The Learning and Teaching Partnership of the Community Radio and Tertiary Education Sectors at Radio Adelaide, 2SER and 2MCE

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Abstract
Recognising the historical partnership between the community broadcasting and higher education sectors, this paper reviews the pioneer educational program Talking to New England *as collaboration between the University of New England and 2SER. It also documents the contributions to learning and teaching at Charles Sturt University (CSU) over three decades by 2MCE and evaluates the potential contributions of the station to the development of new teaching resources such as educational podcasting. This paper also outlines a pilot project at CSU established to investigate whether the "explaining voice" as a style of vocal presentation closely aligned to radio broadcasting traditions, could be adopted for university audio learning.*

In 1974, the progressive policies introduced by the Whitlam government's media ministers, Senator Doug McLelland, and his successor, Dr Moss Cass shook up the moribund Australian media with a series of radical initiatives that aimed at enabling Australia to keep pace with global innovations such as FM broadcasting, which eventually put this nation ahead of the rest of the world. McClelland and Cass acted to open up the FM frequency band (then only being used for TV broadcasts), as part of their policy on minority and public access to the media. Realising that the complex and expensive licensing processes of the time could have held up the process for years, Dr Cass exploited a loophole in the *Wireless Telegraphy Act* (1905) by issuing temporary experimental community broadcasting licences in each state.

Community radio stations were licensed on both the AM and FM bands, ranging from the fine music stations like 2MBS and 3MBS to student stations like 4ZZZ Brisbane, to innovative broadcasters such as ethnic organisations, 2EA Sydney and 3EA Melbourne to possibly the most adventurous of all – those based on education institutions such as 5UV Adelaide, now Radio Adelaide.

Deb Welch is today General Manager of one of those pioneer stations Radio Adelaide and maintains the higher education sector was critical to the establishment of the community broadcasting sector (interview, 4 November 2009). The educational institution could provide an operational subsidy to the station which assisted in the development of infrastructure, staffing and programming to allow community radio stations to do what they wanted to do, and said they would do. Deb further suggests this partnership between educational institutions and community radio stations had a flow-on effect to the wider sector through resource and program sharing. In her experience if a station with support from an educational institution had resources, quality programming or trained personnel, there was a sense of duty to share all of that for the purpose of advancing the community broadcasting movement.

At the University of New England (UNE) in the early 80's Geoff Arger then the university's educational developer was exploring new ways of delivering Distance Education (DE) learning materials. Up until that time UNE delivered DE material recorded on cassette or in print. Arger observes that often these materials were recycled year after year and offered little scope for interaction with the students (interview, 2 May 2008). Arger was attracted to the talkback format of radio he listened to in Sydney and recognised the informal learning element of this radio listening experience. At UNE community engagement was also being discussed and Arger developed a project to deliver material to DE students whilst delivering the wider community to UNE. It was called *Talking to New England* and proved to be one of the most innovative and successful examples of the partnership between the higher education and community broadcasting sectors.

Talking to New England was a one hour program which included a pre-produced 20 minute lecture style presentation followed by a live talk-back session between the audience and the lecturer. The program was developed by Arger at UNE in partnership with 2SER in Sydney and networked on a series of community radio stations live into zones where UNE knew that it had pockets of students. Some of these stations included 2SER, 2MCE Bathurst, 2BOB Taree, 2ARM Armidale, Lismore and Coffs Harbour. For 2SER the *Talking to New England* program provided quality educational broadcast content and for UNE the program offered an innovative way of delivering DE materials and raised the profile of the university in critical student recruitment areas. Arger suggests in the early days UNE was perceived as a very dowdy, rural campus for rural science and grazier's sons and the *Talking to New England* project worked to increase the innovative profile of the university.

Joe Gelonisi, the program's first producer, recalls that 2SER station management were very responsive to the project because it complied with the station's E class license (educational) and meant the station was doing something that no other stations were doing at the time (interview, 19 May 2008). Station Management identified there was knowledge inside the university that would be of interest to a broader audience and the proposal would make an interesting and unusual radio program. This was of course, all before the advent of the internet and instant on-line communication. The proposal to use community radio to interact with students was innovative and well before the days when a student could access a lecturer easily through electronic means.

Stylistically the program varied depending on the presentation of each lecturer. Arger refers to very rapid behaviour modification from the lecturers when they were in the studio for the live talk-back sessions. As with most people who hear themselves for the first time on a recording or on the radio, they were often surprised to hear exactly how everyone else hears them. Some modified their accents, others developed more vocal flair but most were warm communicators who knew how to use direct language and use active language. And all these techniques worked on radio.

The 80's were also an exciting time for innovation and education at 2MCE in Bathurst, NSW. First though, it is important to contextualise this discussion with a brief review the station's history.

In 1975 Mitchell College of Advanced Education in Bathurst received a special licence to cover the operation of an educational broadcasting station. The call-sign 2MCE FM, which connoted the identity of the college, was allocated. A team of dedicated college

staff and students recognised the value in this opportunity and began experimental broadcasts in March of that year.

In May 1976 Principal of Mitchell College Mr E.A.B. Phillips opened the station and during his speech referred to the educational value of operating a radio station on campus, saying the facility was a means of communicating with students and 'a means for students in training for careers in communications to get firsthand experience of real life broadcasting'. This was the beginning of a unique partnership between the community broadcasting and higher education sectors in regional NSW.

The stated educational purpose of 2MCE was primarily to provide formal curriculum support for students of communication at the College, with working studios and recording and editing equipment for students to practice and learn their craft. Throughout its history, 2MCE has been the training ground for many of the nation's best known and respected journalists, broadcasters and program-makers, including former ABC *Enough Rope* presenter and documentary maker, Andrew Denton, former Nine Network *Today* presenter, Jessica Rowe, popular Sydney radio host, Amanda Keller, *Seven Sunrise* program presenter, Melissa Doyle and Mark Bannerman, supervising producer ABC, *Four Corners*.

Station staff and academics from the School of Communication have worked collaboratively over the past three decades to develop broadcast activities for students which reflect the working environment of the modern radio station. In her recent work to document the 30 year work-integrated learning collaboration between 2MCE and CSU, Kay Nankervis (2009) provides a valuable timeline of the learning and teaching activities for journalism students at 2MCE.

From 1976-1978 students filled vast amounts of 2MCE air-time with their own live radio programs. They also produced pre-recorded radio program segments and a live weekly current affairs program, *Counterpoint*. From 1979 student activity moved to daily program production when station manager John Martin and broadcast journalism lecturer Roger Patching programmed the student produced *Counterpoint* as a daily current affairs program covering issues from the Bathurst and Orange region. By 1985 2MCE and the School of Communication had introduced a daily news service produced by students with broad supervision by School tutors. By 1987 School of Communication students were producing and broadcasting on 2MCE several information services including local morning news, local current affairs program, and a national-style news service. This service led to the establishment in 1997 of National Radio News (NRN), which was developed by the School of Communication and 2MCE.

In 2008 2MCE's student learning role expanded to online news and the convergence of broadcast and online journalism. School lecturing and 2MCE staff, Harry Dillon, Rod Bloomfield and Chris McGillion created the 2MCE Digital Newsroom. Print and broadcast students create content for 2MCE local news including bulletins for broadcast and reports for publication on its online site. Second and third year students work to rostered shifts as reporters and news producers with work overseen by a 2MCE newsroom supervisor who has extensive local newspaper and radio experience.

Since the 1970s the student broadcasting club, Studio 4, supported by 2MCE training staff, has enabled all MCAE-CSU students the opportunity to learn about radio: engaging

with their audiences, working in production and presentation teams and obeying the laws and regulations that surround broadcasting.

While the historical partnership between the community broadcasting and tertiary education sectors is familiar to many in the sector, it's timely to explore how community radio stations can contribute to learning and teaching in the digital age. Deb Welch says Radio Adelaide has positioned itself as a professional recording service for several clients including the University of South Australia (UNISA) and University of Adelaide. Projects include recording lectures at the Hawke Centre for UNISA and video recording the University of Adelaide's 'Research Tuesdays'. Presentations are recorded by Radio Adelaide staff, edited and made available to the client for online distribution. Both the Hawke Centre and Research Tuesday projects are high profile for their respective institutions with comprehensive web presence dedicated to each project. Deb recognises a two-fold benefit of this recording service for the station, securing an income stream and skills development opportunities for the station's production team. The clients receive a professionally produced audio and/or visual product to complement their specialist projects.

2MCE provides a similar service for Charles Sturt University. The station records and rebroadcasts public lectures and campus debates. In 2007 the School of Communication hosted the Australian Media Traditions Conference. 2MCE worked with technical staff to record and upload the keynote speeches from this conference to their website. Another exciting project the author has worked on over the past 5 years involves recording an audio CD to accompany NSW high school curriculum Japanese language course text books. I work closely with Mrs Fudeko Reekie, a local teacher and educational designer to record audio examples in Japanese to accompany the text books. These books and the accompanying CD are printed by Pascal Press and distributed to NSW high schools.

David Cameron, lecturer at Charles Sturt University, has a long history of association with Charles Sturt University and 2MCE. As a CSU journalism student in the1980s David participated in curriculum support projects at 2MCE. After graduation he then went on to work in the newsroom as supervisor to undergraduate students and later as the programming coordinator for 2MCE. As an academic in the area of communications David identified that 2MCE could make a more substantial contribution to learning and teaching at CSU in the digital age and proposed a Scholarship in Teaching Fund. I was invited as a project participant and now work with David and Brett Van Heekeren, also a lecturer from CSU, on the project *Lessons from the 'explaining voice': Radio Broadcasting as a model for effective and distinctive educational podcasting.* This pilot project aims to evaluate:

- The extent and effectiveness of any previous or current use of 2MCE's airtime and resources for learning and teaching
- The nature of potential uses of 2MCE's airtime and resources for learning and teaching across all campuses, particularly online streaming and podcasting; and
- The benefits of adopting a distinctive and effective CSU "sound" for forms such as online streaming and podcasting, based on the "explaining voice" style of presentation closely associated with radio broadcasting.

Our scholarship of teaching project is concerned not with the forms and affordances of educational podcasting, but the significance that adopting a particular "voice" for podcasting delivery might have on how understanding of the content is shaped. It is

based on Gardner Campbell's (2005) notion of the 'explaining voice' of radio as a model for effective educational podcasting, drawing on the nuances of broadcasting style to enhance understanding of the content:

> the voice that performs understanding. The explaining voice doesn't just convey information; it shapes, out of a shared atmosphere, an intimate drama of cognitive action in time (Campbell 2005, p.42).

Campbell (2005) notes that the enduring power of radio comes from the historical development in broadcasting of the 'explaining voice' which conveys understanding, not just content. He argues that therefore a key to the success of podcasting as a form is that it is based on the idea of radio, with its reliance on the 'the magic in the human voice, the magic of shared awareness' (2005, 40) such that:

> the explaining voice conveys microcues of hesitation, pacing and inflection that demonstrate both cognition and metacognition. When we hear someone read with understanding, we participate in that understanding, almost as if the voice is enacting our own comprehension (Campbell 2005, p. 42).

Traditional radio training techniques teach the key to good radio is effective communication; the effective conveying of thoughts, ideas and information to the listener. Radio presenters develop vocal skills to communicate a message in a way that the listener wants to take notice to what's being said;

> to engage the listener to action, to make the listener want to take part, or become involved, or become interested, or take notice of their community (Sabin, 2008, p. 36).

Radio presentation adopts a one-to-one form of communication where the radio announcer speaks to one person as the listener, rather than the audience as a group of listeners. The language used (the intimate use of "you" instead of "everyone out there in radio land"), the style of vocal presentation (conversational) and a smile (you can hear a smile on the radio) all combine to create a mode of communication where the listener thinks the radio presenter is talking to just her/him. In doing so, the radio presenter establishes a relationship with the listener which is intimate, friendly and conversational.

Body language can't be seen over the airwaves (or in podcasts) so the radio presenter uses a variety of vocal techniques such as pause, pace, pitch and projection (the Four P's) to deliver a message which sounds authentic, accurate and interesting. Radio trainer Steve Ahern suggests:

> To deliver the message so that listeners hear it, value it enough to pay attention to it, understand and then retain it is the art of good radio-announcing. The words you say and how you say them convey meaning and emotion to listeners (Ahern, 2000, p. 72).

Radio announcers know the voice can convey more than words. It can convey imagination, feelings, likes and dislikes. Radio announcers strive to 'talk straight into listeners' minds, rather than going through their eyes' (Ahern, 2000, p.72). The successful combination of the Four P's, correct phrasing, style, rhythm and understanding (of content) gives the radio presenter the 'explaining voice' for delivering information and communicating. It's one where the message or information is delivered to the listener in a way which encourages the listener to action.

In the radio format the listener can also hear if the presenter is bored, tired, stressed or unfamiliar with their topic. Likewise if you're tired your voice will sound tired and it'll be much harder for the listener to stay connected to what you're saying. If you stumble over words you're not familiar with, or pause unnecessarily while explaining concepts, it'll sound like you don't know what you're talking about and there'll be no authenticity in your presentation. It's all there in your voice.

In an attempt to test the effectiveness of the 'explaining voice' as a presentation style for podcasting, a survey supporting audio material was offered to students in the subject Media Audiences and Public Opinion. This is a compulsory subject for all first-year BA (Communication) students. When the survey was conducted in 2008 there were 164 enrolments in the course. This subject is normally delivered with a weekly lecture and then tutorial mode discussion about weekly topics supported by a set of readings.

Supporting audio material was offered to these students during Spring Session (July – November) 2008 in different presentation styles, with an emphasis on the degree to which familiar radio presentation styles are reflected. The trial included audio recorded during a conventional lecture, which is arguably the presentation form least similar to radio, and then moved through other formats including a summary of the lecture and a radio-like presentation.

62.9% of the student respondents agreed that overall, the audio materials created for this subject enhanced their understanding of the topics. 22.9% strongly agreed and 12.9% returned a neutral response. Only 1 student disagreed that the supporting audio material enhanced their understanding of the topic.

Presentation style preferences in the supporting audio material varied with open-ended responses including:
> 'The shorter versions were more focused and easier to understand'
> 'The summary version enhanced the points I got from the lecture'
> 'The radio like version was interesting and easy to engage with'
> 'The full lecture recording because I could work through the lecture at my own pace'
> 'The full lecture allowed me to revise the content more easily'.

Results from this survey strongly indicate there is still a place for audio content in learning and teaching. This is potentially a point of strength for community radio stations which are linked to educational institutions. Like the Radio Adelaide, 2SER and 2MCE examples community radio stations are often already established with the skills, infrastructure and expertise for an audio recording service. For those stations not already linked to an educational institution, the increasing popularity and use of audio in learning and teaching might be a useful point of introduction.

Universities continue to invest in digital infrastructure to record and publish, and lecturers are becoming more involved in the production of this audio product. Just like a lecturer learns the skills for a lecture presentation, there might be radio presentation skills which could be learned to enhance presentation style for educational podcasting. In our survey the lecturer involved, Ray Harding, reported an initial reluctance when he heard his voice on the recordings, but was intrigued by the process and open to presentation style development (interview, 30 September, 2009). Like the lecturers in the *Talking to*

New England educational program, Harding recognised behaviour modification could work to enhance his style.

Radio presenters from all sectors (commercial, public and community) have been engaging with their listeners in the audio format for decades. The skills learned to communicate one-to-one on the radio can be adopted for lecturers recording audio for podcasting where the listening experience is very similar to that of radio. There is also a long tradition of community radio stations providing the training ground for many of our radio and television broadcasters, producers and journalists. In our sector and in our stations we already have the skills, knowledge and experience to teach radio-like presentation techniques. At 2MCE we envisage working collaboratively with the Division of Learning and Teaching Services at CSU to engage lecturers in training programs which explore radio-like presentation techniques for a full range of audio educational and learning materials, just like 2SER and UNE did 23 years ago when they embarked on *Talking to New England.*

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