Electronic Media History

...video killed the radio...

Radio beginnings
- Broadcasting officially began in the U.S. in 1910.
- Stations licensed to broadcast on two frequencies.
  - One for markets and weather.
  - One for entertainment and programming.
- No stations broadcast for more than a few hours at a time. (Never knew if it would be on or not.)

Farm broadcasting firsts
- KDKA -- Pittsburgh -- first station in 1920 to have a daily program of farm market reports.
- Nation’s first full-time farm broadcaster (KDKA):
  - Frank Mullen -- 1923.

Agriculture’s importance
- Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover said (1922) that no use of radio, except for military purposes, should supersede use for agriculture.
- 1921: 117 stations broadcast daily weather reports.

Farm numbers
- USDA survey of farm families (1924)
  - 370,000 had radios -- double the number from 1923.
- Farm population (late 1920s) -- just under 30 million
- Number of farms -- just under 6.5 million
- Farm workers -- 10 million
- About half of farms had cars, a third had phones, a tenth had electricity, a tenth had running water, and an eighth had radios.

Advertising in early agricultural broadcasting
- Radio pioneers soon learned that advertising was key to profitability.
- Advertisers have been useful to agriculture and to farm broadcasting.
- Westinghouse -- earliest farm program sponsor.
Advertising in early agricultural broadcasting

- Montgomery Ward -- sponsored 3/4 hour of National farm and Home Hour.
- Ralston Purina Company began using radio in 1922. "Checkerboard Time" with local entertainers, music, comedy.
- Programs aired entertainment but wanted to avoid "hayseed" humor.

Agricultural broadcasting programs

- The National Farm and Home Hour (NBC/USDA, 1928-44) heard six days/week.
  - Provided government with an avenue to reach farmers and present agriculture to the public.
  - Brainchild of Frank Mullen of NBC.
  - 16-year, 4,700-broadcast run.
  - Most farmers heard about USDA farm programs by radio.

Agricultural broadcasting programs

- Columbia’s Country Journal -- 1939 -- CBS.
- American Farmer -- 1946-1969 -- ABC.
- Mutual Farm News -- 1955-1959 -- 10 minutes of farm news five mornings a week over 500 stations.
- Wire services -- (AP, Reuters, Commodity News Service) all had farm news/market report segments.

Ag courses on the radio

- Early 1920s, WOI (Ames, IA) broadcast Extension lectures on farm topics.
- KSAC (Manhattan, KS): correspondence course to 2,000 in 30 states, Canada and Mexico.
- USDA’s educational programs “Farm School on the Air” and “Farm Flashes” (1925).
- By 1928, two-thirds of the state extension services and a substantial number of county agents broadcast regularly.

TV beginnings

- Television has been around for more than 110 years--in rough form and concept but really didn’t take off at full speed until the 1920s.
- TV has its beginnings in other electronic mediums:
  - Telegraph
  - Wireless
  - Radio

Why wasn’t TV adopted then?

- Cost-- to develop and produce television sets.
  - It cost a lot of money to buy a television set.
- Wariness--didn’t believe it would catch on--especially in Hollywood.
  - Still thought movies and radio were the entertainment mediums.
Why wasn’t TV adopted then?
- War -- conserve parts for World War II effort.
  - CBS and NBC dropped TV broadcasting until summer 1944.

Networks
- There were three radio networks, two owned by NBC.
  - (1, 2) NBC (two -- Red and Blue)
  - (3) CBS
- NBC had to sell the Blue which became ABC in 1943.
- ABC was so far behind in radio, decided to go full force into TV.

TV picks up
- 1950s -- The Golden Age of Television.
  - "I Love Lucy"
  - "The Honeymooners"
- Began its own awards program called the Emmy Awards.
- (Immy – Image Orthicon Tube)

1960s to today
- Color came on the scene in the ’60s.
- Satellite--instantaneous
- Electronic news gathering (ENG) --1970s a revolution for local stations.
  - Able to go live from just about anywhere to cover just about anything when it happened.

1960s to today
- CNN
- Individual networks (specialized)
  - HBO
  - Home & Garden TV
  - ESPN
  - Others
- Interactive
- Fiber optics

What happened to radio?
- Segmented -- “niche” markets.
- Networks declined.
  - Used more for news, "talk radio."
Agriculture TV programs

- Farm programs had moderate success.
- Most farm reports incorporated into noon news.
- In 1961, USDA started “Across the Fence.”
- 1962, USDA started “Down to Earth,” a 5-minute agriculture spot to be used in news programming.
- Both lasted until 1970s.

Agriculture TV programs

- Some national agriculture TV
  - AgDay: offered via 160 TV affiliates. News, features, weather and commodity reports.
  - Market to Market: PBS
  - Home and Garden TV Network
  - Channel Earth: March 1997- June ‘98.
  - National DirectTV channel.
- Many regional programs

Agriculture broadcasting today

- Radio is of strong value.
- Radio is the main source of information for farmers in the morning.
- During noon, TV and radio equally share farmer’s attention.

National Association of Farm Broadcasters

- Started slowly in early 1940s.
- Began to call it RFD -- National Association of Radio Farm Directors.
- Finally became the “National Association of Farm Broadcasters.”

El Fin

“Well, Red Cloud, it just so happens I did go ask the chief... A bear skin necklace is a symbol of honor— a Gypsy Adams formal necktie is not.”