

# MORE NEWS, MORE JOBS

**A hiring explosion continued in the TV news industry last year, and more than half the TV stations surveyed plan to add even more news coverage next year. Nearly one in seven radio stations reported adding news staff, but more importantly, the radio staff cutbacks of 1994 have begun to taper off.**

**A**ffiliation changes have "literally created...1,500 to 2,000 jobs that didn't exist before," according to Barbara Frye, director of Talent Placement Services at Frank N. Magid Associates in Marion, IA. These changes may have made 1995 the biggest year yet for television hirings, but other factors are continuing to fuel an explosion of jobs in television news.

Almost two-thirds of the TV stations in the RTNDF/Ball State University Survey added news staff. Just 6 percent decreased. Even radio's steady slide eased, with just 8 percent of radio stations reporting staff cutbacks.

"I thought after a year that things would settle down," said Frye, "but I still can't keep up with it."

A year ago, New World Communications Group stations, having converted to Fox from ABC, NBC and mostly CBS, were leading the way with huge staffs running seven hours of news a day at stations in Cleveland, Detroit and Kansas City, MO. Atlanta ran six and a half. A year later, what's the story?

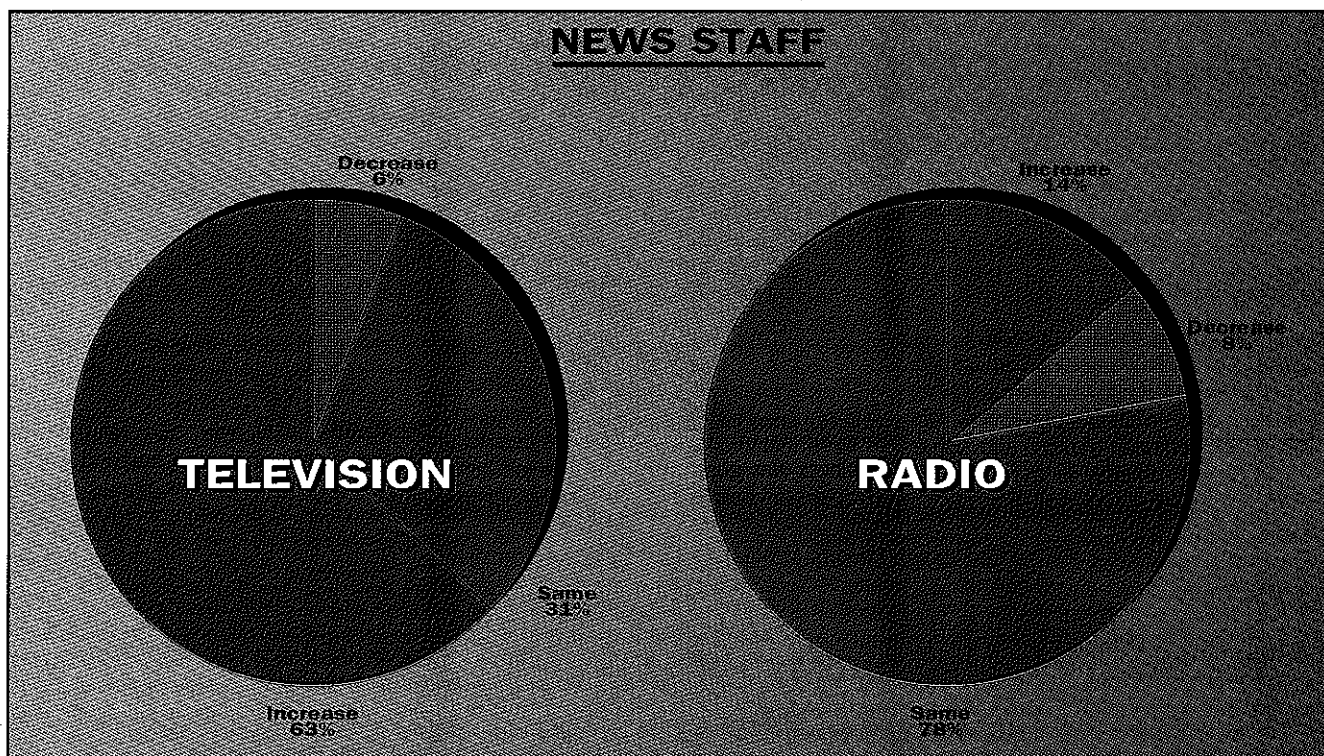
At WAGA-TV in Atlanta (market #10), News Director Budd McEntee is still near 130 newspeople running six and a half hours a day, but the station is adding four more staffers this year. "A number of people thought we'd fall off the face of the earth," said McEntee. "But we've proven them wrong. As far as WAGA is concerned, we'll continue to grow. We wouldn't add people if we didn't believe in what WAGA is doing.

There will be no slowing down; we'll continue to grow and grow and grow."

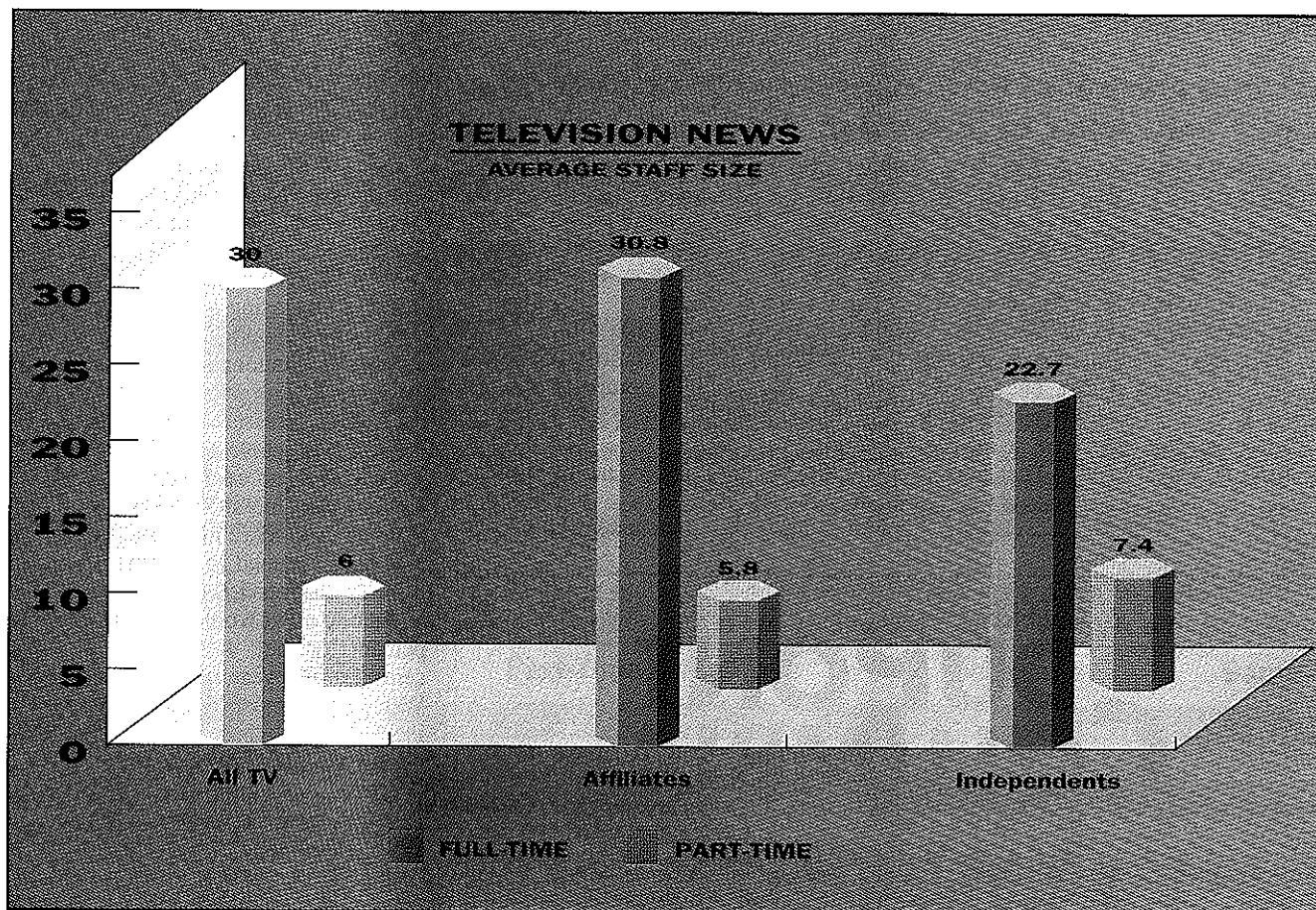
Kathy Williams, news director at WJW-TV in Cleveland (market #13), said the station is up to seven and a half hours a day, after adding more news in the early morning.

Mike McDonald, news director at WDAF-TV in Kansas City, MO (market #31), did the same. He said they have the same staff—about 110—but are now up to seven and a half hours a day.

The only cutback at New World is in Detroit, where News Director Mort Meisner said they dropped the 4 p.m. news (a program started before the change to Fox) and added a half hour in the morning. WJBK-TV now runs six and a half hours a day—with about six



**Nearly two out of every three television newsrooms added staff in 1995, and that trend is likely to continue with stations planning to add more news coverage. Radio stations increasing news staff outnumbered those decreasing staff by nearly two to one in 1995, indicating an end to the large cutbacks of 1994.**



Average television news staffs showed an increase of three full-time positions since 1994. The largest staff increases were with the independents, with an average increase of 10 full-time positions since 1994.

fewer people than a year ago.

Bottom line: So far, the news-heavy New World stations are still holding their own. Joe Saitta, vice president for Affiliate News at Fox, said people should look at the big picture. Five years ago, Saitta said only 14 Fox stations ran local news. By the end of 1995, the RTNDF/Ball State

University Survey found 75 Fox affiliates running local news.

Television stations affiliated with ABC, CBS and NBC were most likely to have local news—at 94 percent, 98 percent and 96 percent of their affiliates, respectively. Less than half the Fox affiliates, 46 percent, run local news. Thirty percent of independents and 27 percent of PBS affiliates run local news.

Within the last two years, 98 stations in 49 markets have changed affiliation or are just about to do so—and that's just ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC affiliates. "At one point last year, when New World was expanding, there were 240 news openings at Fox stations," according to Saitta, and "hundreds (will be hired) this year, at least."

Saitta said Fox has done a lot of research that it shares with its stations on aiming for the 18-year-old to 49-year-old audience. "Our strength is counterprogramming," said Saitta. "Why go up against three already established stations?" Saitta said he expects Fox's new 24-hour cable channel to be up by the end of the year, but people should not expect Fox to roll out a traditional net-

work evening newscast.

The huge amount of news on some Fox stations gets a lot of the attention, but that's just the beginning. "Even if they (Fox) cut back, it would not have a huge impact," said Magid's Barbara Frye. "The expansion is everywhere." Like the new ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates.

Ron Bilek, news director at WNCN-TV, the new NBC station in Raleigh-Durham, NC (market #32), added 68 full-time and four part-time people in 1995 and is still expanding.

Station Manager Jim Swinehart at KSHB-TV in Kansas City, MO, now an NBC affiliate, said the station is up to 72 people with a few vacancies—with news and staff expansion planned again for this year. "We're in the process of looking back on what we did wrong and what we did right," said Swinehart, "taking another look and rebuilding."

In Atlanta, WGNX-TV, the independent-turned-CBS affiliate, is now up to around 50 newspeople. News Director Mike Dreaden said this is a year of consolidation and fine-tuning. Dreaden said

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**About the Survey:**  
The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 1995 among all 1,196 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 922 radio stations. Valid responses came from 679 television stations (56.8 percent) and 449 radio stations (48.7 percent).

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## **Stations that added news reported adding almost three and a half hours of news per week—with even the smallest markets adding more than two hours a week.**

to watch for growth in news and staff again in 1997.

But affiliation change wasn't the only reason for adding news and staff.

There were no affiliation changes in Boise, ID (market #125), but in 1995, KIVI-TV News Director Brink Chipman added a half-hour of news a day and another six people (to 32). That's on top

of a daily half-hour and three people added in 1994. Chipman said they may expand again this year.

Overall, a remarkable 49 percent—almost half of all stations—reported adding news in 1995, compared to just 3 percent cutting back. The rest stayed the same.

Stations that added news reported

adding almost three and a half hours of news per week—with even the smallest markets adding more than two hours a week. The most popular places to add news: weekday morning (the runaway winner), followed by weekday evening (usually early evening), then weekday midday, weekday night and weekend morning.

While stations throughout the country reported increasing news, stations in the Midwest and South were the most likely to add, and stations in the West far less likely to add.

Those increases aren't over. More than half (51 percent) of the responding news directors said they planned to increase the amount of locally produced news in the next 12 months (1996). Only 1 percent planned to decrease—and all were in markets 151+. The rest said the amount of news would stay the same (38 percent) or they weren't sure (10 percent). For this year, news directors in the West are the most likely to be planning increases, and those increases in news usually mean increases in staff.

The average staff size in television jumped three full-time positions in 1995—from 27 people to 30, plus 6 part-timers. Stations in every market size moved up, led by markets 1-25, 26-50 and 101-150. Stations were most likely to add photographers and reporters—with producers a strong third. The largest full-time staffs were in the South and West. The Northeast led in part-timers. Stations in the Midwest had the fewest number of full-time and part-time employees.

News Director Dave Lerner is in the planning stages. KGWN-TV in Cheyenne, WY (market #193), has been for sale for two years, so that's kept things in a holding pattern. Even so, staff expanded by one in 1995, to 14 full time and one part time. Now, with a new owner coming in, Lerner expects to expand news and people—as long as he can figure out where to put them physically.

Ownership changes don't always bring growth. KSBW-TV, in Monterey-Salinas, CA (market #115), added a new morning agriculture news program at 5 a.m. in 1995, but 1996 brought a new owner and cutbacks. News Director Laura Clark said she lost three full-time and two part-time positions, although she has since gained one back. The staff now stands at around 35, running 22 hours of news per week. Clark notes that news took less of a hit than other departments in the new owner belt-tightening.

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# **ALFRED I. DUPONT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AWARDS**

Entries are now being accepted for the annual Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards in television and radio journalism. News and public affairs programs that originally aired between July 1, 1995, and June 30, 1996, are eligible. Awards are given for overall excellence in the following categories:

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## TV News by Affiliation

	Number of Stations	Number with Local News	Percent	No Local News
ABC	188	177	94%	11
CBS	187	183	98%	4
Fox	163	75	46%	88
NBC	196	189	96%	7
Independent	264	80	30%	184
PBS	198	54	27%	144
Totals	1,196	758	63%	438

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey found that of 1,196 nonsatellite, operational television stations, 758 (63 percent) run local news. That's not a projection; that's an exact figure for the fourth quarter of 1995 based on contacting every single television station in America. With an average of 30 full-time and six part-time people in news, that translates into approximately 22,700 people full time and 4,500 part time in local television news—a total of 27,200.

Average TV News Staff Size by ADI			TV News Staff Size Adjustments by Market Size*		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Increase	Decrease	Same
All	30	6	-	-	-
1-25	50.3	8.3	82%	3%	15%
26-50	46.3	7.3	72%	4%	24%
51-100	30.5	6	64%	6%	30%
101-150	22.7	4.7	64%	3%	33%
151+	16.8	3.8	49%	9%	42%
*Changes reported for the past 12 months.					

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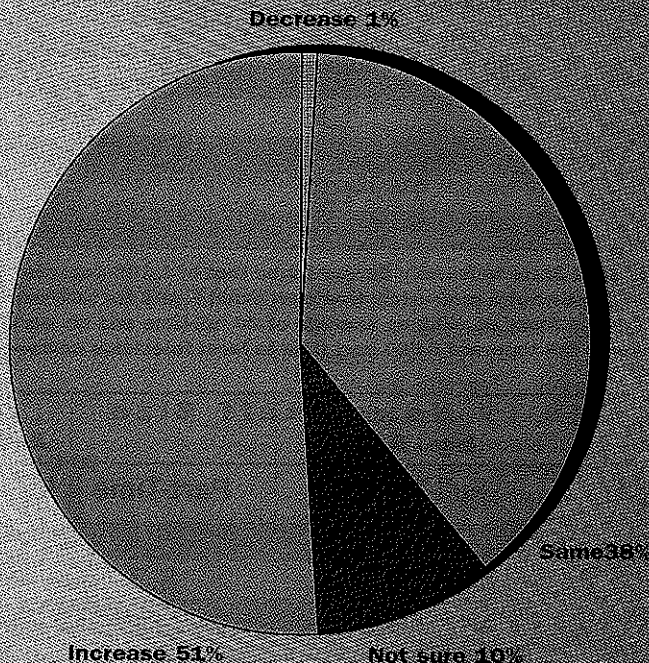
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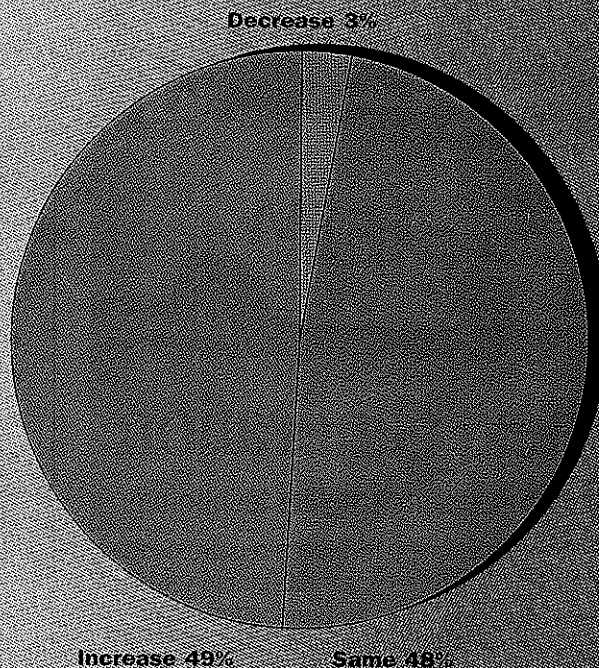
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**Amount of TV News  
Planned for the Next 12 months**



**Amount of TV News  
In the Past 12 Months**



**Increases in news coverage mean increases in staff, and the hiring explosion of 1995 is likely to continue because more than half of the stations surveyed plan to increase coverage in 1996.**

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Plans are now a little uncertain, after rival KCCN-TV shut down in late April.

In New Orleans (market #41), WVUE-TV's switch from ABC to Fox on January 1 of this year meant another three hours of local news per week, so far. By the end of the year, Acting News Director Lee Polowczuk said they'll expand to weekday mornings and possibly midday. Polowczuk has added some staff and is looking for more, as they adjust to different kinds of shows and different demands. Polowczuk thinks the audience is adjusting, too, figuring out who's where. "The big key to being taken seriously," said Polowczuk, "is a need to get into the breaking news business."

The larger the market, the more likely the station was to expand staff in 1995. Just under half (49 percent) of stations in markets 151+ added staff, but the figure rose steadily, with 82 percent of stations in the top-25 markets increasing staff.

News Director Mike Rausch said KGW-TV in Portland, OR (market #25), added news in 1995. At 28 hours per week, he said KGW runs the most news in the market—and intends to continue doing so. The station has added 10 people with the new shows and now has around 75. Decisions about more news and staff will be made soon.

WTTG-TV in Washington (market #7), added news late in 1994 and again in 1995. Former News Director Carl Gottlieb said they now run four and a half hours each weekday and added "a significant number" of staff, "both for the new shows and because we needed more people to do what we do." The Fox O&O is evaluating the situation now. "I'd love to do more," Gottlieb said, "but right now, nothing's solid."

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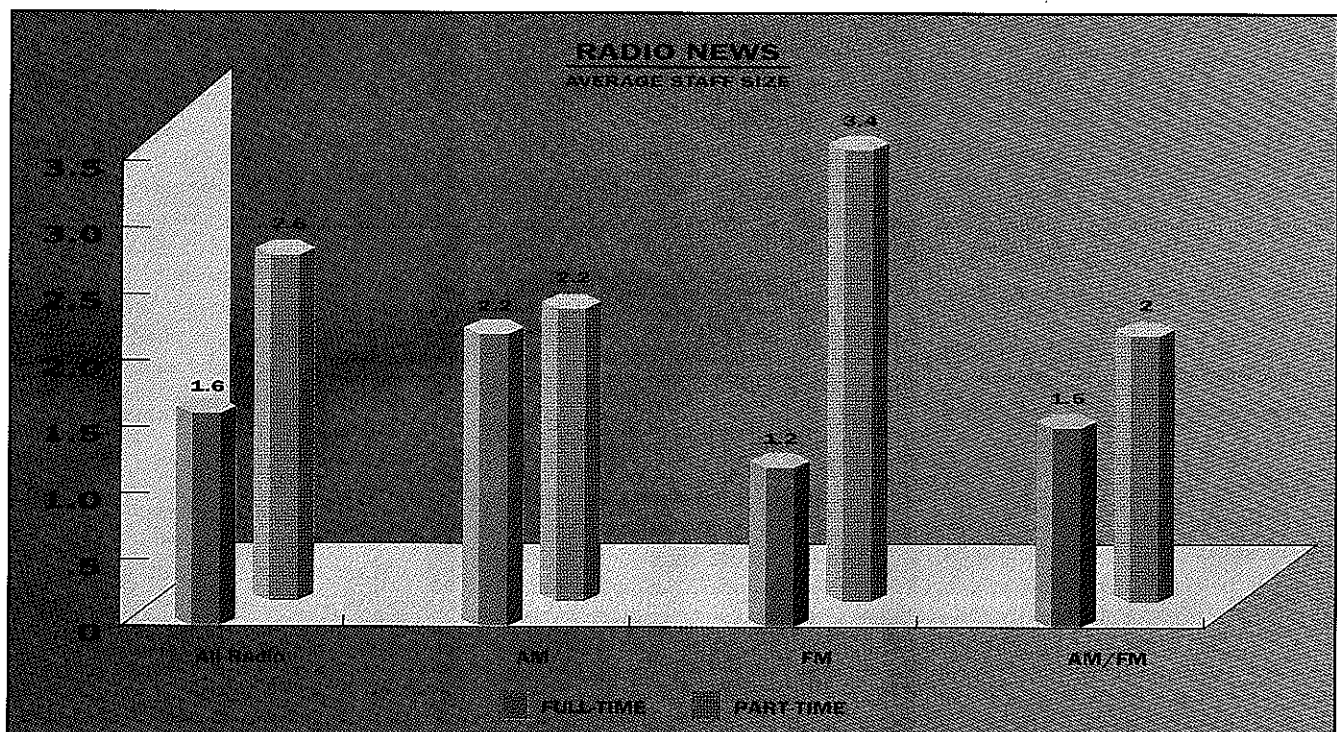
News Director Phyllis Schwartz said WLS-TV in Chicago (market #3) has added five hours of local news a week in the last 12 months or so—

including expanded morning news and Sunday morning. The ABC O&O now runs four hours of news each weekday. "People are getting up earlier and out earlier," Schwartz said of the morning expansion. On the weekend, she said that "people are hungry for local news to complement other shows." Schwartz said they've added staff with each new show—in many cases looking for specialized skills and expertise.

Beyond affiliation changes and growth in news, a lot of stations added staff simply to provide better coverage. The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey found that one in four stations that added staff in 1995 added no more news to the schedule.

Terry Heaton, news director at WAAY-TV in Huntsville, AL (market #83), didn't add any more news last year, but he added "a few" people in 1995 and seven so far this year. Most are involved in five new news bureaus in outlying areas. Some of the increase also involved the switch back from one-man bands to separate reporters and photographers. Heaton called it a three-year experiment that just didn't work. Heaton also said he's looking at news expansion. "You have to work a little harder and move a little quicker," Heaton said, "but it's a great time to be in the business."

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The average radio full-time staff size dropped to under two positions in 1995, but part-time positions increased.

## Radio News Staff Size

	Full-Time Staff				Average Full Time	Median Full Time	Largest Full Time	Average Part Time
	1	2	3-5	6+				
All radio	69%	19%	9%	3%	1.6	1	8	2.6
AM only	58%	18%	16%	8%	2.2	1	8	2.2
FM only	84%	14%	2%	—	1.2	1	5	3.4
AM/FM	66%	23%	10%	1%	1.5	1	8	2
AM music	65%	25%	8%	2%	1.6	1	8	1.8
AM news or talk	57%	17%	17%	9%	2.2	1	8	1.8
FM music	73%	21%	6%	—	1.4	1	5	1.7
FM news or talk	46%	18%	27%	9%	2.4	2	8	1.8

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### RADIO

Interestingly, the percentage of radio stations in the survey running local news, 63 percent, was exactly the same as the percentage of television stations running local news. Radio stations that ran news averaged fewer than two full-time people, and part-timers heavily outnumbered full-timers.

Unlike in television, stations in the Northeast were likely to have the largest staffs—both full time and part time. Like television, radio stations in the Midwest had the smallest news staffs.

Brian Hill is considered the news director at KPRC (AM, news/talk) in Houston but he doesn't actually work for the station. When KPRC sold three years ago, the buyer changed strategy and staffing. The station went from a news station with talk to the reverse. The station also went from a full-time staff of 11 or 12 to just four—all of whom actually work for Metro Networks (a subsidiary of Metro Traffic). "We used to have staffing at city hall, other places, the police beat. Now there's none of that," according to Hill. "If we don't cover it on the phone, we don't do it."

Hill is the only newsperson who actually broadcasts from the station—the rest are at Metro's Houston headquarters. In 1995, news lost another hour—paring down to 5 to 7 a.m. when the 7 to 8 a.m. hour switched from news to local talk. Hill expects no changes this year. "I'm grateful

there won't be any more cuts."

In contrast to KPRC, News Director Ray Waiter said little has changed at WHBY (AM, news/talk) in Appleton, WI, which has had a strong reputation for local news for as long as he can remember. Waiter has worked at WHBY for 23 years. In fact, the newest member of the three-person news team has been at the station for eight years. All told, they run 22 local newscasts a day: morning drive, noon and through the afternoon. Waiter said things look pretty stable to him.

Local news has just returned on KNJO (FM, soft adult contemporary) in Riverside, CA. Harvey Kern, director of Public Affairs and Public Service and morning air personality, said the station's new owners are building the place back up. The news will be done by Shadow Broadcasting out of Los Angeles; there will be no reporters at the station. The 92-second updates (matching the station's frequency) will run every half-hour from 6 to 9 a.m., concentrating on local Conejo and Simi Valley news.

News Director Cindie Jeter said 1995 meant "doing more news with less people" at KZIM (AM, news/talk) in Cape Girardeau, MO. She has two afternoon co-anchors/reporters. The station used to have a couple part-timers, but they're gone. Jeter has lengthened some of the newscasts and added more of them. "I have to use every moment of the workday to get things done," said Jeter, who is on the air for five straight hours. In addition to doing the news on KZIM, there's also KEZS (FM,

country), and when she's done with the news from 5:30 to 9 a.m., she handles a talk show until 10:30 a.m. Jeter said she loves it, and she feels it's like talking with family—although it's a far cry from Los Angeles where she used to work: "I loved the people and the equipment, but I got tired of going to work with armed guards." Jeter said she hopes to add another full-time anchor/reporter later this year.

Ron St. Pierre is program director and oversees the news on WKGR (FM, classic rock) and WBZT (AM, talk) in Fort Pierce, FL. The FM runs news inserts in morning drive, done by co-host Gloria Harlowe. St. Pierre said Harlowe's position is really an entertainment slot, not news. Bill Adams handles the news on the talk station, gathering material on the phone. The station runs two-and-a-half to three-minute newscasts on the hour and one-minute updates on the half-hour—morning drive only. St. Pierre said there are no plans to increase news staff, but they are thinking about running local news later in the day on the talk station.

Dave Williams, program director at WSOS (FM, adult contemporary) in St. Augustine, FL, said the station is really "music driven." The station does two newscasts a day—at 9 a.m. and noon—each four to five minutes and all local. He's doing it now, after a news service they had went out of business. Before that, they didn't run news.

Hank Baughman handles the news for

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## Radio stations that ran news averaged fewer than two full-time people, and part-timers heavily outnumbered full-timers.

WSHH (FM, soft rock) in Pittsburgh. He's watched news get cut back and de-emphasized during his eight years at the station. The station runs news, sports and traffic from 5:30 to 8:30 a.m. Then, it's just music.

News Director Laura Ridder said her stations are doing more news now than they were before—although she's still the only one doing it. WKLP (AM, talk and music) and WQZK (FM, classic rock) in Keyser, WV, run news several times in morning drive, once in afternoon drive and twice on Saturday.

Carole Thornton brought local news back to WTHH (FM, R&B and oldies) in Atlantic City, NJ. For at least a while, the station had run only network news until she started this January. While Thornton is the only person in news, she's hoping to add a part-timer to help cover the community. News runs every half-hour from 6:30 through 9:30 a.m.

Bob Garman has been looking for his replacement in news at KKXL (AM, news/talk) and KKXL (FM, CHR) in

Grand Forks, ND. Garman is actually the new program director, overseeing the format change from country to news/talk on the AM. In the meantime, he's been doing the news, including three local morning drive newscasts on the FM. Garman expects to hire a full-time news director, a part-timer, a meteorologist and someone in sports—among others—as part of an increasing focus on local news.

John Richards is the news director at KINN (AM, adult contemporary) and KZZX (FM, country) in Alamogordo, NM. The stations simulcast three five-minute newscasts each weekday: 7 a.m., noon and 5 p.m. and Saturday at noon (for two minutes). Richards actually just prepares material. The air people decide whether to use the material and actually read it. Richards said it's been that way for the five years he's been there. Richards figured he spends little more than an hour a day working in news. The rest of the day he spends selling advertising.

Pat Gaffney has worked at WMAS (AM, big band) and WMAS (FM, adult

contemporary) for 10 years. Back then, she said, the station had six people and "covered everything all day long." She said about every two years, another round of cuts took another newscaster. The last round in December left Gaffney as the entire news department—although she has added a part-timer. News runs in morning drive only now, and she doesn't cover stories; the last sound bites went about four years ago. "I guess you have to change with the times," said Gaffney. She still likes radio, but her other job doing transcription work at a medical office really pays the bills these days. "That's reality." ■

**Bob Papper is associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. Andrew Sharma, Ph.D., and Michael Gerhard, Ph.D., are both assistant professors of telecommunications at Ball State University with extensive industry and research experience. This research was supported by the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University and the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation.**

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