



A Passion for Radio
Radio Waves and Community
www.comunica.org/passion

Preface to the Electronic Edition

Bruce Girard

The media have changed in the nine years since this book was first published. Most obvious, perhaps, are the changes in *mainstream* media. Globalisation, increased presence of transnational media, convergence of technologies and industries, emergence and expansion of multimedia empires, decline of public media, concentration of media ownership, ever-increasing commercialisation of media space... More media, fewer options. New ways of interacting with media do little to hide the fact that the main message, at least for those with money, is, “Shut up and shop”.

But the mainstream media only tell part of the story. Alternative, independent, and community media have also changed, including many of the experiences presented in this book. In the USA, the tensions referred to in the chapter about *KPFA* (chapter 5) have grown to crisis proportions, putting the entire *Pacifica Network* at risk. Also in the USA, the microradio militants (chapter 10) celebrated when a policy permitting very low-power radio stations was introduced, but the victory parties were cancelled once the countless restrictions associated with the licences became known. In El Salvador a peace accord was signed and *Radio Venceremos* (chapter 7) got a legal frequency, only to quietly fade away. *Echo of Moscow* (chapter 8) continues its struggle for independence – even as I write, control over the station is being fought over by the journalists (who still own 40%) and Gazprom, the massive gas company that has expanded the definition of convergence by becoming the platform for Russia’s newest multimedia empire. *Mahaweli Community Radio* (chapter 13) has been overshadowed, at least in the international community’s eyes, by its little sister *Kotmale*, but we still have lots to learn from the lessons identified in the Mahaweli chapter. CASET (chapter 22) became Bush Radio, and South Africa’s

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National Community Radio Forum now has more than 30 member stations on-air, but the sector is plagued by the regulator's slowness in approving licences.

Nine years ago we published *A Passion for Radio* to facilitate the exchange of experiences among alternative radio broadcasters. Our hope was that stations would think about the ideas presented here and adapt and apply the ones they found useful. Since then, hundreds, even thousands, of new local, independent and community radio stations have sprung up. We offer this second, electronic, edition to them in the same spirit. Find the ideas that might help you. Make them better. And apply them. And then let us know about it.

One new chapter, about Ecuador's *Radio Chaguarurco*, was added to this electronic edition (chapter 23). More chapters could be added, since electronic publishing enables *A Passion for Radio* to take on an even more dynamic recording of the history and politics of alternative radio broadcasters. Perhaps at some point these new stories will warrant a book of their own.

The first edition of *A Passion for Radio* was published by Black Rose Books with the support of AMARC, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters. AMARC's head office is in Montreal and it has regional offices in Africa, Europe and Latin America. Up-to-date information about the organisation and its activities is available on the internet at www.amarc.org.

Nine years later, I would like to once again thank the many people who contributed to this book for their support and their insights. Evelyne Foy, then Secretary General of AMARC, provided invaluable assistance with the first edition. In 2001, Amy Mahan, designed the electronic edition and helped deal with technology-induced quirks.

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