even to this day is its biggest advantage over television news, has been traditionally its strongest suit in competition with the newspapers. It was this ability of radio to report the news "right now" that caused the press to abolish the extra-edition newspapers.

The war period proved it was nearly impossible for a radio station to schedule too much news so long as it was not merely repetitious. For instance, NBC increased the total number of news programs from 2.8% of its total program hours in 1937, to 20.4% in 1944.[4]

When the war ended in 1945 there was a widespread feeling, both inside and outside the industry, that the public would turn away from radio news to a more relaxed type of broadcasting. Radio faced a readjustment to civilian life just as did many of the returning GI's. But broadcasters learned with some surprise that the public's appetite for news did not slacken when the fighting stopped. The number of newscasts and news related programs even increased in many instances, as station after station discovered news as a sure prop for sagging ratings.[5]

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[4]William F. Brooks, Radio News Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948) p. 5.

[5]James Bormann, "How Durable Is Radio?" Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 34 (Summer 1957) p. 311.

Broadcasters and sociologists alike began to re-evaluate the importance of radio news. A great deal can be learned by comparing the results of three different listener surveys taken over an eight year period. The first survey was taken by Elmo Roper before the war in 1939. The other two, taken by the NORC, and reported by Paul Lazersfeld and associates, were taken immediately at the end of the war and again two years later.

All three surveys asked the same question: "From which one source do you get most of your news about what is going on - the newspapers or radio?" The following results were obtained.

1. Comparison of listener survey results

	Survey by Roper, 1939[6]	Survey by NORC, 1945[7]	Survey by NORC, 1947[8]
Newspapers	64%	35%	48%
Radio	25%	61%	44%
No Choice	11%	4%	8%

A comparison of these surveys shows that although radio news had dropped in hours per day from its wartime peak, when speed was all important, it had after the war retained about half its gain over pre-war status. Although radio had returned to its original position

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[6]Paul W. White, News On The Air (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948) p. 356.

[7]Paul Lazarsfeld and Harry Field. The People Look At Radio (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946) p. 100.

[8]Paul Lazarsfeld and P. Kendall. Radio Listening In America (New York: Prentice Hall, 1948) p. 116.

behind the newspapers in relative importance as a source of daily news, the popularity of news programs during the war and its carry-over to postwar years is evident in these survey results.

Soon after the war, in March of 1946, radio news received another "shot in the arm" in the form of government regulation. It was then that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made public its Blue book, called "Public Service Responsibilities of Broadcast Licensees." Much of this report was devoted to the Commission's insistence that the extent of a station's "live, local programs" was an important factor in FCC evaluation of the station's service, and that local news programs would receive a high status among the local program offerings.

> "Though the report rested on a firm base, it was received by anguished howls of 'Censorship - Government control!' by a large portion of the broadcast industry. Anguished or not, however, the industry was impressed, and one evidence was the fact that the rate of establishment of newsrooms in radio stations - a rate that had already spurted since the beginning of the year - was further stepped up."[9]

The FCC's interest in local news in station programming was underscored in April, 1946, when it favored a licensee in Orangeburg, N.C., the one of two applicants that showed both intent and facilities to place heavy emphasis on local news service. On this occasion the FCC said:

> "We believe that an essential function of a station's operations in the public interest should contemplate the gathering and broadcasting of not only national and state

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[9]Charnley, Op. Cit., p. 10.

news, but also the gathering and broadcast of local news on a regularly scheduled news program."[10]

At the end of World War Two a new field of mass communication arose that was to affect radio broadcasting. Until the end of the war, radio had had a clear field in the broadcasting of news. Now television began its meteoric rise.

Some people predicted that as television expanded, radio would become a dead industry. However just as those who had predicted that radio would put an end to newspapers were wrong, so too were those that predicted that television would end radio.

"For example, from 1946 to 1952, a period of great television expansion when about 25 million television sets were sold, over 90 million radios were manufactured in the United States."[11]

"In 1954 alone, 6,415,000 home radios were sold, over half of them portable and clock radios. In addition 4,124,000 new radio equipped cars set forth on the highways. That makes a total of over 10,500,000 new radios . . . compared to 7,100,000 television sets sold that year."[12]

These are impressive figures when one remembers that television, and not radio, was on the rise. Many other figures of this type could be cited to show that the dire predictions of the death of radio did not materialize. As late as 1957 a "CBS Evaluation of qualitative

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Phillips, Grogan and Ryan. An Introduction To Radio And Television (New York: The Ronald Press, 1954) p. 26.

[12] Leo Bogart, The Age Of Television (New York: Fredrick Unger, 1956) p. 117.

differences between radio stations" showed the strength of radio. Over a thousand persons were asked to make a choice among radio, television, newspapers and magazines if they were allowed to keep only one news source. The highest total percentage was achieved by radio, 35% while television was next with 32%.[13]

In the past decade in America there has been a trend of movement from the centers of the cities to the suburbs, and radio has followed. The U.S. census Bureau shows that in markets of 3 million or more population, the suburbs and beyond have increased 68%. Population of the central cities has decreased at the same time. In the central cities the newspapers miss two out of every ten families. Outside the city itself, the places where interurbia growth has been tremendous, newspapers miss six out of every ten families.

"Radio therefore reaches suburbia like no other medium, covering it like a blanket."[14]

Because of this move to the suburbs more and more stations, especially the newer ones, deliberately cater to a geographically limited audience with transmitter power to be effective in as little as a ten mile radius.

"They are interested in only their backyards. Their sports coverage may consist of local high school games, and their news

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[13] Different, An evaluation of some qualitative differences between radio stations. A report prepared by Modivation Analysis Inc. for CBS. 1957. p. 3.

[14] "Radio Declares - Compare Me," Sponsor, Vol. 15 (November 20, 1961) p. 29.

includes an accident around the corner, social events in the next block and the evening's schedule at the Parent Teacher's Association."[15]

Thus today there seems to be a trend toward a greater individualization of stations throughout the United States as they specialize to reach their respective audiences.

Therefore a greater emphasis than ever before is seemingly being placed on the gathering and broadcast of local news, supplementing this with national reports received from the network news centers or the national wire services.

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[15]"Radio gaining strength as local service," Business Week. (May 27, 1961) p. 53.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of this study is to determine the position of local news broadcasting in the radio industry at the present time. The history of radio news up to this time has been one of great steps forward. It was the opinion of this writer that in recent years the local news function had degenerated greatly, leading to the following hypothesis.

1. Generally in the radio industry the news function of a station is secondary to other functions of the station to such a point that little or no attention is given to local news, and that the news function for most stations becomes the presentation of newswire copy and little more.
2. Generally in the radio industry the preparation and presentation of news is a secondary function of station personnel whose other duties are primary, and who bring little or no news experience or journalistic background to the job.
3. Because of this the public is not receiving from the radio industry the quality of news it has a right to expect from a major news medium, particularly in the area of local news.

4. In making such a generalization it must be noted that there are many stations with responsible news departments who do serve their listeners well; however, there are not enough of them to raise the over-all average.

To determine how radio stations are handling news, it was decided that a detailed survey of individual stations and their approach to the news function of the medium would give the most usable information.

Since a representative sample of the radio stations in the United States would be difficult to obtain, it was decided to limit the research to one state, Michigan. The writer was living in the state at the time and because of this would be in a better position to analyze the information received. Michigan ranks seventh in population in the United States, and this population is almost equally divided between large metropolitan centers and rural areas. No one nationality, race or ethnic group dominates the population.

As a pre-test for the final survey, a sample of one community was made. The object of the pre-test was to select the questions which would later form the final questionnaire. This sample was made in the Lansing-East Lansing market which ranks 48th in the nation. It is the state capitol and a center of both higher education and industry. The market at the time of this survey was served by four AM and four FM stations. These stations total only five separate broadcasting units since some operation is simulcast.

The pre-test was made in the form of a personal interview with the news director of each station. In many cases the wording of a question was changed from interview to interview if confusion on the

part of the interviewee was observed. In addition an attempt was made to omit any words or phrases that would be effective verbally but might not be as effective in written form.

There were at the time of the survey 115 individual broadcasting units in the state of Michigan. Using the 1962 Broadcasting Yearbook as a resource, an attempt was made to isolate the number of radio newsrooms, or possible radio news operations in the state to avoid duplication. Thus if a station were both an Am and FM operation it was counted as one unit. In the original sample no attention was given to the possible affiliation with a television station, newspaper or other news organization. Only the number of newsrooms serving radio stations was of interest.

Rather than attempt to reach every newsman in the state, it was decided to attempt to question only one person at each station. If the Broadcasting Yearbook listed a news director, the survey was addressed to him personally in care of the station. If no news director was listed by name, then the survey was addressed to the news department of the station. Here an assumption was made that if the station had no formal news director, the survey would be forwarded to someone who would have the information requested.

It was decided that with such a small total number of stations in the state it would be advantageous to survey all of them instead of getting involved in the selection of a representative cross section. Thus the sample was very definite - the news director or news department of every radio station in the state of Michigan.

Of the possible means of reaching these persons the mail questionnaire was selected for many reasons. Obviously direct observation of each station would make possible highly accurate descriptions of the operation of the news department. However this would be very time consuming, and the presence of an observer might in some way tend to influence the normal operation. Material with the minute detail that this type of observation would bring would also be quite unwieldy for this type of survey. For the same reasons the personal interview would present some of the same problems. In addition the high cost of this form of survey makes it prohibitive.

One of the strongest disadvantages of the mail questionnaire is that it might be filled out by someone other than the intended respondent. If a station has no formal news director, there is no assurance that the next best informed person will complete the form. This is especially true in a closed sample of this type where the person selected has been so picked because he is the specific person who can give the most accurate responses. In many cases he is the only person with the information available to him. Information that a person working daily in the news department would have at his fingertips would have to be searched for by another person.

An additional disadvantage is that there is no means of controlling the sequence of stimuli. Consequently some respondents will read the entire questionnaire before answering any of the questions, and others will skip around. Incomplete answers and omissions will occur, whereas in an interview or observation situation this problem can be

avoided. This again is especially true in this type of survey, because some questions are based upon replies to previous questions.

Since in this particular survey the respondents were to be news directors of radio stations, and in responsible positions, one had to assume that their over-all intelligence, training, and daily working with words would help eliminate some of these problems.

Another of the major disadvantages of the mail questionnaire is that there is no assurance that there will be a return high enough to make the figures which are received significant. Probably the greatest determinant of return is the form of the questionnaire itself. This particular form was four pages long and contained 27 questions. The final question about each individual newsman at the station had to be answered separately; so this question was repeated on a fifth page which was included with the questionnaire. If the station were known to have a large news staff, additional final pages were included. Normally only two of these pages were included, making the questionnaire six pages long.

In order to speed up the response to the form, questions were designed to be answered by circling a proper response. There were six exceptions to this where the respondent was asked to fill in a numerical answer. Occasionally the respondent was asked to be specific when he circled an "other" category in a multiple choice question; however very few did so.

The first two questions in the survey[16] dealt with station power

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[16]See Appendix I.

and population, and were of a general background-information nature. In the second question, referring to population, the term "listening area" drew a few questions in the pre-test. However, in forming the final survey it did not seem advisable to become technical and refer to the primary or secondary coverage area. It was believed that this obvious generalization would serve the purposes of this survey best.

Question three, referring to the number of newspapers in the listening area, was included to determine the amount of non-broadcast competition existing. The fourth item was intended to determine what different media were served by the same newsroom.

The next four questions attempted to determine the number of persons involved directly and indirectly with the news operation. Here an attempt was made to differentiate among personnel whose sole duties were with the news department, those who worked part time in the department in addition to other duties, and those who presented news on the air, but were in no way designated as newsmen.

In many cases of a joint AM, FM or TV operation, a person's work may be divided between the different media. To estimate the amount of time devoted specifically to radio news, a rough percentage of total man-hours of the personnel in each category was requested.

In reference to question eight, about the number of stringers employed, the pre-test showed that there is no better term than "stringers" to use when speaking to newsmen, when referring to persons who are not employed by the station but give the news department tips or stories they have uncovered.

The next three questions asked for information about the number of newscasts broadcast daily during the five day week. Since the schedules of most stations are the same across the board Monday through Friday, it was thought that this figure would give a good average figure. Schedules on weekends usually differ quite a bit from the daily routine and therefore would tend to distort the figures obtained.

The ninth question asked for the total number of newscasts broadcast daily, Monday through Friday. Question 10 asked for the total number of these newscasts which were locally prepared and presented. This was to give the total of the broadcasts which originated from the station in contrast to those which were originated from some other place, such as a national network.

Question 11 was concerned with the number of locally prepared newscasts whose content was strictly of a local nature, as differentiated from newscasts which also included national or international news in addition to the local material.

The next group of questions dealt with the source of the news which the station broadcast. The replies to the fourteenth question were to disclose any reliance upon any one particular source of news. It was felt that the amount of time and effort put into rewriting wire service copy before it was put on the air would be a good indicator of the station's attitude toward the news function; this was requested in question 15.

Since local news coverage is the main interest of this study, it was desirable to focus the questioning about the sources of news to the individual station's means of collecting local news. The next

series of questions referred to the number of places, and the number of times a day, that possible sources of news were contacted. Information was requested about both personal visits and telephone calls. In an attempt to discover the news sources the stations depended upon, question 20 asked the respondents to circle the sources with which they regularly worked.

The next group of questions aimed at finding out information of a secondary nature that would help to give an over-all picture of the importance placed on the news function of the station. The time and effort and in some cases money spent to include recorded voice inserts, to operate a mobile news unit, or submit stories from the local area to the regional wire services all tend to help define the value placed on the news department. The preparation of special or public affairs programs or editorials by the news department could also be an important indicator.

Since this study was interested not only in the station's news operation, but also the individual newsman, the final question was included asking for information about the education and professional background of each newsman. The structure of this question was more complex than that of others in the survey, but to find the information needed it could not be as simple in construction.

The major difference in this question was that if the person filling out the form was not fully informed about the background of each newsman, he would then have to have the newsman fill out this part of the form himself. The inherent problem here was that this might prove too much trouble and that the response would drop off for this

question. Considering the value of the information hoped for it was decided to take the chance and get as many answers as possible.

A total of 115 questionnaires were placed in the mail from East Lansing, Michigan, August 11, 1962. Each one was accompanied by a form letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a stamped, addressed return envelope. An individually stamped envelope was used rather than a franked envelope. There is some indication that psychologically this may have a tendency to increase the possible return.

The letters were to be returned in care of the Television and Radio Department at Michigan State University. It was hoped that this would add a certain prestige to the survey that a post office box return address might not have. Earlier attempts to associate the survey with the news broadcasters association and the wire services were unsuccessful. As it turned out this added prestige seemingly was not needed because the percentage of return of the questionnaires was quite high.

By the first of October, 1962, 60 of the 115 forms had been returned. This is a return of 52 per cent. In an attempt to raise the percentage of the return, on October 8, 1962, an identical questionnaire was sent to all stations which had not replied by that time. Since the writer had moved from Michigan, the second wave of questionnaires was delayed longer than normally would seem advisable. A second questionnaire was sent out rather than just a reminder card because of the length of time that had passed since the original survey had gone out. As in the original wave of questionnaires, a self addressed, stamped envelope was included.

Twenty-three more questionnaires were returned following the second mailing, giving a total of 83 of the original 115 stations, or a 72 per cent return, which is the final figure used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The following figures describe the status of radio news in Michigan at the time of this survey. They give a picture of today's broadcast journalist, his job and his working situation. There is no attempt made to explain <u>why</u> certain situations are as they are, but to report <u>that</u> they are.

Of the 83 replying stations 73 were AM stations and 10 were FM-only stations. In addition 21 of the 73 AM stations operate on both AM and FM thus raising the total number of FM stations in the state to 31.

Of the AM stations, 38 or well over half (52.1%), operate on a power of 1,000 watts. Nine stations operate at 250 watts, 11 at 500 watts, and 12 at 5,000 watts. There is one station operating at 10,000 watts and there are two maximum power, 50,000 watt stations.

Twenty-eight of the AM stations (38.4%) hold a daytime license, and are therefore forced to sign off the air at local sunset.

Almost three quarters of the stations (73.5%) serve a listening area of over 100,000 population, while none of the stations report a listening area of less than 5,000. The largest number of stations, 29, reports serving a population of between 100,000 and 500,000. This places 34.9% of the stations in this category. Sixteen stations indicate serving over a million population. Of the remaining

stations 8 serve a 10,000-25,000 population, 13 serve a 25,000-50,000 population and 9 stations serve from 50,000 to 100,000 listeners.

As might be expected almost all of the stations serve areas that are also served by a daily newspaper. Only ten stations indicate that no daily paper serves their listening area, although there are weekly papers mentioned in these cases. Seventy-three of the stations report daily papers serving their listening area, 3 stations report bi-weekly papers and 52 of the stations' audiences are served by weekly papers.

Of the stations reporting daily newspapers in their listening area, 42 report only one paper, 19 report 2 daily papers, 8 report 3 daily papers, 2 report 4 daily papers and 1 station reports serving an area served by 6 daily newspapers, and 1 served by 11 daily papers.

The number of weekly papers serving a listening area ranges from 1 to 10 with the most frequent figure reported being 2 papers.

The majority of the newsrooms serve only the surveyed station, but there are a few which serve another news medium as well. Sixty-two newsrooms serve no other news medium while 21 report some sort of affiliation. Ten of the newsrooms serve both an AM and FM operation. There is one AM-Newspaper affiliation, 6 AM-TV affiliations, 3 AM-FM-TV affiliations and one FM-FM affiliation.

The next three questions on the survey, regarding station personnel, were grouped together, and each was composed of two parts. It seems advisable to invalidate the second part of each of the questions, which inquires about the percentage of a newsman's time devoted to the surveyed station, in the case of a joint operation.

Response should have been limited to stations whose newsroom serves more than one news medium; however many more responses were received, indicating the question was confusing and unclear.

One of the most significant facts regarding staff size is that almost 40 per cent of the stations have no one whose sole duties are with the news department. Thirty-two stations (38.5%) have no full time newsman. Another 32 stations (38.5%) employ one person with sole duties in the news department, while 11 stations (13.25%) have two persons in this capacity. One station each employs 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 full time newsmen and two stations employ 5.

One quarter, 21 of the stations (25.30%), have no persons whose part time duties are with the news department. Almost a third, 26 of the stations (31.32%), have one person in this capacity and 11 stations (13.25%) each have three part time personnel in the news department. Eight stations employ 4, and two each employ 5, 6, and 7 part time newsmen.

It is of interest to note that the majority of the stations have personnel, in no way designated as newsmen, who in the course of their other duties prepare and/or present news on the air.

Only 22 stations (26.50%) state that no one other than a newsman assumes these duties. This means that almost three quarters of the stations depend on non-news personnel to handle their news. Seven stations (8.43%) report three persons and 12 stations (14.45%) report four persons in this category. Eight stations report five non-newsmen reporting or preparing news, while 1 station reports six persons, 2 stations report seven persons and 1 station has ten such persons working with the news.

A comparison of the news department's staff size, including all full time and part time personnel, can be made to station power and the estimated population of the station's listening area. It was hoped to find a correlation between the two, and although statistically there was no significant correlation, the raw figures are interesting and important enough to be included here.

The mean figure in the following five tables is the arithmetic average size of the station staffs; and the mode indicates the number of personnel which occurred most often in each category. The first table relates the station news staff size to the power of the AM stations. Since the 9 FM stations do not fall into such a power breakdown, they are not included.

2. Size of staff related to AM station power

N	POWER	MEAN	MODE
9	250 w	3.1	2
12	500 w	2.8	2
36	1,000 w	2.9	2
14	5,000 w	3.5	3
1	10,000 w	2	2
2	50,000 w	9	7 & 11[17]

The second table relates the station news staff size to the estimated population of the listening area.

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[17]Both figures appeared the same number of times.

3. Size of staff related to population

N	POPULATION	MEAN	MODE
0	5,000 or less	0	0
2	5-10,000	3.5	3 & 4[18]
8	10-25,000	2.75	2
13	25-50,000	2.2	2
10	50-100,000	2.5	2
28	100-500,000	3.7	2
6	500,000-1 Million	2	2
16	1 Million or more	4.1	2

Well over half of the stations do all of their newsgathering with their own staff, without the use of stringers to report news items which have come to their attention. Sixty stations (72.28%) employ no stringers at all, while 7 stations (8.43%) each employ either 1 or 2. Three stringers are used by 2 stations, 5 stringers by 2 stations, while 1 station reports the use of 10 stringers and 4 stations report the use of over 15 such persons to help them gather the news.

The news policy of a station determines not only who shall present the news and how it shall be gathered, but also how much news it will present to its listeners. There is a wide variation among the stations in Michigan as the following figures show. It is important to note the number of stations that have no newscasts at all in the different categories. In the following three tables the mean column indicates

[18]Both figures appeared the same number of times.

the average number of newscasts broadcast daily throughout the state. The figures in the range column indicate the range between the greatest number of newscasts broadcast daily and the smallest number reported by the respondents. The figure in the mode column indicates the number of newscasts which most stations reported in each category. In the cases where the mode is zero, the number of stations reporting this is given. The first table gives figures referring to the total number of newscasts broadcast daily, Monday through Friday.

4. Total number of newscasts broadcast daily

N	LENGTH	MEAN	RANGE	MODE
83	Less than 5 Minutes	5.09	0-55	0 (47 sta.)
83	5 Minutes	15.18	0-55	10
83	10 Minutes	1.74	0-15	0 (33 sta.)
83	15 Minutes	2.22	0-15	1 & 2

Since some stations receive many of these newscasts from a network or some other source, the following table gives figures for the number of newscasts which are prepared and presented at the station, in contrast to newscasts from some outside point of origin.

5. Total number of locally prepared news broadcasts daily

N	LENGTH	MEAN	RANGE	MODE
83	Less than 5 Minutes	3.11	0-25	0 (53 sta.)
83	5 Minutes	7.16	0-25	0 (18 sta.)
83	10 Minutes	0.94	0-10	0 (40 sta.)
83	15 Minutes	1.30	0- 9	0 (42 sta.)

Of those newscasts which are locally prepared and presented, some are devoted entirely to news of the local listening area. The following table gives these figures.

6. Total number of newscasts with strictly local content

N	LENGTH	MEAN	RANGE	MODE
83	Less than 5 Minutes	0.91	0-21	0 (72 sta.)
83	5 Minutes	2.17	0-23	0 (54 sta.)
83	10 Minutes	0.58	0- 6	0 (62 sta.)
83	15 Minutes	0.27	0- 4	0 (72 sta.)

One source of news other than local facilities is the major radio networks, each of which has regular newscasts available to the affiliate station. The majority of the stations in the state, 47 (56.6%), are independent stations and have no network affiliation. The Mutual Network has the greatest number of outlets in Michigan with 13 of the responding stations (15.6%) as affiliates. Eleven stations (13.2%) are affiliated with ABC, five (6.0%) with NBC and four (4.8%) with CBS. Four stations report belonging to some network other than the above mentioned, with one of these also affiliated with one of the national chains.

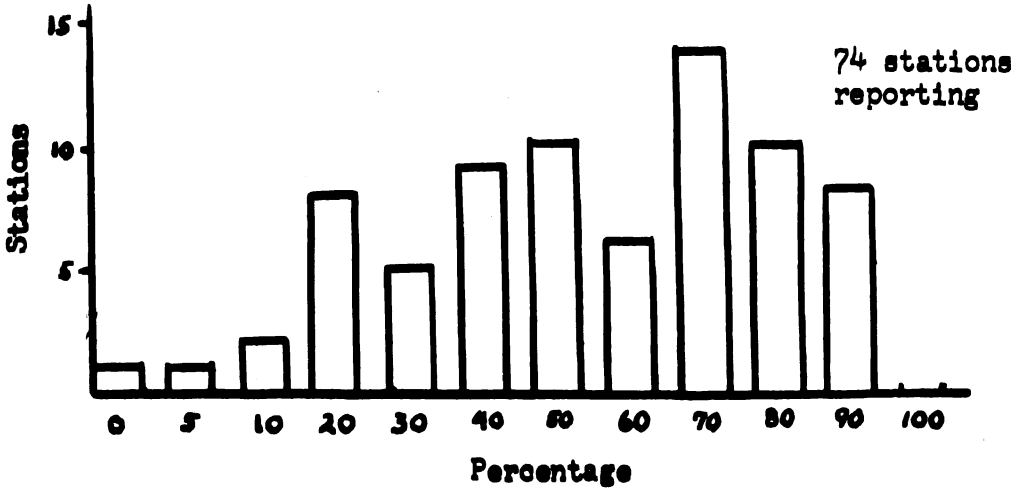
Another main source of news is the news wire services. These services supply the station with news copy via a teletype circuit. This news is then presented over the air by the local station announcer. Thirty-nine stations (48.2%) are members of the Associated Press while 44 stations (51.8%) subscribe to United Press International services. Three stations have both services and three stations have

neither of them. None of the other services of this sort, such as the New York Times Service or Reuters, are used in the state.

In preparing the newscast locally the news department has a variety of sources from which it can draw items to make up a newscast. There are basically three ways a station can get its news. It may receive it over the wire service, it can gather the information itself or it can call upon information submitted to it. In the survey the stations were asked to estimate the percentage of their newscasts which are drawn from these sources.

The results show a strong dependence upon the wire services to supply them with news. The following graph indicates the number of stations, on the vertical axis, and the percentage of the newscasts drawn from the wire services, on the horizontal axis.

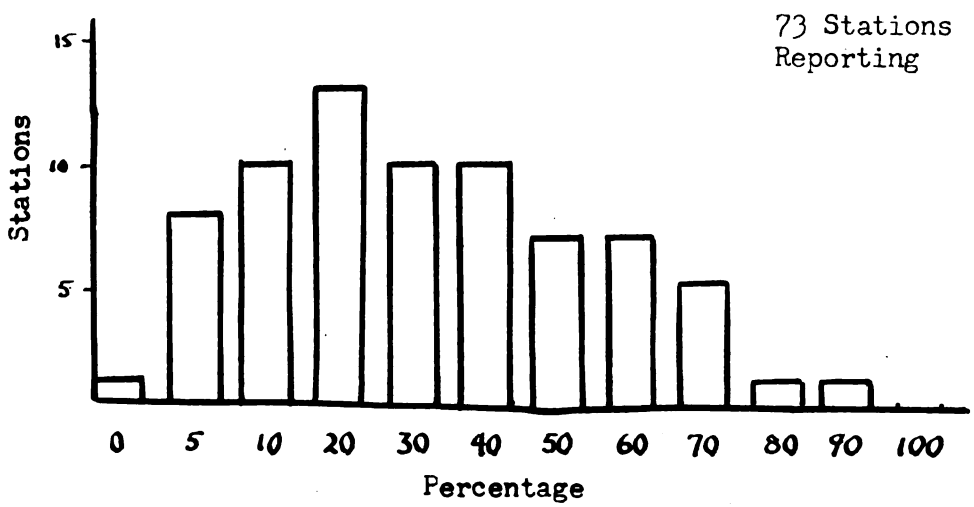
7. Percentage of newscasts drawn from wire services



As is shown in the preceeding chart, 14 stations (16.9%) receive an average of 70 per cent of the material used on their newscasts from the wire services. Another 10 stations (12.0%) receive 50 per cent and the same number receive 80 per cent of the newscasts on the wire service. A grand total of 48 stations (57.83%) depend upon the newswire for 50 per cent or more of their newscasts. Carrying this further over one third of the stations (32 or 38.5%) receive over two thirds of the news they broadcast from the wire service, and although no station indicates total dependence, eight stations or almost 10% (9.63%) use the wire copy for 90 per cent of their news.

The next graph indicates the number of stations and the percentage of the newscasts which are sought out by the local news staff of the station.

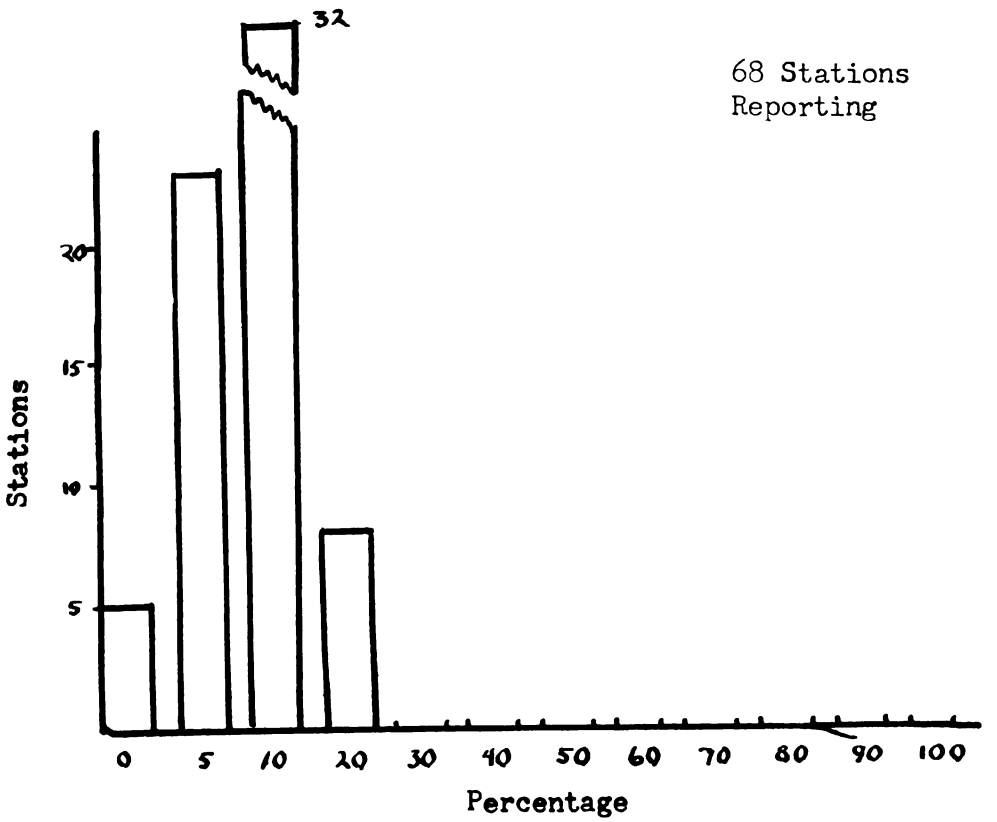
8. Percentage of newscasts sought out and prepared locally



As the graph indicates, 14 stations (15.6%) obtained an estimated 20 per cent of the material used in their newscasts locally. Ten stations (12.0%) in each category drew upon the local news sources for 10, 30 and 40 per cent of their broadcasts. A total of 21 stations (25.30%) seek out 50 per cent or more of their news locally.

The following graph indicates in the same way, the percentage of the newscasts which is taken from press releases and other material submitted voluntarily to the station.

9. Percentage of newscasts drawn from news releases

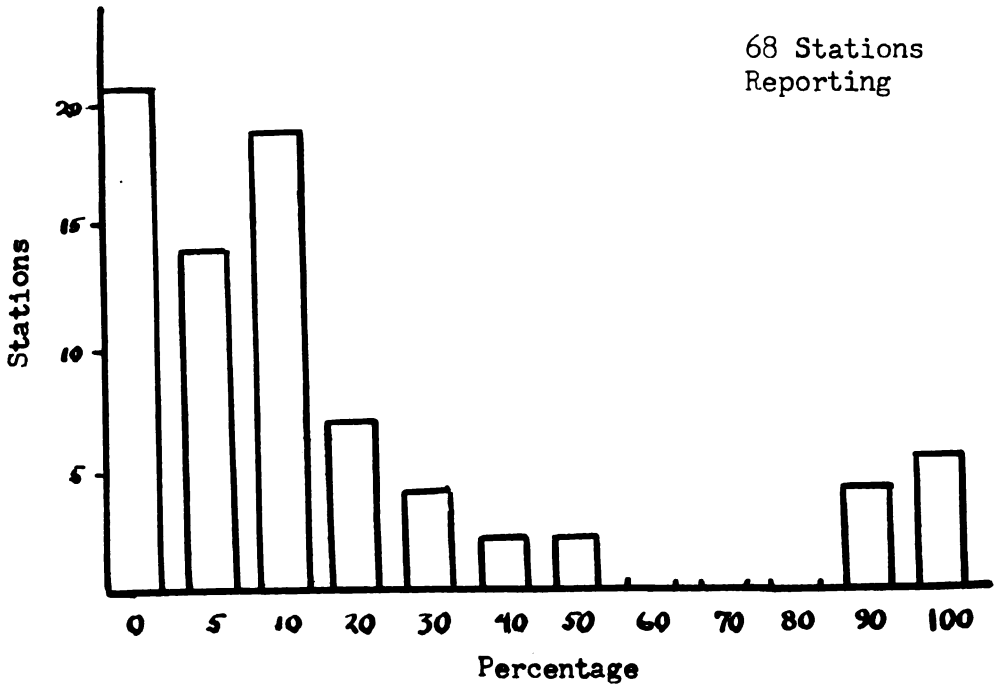


The most frequently mentioned percentage of the newscasts drawn from news releases is 10 per cent, indicated by 32 of the stations (38.5%).

Twenty-three stations (27.7%) indicate that 5 per cent of the news broadcast is drawn from press releases. There is very little dependence upon submitted material, as none of the stations' newscasts include over 20 per cent.

The preceding figures show a very strong dependence upon the news wire services for the bulk of the news presented on the air. In addition, very few stations rewrite any of the wire copy they receive before they use it on the air. One quarter of the stations (21, or 25.3%) rewrite none of the news wire copy they broadcast.

10. Percentage of wire copy rewritten before aired



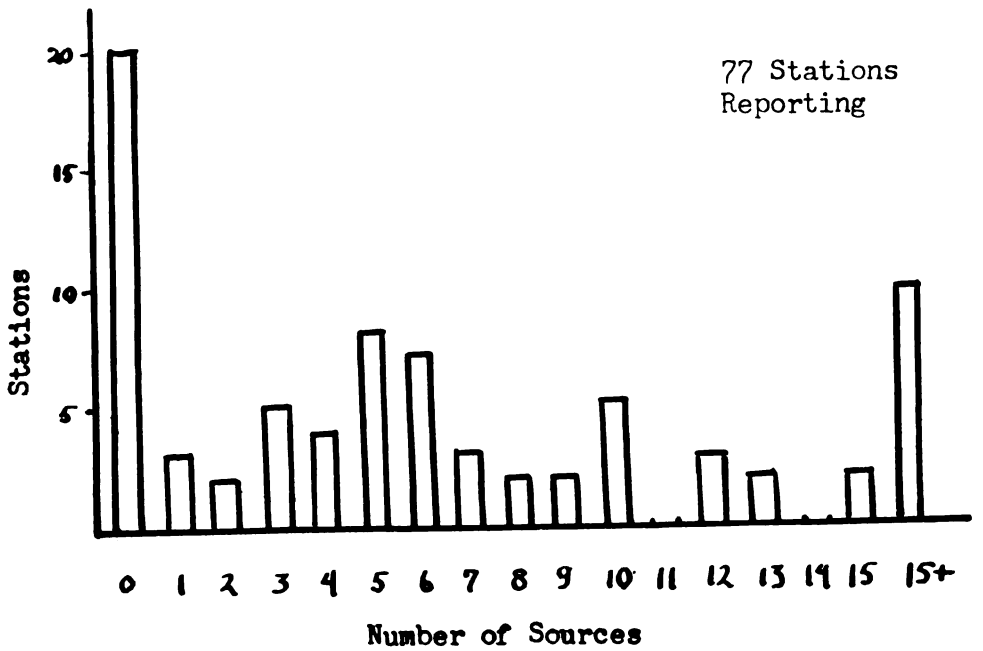
In the gathering of local news most of the stations visit or call the same basic sources. Sixty-nine stations contact the local police,

68 the Sheriff or county police, and 65 the State Police Department. Fifty-five stations regularly contact the local fire department, 52 the city offices, 44 the county offices, and 47 contact hospitals. No answer was received in the case of three of the surveyed stations.

In the seeking of news there is little cooperation among the news departments of different stations. Seemingly the value of the news "scoop" is as important a factor in broadcasting today as it was in an earlier time with newspapers. Only 10 stations (12%) contact other radio stations in their regular news beat. The stigma is somewhat removed from newspapers as 25 stations (30.12%) do contact them regularly in the search for news.

Almost one quarter of the stations, or 20 stations (24.1%), do not visit any local sources of news, to supplement the material received from outside sources. On the opposite extreme, visits are made to 15 or more local news sources on an average weekday by 10 stations (12.0%). Other stations are spread out between these two extremes as the following chart indicates. The statewide average number of visits to news sources is 5.67 per weekday, a substantial number. There was no observable correlation between station staff size and the number of news sources visited.

11. Average number of news sources visited daily

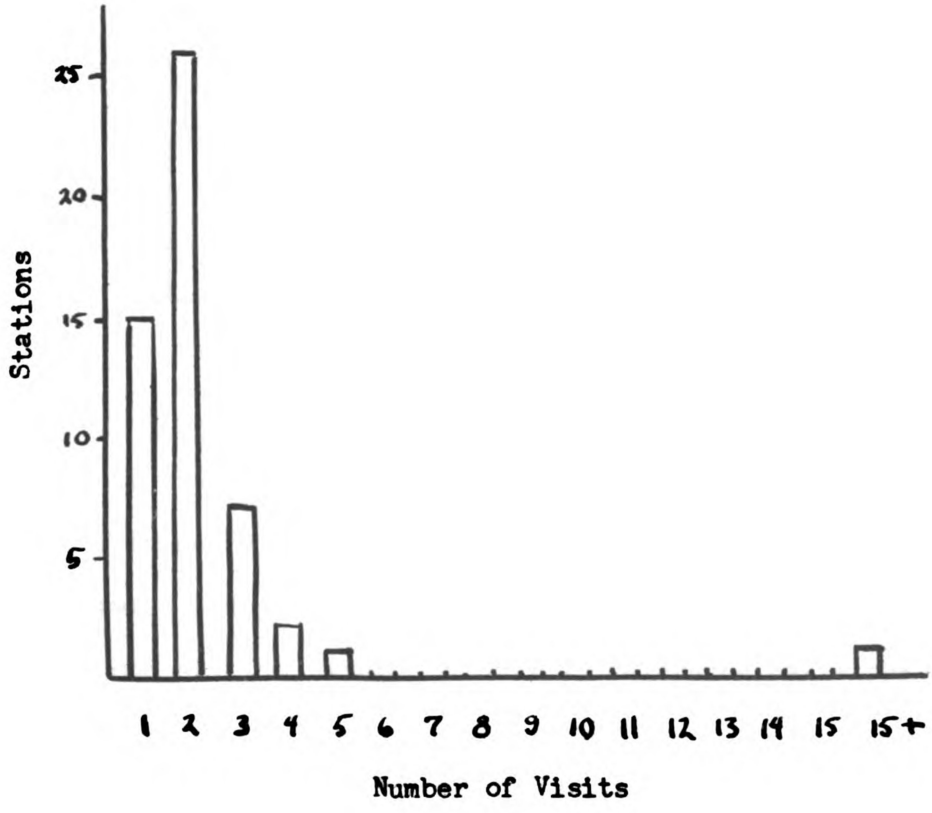


Almost half of the stations (26 out of 54, or 48.1%) making such visits do so twice a day. Fifteen stations (27.7%) make these visits once a day. Another seven stations make three visits a day and one station makes such visits only once a week.

One station, as can be seen in the following chart, indicated that it visited its sources over 15 times a day; however the writer believes this to be an invalid answer since the respondent repeatedly circled the highest number given in the choice, even when it conflicted with other answers. This pattern will be seen repeated in following charts.

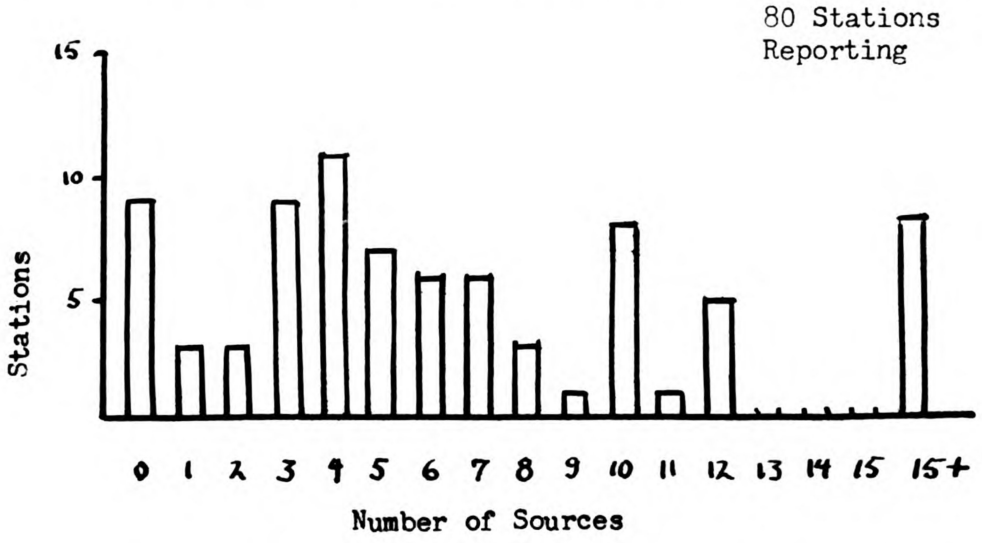
12. Average number of times news sources are visited daily

54 Stations
Reporting



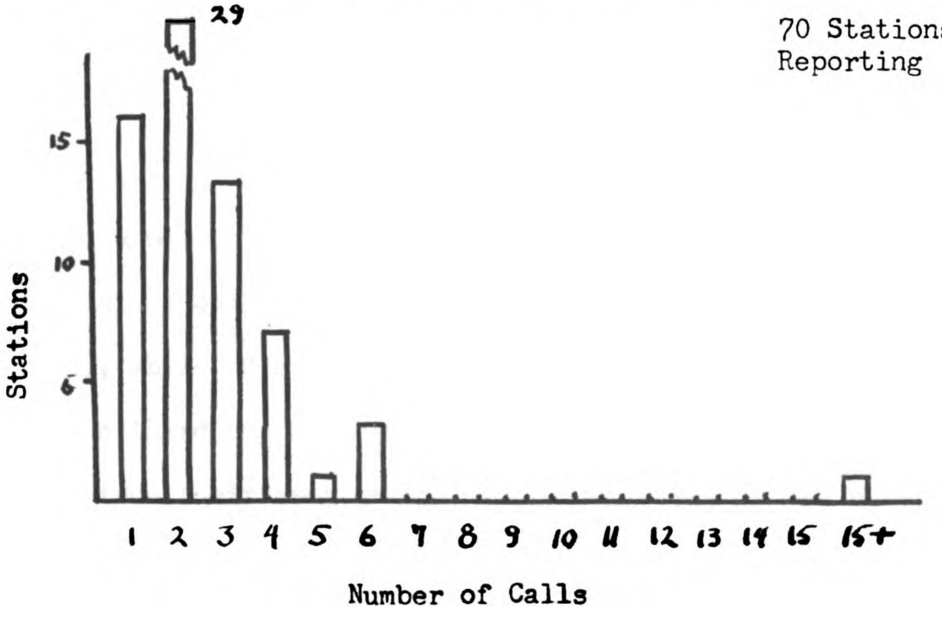
In collecting local news more stations depend upon the telephone than make visits to possible news sources. Only nine stations (10.8%) make no telephone calls daily to sources of news. The largest number of stations, 11 (13.3%), call four different sources of news each day. Nine stations (10.8%) call three sources daily, while eight stations (9.6%) each contact either 10 or 15 stations by telephone.

13. Average number of news sources telephoned daily



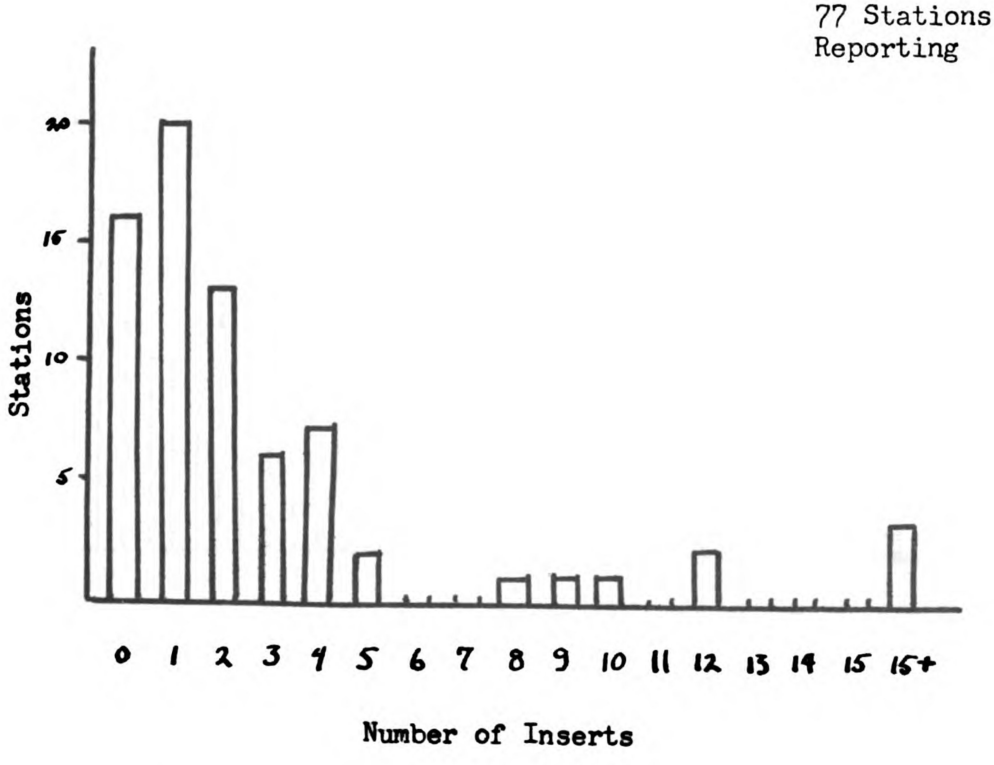
Seventy stations indicate that they make these calls on a regular basis. Of these 70 stations, 29 (41.4%) call local news sources, on the average, twice a day. Sixteen stations (22.8%) make only one call per day. The one station indicating over 15 telephone calls per day is the same station that earlier indicated making over 15 visits to news sources daily.

14. Average number of times news sources are telephoned daily



Twenty stations (24.09%) use an average of one tape recorded voice insert in their newscasts each day. Sixteen stations (19.27%) use none at all and 13 stations (15.66%) use 2 such inserts in their newscasts, as the following graph indicates. No answer was received in the case of 6 stations; and 5 stations indicate "occasional" use of such reports.

15. Average number of tape recorded voice inserts used daily

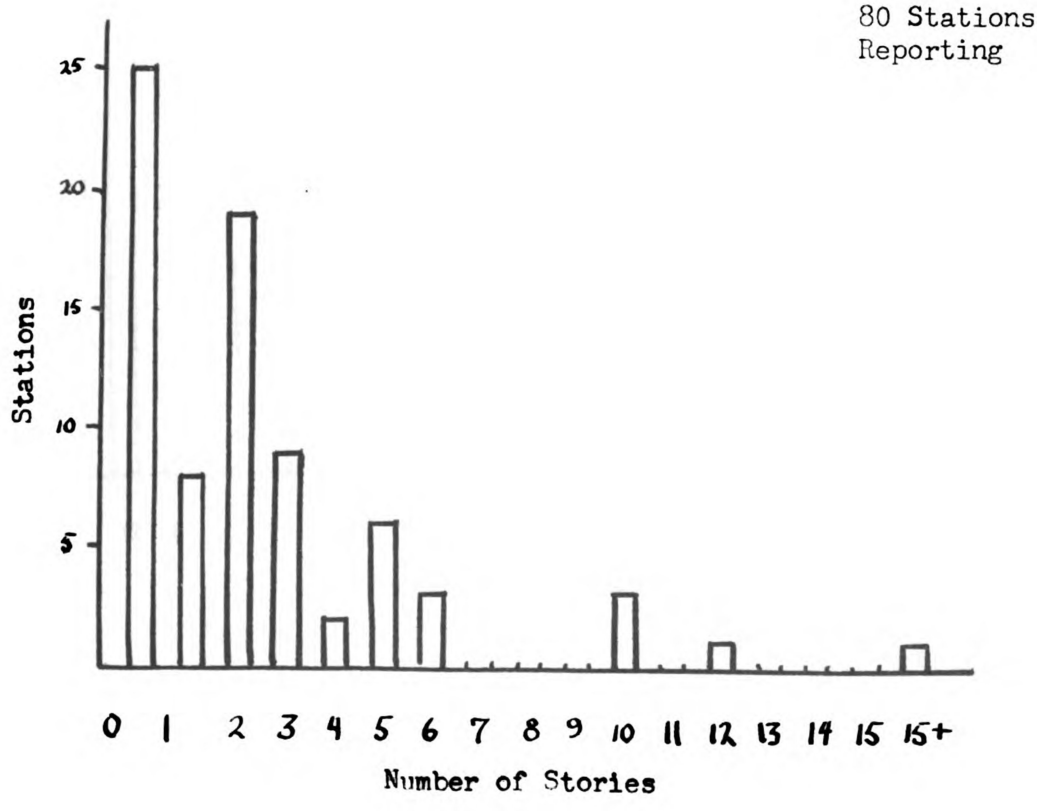


The mobile news unit still seems to be a luxury item for most news departments. Such units are operated by 23 of the news departments (27.7%), while 60 stations have none.

About one third of the stations, or 25 (30.12%), never submit news stories from their area to the wire service for statewide

transmission. An average of one news story per week is submitted to the wire services by eight stations (9.63%) and two stories a week are submitted by 19 stations (22.89%). Three stations indicated that they will occasionally do so, but it is not a regular practice.

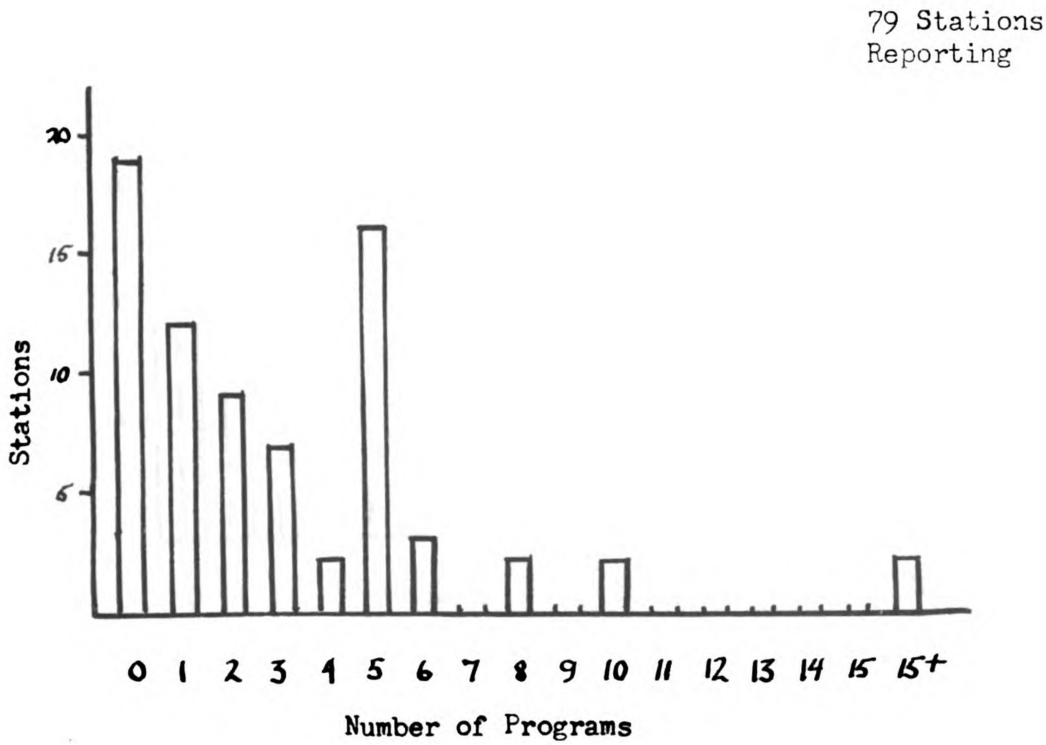
16. Average number of stories submitted weekly to wire services



The majority of the stations do not consider their news function to be hourly newscasts alone. In addition to regular newscasts, only 18 news departments (21.68%) present no special or public affairs programs. Once a day seems to be the prevalent pattern, as 16 stations (19.27%) present five such programs per week. Twelve stations (14.4%)

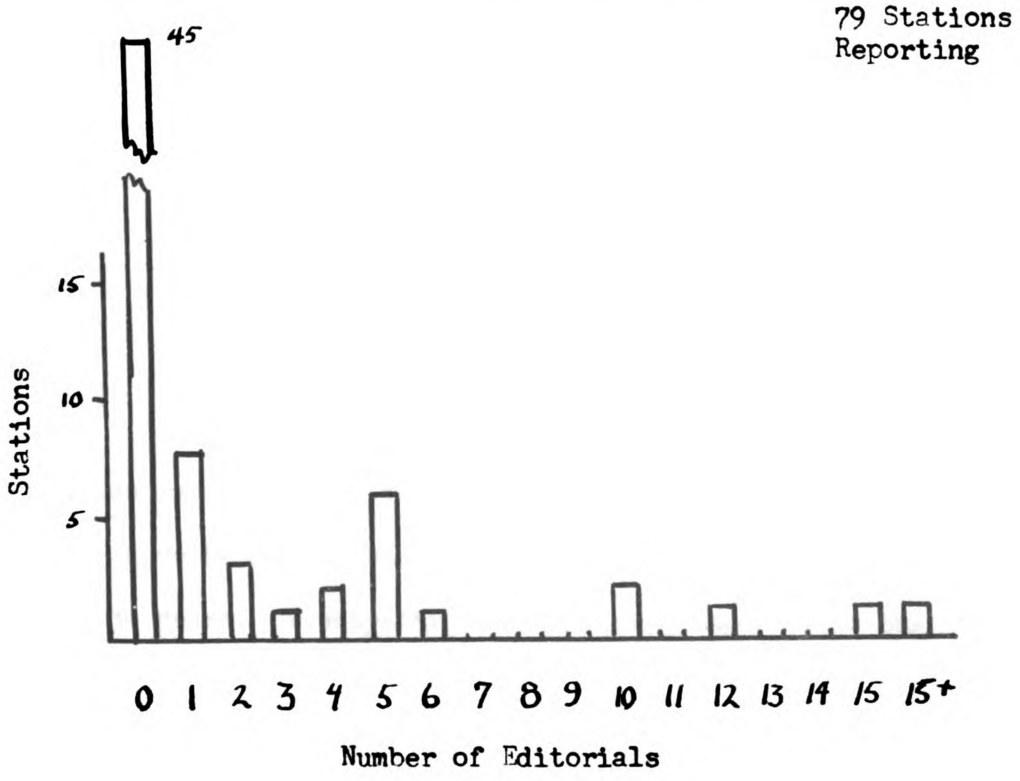
present at least one each week. Five stations indicated that they present such programs only "occasionally."

17. Number of special or public affairs programs presented weekly



Seemingly the area of broadcast editorializing is such a controversial one that many stations avoid editorials on the air entirely. As the following graph indicates, 45, or over half of the stations (54.21%) present no editorials at all on the air. Editorials are broadcast once a week on eight stations (9.63%); and eight stations indicate they broadcast editorials "occasionally."

18. Number of editorials broadcast weekly



Of the 34 stations indicating that they broadcast editorials, eleven state that they average three minutes in length. Ten stations' editorials are five minutes in length, and five stations broadcast two minute editorials. Three stations editorialize for one minute while two stations indicate that their editorials run five minutes or longer.

Information was gathered on the education and experience of 212 individual newsmen. The newsmen are generally a well educated group of people. All but eight of them have completed four years of high school. This total, 204, represents 95.75% of the surveyed newsmen. In order to simplify the reporting of these figures, four different

levels of education have been selected, and the following table indicated the number of newsmen and the percentage of the total which fall into each of the categories.

19. Formal education of 212 newsmen surveyed

NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	EDUCATION
204	95.75%	Completed High School
126	59.4 %	Completed 2 Years College
77	31.6 %	Completed 4 Years College
13	6.13%	Completed Over 4 Years College

Replies were received from 188 newsmen regarding the number of years they have been in broadcasting. There is a range from less than a year to 34 years. Twenty-five newsmen have been in the business one year or less, while 68 have been in broadcasting from 2 to 5 years; 48 fall between 6 and 10 years, and 47 newsmen have been in broadcasting for over 10 years.

Similarly, replies regarding years in broadcast news work range from less than a year to 22 years. Forty-four newsmen indicate experience in the newspaper field, and here the range is from less than a year to over 48 years.

Any special training in news and related fields is dominated by on the job training at a station, as 142 newsmen indicate receiving such training. Many newsmen received training in more than one area, of course. In addition to the information given in the following table, six other newsmen indicate newspaper background of various types as the special training which they had received.

20. Special training received by newsmen

NUMBER	TYPE OF SPECIAL TRAINING
142	On The Job Training at a station
78	College Courses
68	High School Courses
34	College Major
30	Private Radio School
23	Military Training
11	College Minor

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY

Each day in the state of Michigan there are over 2,000 radio news broadcasts in some form or another. Each station broadcasts, on the average, 25 newscasts each weekday. The emphasis is upon the five minute summary of the news with an average of over 15 such newscasts a day. The less than five minute, headline variety, newscast is broadcast on the average five times a day, while longer newscasts are usually heard twice a day. This type of schedule does not lend itself to very much reporting in depth on any particular story.

Less than half of the stations receive news broadcasts from the national networks; therefore over half of the newscasts heard in Michigan are prepared and presented by the personnel at the local stations. Although most stations do attempt to search out their own local news, there is still a great deal of dependence upon the two major newswire services for most of the news. Almost one third of the stations depend upon the wire for 70% or more of the content of each newscast, and over half of the stations select 50% or more of the material broadcast from that supplied by the wire services.

This leads to a great sameness in the news which is available to the radio listener, regardless of which station he may listen to. This duplication of the news would not be as noticeable if the material from the wires were re-written to fit the particular audience the stations

are reaching for, but unfortunately over a quarter of the stations in the state never re-write any of this material, but present it exactly as it comes to them over the wire.

The majority of those stations which do re-write this news do so with only 5 to 10 per cent of it, which in a five minute newscast would amount to only one or two of the stories.

Matching the percentage of the stations which depend upon the wire services for the majority of the news which they broadcast, over a quarter of the stations make no visits to local news sources to seek out possible stories. However over the state the average number of news sources visited or telephoned daily ranges between five and six. At first this may seem to indicate an over dependence upon a few sources, but there is a point at which further researching would tend to be duplication and these sources, such as police and fire departments, and government offices, are likely to have the information needed.

The majority of the stations also include recorded voice inserts in their newscasts, indicating an attempt to get away from the straight reading of the news and toward the inclusion of on the scene reports and direct quotations by figures in the news. Almost a third of the stations are equipped with mobile news units to aid them in presenting news as it happens.

Throughout the state there is an indication that the news function of the station is not entirely relegated to the hourly straight news broadcasts. All but about one fifth of the stations present some sort of special or public affairs broadcasts in addition to the regular schedule of newscasts. About 20 per cent of the stations are presenting

such programs daily.

The weakest link in the news chain, however, lies in the area of the presentation of editorial opinion. Few broadcasters are taking advantage of the opportunity to express their personal viewpoints. Well over half of the stations in the state present no editorial opinions on the air. The overall picture is brightened because those stations that do editorialize do so with a high degree of regularity.

Probably one of the most encouraging facts to come from this study is the high formal education level attained by the newsmen of the state. Ninety-five per cent of them have completed a high school education, and almost one third of them have a college degree. Although formal education is not a guarantee of ability to judge and evaluate news, and present it in its proper context and with proper values, it is an extremely important factor. The newsmen of Michigan are very well equipped to hold the important news handling positions they hold.

The largest proportion of the newsmen have been in the business for over five years, and therefore can add the weight of experience to that of educational level.

Although most newsmen received their training in news work in an on the job training situation, there is a large percentage of them who also have had formal training in the field.

Over-all the news departments of Michigan radio stations are well equipped to research and present the news to their listeners. Although many non-news-trained personnel present the news, the stations are well staffed with well qualified personnel. The individual newsmen at the stations seem to be a well educated, highly experienced corps.

There is, however, a strong dependence upon the news wire services to supply news to them, tending to eliminate local emphasis and make most stations' newscasts sound alike.

This study has opened many possibilities for further exploration. Many of the areas which could only be skimmed in this general survey could be elaborated upon and expanded into a complete project. Two of these possibilities seem the most interesting to the writer.

Further research into the source of most of the news heard on radio in the state, the wire services, could be most rewarding. A determination of who the actual gatekeepers are within these organizations, and what their qualifications are for the position, could be the main area of study.

The other area this study indicated as one for further exploration is that of the individual newsman. A detailed study of the training, education and other qualifications of the persons now at the stations could be of value to those in broadcast education and to those planning a career in news work.

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APPENDICES

I. The Questionnaire. These questions were compressed into four pages in the actual form.

RADIO NEWS DEPARTMENT SURVEY

Except where designated otherwise, please circle the response which describes your operation.

1. Station Power AM: 250w 500w 1kw 10kw 50kw

   FM: (Please specify) _____

   Non restricted license Daytime license

2. Estimated population in your listening area:

   Under 5,000 5-10,000 10-25,000 25-50,000

   50-100,000 100-500,000 500,000 - 1 Million

   Over 1 Million

3. How many newspapers of the following categories have the major part of their circulation in your listening area?

   Daily _____ Bi-weekly _____ Weekly _____

4. Does your news department serve both this station and another?

   Yes No

   If Yes, circle which: AM FM TV Newspaper

5. Total number of personnel whose <u>sole duties</u> are with the news department: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

   Percent of these persons' man hours devoted to radio if a joint operation: 0 1-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%

6. Total number of personnel whose <u>part-time duties</u> are with the news department: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

   Percent of these persons' man hours devoted to radio if a joint operation: 0 1-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%

7. Total number of personnel (not already counted) in no way designated as newsmen, who, in the course of their other duties prepare and/or present news on the air:

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

   Percent of these persons' man hours devoted to radio if a joint operation: 0 1-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%

8. How many stringers are employed on a full, part-time or per story basis by your news department?

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

9. Total number of newscasts broadcast daily, Monday through Friday. (Write in)

   Less than 5 minutes in length _____

   5 minutes _____

   10 minutes _____

   15 minutes _____

   Other (specify) _____

10. Total number of these newscasts <u>LOCALLY</u> prepared and presented.

    Less than 5 minutes in length _____

    5 minutes _____

    10 minutes _____

    15 minutes _____

    Other (specify) _____

11. Total number of those locally prepared newscasts devoted strictly to local (listening area) news.

Less than 5 minutes in length _____

5 minutes _____

10 minutes _____

15 minutes _____

Other (specify) _____

12. Wire service(s) whose service you receive:

AP UPI Reuters New York Times Other _____

13. Sources of newscasts other than locally prepared and presented:

ABC CBS Mutual NBC Other (specify) _____

14. Circle the estimated percent of each newscast drawn from each of the following sources:

National News (Wire) Services

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

News sought out and prepared by local staff (including stringers)

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Press releases and other material voluntarily presented to you

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Other (please specify) _____

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

15. Estimated percent of wire copy that is rewriten before used on the air.

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

16. In collecting local news how many sources of news are normally visited each weekday?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

17. How many times a day are these places visited (average)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

18. In collecting local news how many news sources are normally telephoned each weekday?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

19. How many times a day are these places called (average)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

20. Circle the sources listed below that are normally contacted each weekday.

Local Police	County Offices
County Police (Sheriff)	Hospitals
State Police	Other Stations
Local Fire Department	Newspapers
City Offices	

21. How many, if any, tape recorded voice inserts are used, on the average, each day in newscasts?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

22. Is a mobile unit operated by the news department?

Yes No

23. How many times a week does your department, on the average, submit a news story to the wire service for statewide transmission?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

24. In addition to regular newscasts, how many special or public affairs programs, if any, are presented each week by the news department?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

25. How many editorials, if any, are broadcast each week by the news department?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 15+

26. Average length of these editorials?

0 1 min 2 min 3 min 4 min 5 min 5-10 min 10+ min

27. The following question is asked several times. Please find out the following information about Each Person regularly preparing and presenting news on your station.

NEWSMAN __A__

Education (Circle highest grade attended) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(High School) 1 2 3 4 (College) 1 2 3 4 5 6 6+

Years in Broadcasting _____

Years in Broadcast News _____

Years in Newspaper Work _____

Special training in news or related fields: (Please circle those which apply)

High School Courses	Private Radio School
College Courses	On The Job Training at a Station
College Major	Military Training
College Minor	Other (specify) _____

II. Form letter accompanying the original mailing of the questionnaire, on Michigan State University letterhead.

August 11, 1962

Dear Radio News Director:

Enclosed is a survey being circulated among all of the radio news directors throughout the state of Michigan. I wish to use this survey in deriving a more accurate picture of the status of local radio news within the boundaries of our state. I hope further to compile the results of my research in a thesis which I shall submit as a part of my graduate program here at Michigan State University.

I would greatly appreciate your completing this survey for me. In some cases the individual questions may not apply directly to your operation, and it will be difficult to be precise, however I would appreciate your being as accurate as possible. As you can see, I have designed the questionnaire so that it will require only a modest amount of your time.

With so few radio stations in the state, I am sure that you can see how important each individual reply will be in the final tabulation of the state-wide findings, so please take a few moments to fill out the form and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Mr. Joel B. Fleming
Television and Radio Department
Journalism Building
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

If you would like an abstract of my final report, please make a note of this on your questionnaire, and I will see that you receive one.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Joel B. Fleming

III. Form letter accompanying the second mailing of the questionnaire, on Michigan State University letterhead.

October 8, 1962

Dear Radio News Director:

Recently all the radio news departments in Michigan received the enclosed questionnaire about their local news operations. The results of this survey are to be used in gathering information about the relative emphasis placed on local news by radio stations throughout the state.

In tabulating the returned surveys it was noted that no reply had been received from your station yet. To make the results of the survey accurate and valid the number of stations surveyed must be as high as possible.

I would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to complete the enclosed survey and return it in the stamped, addressed envelope provided, to:

Mr. Joel B. Fleming
Television and Radio Department
Journalism Building
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

The results will be used in the formation of a thesis which I shall submit as a part of my graduate program here at Michigan State University. Your co-operation in this venture is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Joel B. Fleming