

The background of the slide is a light beige color with a faint, stylized map of a region. A compass rose is visible on the left side, showing cardinal and intercardinal directions (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW). The map lines are thin and light-colored, creating a subtle geographical context for the text.

Media matters: Using local media to maintain small town culture and characteristics.

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Who we are

- Dr Jacqui Ewart - lecturer and researcher;
- Dr Susan Forde - senior lecturer and researcher;
- Assoc Prof Michael Meadows
- Kerrie Foxwell - senior research assistant
- Based at Griffith University, Brisbane, Qld.
- Working on a two-year Australian Research Council funded project examining community broadcasting audiences and their expectations of community broadcasting.

Our research

The two year project 2005-2006 aims to:

- Identify the nature and diversity of community broadcasting audiences in urban, regional, and remote Australia;
- Investigate perceptions of existing community broadcasting by audience sub sectors: ethnic, indigenous, RPH, general (including religious, youth, specialist);
- Evaluate the 'community value' of community broadcasting through research into audience and community use;
- Identify audience needs for future community broadcasting development;

Connecting research

First comprehensive study of community broadcasting sector in Australia (2002) - Forde Meadows and Foxwell identified:

- Significant contribution made by sector volunteers;
- Role of sector in training staff;
- Importance of sector in providing an alternative public sphere especially for minority voices;

Connecting research

- Survey of community broadcasting audiences 2004
McNair:
- 84 per cent of Australians in non-metropolitan areas listen to community broadcasting ;
- Regional Australians listen to community broadcasting for local news and information;
- Regional Australians listen to community broadcasting for longer than metropolitan listeners;
- 1.4 million Australians in regional and rural Australia listen to community broadcasting in an average week.

Our argument

- Paradox of global news and information expansion.
- Small town Australia less access to information and news about local events and issues.
- Decline of local media impacts significantly on connectivity within a community, circulation of information and quality of community life.

Our argument

- Closure of media outlets also leads to a loss of cultural knowledge - e.g. store of knowledge re the area.
- Local media is part of the cultural and social fabric of a small town.

Responses by communities to decline in local news

- Emergence of:
- Community broadcasting with focus on local information and local content;
- First truly community owned and operated newspaper - Blackall 2004;
- Web based forums and community sites.

Connecting local media what's being done now

- Emerging phenomena:** Informal ties exist between some regional and rural radio stations and community newspapers;
- Mainly in three forms:
 - Simple agreements to read newspaper copy on air;
 - Informal arrangements for discussion and coverage of issues by radio and newspapers;
 - Use by local community radio presenters of community newspapers for cross promotion of events.

Connecting local media what's being done now

Comments from station managers:

“We do not have a dedicated local news program. During our breakfast program we read out items from the *Bendigo Advertiser*. We don't focus on car accidents or things like that, we read items that help the community.”

AND:

“We cover the things that could not otherwise be covered locally. We work in conjunction with the local newspaper. We don't treat each other as competition. We work together even with sharing of news, for example they will publish news and we get the information from them to put over the air.”

Our suggestions

- Development of existing informal relationship between media;
- Sharing of resources;
- Development of coordinated campaigns - with civic/public journalism approaches by both media outlets
- Co-location of community newspapers and radio stations - combined newsroom.

Where to from here

- End 2005 finish field work 52 stations: 27 generalist; 10 ethnic radio; 10 indigenous radio/television; 5 community TV stations (interviews with key people, community groups and focus groups at each station).
- Additional exploration of how community broadcasting and newspapers work together - may be examples out there that we have not yet identified.
- 2006 writing up and publication of our report.

Contact us

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