

By Bob Papper, Andrew Sharma and Michael Gerhard

SALARIES MOVING UP

Affiliation changes, start-up news operations and expanding news departments and newscasts made 1995 another good year for people moving into the business and moving up within it.

Salary "increases are running 5, 6, 7, 8 percent and more," according to Don Fitzpatrick of Don Fitzpatrick Associates talent placement in San Francisco, "primarily because of the amount of hiring and the bidding that's taking place. Two or three years ago, a news director would say, 'It's \$35,000. Take it or leave it.' Now, it's a bidding war—especially for male anchors and reporters. And good producers can just write their own tickets."

Phone calls made around the country, in conjunction with the 1995 RTNDF/Ball State University Survey, showed that affiliation changes, start-up news operations and expanding news departments and newscasts made 1995 another good year for people moving into the business and moving up within it.

Most news directors reported salary increases in the 4 to 6 percent range, with at least some people under contract getting closer to 10 percent if they resigned with their old station. Virtually everyone we talked with labeled 1995 a better year for salaries than 1994. (See graph on page 17.)

Fitzpatrick said more people were hired in each of the last two years than in any other year in the past decade.

"The biggest (hiring) problem is that there are lots more stations doing news," according to Steve Hammel, news director at KMOV-TV in St. Louis. "You must make a decision a lot faster than

you used to because others are looking."

"It's supply and demand," said Fitzpatrick. "We got to the point in the office with news directors in every day looking for the same people. I told them, if they're here, chances are other news directors in similar markets are doing the same thing. If you like the person, call and talk to them—at least get on their dance card."

Some of those competitive forces come from people like Bob Schadel. He's the news director for a start-up news department at KOKH-TV in Oklahoma City (market #43). The Fox

Virtually everyone we talked with labeled 1995 a better year for salaries than 1994.

station plans to start with a half-hour newscast at 9 p.m. on Memorial Day. Schadel didn't want to talk about specific salaries but said his budget allows him to be competitive in the market, and he's having no trouble finding local people interested in moving and talented younger people in smaller markets wanting to move up.

But Schadel noted that it's tougher to find quality talent now than it was before Fox. The demand is going up. "It comes down to the almighty dollar," according to Schadel. "If a station is willing to pay, it can get top news people."

Talent agent Bill LaPlante saw 1995 as a variable year, with many of his people seeing raises in the 5 to 10 percent range. Media Alliance, in Burlington, CT, represents fewer than 50 people. LaPlante saw last year as especially good for people getting into the business, but he's worried about the industry losing good people because of the low starting salaries.

David Crane, whose agency in Ormond Beach, FL, represents 50 to 60

people, said he saw the same 5 to 6 percent increases. News directors usually started offering around 4 percent, said Crane, but "when someone is highly desired, you can negotiate pretty hefty raises of 10 or even 20 percent sometimes."

Crane agreed that the affiliation changes and new start-ups have presented lots of new opportunities and helped salaries, but, he said, there are dangers, too. "These new operations can be difficult places to work, with lots of unformed program concepts. So unless you're extremely versatile, you may have been perceived as a solution (when you were first hired), but six months down the road, you may be perceived as the problem" if the news department changes direction.

"News directors want to keep the increases fairly modest," according to Rick Gevers in Grand Rapids, MI, who moved from news director to talent agent in 1995. "The thing that astounds me is the variance between markets.... Sometimes you can find double the pay in a smaller market."

"Tenure has a lot to do with it," according to Gevers, "and sometimes it's just competitive forces in the market or a union. It varies." Gevers said the increases he's seen have varied from as little as 3 to 4 percent into the low double digits.

As always, with rare exceptions, salaries moved up with size of staff and market size. (See tables on pages 19 and 20.)

Jay Hildebrandt, news director at KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID (market #163), said most of his people got raises of \$500 to \$1,000 a year in 1995. At his salary levels, that translated to 3 to 7 percent.

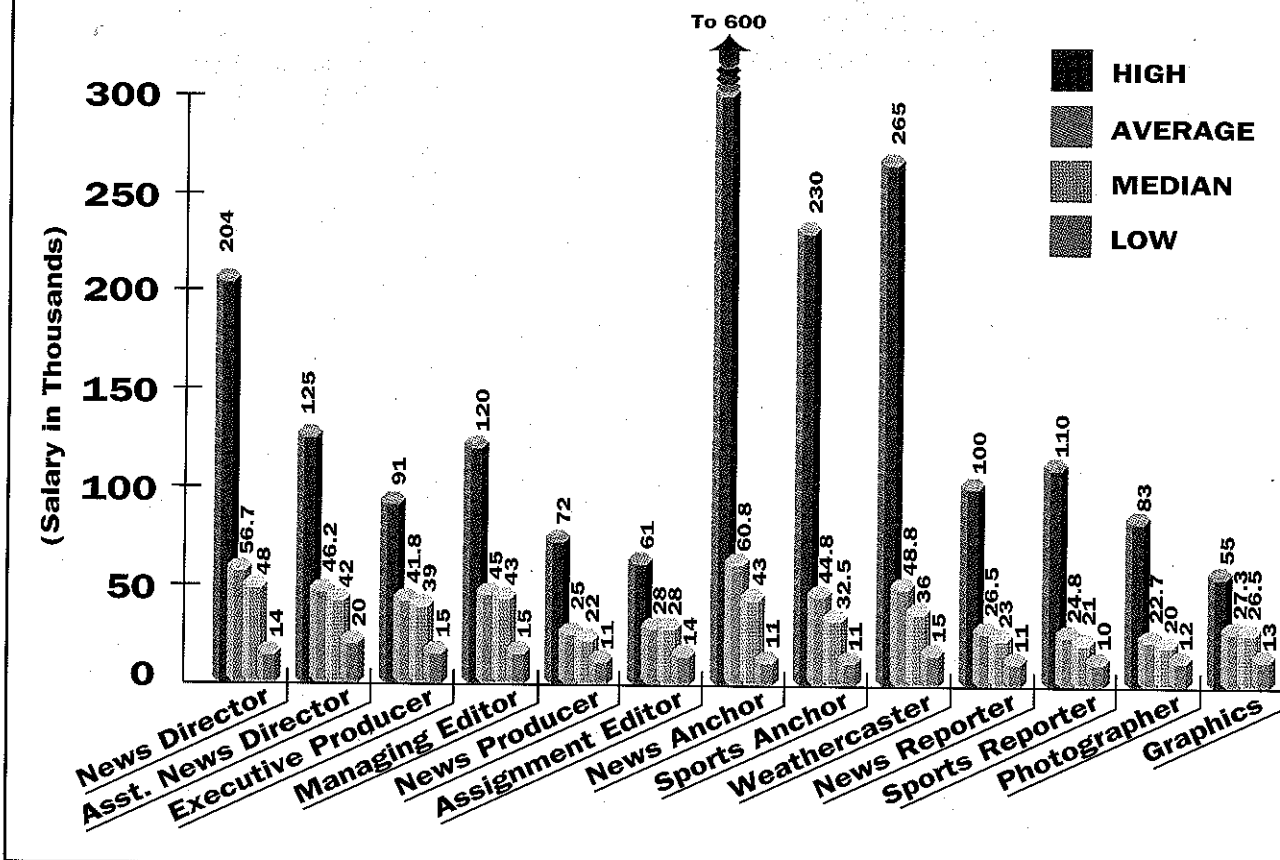
Renard Maiuri is news director at KDRV-TV in Medford, OR (market #145), as well as KEZI-TV in Eugene. Maiuri said raises were around 5 to 6 percent, which is better than past years.

Mary Loftus said last year was at least marginally better than before.

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).

TELEVISION NEWS SALARIES



The range between the low salary and the high salary for each position is enormous. The low end usually means small market and small staff; the high end: major market and the biggest newsrooms. The better indicator of salaries is represented in the median figure—the midpoint of all the salaries.

Raises in her news department at WIBW-TV in Topeka, KS (market #142), were generally 4 to 5 percent.

That's close to what Bruce Cramer saw, as news director at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, FL (market #116). Cramer said raises ranged from 3 to 5 percent, depending on merit, experience and longevity. "And I've got Florida to sell," said Cramer, and that helps.

A booming economy helped Roger Bell, news director at KVBC-TV in Las Vegas (market #66). Raises there were "in the 5 percent range in general, maybe a little more."

Percentages were a lot higher for some of the people at WHBQ-TV in Memphis, TN (market #42). News director George Tyll brought the new Fox affiliate from 28 news people to 55. And along the way, Tyll said he really brought the low end up to make it a lot more competitive in the market.

Steve Schwaid, news director at WVIT-TV in Hartford, CT (market #26), said raises fell in the 4 to 5 percent range, and "nobody got no raise." That's a good year after the retrenchment his

station (and so many others) had a couple of years ago.

Steve Hammel, news director at KMOV-TV in St. Louis, said his newsroom raises of 3 to 4 percent had been determined a number of years ago. Everyone is union at KMOV-TV, and the 1996 raise of 3 percent has already been negotiated.

Trends

The biggest trend David Crane sees is more and more longer term contracts—up to five years. Crane said a number of his clients have agreed to smaller raises as a trade-off for greater security, but not everyone wants to be tied down like that, either.

And it isn't just longer contracts. As we noted last year, more and more stations appeared to be signing more and more people to contracts. Larger stations have always had contracts with anchors and reporters. Today, those stations frequently sign producers and assignment editors to contracts, too. So do more and more smaller stations.

"We sign everyone for a couple-year commitment," according to Jay

Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID. "That makes it worthwhile to go through the effort to train them. They stay for a couple years, minimum." After a couple years, most go on to larger markets.

"We got hit real hard a year and a half ago" with three people leaving to bigger markets, said Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV in Medford, OR. "After that, we changed our policy: Most (on-air) people are under contract, and there are no outs in the first year." Maiuri also said he has more multiyear contracts than ever before, some reaching to three years.

Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, FL, said most of his people are under contract—except photographers. "It's very, very hard keeping people," especially producers. "They're gold right now. I've got two under contract, but their contracts are coming up, and I expect them to move on and make more money."

Many news directors told us about 1995 as a year for salary parity—either

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News directors report making as little as \$14,000 a year and as much as \$204,000. The average was \$56,700 and the median was \$48,000.

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bringing up the low end in the newsroom or bringing salaries more in line with others in the market.

"Historically, we've been a bit lower than the others," according to Marc Cotta at KJEO-TV in Fresno, CA (market #57). He said their big goal was to bring up their salaries to be more even with the market, especially for those who are "grossly underpaid."

That was a theme echoed by George Tyll at WHBQ-TV in Memphis, TN. Tyll said probably their biggest push in salaries was "on the lower end," people paid well below market.

The short-term future? Rick Gevers thinks this year will be strong, with the Olympics and big elections pouring dollars into stations. Gevers said the year to watch for retrenchment is 1997.

David Crane also sees this year as a strong one, and he thinks that some movement in the syndicated market away from tabloid sensationalism could offer some more attractive alternatives for people in the business.

Bill LaPlante and others are waiting to see exactly what ABC, NBC/Microsoft and Fox do, if anything, in the cable/electronic news business.

"In the back of my mind, a voice says it's slowing up," noted Don Fitzpatrick.

"But it's not. We're as busy as we've ever been."

News Directors

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey found TV news directors making as little as \$14,000 a year and as much as \$204,000. The average was \$56,700 and the median (midpoint of the group) was \$48,000.

Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV said news directors in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID, make in the mid-\$20s or so. Hildebrandt is also one of the station's main anchors, so his situation is a little different. He said he and co-anchor Karole Honas got tired of young, inexperienced news directors going through the market, so he and Honas suggested to management that they also manage the department (Honas is now assistant news director)—and split the news director's salary between them.

Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV said news directors in Medford, OR, get paid between the mid-\$30s and the high \$40s.

In Tallahassee, FL, Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV said news directors make in the \$40s.

Marc Cotta, news director at KJEO-TV, figured news directors in Fresno,

CA, make anywhere from \$60,000 to \$100,000.

Roger Bell at KVBC-TV said news directors in Las Vegas earn between \$75,000 and \$100,000.

That's higher than George Tyll at WHBQ-TV in Memphis, TN, estimated for news directors there: \$70,000 to \$80,000 or so.

But it's lower than Steve Hammel at KMOV-TV in St. Louis figured for his market. "Over \$100,000, for sure," said Hammel.

Other News Managers

Overall, assistant news directors, executive producers and managing editors averaged in the low to mid-\$40s, with median salaries of \$42,000, \$39,000 and \$43,000 respectively. The figure for managing editor is deceptively high because most stations, including medium and smaller ones, have an assistant news director and/or an executive producer, but few stations outside larger and major markets have managing editors. That inflates the average (and median) for managing editors.

Assistant news directors made a bit more than executive producers or managing editors, but the relative pay between executive producers and managing editors varied too much to give either the nod over the other.

At a number of smaller stations, the assignment editor also serves as executive producer or the management equivalent. In Topeka, KS, the assignment editor at WIBW-TV is also the executive

Median Television News Salaries by Market Size

	1-25	26-50	51-100	101-150	151+
News Director	\$106,000	\$75,000	\$55,000	\$43,000	\$38,000
Asst. News Dir.	78,000	52,000	42,000	35,000	30,000
Executive Prod.	65,000	45,000	35,000	30,000	33,000
Managing Ed.	60,000	42,000	39,500	38,000	30,000
News Producer	37,000	30,000	23,000	18,000	18,000
Assignment Ed.	38,000	30,000	27,000	24,000	20,000
News Anchor	135,000	76,000	47,000	35,000	28,000
Sports Anchor	93,000	55,000	35,000	29,000	24,500
Weathercaster	100,000	60,000	40,000	32,000	27,000
News Reporter	45,000	30,000	24,000	18,000	17,000
Sports Reporter	45,000	28,000	23,000	18,500	17,000
Photographer	35,000	25,000	20,000	17,000	16,000
Graphics	35,000	21,000	20,000	26,000	17,000

producer, the number two position there. In Tallahassee, FL, the assignment editor at WTXL-TV is also the managing editor, the number two position there.

In Medford, OR, Renard Maiuri said executive producers make in the mid-\$20s to mid-\$30s.

Over \$40,000, according to Roger Bell, news director at KVBC-TV in Las Vegas.

Other news managers in Fresno, CA, make in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range, according to KJEO-TV news director Marc Cotta.

In Memphis, TN: \$50,000 to \$60,000, according to George Tyll, news director at WHBQ-TV.

In St. Louis, news managers make \$55,000 and up, according to Steve Hammel at KMOV-TV, "but not six figures."

Assignment Editors and Producers

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey found similar numbers for both assignment editors and producers, with the low end a bit higher for assignment editors: \$14,000 vs. \$11,000. But the high end was a bit lower: \$61,000 for assignment editors vs. \$72,000 for producers. Both averaged in the mid to upper \$20s, but the median salary for assignment editors, \$28,000, is considerably higher than the median for producers, \$22,000. The difference could be based on the number of assignment editors who also serve as middle managers, especially in smaller stations.

Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID, said both positions make in the mid to high teens in his market.

In Medford, OR, Renard Maiuri said both make in the high teens to mid-\$20s, depending on experience. That's the same figure Bruce Cramer reported at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, FL.

Pick your salary, any salary, and there's probably an anchor making that somewhere. Our survey found a range (for main news anchors) of \$11,000 to \$600,000.

In Fresno, CA, Marc Cotta at KJEO-TV said assignment editors and producers make in the \$20s and \$30s, depending on experience.

Roger Bell at KVBC-TV in Las Vegas put the range for producers at \$17,000 to \$35,000, depending on show and experience. The assignment desk runs \$25,000 to \$40,000, Bell said.

George Tyll in Memphis, TN, gave similar numbers for assignment editors, but producers run in the low \$30s and up, he said.

Salaries for producers in St. Louis run in the mid-\$30s to mid-\$40s, according to Steve Hammel at KMOV-

TV. Assignment editors run in the mid-\$30s, he said, excluding overtime.

Anchors

Pick your salary, any salary, and there's probably an anchor making that somewhere. Our survey found a range (for main news anchors) of \$11,000 to \$600,000. The average comes to \$60,800, but that's inflated by the high end. A more realistic number is probably the median, which came to \$43,000. Overall, weather was second, with a median salary of \$36,000, and sports third, with a median of \$32,500.

Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV said main anchors in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID, make in the low to mid-\$30s.

Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV said reporters who do some anchoring make in the low \$20s or so. Main anchors, news, weather and sports, make in the mid-\$20s to mid-\$40s.

Mary Loftus at WIBW-TV in Topeka, KS, gave similar numbers. Reporters who do some anchoring make in the low to mid-\$20s; main anchors run in the low to mid-\$30s and up—depending on experience and longevity.

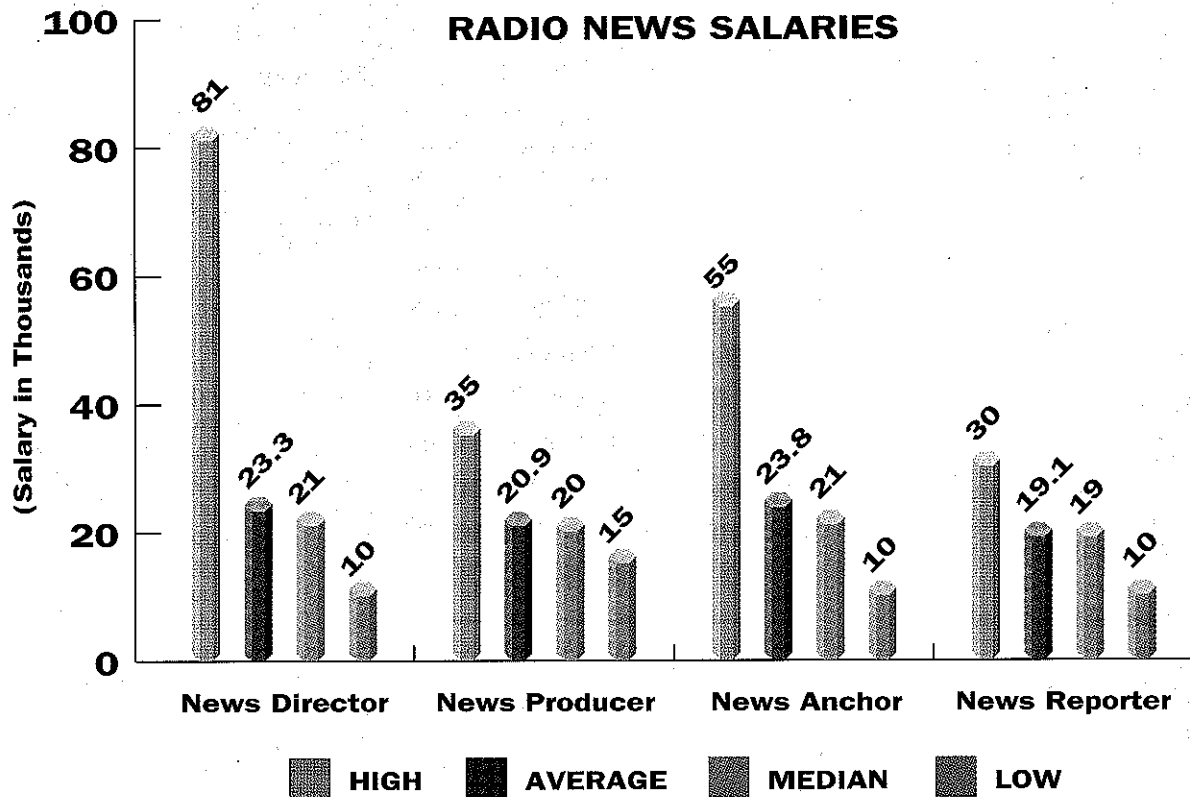
Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, FL, said all the main anchors there make "around \$30."

Marc Cotta at KJEO-TV in Fresno, CA, said main news anchors run \$40,000 to \$65,000 and up. And it could be up quite a bit. Weather and sports, he said, run \$30,000 to \$40,000 and up, and, again, it could be a lot more, depending

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Median Television News Salaries by Staff Size

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$111,000	\$70,000	\$49,000	\$40,000	\$30,500
Asst. News Dir.	70,000	49,000	34,000	29,000	25,000
Executive Prod.	62,000	41,000	30,500	25,000	32,500
Managing Ed.	57,500	42,000	35,000	25,000	45,000
News Producer	36,000	25,000	20,000	18,000	19,000
Assignment Ed.	36,000	30,000	25,000	20,000	18,000
News Anchor	125,000	70,000	40,500	28,000	22,000
Sports Anchor	86,500	50,000	31,000	25,000	21,000
Weathercaster	90,000	52,000	35,000	26,000	23,000
News Reporter	45,000	28,000	20,000	17,000	19,000
Sports Reporter	35,000	25,000	20,000	16,000	17,000
Photographer	34,000	24,000	18,000	16,000	19,000
Graphics	33,000	21,000	31,000	27,000	21,000



Although there's a large range between low salary and high salary for news directors, the range for other positions is much more compressed in radio than in television. That's why the average (the average of all the individual salaries) is so close to the median (the midpoint for all the salaries).



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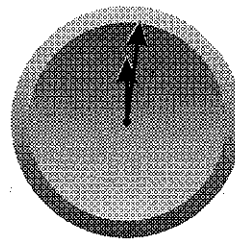
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on experience and length in the market.

Roger Bell at KVBC-TV in Las Vegas put secondary anchors in the \$30s and main news anchors between \$50,000 and \$125,000. He put weather and sports between \$35,000 and \$60,000—with maybe a slight edge in pay to weather.

George Tyll at WHBQ-TV put main anchors in Memphis, TN, at “no less than \$100,000” and probably up to \$125,000 or \$130,000.

Steve Hammel at KMOV-TV said main anchors in St. Louis run double

that or so: “over \$200,000.” Sports and weather run “all over the ballpark,” depending on the individual.

As is commonly the case, the highest paid anchors didn’t show up in the survey. Talent representative Bill LaPlante estimated that there are 12 to 15 local anchors in the country making more than a million dollars a year.

Reporters

News reporters in our survey made anywhere from a low of \$11,000 to a high of \$100,000. The average pay was \$26,500 and the probably more realistic median pay was \$23,000.

Reporters start out between \$13,000 and \$14,000 in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID, according to Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV, and then move to about \$15,000 in a year. Some anchoring would raise pay into the high teens.

In Medford, OR, reporters make in the mid teens to low \$20s, according to Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV. Most do at least some anchoring.

That’s pretty close to the numbers in Topeka, KS, according to Mary Loftus at WIBW-TV. Loftus said reporters who do some anchoring will move into the low to mid-\$20s.

Around \$18,000, according to Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, FL.

It depends on experience, according to Roger Bell at KVBC in Las Vegas. Less experienced reporters make \$18,000 to \$22,000, with experienced reporters running from \$24,000 to \$35,000.

In Fresno, reporters make \$25,000 to \$35,000, depending on experience, according to Marc Cotta at KJEO-TV. But, he said, there are some reporters in the market making more than that.

George Tyll at WHBQ-TV in Memphis, TN, figured reporters there make anywhere from \$25,000 at the low end up to \$40,000, depending on experience.

In St. Louis, reporters start at \$42,000 and go up from there, according to Steve Hammel at KMOV-TV.

Photographers

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey found photographers’ pay ranged from \$12,000 to \$83,000, with an average of \$22,700 and a median of \$20,000.

At KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, ID, Jay Hildebrandt said they really don’t have photographers—reporters shoot their own stories. The same situation is found in Medford, OR, at KDRV-TV, according to Renard Maiuri.

Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, FL, said photographers start out in the \$16,000 range plus overtime. Overtime runs about six to eight hours every two weeks, Cramer said, because he’ll bring in part-timers on weekends rather than pay overtime.

Roger Bell at KVBC-TV said photographers make \$16,500 to \$26,000 plus overtime, which could tack on another 10 percent.

Marc Cotta at KJEO-TV said a starting photographer in Fresno, CA, might make around \$20,000, but the average is \$25,000 to \$30,000 overall, with the

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"You trade certain things for quality of life. Small-market radio doesn't pay jack," said Steve Hair of KPQ in Wenatchee, WA.

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high end up between \$35,000 and \$40,000.

In Memphis, TN, George Tyll at WHBQ-TV figured photographers average around \$25,000.

In St. Louis, photographers can start around \$27,000 and go up to \$52,000 after seven years. Add another 6 to 7 percent for overtime, according to Steve Hammel at KMOV-TV.

RADIO

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey showed a pay range for radio news directors from \$10,000 at the low end up to \$81,000. The average was \$23,300 and the median (midpoint for the group) was \$21,000. Radio news reporters made from \$10,000 up to \$30,000, with an average of \$19,100 and a median of \$18,000. News producers and anchors did a bit better. (See graph on page 20.)

Steve Hair, the news director at KPQ (AM), news/talk, in Wenatchee, WA, said, "You trade certain things for qual-

ity of life." Salary is one of those things. "Small-market radio doesn't pay jack," Hair said. "You do it because you love it."

Hair has been doing it off and on for 23 years—five years at KPQ. "My biggest disappointment in radio news is the salaries," he said.

Hair has news anchors who host the programs and read material he's prepared. The anchors make \$12,000 to \$14,500. News directors make in the mid-\$20s, according to Hair. Raises were about \$50 per month last year—less than 2 percent.

Vicki Holloway said she took quite a pay cut—moving from a TV producer in Dallas to the news director (and "pretty much the whole news department") at KETR (FM) in Commerce, TX. It's a public station, soon to be a part of Texas A&M University. She does have students who help and a couple of part-timers.

Last year brought across-the-board 3 percent salary increases. Holloway said

she makes \$18,500, and as a single mom, that can be tough. She produces about a dozen packages a day, and she loves the experience she's gaining and the contacts she's making as a member of the Texas Board of Directors for the Associated Press.

Libby Jackson said her last raise came in October 1994, and she doesn't expect one this year, either.

Jackson is news director (and news staff—along with a sports director) at KEXO (AM), adult contemporary; KKNN (FM), hot country; KQIL (AM), traditional country; and KQIX (FM), rock, in Grand Junction, CO. She's been there 10 years and makes \$19,200. "TV here pays less than radio," Jackson said.

"When we first moved here, the place was in a real depression; everything was dead," according to Jackson. Now she said everything's building and robust, but it hasn't filtered down into salaries—for her or the town, generally.

Jackson said she loves Grand Junction. "I'm going to stay; I'm hoping for profit sharing."

Rich Fellingham, news director at KASI (AM), talk/oldies, and KCCQ (FM), top 40, in Ames, IA, said 1995 was a strong year, compared to previous ones. Salaries went up in the 3 per-

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cent range last year. But, he said, there are fewer radio news people in Iowa. "If they had three, they cut back to two; if they had two, they cut back to one; and some eliminated news completely," according to Fellingham.

Fellingham has two full-time news people plus an intern from Iowa State University. While he said the pay isn't great, it's better than average for radio.

John Harris expects this year to be better. He said 1995 was about the same as 1994 and 1993—no increases in staff and little increase in money. Harris is the one-person news department at WCVS (FM), 70s; WFMB (FM), country; and WFMB (AM), sports, in Springfield, IL. Radio news salaries are in the upper teens and lower \$20s, Harris said, but he is hoping for a pay increase this year.

Lynda Lambert left the network and Los Angeles radio to be closer to family, a better quality of life and "out of the madness of L.A." She knew the trade-off would be money, although she said they now own a house in Birmingham, AL—something that seemed inconceivable in Los Angeles.

She and three reporters/anchors handle the news on WERC (AM) news/talk; WMJJ (FM), adult contemporary; and WOWC (FM), country. That's an increase of one over last year. "Our research said we could add several rating points by upgrading the news product."

Reporters in Birmingham, AL, make in the low to mid-\$20s, Lambert said, and news directors make in the high \$20s to the mid-\$40s. 1995 meant "very, very minute increases: 2 to 3 percent, if that." And 1996? "It better look better," said Lambert with a smile.

Radio news is alive and very well, thank you, at WBAL (AM), news/talk, in Baltimore. Salaries in 1995 grew a little ahead of the previous three years: about 3 1/2 percent, compared to about 3 percent before. Mark Miller has a news department of 10 full-time reporters, one part-time reporter, plus a full-time traffic reporter, three meteorologists (shared with WBAL-TV), two in sports and part-timers covering financial and political issues.

"In the last 15 years," according to Miller, "the number of radio stations with news departments (in Baltimore) has dwindled from 10 to two." By departments, he said he means stations that actually have enough staff to send a reporter to cover something.

"TV is more competition than radio, with its morning shows and 10 a.m. news and 11 a.m. news."

In Baltimore, radio reporters start around \$28,000 and top out around \$50,000 in four years. That's AFTRA, but a long-time, popular newscaster could make a lot more. A radio news director makes around \$70,000.

"1996 looks good," according to Miller. He sees no changes in staffing, pay raises in line with '95, and, if anything, an increased commitment to news. "We just put a home page on the Internet, so there's more news going there." ■

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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