Appendix A

Journalism Graduate Report

Final Report by Shreshtha Trivedi

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1. What the radio stations think of the features - are they the kind they would like to broadcast on their stations; would they put them on their websites; does it matter whether the features are dated? Would the stations be prepared to provide leads or contacts for students to produce similar work? Can they see a role for other student involvement in community radio - but NOT producing news bulletins?

I have intensely been contacting all the four radio stations but have managed to get answers from just the two of them, in spite of requesting them about the report deadline.

For Radio Bedside, Andy Read, a producer/presenter liked the two features, both the content as well the production. But he continued that the nature of the shows on their stations is very personality based – most of them heavily music-centric. His show is based on 90s music and trivia so they find it very hard to fit the features with themes of most of the shows on their station. Also, they don't have any content on their website apart from the live stream, so they think putting features would look odd.

They are quite flexible when it comes to material that's dated. In Mr. Read's opinion, both the features are not likely to be 'out of date for as long as Wagamama's is around and the Be Reel feature is relevant for as long as the film shows are still going.'

He says there could be a role for other student involvement in the future, but mentions again the reliance of personality-based nature of their shows. He says: "Because we are all volunteers, we haven't had any training or background in radio, we just dabble. Sometimes, so infrequently that we can't commit to even presenting a show because of family commitments etc.'

The Park

Regarding the New Forest- based 'The Park FM', founder and editor Catherine Lake has said that the features fit into her revised 'New Forest Breakfast show' as it now incorporates 'Working Lives' – their business, employment and education strand. Hence they should be broadcast on the radio station soon. I have tried to ask her about more information about the features, featuring them on Park's website, and contact leads for students but still awaiting her response.

2. Your reflections on your own role in the Community Hub project

What have you learned from your own activities: contact the stations and interviewing, providing your own ideas for features, supervising students in producing features. e.g. entrepreneurship, management skills? Might this be developed further / in other ways?

The Community Hub Project has been a great professional learning experience. It was an insight into the functioning of local community radio stations: their programming needs, the intended demographic; their successes and limitations; funding; day-to-day running; what sort of programming do they need and what students can be trained to do in their extremely constricted time.

The aim of the project was to develop some sustainable scheme for links between students and community radio stations. To start with, I heard their news, factual and entertainment-based shows – mapping their pattern – so that I can understand their programming schedule and what kind of radio content they are broadcasting.

Next was tracking down the station managers/programme producers of the four leading community radio stations in and around Bournemouth: Hope FM, Radio Bedside, Forest FM and the Park FM. I set up appointments with representatives of all the four stations and travelled to their respective studios, including Lymington and New Forest, to interview them and hear their vision.

I spoke to them about everything: from aims of the station, their editorial policy, terms of licence, number of permanent and temporary staff, what kind of programming they would like to include and what's stopping them.

Based on their views and my own listening research – along with inputs from my supervisor – I realised that students can help them out in providing content which isn't time-sensitive, that is, which even if a little dated can be broadcast. Since most of the radio stations editors/producers mentioned that they would welcome radio features as they have neither the resources/finances nor the talent pool man to commission shows on their own; and even students can produce them without worrying about immediacy.

My next step involved thinking about the prospective feature ideas and providing them to students as a blueprint. This exercise not only was helpful to the students but also instilled confidence in me: I realised that ideation was one of my forte. Even to get selected for the Community Hub, my ideas were appreciated. But here, it was not just ideation, but also implementation and management of several things: research, interviewing, generating ideas, liaising between the stations, supervisor and students, managing students during the production of the features and then pitching them to the stations.

I feel my enhanced skill-set has prepared me for further production/research/supervision roles in the future, especially in the radio sector; but since these skills are transferable, they can be used cross-platform.

3. Finally, the object of the project was to develop some sustainable scheme for links between students and community radio stations: What are you own ideas on this? Views on what has been accomplished, etc.?

The objective of developing a sustainable model for links between students and community radio stations makes a lot of sense. This symbiotic relationship will be ideal for both the groups as the former will get a platform to broadcast their work and understand how a radio station works in totality, whereas the stations will get relevant content without the usual worries about manpower or financial crunch. Also, it will involve students more into the community affairs.

But I also feel that this is a long-term process. The idea will surely work, just that it needs to establish itself as a process. For that, the universities/supervisors need to earmark the stations and the areas they can serve; this needs to be coupled with the syllabus of the students (both undergrads as well as masters): when do they produce radio content in their timetable or when are the times they are having vacations or doing work placements?

In this pilot project, we found out that the focus on news and factual programming was quite limited with entertainment and songs taking up a chunk of time for most of the community stations. News was mostly sourced from the Sky News Centre, dominated by national and international news, though The Park, and Forest FM to a lesser extent, did feature local news.

But students, due to their hectic schedules, would not be able to produce news bulletins as that requires daily commitment. So it was decided that short radio features would be the answer; based on the something topical as a peg but not exactly news so that they have a long shelf-life.

There were three radio features produced and out of them two will be broadcast on at least two radio stations. I also contacted the major community groups, charities, government offices and councils of the nearby areas and put the university / department's name on their database so they could send their press releases and emails about latest happenings which can be used as news leads by the students. This was helpful to the students while producing their radio features.

Another useful thing could be if students could pitch their course content to the stations after it has been evaluated. The content, of course, would carry a disclaimer stating that it is the intellectual property of the University and is being broadcast with their due permission.

The paucity of good, relevant content is such that station managers don't mind sharing content with other radio channels. With a bit of planning, coordination and support from the stations, a student–radio channels association is quite a practical possibility.