

WHRO Marks Its 50th Anniversary



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Public television and radio are old and trusted friends that I spend time with on a daily basis.
– A Newport News mother of four

Public broadcasting: For many of us, the term calls to mind beloved children’s television shows like “Sesame Street,” and thoughtful (if not necessarily hip) adult programming like “Nova” or “Antiques Roadshow.” Jazz and classical music lovers provide a core audience for public radio, as do commuters and other news listeners seeking an alternative to AM talk radio. As an affiliate of the national networks PBS and NPR, WHRO (encompassing WHRO-TV, as well as the broadcast radio stations WHRO-FM and WHRV-FM) transmits this and other publicly supported programming throughout Hampton Roads.

This broadcast activity is substantial, yet it is only a portion of WHRO’s greater identity, as indicated by the organization’s formal rebranding in January 2011 as WHRO Public Media. The depth of WHRO’s offerings and its service to the Hampton Roads community is surprisingly large and extends well beyond the airwaves of three broadcast stations. Today, WHRO presides over eight unique radio channels, some catering to specialized niche audiences as tailored as devotees of 1920s big band music, or followers of the local rock and alternative music scene. All of these channels stream live through the whro.org website; six are also transmitted digitally.

Digital technology has enabled WHRO to expand its television offerings as well. The original broadcast channel (now dubbed WHRO.HD 15.1) is accompanied by WHRO.World (15.2) and WHRO.Kids (15.3). A fourth channel, WHRO.Create, is carried by regional cable providers Cox and FiOS.

Much – though by no means all – of these channels’ content is distributed by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR). However, original local programming plays the greater role in WHRO’s radio offerings. But WHRO is not (nor is any other public station) owned and operated by PBS or NPR. Rather, WHRO is an independent nonprofit organization that is owned by the Hampton Roads Educational Telecommunications Association (HRETA), a consortium of 18 area school systems. This collaborative arrangement is unique among American public media affiliates and has empowered WHRO to

develop an array of forward-thinking, technology-based educational services for teachers and students alike that is above and beyond the station’s familiar efforts as a radio and TV provider.

Through its ownership and its outreach, WHRO is a distinctively regional institution that links a diverse constituency throughout Hampton Roads (and beyond). Whether on the radio or TV, in the classroom or online, most Hampton Roads residents have been touched in some way by the services of WHRO. Fewer of us are familiar with the breadth of the station’s offerings, however, or how these offerings have changed and expanded significantly in the last five to six years alone. 2011 marks the 50th anniversary of WHRO and public broadcasting in Hampton Roads – a fitting opportunity to take stock of the station’s accomplishments, as well as to look forward and consider some of the challenges it will likely face in the years ahead.

We’ll look back at the origins of public broadcasting and how the work of WHRO has evolved over time. The digital revolution has increased the recent pace of this evolution exponentially. We’ll explore how WHRO, through its educational services and other offerings, has adapted to the transformed landscape of Public Media 2.0. Finally, we’ll examine the cultural and political challenges WHRO confronts as it seeks to maintain its public funding and community support in lean economic times.

WHRO and the Evolution of Public Broadcasting

WHRO became Virginia's first noncommercial, educational television station in 1961, when the Federal Communications Commission awarded a broadcast license to the Hampton and Norfolk public school systems. In its early years, WHRO-TV aired weekdays during the school hours of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The broadcast course schedule included subjects such as personal finance, history, science, social studies and Spanish. All programs were shot live from two production studios in Norfolk. This early model of instructional television proved a success and five years later WHRO's reach had expanded to the school systems of Newport News, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach and Suffolk, as well as Nansemond, York and Isle of Wight counties. **In 1968, the participating school divisions formally incorporated as the Hampton Roads Educational Television Association Inc. (HRETA), a private nonprofit educational corporation that still owns and governs the station today.**

WHRO-TV thus predates the broader endeavor of national public broadcasting, which came to life through an act of Congress in 1967. The Public Broadcasting Act sought to dedicate a portion of the radio and television broadcast spectrum to educational, noncommercial purposes. The main agent of the legislation (then and now) is the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private nonprofit entity that supports public broadcasting. Most CPB-funded television programming is distributed by PBS, which CPB created in 1969. WHRO-TV became a PBS affiliate, enabling the station to supplement its menu of locally produced shows with new nationwide programming like "Sesame Street" and "Masterpiece Theater." In addition to funding programming, CPB provides grants to local broadcast stations; in the 2010 fiscal year, WHRO received nearly \$1.5 million from CPB, approximately 12 percent of the station's total budget (see Table 1).

Public radio became a part of WHRO's mission in 1975, when HRETA assumed responsibility for the license of classical radio station WTGM-FM (89.5). (Three years later, the call letters were changed to WHRO-FM.) As an NPR

affiliate, WHRO-FM initially broadcast a mix of music, news and information programming. NPR's weekday news magazine, "All Things Considered," debuted in 1977, followed by "Morning Edition" in 1979. These shows continue to be among the most widely heard on public radio today. In 1991, WHRO activated a second FM station to better accommodate the demands of a diverse and growing radio audience. News and information, plus jazz, folk and alternative music, became the purview of WHRV-FM (89.5); classical and fine arts programming found a dedicated home at WHRO-FM (90.3).

The pace of WHRO's evolution has accelerated in the past decade. The nationwide conversion to digital television, formally completed in 2009, enabled the station to broadcast multiple channels within a single frequency. Digital radio opened up the same opportunity (although to date, most listeners continue to use analog radios). By far the greatest technological change, however, is the ever-widening capacity of the Internet. WHRO's broadcast content is now accessible online at whro.org in a variety of formats – podcasting and live audio streaming, as well as audio and video on demand. WHRO offers more programming than ever before and it is accessible not merely to residents of Hampton Roads, but also to anyone worldwide with an Internet connection.

WHRO Ownership: HRETA

WHRO is owned and governed by the 18 public school systems that are members of the Hampton Roads Educational Telecommunications Association Inc. (HRETA):

- Accomack County
- Chesapeake
- Franklin
- Gloucester County
- Hampton
- Isle of Wight County
- Mathews County
- Newport News
- Norfolk
- Northampton County
- Poquoson
- Portsmouth
- Southampton County
- Suffolk
- Sussex County
- Virginia Beach
- Williamsburg-James City County
- York County

TABLE 1

WHRO REVENUE AND EXPENSES (FY 2009-10 OPERATING FUNDS)

Revenue				
Education Service Fees	\$2,588,250	20.4%		
Enterprise Service Fees	\$2,325,993	18.3%		
Government Grants	\$2,231,437	17.6%		
Includes:			Federal Grants	\$1,488,669
			State Grants	\$721,369
			Other	\$21,399
Membership	\$2,150,345	16.9%		
Underwriting	\$1,223,162	9.6%		
Major Gifts	\$955,332	7.5%		
School Assessments	\$534,472	4.2%		
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$187,304	1.5%		
Investment Income	\$155,797	1.2%		
Special Events	\$145,436	1.1%		
Corporation and Foundation Grants	\$81,477	0.6%		
Board Giving	\$70,197	0.6%		
Production Funding	\$26,417	0.2%		
Planned Giving/Memorials	\$12,159	0.1%		
	\$12,687,778	100.0%		
Expenses				
Personnel	\$6,638,748	51.9%		
Operating	\$3,110,583	24.3%		

Expenses continued				
Mission Direct	\$3,033,253	23.7%		
Includes:			PBS Fees	\$1,024,491
			Education Licenses & Programs	\$813,088
			NPR Fees	\$461,537
			Program Fees - Other	\$298,754
			Independent Contractors & Talent	\$271,297
			Listing Service & Audience Research	\$89,934
			Production Costs - Other	\$67,555
			Streaming Fees	\$6,597
	\$12,782,584	100.0%		

Source: WHRO

WHRO Audited Financial Results					
Fiscal Year	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11 (budgeted)
Revenue	\$16,137,981	\$15,188,070	\$14,640,725	\$13,862,336	\$14,469,425
Expenses Before Depreciation	\$13,031,349	\$12,989,801	\$13,154,625	\$12,873,982	\$12,656,882
Net Margin Before Depreciation	\$3,106,632	\$2,198,269	\$1,486,100	\$988,354	\$1,812,543
Depreciation	\$1,588,172	\$1,601,951	\$1,585,503	\$1,437,782	

Source: WHRO

Public Media 2.0

The Internet has transformed the way Americans receive news and entertainment and will continue to do so in the years ahead. Traditional radio and TV providers like WHRO can and, increasingly, must, now reach out to their audiences through a variety of platforms in order to survive and remain relevant. As summarized in a recent report from American University's Center for Social Media, we "now inhabit a multimedia-saturated environment that spans highly interactive mobile and gaming devices, social networks, chat – and only sometimes television or newspapers. People are dumping land lines for cell phones and watching movies and TV shows on their computers. ... Open platforms for sharing, remixing, and commenting upon both amateur and professional media are now widely popular – hastening the demise of print subscriptions and 'appointment television.' While broadcast still reaches more people, the Internet (whether accessed through phones, laptops, or multimedia entertainment devices) has become a mass medium."¹

This new media landscape has created fascinating opportunities for broadcasters like WHRO, beginning with the array of new channels available for the distribution of public programming. As evidenced by Table 2, WHRO has excelled in this arena. **Freed from the constraints of "appointment radio," episodes of the public affairs program "HearSay with Cathy Lewis" were downloaded as a podcast or played as an on-demand radio stream more than 31,000 times each month in the second half of 2010.** Approximately 3,000 teachers and students per month viewed episodes of "Discovering Jamestown," a series of educational videos produced by WHRO for the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. Perhaps most impressively, The 1920s Radio Network was streamed live nearly 1 million times each month by listeners worldwide. (see Table 2). Such examples suggest that new technologies have significantly expanded the outreach and accessibility of WHRO's programming.

The definition of "programming," however, is no longer limited to the delivery of static content. The 20 million children who visit the pbskids.org website each

¹ "Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics" (February 2009), at: <http://centerforsocialmedia.org/future-public-media/documents/white-papers/public-media-20-dynamic-engaged-publics>

quarter play math and reading games, download coloring pages, create their own comics and movies, and engage in other kinds of interactive learning. Since the end of 2009, PBS has fully merged its television and online news operations; pbsnewshour.org (and an accompanying iPhone app) provides coverage that deepens and expands upon the content of the TV news hour. Local PBS and NPR affiliates have begun to explore the Internet's capacity to promote interactivity, dialogue and specialized news coverage at the community level. A recent Aspen Institute report on the future of public media identifies ideastream.org, a public media collaboration in Cleveland, and Minnesota Public Radio's Public Insight Network as noteworthy examples.²

A recent episode of "HearSay" (WHRV-FM) highlighted how New Mexico public television affiliate KNME uses social media to provide expanded legislative coverage. Such Internet-based innovation seems to hold rich potential for WHRO, given the station's established focus on regional affairs via its broadcast programming, and its self-described mission to be "a trusted and valued civic space where citizens can explore diverse issues in a thoughtful manner." WHRO's Center for Regional Citizenship might eventually assume a more substantial role through such new media initiatives.

The brave new world of Public Media 2.0 brings challenges as well as opportunities – not least, the question of strategic focus. The emergence of so many technological innovations within a short period has spread thin public broadcasters' already modest resources. The temptation to jump on the latest media bandwagon – blogging, Facebook, Twitter, etc. – can distract from core services. The public is already distracted in myriad ways, as a virtually limitless array of online content now competes for audience attention. In an age when "anybody can start up a radio station in their garage" (as aptly put to us by WHRO Music Director Dwight Davis), or when anybody can develop their own YouTube video channel, public broadcasters must consider carefully the services they provide.

² The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, "Rethinking Public Media: More Local, More Inclusive, More Interactive" (December 2010), at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/rethinking-public-media-more-local-more-inclusive-more-interactive>

TABLE 2		
A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF WHRO: INTERNET WEBTRENDS REPORTS FOR WHRO ONLINE PRODUCTS		
	November 2010	6-mo. Average (July-Dec. 2010)
Radio Streams Clips Played		
The 1920s Radio Network	1,007,188	903,417
Connoisseur Classics	255,621	290,213
AltRadio.org	212,258	225,457
WHRO-FM	23,899	22,701
WHRV-FM	80,762	42,500
SpeakEasy	66,045	62,399
WHRO Radio Reading Service	228	230
Podcasts (Number of downloads)		
Discovery Now	44,264	55,241
HearSay with Cathy Lewis	23,725	30,772
CD of the Week	22,378	22,145
Loessin @ Large	9,491	9,743
Norfolk 17	250	294
What Matters Video Podcast	4,109	3,505
What Matters Audio Podcast	3,874	5,717
Another View Video Podcast	1,938	1,885
Another View Audio Podcast	1,134	1,809
Arts Conversations	4,817	4,686

Podcasts (Number of downloads) continued		
How We Saw It	587	526
Bird Notes	7,402	7,355
On-demand Radio/Video Streams (Number of clips played)		
Out of the Box	1,999	2,920
HearSay with Cathy Lewis	600	875
Sinnet in Session	577	822
Vocal Sound of Jazz	105	91
R&B Chronicles	161	240
Discovering Jamestown 2007	3,401	3,032
Saturday Night Fish Fry	238	261
Acoustic Highway	117	161
Pickin' on WHRV	101	82
From the Parlor	31	63
Silver Moonbeams	120	224
	1,777,420	1,699,363
Source: WHRO		

Much of the content broadcast by local affiliates like WHRO is now available through other means. NPR offerings like "This American Life" and "Car Talk" are consistently among the most popular iTunes store podcasts; many TV shows can be viewed on demand at pbs.org. As Hampton Roads audiences grow accustomed to accessing their favorite NPR or PBS shows outside the local broadcast airwaves, WHRO may be compelled to adapt its services accordingly. One answer, as suggested to us by Davis, is a keener focus on "live and local" programming.

The WHRO “Thinkplex”

WHRO’s most innovative use of new Internet technologies comes through its educational services, or “Thinkplex.”

In the last two years alone, these services have earned awards from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Association of Public Television Stations, the National Educational Telecommunications Association and CIO magazine. WHRO has long been a leader in the field of educational technology, from its early days as a broadcast television channel, to its videodisc production and establishment of the Consortium for Interactive Instruction in the 1980s, and now into the Internet era. Today, WHRO is a key provider of new media services to educators and students in Hampton Roads and throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The extent of WHRO’s involvement in educational technology may surprise Hampton Roads residents most familiar with the station’s radio and TV programming. Yet, radio and TV are only the most visible portions of a much larger iceberg, to borrow a metaphor from Chief Education Officer Brian Callahan. As Callahan describes, WHRO’s educational services today are supported by four pillars:

- *Ready to Learn* – Ready to Learn is a cooperative agreement among the U.S. Department of Education, PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that supports research-based programming like “Super Why!,” “Martha Speaks” and “Word World” across multiple media platforms. Ready to Learn seeks to prepare young children for school, particularly those who may face economic, geographic or other barriers to academic success. WHRO airs Ready to Learn programming on two broadcast channels, and supports a full-time staff member to coordinate enrichment activities such as reading camps and parent training sessions throughout the Hampton Roads community.
- *Online teacher training* – WHRO is the state coordinator for Virginia’s PBS Teacherline, which offers online professional development courses for Virginia teachers, enabling them to earn recertification points (and in some cases, graduate credit at James Madison University) in a flexible, easy-to-access manner. Led by faculty with specialized training in online instruction, courses are typically offered in six-week blocks and take 15-45 hours to complete. WHRO provides additional courses through Virginia’s Community of Anytime

Knowledge, a partnership between Virginia’s public broadcasting stations and the Virginia Society for Technology in Education. In 2009-10, 1,500 Virginia teachers, including 1,058 from the HRETA-owner school systems, enrolled in an online training course powered by WHRO.

- *Online student courses* – Since 2007, WHRO has provided complete high school courses online through the Hampton Roads Virtual Learning Center, a collaborative initiative of the 18 HRETA school divisions. Courses (including English 9-12, Algebra II, Biology and U.S. History) are modular in nature, rich-media infused and fully aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning. Courses are freely available to the HRETA-owner schools, which may customize or use the material however they see fit in lieu of a paper textbook, as a supplement within a traditional classroom or as a freestanding course. Through the assistance of a \$2.5 million federal stimulus grant (ARRA E2T2) in early 2010, 22 courses, including specialized offerings like Astronomy and Oceanography, will be online this fall.
- *Digital Media Distribution* – WHRO is the statewide distributor of content from Discovery Education streaming, which provides schools with tens of thousands of ready-to-access video clips in all subject areas. The clips derive from nonprofit and commercial providers of educational media, including PBS, as well as the Discovery Channel and its sister companies. In its infancy only a decade ago, digital media streaming is now the No. 1 service WHRO brings to Virginia schools, with 3 million items viewed in 2009-10, including 677,000 within Hampton Roads. To educators, the appeal of digital media streaming is obvious. It provides a breathtaking array of video content (the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci, how to graph an algebraic equation, etc.), it is correlated to the Standards of Learning and it is available on demand. Discovery Education is now the leading provider of digital media streaming to U.S. schools, but PBS and its local affiliates have begun to take a more proactive role. Testing is currently under way for VideoClassroom, WHRO’s own distribution system. The VideoClassroom will allow teachers and students to stream educational content from WHRO, as well as from other public broadcasting stations and the new PBS Digital Learning Library.

Each of HRETA’s 18 school divisions makes an annual contribution to WHRO at the rate of \$2 per student.

In 2009-10, WHRO received \$534,472 (or, 4.2 percent of its annual revenue) from its HRETA school assessments. Placing a dollar figure on all of WHRO's educational services, station representatives emphasize that the Hampton Roads schools "saved" \$7.6 million through their collaborations with WHRO, an approximate \$25 return for every dollar invested. The "saved" label may not be entirely descriptive, since school divisions do not necessarily use all of the services WHRO provides. "Potential services valued at \$7.6 million" might be more accurate. Regardless, it is clear that WHRO provides valuable services at low cost to the Hampton Roads schools. The HRETA partnership has been an asset to our region's students and educators.

The Hampton Roads Audience: Who's Tuning In?

Beyond the 286,000 students and 25,000 teachers in Hampton Roads who may access WHRO's educational services, hundreds of thousands more people worldwide enjoy WHRO programming each month. (The 1920s Radio Network, in particular, has a substantial overseas following; nearly 46 percent of its online users in 2010 hailed from beyond North America.) Hampton Roads residents, however, comprise WHRO's core audience. At the beginning of 2011, the station's radio broadcast coverage stretched northward to Gloucester, southward to Elizabeth City, N.C., and westward into Sussex and Southampton counties. Expanded eastward coverage is planned through the addition of new transmitters in Gloucester and on the Eastern Shore; a transmitter in Emporia will extend the station's western reach (see Figure 1). WHRO's approximately 20,000 community members live throughout Hampton Roads, with particularly strong representation in Virginia Beach, Norfolk and Williamsburg (see Table 3).

Assessing audience size and demographics is an imprecise science; numbers vary substantially according to the audience samples and methods of data collection. Nonetheless, the available statistics give us at least a rough idea of who is tuning in to WHRO. **National surveys indicate that public broadcasting audiences are significantly older, better educated,**

wealthier and earn higher incomes than the U.S. population at large. (The prominent exception is the early childhood TV audience, which is dominated by PBS.) There is rough equality of listeners/viewers between men and women.

The national patterns appear to hold true in Hampton Roads – although, it should be noted, WHRO currently receives detailed ratings information only for its traditional broadcast channels (WHRO.HD 15.1, WHRO-FM and WHRV-FM). WHRO obtains these ratings and accompanying audience statistics through paid subscriptions to Trac Media Services and the Radio Research Consortium, which process data collected by Nielsen and Arbitron.

In November 2010, approximately one-third of television-viewing households in Hampton Roads tuned in to WHRO.HD for at least five minutes each week. One-half of this viewing audience consisted of two demographics: children ages 2-5 and women age 50 and older. WHRO.HD earned its strongest ratings on the weekend, particularly during the prime-time hours of 8-10 p.m. and Saturday late morning. Director of Programming Linda Delgado tells us that Saturday morning "how-to" shows such as "America's Test Kitchen" and "This Old House" are consistently among the station's most popular, as are the British comedies that air on Saturday evenings. "Antiques Roadshow," "Masterpiece" and the science shows "Nature" and "Nova" also perform well.

Television ratings have fallen for all channels in recent years, due to the proliferation of media offerings now available to consumers. WHRO.HD's viewership is smaller than that of Hampton Roads' commercial network affiliates; its total audience size more closely resembles that of a specialized cable channel (see Table 4).

WHRV-FM and WHRO-FM attract significant proportions of regional audiences, respectively earning a 3.7 and 1.6 Average Quarter Hour share among Hampton Roads radio listeners in November 2010. WHRV-FM placed 12th, and WHRO-FM placed 18th, among the 33 FM stations ranked in our market. These ratings compare favorably to those of other public radio stations in similarly sized markets around the country.

In November 2010, WHRV-FM and WHRO-FM appealed most strongly to listeners over age 45; fully one-third of WHRO-FM's listeners were 75 and older. Surprisingly, men outnumbered women listeners nearly 2 to 1. The African American listenership of both stations was nearly 27 percent, not very far off the overall proportion (32 percent) of African Americans in Hampton Roads.

The weekday news magazines "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered," which air during the morning and afternoon drive times, are the most widely heard shows on WHRV-FM; weekend morning shows such as "Car Talk," "Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me!" and "A Prairie Home Companion" attract large audiences as well. These times of day are also among the most popular for WHRO-FM's musical programming (see Table 5).

STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS

WHRO currently has 85 full-time and eight part-time employees, as well as 42 temporary part-time employees (largely production staff). As for volunteers, about 300 help at least once in a 12-month period. Additionally, 140 organizations routinely assist with fundraising drives and other events, and about 50 groups send an average of eight people to the station at least once in a year, for a total of 400. Thus, about 700 volunteers assist WHRO at least once in a typical year.



TABLE 3

WHRO MEMBERS (APRIL 2011)

Annual Giving Level			Category			Location		
\$0 - \$47.99	3,446	17.0%	Corporation	64	0.3%	Virginia Beach	4,949	24.5%
\$48 - \$99.99	6,315	31.2%	Foundation	11	0.1%	Norfolk	2,954	14.6%
\$100 - \$249.99	7,614	37.7%	Individual/Family	20,143	99.6%	Williamsburg	2,380	11.8%
\$250 - \$499.99	1,836	9.1%	Other	1	0.0%	Newport News	1,662	8.2%
\$500 - \$749.99	412	2.0%		20,219	100.0%	Chesapeake	1,532	7.6%
\$750 - \$1,199.99	111	0.5%				Hampton	1,328	6.6%
\$1,200 - \$2,499.99	356	1.8%				Portsmouth	779	3.9%
\$2,500 - \$4,999.99	78	0.4%				Yorktown	746	3.7%
\$5,000 - \$9,999.99	19	0.1%				Suffolk	664	3.3%
\$10,000 - \$24,999.99	2	0.0%				Gloucester	259	1.3%
\$25,000 - \$49,999.99	0	0.0%				Smithfield	204	1.0%
\$50,000+	1	0.0%				Poquoson	167	0.8%
Unspecified	29	0.1%				Franklin	95	0.5%
	20,219	100.0%				Elizabeth City	89	0.4%
						Hayes	88	0.4%
						Carrington	70	0.3%
						Other	2,253	11.1%
							20,219	100.0%

Source: WHRO

TABLE 4

A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF WHRO: TV

DMA CUMES (% of households in the Designated Market Area that viewed WHRO for 5+ minutes)

Prime Time	16						
Whole Week	32						

The WHRO.HD Audience

Kids 2-5	23%						
Kids 6-11	10%						
Teens 12-17	3%						
Women 18-49	10%						
Women 50+	27%						
Men 18-49	10%						
Men 50+	15%						

Top 10 Programs	Rank	Name	Weeks	Day	Time	Rating*	Share**
	1	Antiques Roadshow	1234	Sat	08:00 PM	1.86	2.92
	2	Masterpiece	12_4	Sun	09:00 PM	1.78	2.34
	3	Antiques Roadshow	1234	Mon	08:00 PM	1.77	2.42
	4	Tina Fey: The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize	_3_	Sun	09:00 PM	1.72	2.34
	5	Ask This Old House	1234	Sat	11:30 AM	1.48	3.44
	6	Nature	1234	Sun	08:00 PM	1.43	1.95
	7	Everyday Food	123_	Sat	10:30 AM	1.35	2.80
	8	Nova	1234	Tue	08:00 PM	1.33	1.81
	9	America's Test Kitchen	1234	Sat	10:00 AM	1.32	2.88
	10	This Old House	1234	Sat	11:00 AM	1.30	2.91

* **Rating** = % of viewing households (based on total number of homes in the market)
 ** **Share** = % of viewing households (based on number of homes using television during the program's telecast)
WHRO.HD Ratings (Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News Designated Market Area, November 2010)
 Source: Nielsen and TRAC Media Services

TABLE 5

**A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF WHRO: RADIO
WHRO-FM AND WHRV-FM RADIO RATINGS (NORFOLK-VIRGINIA BEACH-NEWPORT NEWS METRO AREA)**

	WHRO-FM (Nov. 2010)	WHRO-FM (6-mo. Average, July-Dec. 2010)	WHRV-FM (Nov. 2010)	WHRV-FM (6-mo. Average, July-Dec. 2010)
Average Weekly Time Exposed	2:30	3:17	4:30	4:30
** AQH Share	1.6	1.7	3.7	3.3
Mo-Fr 6A - 10A	2.0	2.0	4.2	3.9
Mo-Fr 10A - 3P	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.6
Mo-Fr 7P - 12M	1.6	1.5	4.6	4.1
Sa-Su 6A - 12M	1.5	1.8	3.8	3.1
Gender Composition				
Male	63.6%	61.8%	67.0%	60.2%
Female	36.4%	38.2%	33.0%	39.8%
Age Cell Composition (AQH)				
6-11	7.2%	8.5%	0.6%	0.6%
12-17	1.3%	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%
18-24	3.8%	2.6%	2.3%	3.7%
25-34	4.5%	2.8%	5.2%	5.2%
35-44	3.8%	4.8%	6.2%	5.9%
45-54	7.5%	6.7%	25.8%	27.9%
55-64	16.8%	21.0%	31.2%	29.3%
65-74	21.5%	27.6%	13.0%	13.9%
75+	33.6%	25.1%	14.9%	12.3%
Ethnic Composition (AQH)				
Black	26.9%	21.0%	26.8%	22.8%
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	73.1%	79.0%	73.2%	77.2%
Location (AQH)				
Out of Home	41.1%	42.9%	47.5%	48.4%
In Home	58.9%	57.1%	52.5%	51.6%

** AQH Share = % of persons listening to this station for 5+ min. during a 15-min. period (based on number of radio listeners)
Source: Arbitron and Radio Research Consortium

“... made possible by viewers like you.”

PBS audiences are no doubt familiar with this phrase, which reminds them that local affiliates like WHRO rely upon the financial contributions of their community members. In the 2009-10 fiscal year, 16.9 percent of WHRO's revenue (just over \$2 million) was derived from its members, the great majority of whom donated \$250 or less. WHRO's membership revenue has remained steady throughout the recent economic downturn, a positive indicator of both the loyalty of the station's approximately 20,000 members and their economic status. Other sources of community support are underwriting, major gifts and special events (see Table 1).

Government grants provided 17.6 percent of WHRO's revenue in FY 2009-10. WHRO received nearly \$1.5 million in federal funding through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and \$721,369 from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Funding for public broadcasting became a topic of considerable debate during this year's legislative session in Richmond, as Gov. Bob McDonnell proposed eliminating all state subsidies to Virginia's public broadcasters as a necessary cost-cutting measure. The General Assembly ultimately settled upon a 51.3 percent funding cut.

In Washington, D.C., proposals to entirely defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and/or National Public Radio gained momentum in the wake of back-to-back public relations debacles that raised questions about the radio network's political objectivity. **Radio and television audiences always have tended to self-select and an operating assumption on the part of many has been that public television and radio listeners (and news personnel) are more politically liberal than the nation as a whole. There is some empirical evidence to support this notion, though it is an uncomfortable topic for NPR. In 2009, an NPR survey revealed that only 4 percent of NPR listeners identified it as having a conservative slant, while 40 percent thought it had liberal leanings.** As this report was completed, some reduction in federal funds for public broadcasting seemed likely.

While certainly unpleasant, such cuts in public funding would affect a relatively small portion of WHRO's overall revenue. In the diversity of its revenue sources, WHRO differs substantially from other affiliates across the commonwealth. Just over \$2.5 million (or 20 percent) of the station's 2009-10 revenue was derived from "education service fees." Much of this was contract revenue from sources such as the Virginia Department of Education, PBS and HRETA-owner school divisions; it funds many of the new media education services described above. An additional 18 percent (or just over \$2.3 million) of WHRO's 2009-10 revenue came from "enterprise service fees" – tower rental and spectrum leases, production and engineering contract revenue, Internet services and other entrepreneurial initiatives that contribute to the station's operating funds.

Commercial interests do not directly influence WHRO programming, but the station may operate a bit more like a business than many audience members suspect. While some may regret WHRO's entrepreneurial ventures as a distraction from its public mission, this activity has and will continue to assist WHRO in weathering current and future rounds of public budget cuts.

The Challenges Ahead

I like PBS, it airs great programs, including, if I do say so myself, tonight's speech. But with hundreds of options in the free market, radio and television programming is not a core function of government requiring \$4 million.
– Gov. Bob McDonnell, State of the Commonwealth address, Jan. 12, 2011³

The institution of public broadcasting in the United States has never existed without controversy. This is particularly true in 2011, when budget shortfalls and pressure from taxpayers have encouraged federal and state administrators to cut spending for many programs. At NPR, the hasty firing of commentator Juan Williams in October 2010, followed in March 2011 by the release of an undercover video of fundraiser Ron Schiller, led many to question the network's leadership and political impartiality. Calls to reduce or eliminate

³ <http://www.governor.virginia.gov/News/viewRelease.cfm?id=555>

state and federal subsidies for public broadcasting grew louder. The future of public broadcasting was widely discussed on blogs, editorial pages, and in state and federal legislatures. On all sides of the issue, however, the debate did not always reflect a keen awareness of public media's potential strengths (and weaknesses) in a new Internet age.

There were several ironies surrounding McDonnell's remarks about public broadcasting in his State of the Commonwealth address – beginning with the reality that of the hundreds of television options available to Virginians, the only ones to air his speech in its entirety were public affiliates such as WHRO. Host Cathy Lewis drew attention to this irony on a subsequent episode of "What Matters" (WHRO.HD). Yet, text and video versions of the governor's speech were almost immediately accessible online (and remained so, several months later), through the Office of the Governor's website and on YouTube. This kind of access was not possible a generation ago, and it suggests to us that public affiliates like WHRO may need to adapt or reconsider some of their traditional broadcast services.

We commend WHRO for its broadcast of the governor's speech. Nonetheless, the station's function as a site for civil discussion and intelligent political commentary (particularly with respect to affairs of state and regional significance, like the State of the Commonwealth address) may serve an even greater public need in today's media environment. The in-depth attention to local public affairs that is a hallmark of "What Matters" and "HearSay" (WHRV-FM), emphasizing multiple viewpoints and discussion across the political spectrum, has no parallel among the commercial stations in our region, which (as another chapter in this year's report indicates) sometimes have leaned toward an "If it bleeds, it leads" approach to the news.

McDonnell stated in his address that he "likes PBS," but that supporting its programming is not a core government function. The Commonwealth of Virginia does not, however, directly subsidize PBS (or NPR). Rather, state funding for public broadcasting is distributed among 10 locally operated radio and television affiliates. In FY 2009-10, 8 percent (or just over \$1 million) of WHRO's total expenses was spent on PBS programming fees. As a PBS affiliate, WHRO determines how much of the network's programming it airs. **Ironically, therefore, cuts in state funding are likely to result**

in more, rather than less, PBS programming on WHRO's broadcast schedule, as fewer resources will be available for local productions.

There is no evidence to suggest that a commercial market exists for quality WHRO productions such as the multipart documentary "Civil War in Hampton Roads," or the weekly TV series "Another View," which addresses issues specific to Hampton Roads' African American community. Of course, market-oriented critics typically say that if this is the case, it means there really is no demand for such programming. Or, if such demand were to exist, one of the 500-plus commercial stations should take up that task. Why, they ask, should public funds extracted from all taxpayers support programming that may appeal to only a very narrow segment of the population? It is, they say, a modest form of welfare for the old and wealthy.

The consensus economic view, however, is that PBS, NPR and public media affiliates such as WHRO are best considered to be "public goods" that generate broadly distributed benefits for many people, much like public health programs and national defense. Hence, they deserve to be supported by public funding.

McDonnell is not the only Virginian who perhaps conflates PBS or NPR with the commonwealth's public media affiliates. The two networks' national prominence (and in the case of NPR, growing audience numbers and recent negative publicity) has sometimes overshadowed the unique identities of their local affiliates. This seems particularly true in Hampton Roads, where the educational services that have long been integral to WHRO's mission are now mostly removed from its radio and television operations. The "Thinkplex" is almost entirely Internet-based and not visible to the public at large. A most important challenge for WHRO in the years ahead will be to bridge the gaps that separate its diverse operations by finding ways to better communicate the many things it is doing. WHRO's achievements and evolutions have been impressive, but neither its written materials nor its broadcast presentations appear to have been successful in communicating such.

TABLE 6

THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING AUDIENCE (PERSONS 18+)

	PBS Audience	Public Radio Audience (Classical)	Public Radio Audience (News/Music)	U.S. Population
Men	51%	49%	53%	
Women	49%	51%	47%	
12-18	N/A	2%	1%	N/A
18-54	63%	29%	56%	68%
55+	37%	68%	43%	32%
College graduates	37%	64%	54%	25%
Household income \$75,000+	40%	40%	32%	33%

Note: The American Community Survey figures are based upon an adult population ages 20+.

PBS Audience Source: 2009 GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media Survey, at: <http://www.janson.com/media/2010/12/13/pbs-audience-demographics/>

Public Radio Audience Source: Public Radio Today 2010, at <http://www.arbitron.com/study/publicrt.asp>

U.S. Population Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, at <http://factfinder.census.gov>



Few residents of Hampton Roads – even those who consider themselves supporters of public broadcasting – are aware of the breadth of services that WHRO currently provides. This is a serious problem for an organization whose vision is to “be a dynamic and vital organization that improves the civic, educational and cultural life of the Hampton Roads community through broadcast, communications, and media services.”⁴ Through greater awareness of its services, increased financial and political support likely would follow.

Maintaining the support of WHRO’s diverse constituencies in the years ahead raises a further challenge. Member contributions and government grants comprised nearly equal proportions (16.9 percent and 17.6 percent, respectively) of the station’s operating funds in FY 2009-10. WHRO members are, presumably, satisfied customers of the station’s broadcast programming; most make their annual contributions during on-air fundraising drives that take place several times per year. If WHRO members are representative of PBS and NPR audiences, then they are older, comfortable financially, well-educated and more often than not, politically left of center (see Table 6).

Producing subsidies for radio and TV programming for this audience recently has been a tough sell in Richmond and Washington, D.C. Thus, to state policymakers, President and CEO Bert Schmidt instead emphasizes the high-quality educational services WHRO provides at low cost to Virginia students and educators. In an April 11 story in *The Virginian-Pilot*, Schmidt was quoted as saying: “I feel really good about the work we do, whether it’s through our TV or radio stations or the services we provide for schools. It’s disappointing that there are people who either don’t understand how important we are or how important we can be – or they simply want to use public media in the political arena as a punching bag.”

A final challenge concerns the continued relevancy of public broadcasting into the 21st century. The past decade has tested all members of the “legacy media” – including newspapers, publishing houses, film studios, and commercial and public broadcast stations alike. Ernest J. Wilson III, chair of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California, recently stated, “This is potentially a 1967 moment. Just as the Public Broadcasting Act moved us

⁴ <http://whro.org/home/insidewhro/statement.htm>

from educational television to public broadcasting, now we need to move to public service media.”⁵ Some observers have, in fact, recommended reinventing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting as a Corporation for Public Media, enabling a greater portion of the organization’s federal funding to be applied to digital initiatives and the promotion of universal broadband access. It is unclear, however, whether this kind of dramatic transformation can be achieved in the current political and economic climate.

These are difficult, but exciting, times for public affiliates like WHRO, which has evolved dramatically in its first 50 years of existence. **WHRO is widely regarded as one of the most productive and successful public affiliates in the country. “In many ways, they provide the model for the rest of us,” comments a somewhat envious director of another public affiliate organization. Nevertheless, in order to thrive for the next 50 years, WHRO not only must continue to provide the region with excellent multimedia programming and services, but also find more effective ways to tell its interesting and highly productive story.**

⁵ “Rethinking Public Media,” p. 16.

FIGURE 1





