

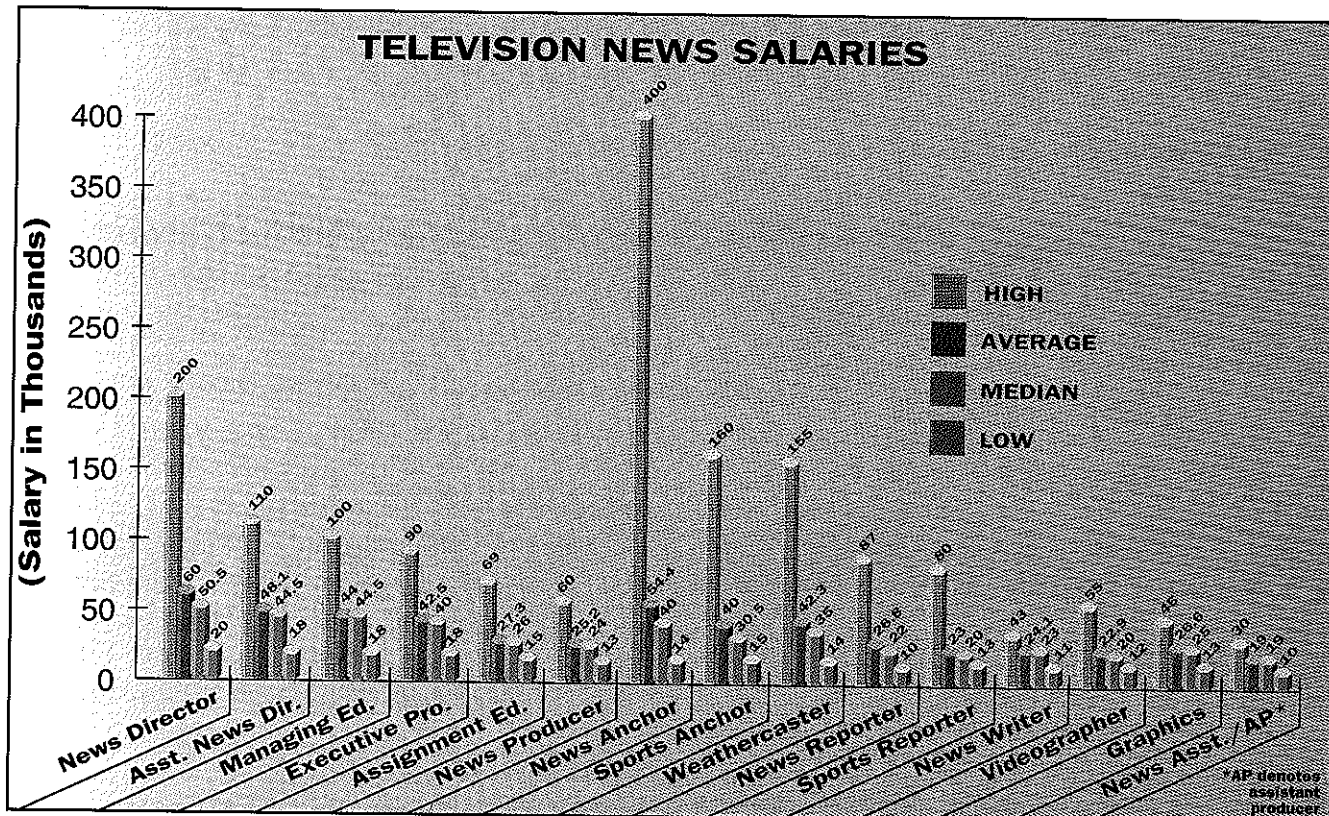
A STEADY YEAR FOR SALARIES

With the home-turf Olympics, a presidential election and a flurry of news start ups, many thought 1996 would be a booming year for electronic journalism salaries. Although the reality didn't quite live up to the high expectations, salaries and increases outpaced inflation in most cases, with producers and behind-the-scenes staffers leading the pack. Start ups fueled a flurry of newly created positions, and some news managers found themselves spending more to keep quality personnel.

"I tell my clients that before they go to bed, (they should) say a prayer to Rupert Murdoch," says Steve Caruso of Caruso and Company Professional Management Group in Sacramento, CA. Aided by continued expansion of local television news, more opportunities in cable news and more news start ups, 1996 was another good year for radio and television news salaries.

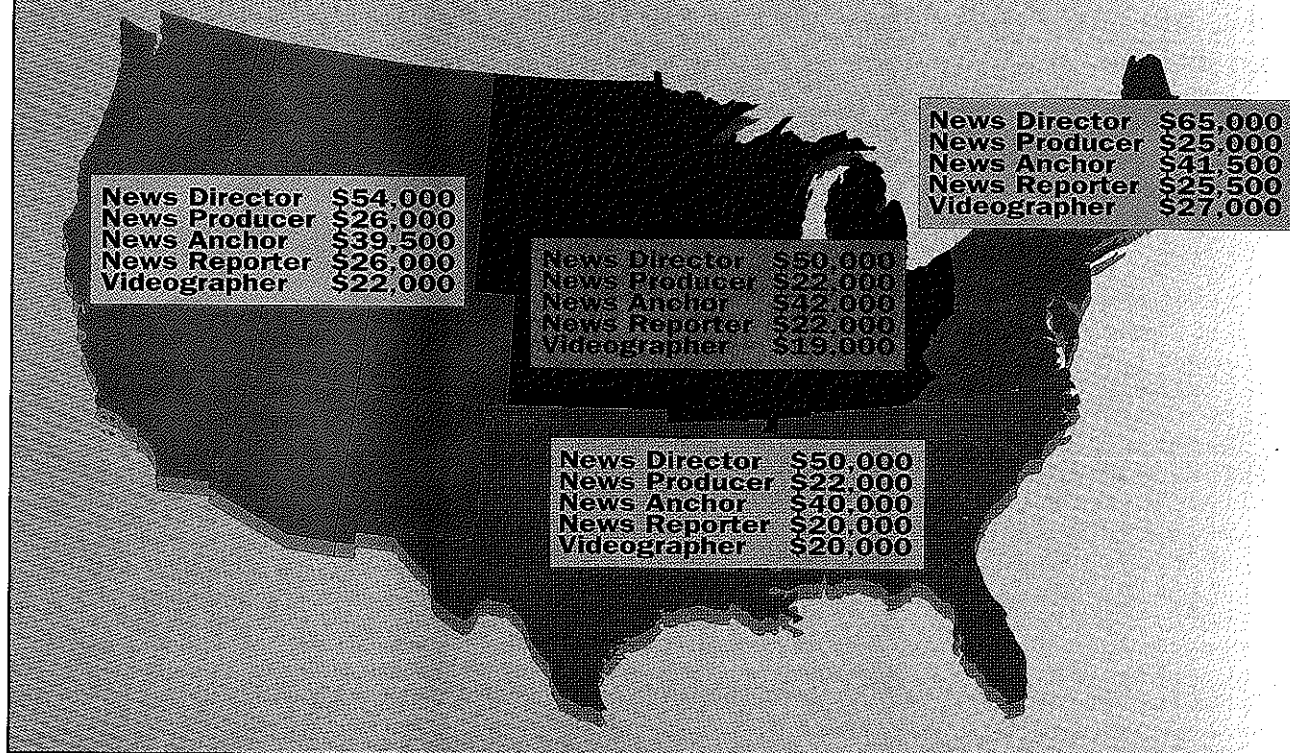
Attempting to compare 1995 with 1996 is extremely difficult. A slew of start-up news operations—mostly Fox affiliates in larger markets—brought many of the median salaries down as those stations populated smaller newsrooms with frequently below-market salaries. But that salary saving was not felt across the board. While overall on-air median salaries dropped by 5.1 per-

cent (for news, sports and weather), videographers remained the same, as did the combination of producers (which went up a bit) and assignment editors (which went down a bit). News managers, on the other hand, went up 4.5 percent. Overall, salaries went up fairly strongly in large newsrooms but slid in some smaller—and usually newer—news operations.



As always, the range between high and low salaries is enormous, with higher salaries going to stations with larger staffs and in larger markets. It's also clear from the numbers that few traditional network affiliates in the top 10 markets participated in the salary portion of the survey this year. The median—or midpoint—is probably a better gauge of the salaries being paid.

Median Television News Salaries by Region



Overall, television stations in the West were most likely to pay the highest salaries, followed very closely by stations in the Northeast. Midwest stations were much farther back with stations in the South generally paying the least.

Most news directors we spoke with talked about raises at least a little above inflation, which was about 3 percent in 1996. While increases were commonly in the 4.5-percent range, some stations reported salary hikes as high as 10 to 15 percent. Mostly, those high raises went to people viewed as under the market—raises given heavily to prevent turnover, especially among producers.

But depending on the market, those salary increases didn't necessarily translate into big total payroll jumps, as stations attempted to fill vacancies at the same salary levels they had been paying to departing staffers.

ABOUT THE SURVEY:

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 1996 among all 1,186 operating, nonsatellite television stations and a random sample of 843 radio stations. Valid responses came from 652 television stations (55 percent) and 351 radio stations (41.6 percent).

As always, the RTNDF/Ball State University Survey found that pay moves up as market size and staff size increase.

Looking Back on 1996

At KPAX-TV in Missoula, MT (market #174), News Director Paul Shoemaker says he had enough typical small-market turnover so that many salaries stayed the same in 1996—they just went to different people. For those who stayed, increases tended to range from about 5 to 8 percent, depending on the quality of the work.

Bob Young, news director at WGXA-TV in Macon, GA (market #123), says 1996 was an "interesting" year because the station had just changed ownership, switched affiliations from ABC to Fox and nearly tripled the size of the news department (to about 20 full time). Young says all staff members saw a salary increase, "in many cases, as much as 10 percent."

News Director Al Setka, at WHO-TV in Des Moines, IA (market #72), called 1996 a better year than 1995, with raises "above the rate of inflation." But those raises were not uniform. Setka says the rippling effect of more news at Fox stations meant bigger salary increases to keep producers and photog-

raphers, along with greater efforts at "growing your own." In contrast, Setka says talent was "a little flat or a slight increase." Setka says he found that replacing behind-the-scenes people usually meant spending at least as much money for a lot less experience. To cut back on that behind-the-scenes turnover, some people saw raises in the 10- to 15-percent range.

Mark Casey, news director at WTVD-TV in Raleigh, NC (market #30), views 1996 as a "flat year," with most staffers getting raises "just a step ahead of the inflation index" pretty much "across the board." Fortunately, Casey notes, the station didn't have to "reach into the free-agent market and pay outrageous amounts" for a major anchor.

News Director Nancy Shafran says she understood that 1996 was a good year for the station and hoped for the same this year. Many of the salary increases at KPRC-TV in Houston (market #11) were pre-determined by contract, according to Shafran. Others were "solely performance based," although "very few people" saw no increase. Increases ran in the single-

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"People come to work here...eight months or six months, and they're gone. They start to send out tapes at four months."

digit range; Shafran says it was doubtful that anyone got a double-digit raise.

Caruso thought 1996 involved "a little tightening of the belt" unless there was somebody the station really wanted who had the leverage of other options. Caruso says news directors in 1996 talked about 3-percent increases, but would frequently compromise around 5 percent. "Agents don't like to talk percentages; news directors like percentages," according to Caruso. "Agents want to talk about money."

Mendes Napoli at Napoli Management Group in Minneapolis found 1996 a "pretty flat" year, particularly in mid-size markets. Napoli says that it was his impression that increases were mostly small, in the 3- to 4-percent range, with news directors working at filling most openings for the same or less than they had been.

Henry Reisch, vice president at the William Morris Agency in New York, saw 1996 as a "very solid year," but varying a great deal from client to client. Again, it depends on the person's

"value to the station and opportunities outside the market." Generally, Reisch saw increases of 3 to 5 percent, similar to 1995.

Looking Ahead in 1997

Most of the people we talked to expect this year to look a lot like 1996, but that's considerably more optimistic than the same view a year ago. People expected 1996 to be a pretty good year—primarily because of the elections, the Olympics and start-up news operations (including cable). They were more concerned about possible belt-tightening in 1997. So far, those concerns have not materialized.

Still, WHO's Setka is cautious. There was a lot of political money in Iowa last year, so the station is taking a conservative approach so far. Even so, Setka expects raises to vary quite a bit, with producers and photographers again seeing the biggest increases.

WGXA's Young expects to continue news expansion this year in Macon, and

while he expects to add staff, he does not expect double-digit salary increases. Young expects increases of at least 4-plus percent.

Casey in Raleigh expects '97 to look a lot like '96. So does Caruso.

Napoli expects to see a lot of movement in '97, but relatively tight budgets with small increases. Still, cable has created more positions, and that plays a part in the movement in the industry. Napoli is still seeing some big jumps for good people—"bigger than ever." And "if the demand (for the individual) is high, you can get big money; but that's the exception."

Reisch expects continued growth in 1997. "Changes in ownership will lead to more opportunity. It will continue to be chaos, but out of chaos comes opportunity." There was a lot of hiring because of the start ups and expansion, Reisch noted. Now there are some moves to upgrade people and change-over people who haven't worked out well.

Contracts

More and more stations continue to sign more and more people to contracts. KPAX, in market #174, has 12 full-time staffers—all of whom are under contract right now. The contracts are designed to slow down the stepladder mentality.

**Median Television News Salaries
by Market Size**

Market Size	1-25	26-50	51-100	101-150	151+
News Director	\$107,500	\$80,000	\$60,000	\$45,000	\$35,000
Assistant News Director	82,500	55,000	45,000	33,000	28,500
Executive Producer	65,000	49,000	40,000	30,500	25,000
Managing Editor	58,500	45,000	45,000	30,000	25,000
Assignment Editor	32,000	26,500	27,000	21,000	20,000
News Producer	36,000	30,000	25,000	19,500	19,000
News Anchor	90,000	75,000	50,000	36,500	23,500
Sports Anchor	82,500	54,000	35,000	26,000	23,500
Weathercaster	70,000	63,500	39,000	28,500	23,000
News Reporter	53,000	35,500	25,000	19,000	16,500
Sports Reporter	42,500	33,500	22,000	18,000	18,000
News Writer	27,000	19,000	19,000	18,500	18,000
Videographer	33,000	30,000	22,000	18,000	15,000
Graphics	35,000	24,000	24,000	15,000	19,000
News Asst./AP	21,000	19,000	18,500	16,000	15,000

Median Television News Salaries by Staff Size

Market Size	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$130,000	\$75,000	\$52,500	\$40,500	\$32,000
Assistant News Director	80,000	50,000	36,000	28,500	28,000
Executive Producer	65,000	44,000	31,000	25,000	30,000
Managing Editor	58,500	42,000	30,000	29,000	26,000
Assignment Editor	35,000	29,000	28,000	21,000	18,000
News Producer	36,000	27,000	21,000	18,500	18,000
News Anchor	117,000	57,000	40,000	30,000	25,000
Sports Anchor	85,000	45,000	28,500	24,000	20,000
Weathercaster	92,500	50,000	32,000	26,000	22,000
News Reporter	56,500	29,000	20,500	18,000	17,000
Sports Reporter	45,000	25,000	18,500	17,000	25,000
News Writer	25,000	21,000	26,500	22,000	17,000
Videographer	35,000	27,000	19,000	16,000	20,000
Graphics	40,000	28,500	28,000	19,000	22,000
News Asst./AP	21,000	20,000	20,000	13,000	17,000

"People come to work here...eight months or six months, and they're gone," says Paul Shoemaker. "They start to send out tapes at four months."

KPAX also has six part-timers who handle technical jobs in the studio and control room (except directing). All are students from the University of Montana.

Caruso says he's starting to see some changes in contract details. One is in non-compete clauses. At least one big station took them out, and others are reworking

them to specify that a certain part of the salary pays for the noncompete. Caruso says he's also seeing fewer and fewer "no-cut" deals and more and more contracts that provide for annual outs.

Napoli agrees. Main anchor contracts are usually firm, he says, but almost all the other contracts this past year included yearly reviews and yearly outs.

Toughest Position to Fill

"You think I'm going to say producer," says WGXA's Young in Macon, "but I'm not. It's weather."

WTVD's Casey in Raleigh agrees. "We've created this weather monstrosity, sometimes telling people that any time there's a thunderstorm, they need to be afraid—and they are," Casey says. "The viewers now demand very good forecasting. We live in hurricane country, so there's a legitimate fear. In the last year we've had four ice storms and two hurricanes." Casey says he's looked at a lot of tape in the past few months without much to show for it.

"Producers continue to be hard, too," Casey says. "Like a lot of stations, we've gone into growing our own." Casey also says assignment editors have been tough to find, "ever since they killed radio news."

Both Casey and Caruso note the difficulty of finding mature-looking male anchors, and Caruso acknowledges how

difficult it is to find weathercasters with personality.

WHO's Setka just hired a new producer—with limited experience, but he says the demand in the position is so great that he knew he had to take the chance. "Everyone says 'grow your own (producers),' but at some point you need to freshen the gene pool."

KPAX's Shoemaker in Missoula and KPRC's Shafran in Houston say the toughest positions to fill have been for the morning news. Shoemaker blamed the problem on bad hours and low pay.

The issue goes beyond simply finding qualified people, generally, according to Shafran. "We spend a lot of time (trying to find) people who, in addition to what they do on the air, are the kind of people we're looking for behind the scenes—in journalism skills, who have a great work ethic, people who are nice."

Entry Level and Training

WGXA's Young has no news or production assistants. His "training" position is the overnight slot. He has a pool of as many as seven—each working one or more nights, but only one at a time. They start between 11 p.m. and midnight and work through 5-6 a.m., monitoring the scanner and phones, on the air with hourly 30-second newsbreaks and either

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STATE RADIO NETWORKS

For the first time, the RINDF/Ball State University Survey was extended to other groups beyond radio and television stations.

There are 23 state radio networks in the country. In preliminary survey results, those listed as director of a radio network had a salary range of \$25,000-38,000, with a median of \$31,000. Senior reporters ranged from \$25,000-44,000, regular reporters ranged from \$18,500-22,000, with a median salary of \$20,100. News anchors ranged from \$21,200-25,000, with a median of \$23,100. The pay range for part-timers—30 percent of the total work force—ranged from \$7-10 per hour.

"There's a shortage of high-quality managers, and it's tougher getting people to move unless the money is really significant."

going out to shoot breaking news or calling someone in. (If they go out to shoot, they record the newsbreak.) All of the overnights are college grads, and many were interns. Young says the system works well, giving him low-cost overnight coverage and serving as a training pool for other positions. Overnights are paid \$5 per hour.

WHO's Setka notes that while the station has interns, it has no assistant producers or desk assistants. "We don't have that luxury." He has one part-timer on the weekends, which, he says, makes growing his own very difficult.

WTVD's training pool in Raleigh involves three full-time associate producers. They make around \$20,000-25,000. For some, it's their first job. That works pretty well to develop producers, according to Casey. For desk people, he's tried to talk photographers or smaller market reporters into working the desk, but Casey says that hasn't been too productive so far.

KPAX's Shoemaker makes hires from both student interns and student part-timers—based on "ambition and ability."

Shafran at KPRC in Houston has about 10 part-time desk assistants and production assistants that include students and graduates, many of whom had interned at the station previously. Pay is around \$6 per hour. The best of the group move up to associate producers, mostly full time.

News Managers

With median salaries ranging from \$40,000-50,000, 1996 was a good year for news directors, assistant news directors, executive producers and managing editors.

Napoli thinks the issue is supply and demand. "There's a shortage of high-quality managers, and it's tougher getting people to move unless the money is really significant." Although Napoli says he "helps" some managers, the company only represents reporters and anchors—about 175 of them.

Caruso says he represents about three or four news managers out of about 42 clients overall.

Reisch says William Morris doesn't represent any broadcast news people other than anchors and reporters—although he thought that might be a good business niche for someone. William Morris handles a couple thousand people—about 90 of them in TV news.

Assignment Editors and Producers

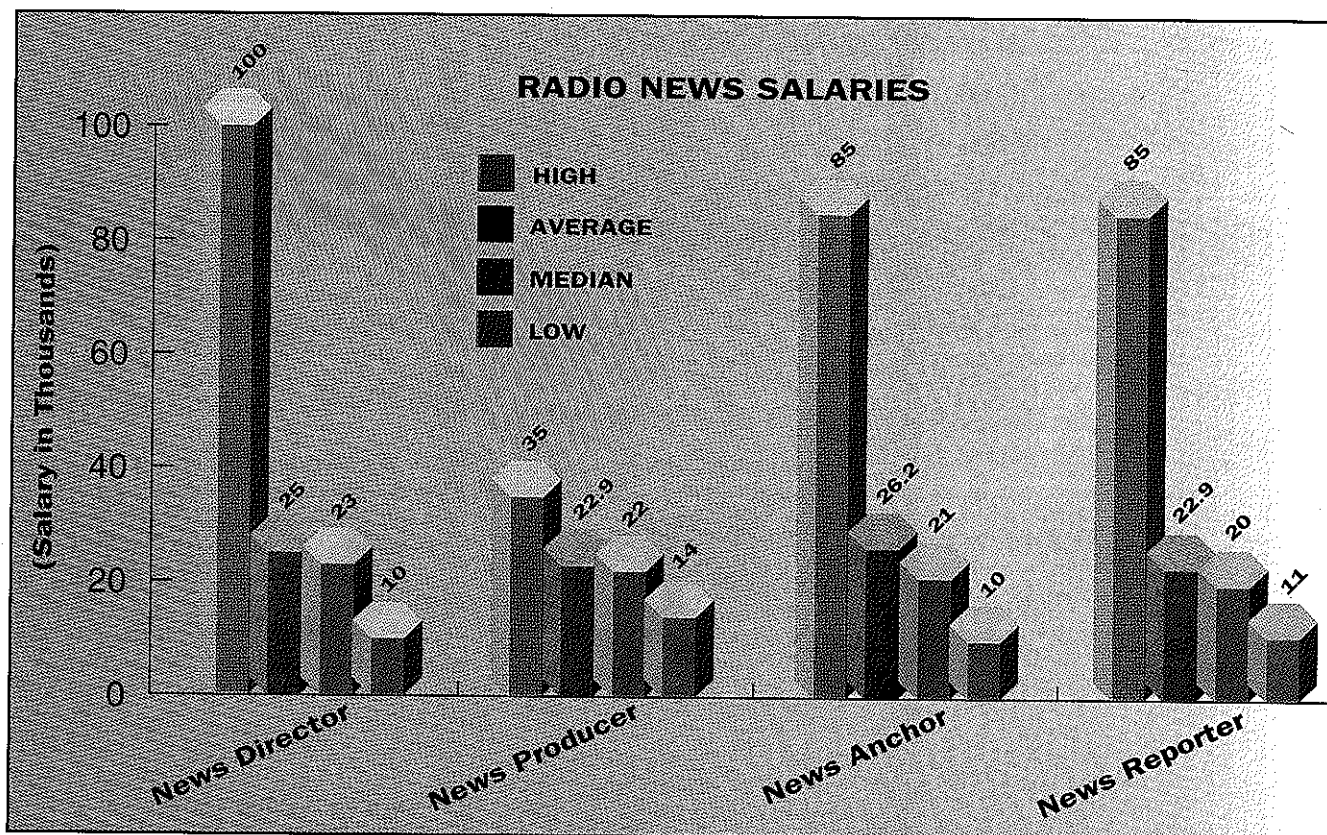
Results from the RTNDF/Ball State University Survey show a median salary of \$26,000 for assignment editors and \$24,000 for producers.

KPAX has no producers as such; anchors produce their own shows in Missoula and typically make in the mid- to upper-teens. And News Director Shoemaker is also the assignment editor.

At WGXA, Young says producers make around \$18,000, with assignment editors around \$20,000.

Setka says WHO's producers make from the upper teens for entry level to the mid-\$30s for an executive producer. Assignment editors? "Pay

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The range of radio salaries reported this past year is much larger than usual—suggesting greater participation from larger markets. The median—or midpoint—is probably a better gauge of the salaries being paid.

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey placed the median 1996 salary for radio news directors at \$23,000, and the median salary for reporters at \$20,000. But in both cases, there's a sizable range based on market size.

"em what they want," Setka says, but "you need to care (for) and nurture them and (eventually) move them off the desk."

Producers at WTVD in Raleigh/Durham range from the low \$20s up to the mid-\$40s with assignment editors about the same.

Anchors and Reporters

According to our survey, the median salary for news anchors was \$44,000, while the median for reporters was \$22,000. But, as always, the range for both was enormous.

At WGXA, Young says reporters typically make around \$16,500.

"There are not a lot of stand-alone reporters here," according to WHO's Setka in Des Moines. Reporters vary a lot in pay because so many of them also anchor at least one show. Most of the

reporters in the market make from the low \$20s to the mid-\$40s.

Casey says reporters at WTVD start around the mid-\$20s and go up, depending on experience.

With the highest paid anchor in the survey making \$400,000, it's clear that few—if any—traditional network affiliates in the top 10 filled in the salary part of the survey. Caruso suspects that there are probably two or three anchors in every top-20 market making \$400,000 or more but probably fewer than 10 local anchors at a million dollars a year or more.

Reisch agrees with those numbers, noting that in markets 10 through 20, the established anchors who have been in the market for a while will be at the higher end. Reisch doubted there were any anchors at a million dollars or more outside of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

RADIO

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey placed the median 1996 salary for radio news directors at \$23,000, and the median salary for reporters at \$20,000. But in both cases, there's a sizable range based on market size.

With only 2,500 permanent residents—but 30,000 people on a good weekend—Tim Nardiello says operating WIRD-AM (talk and sports) and WLPW-FM (adult contemporary) in Lake Placid, NY (small market) is a real challenge. Nardiello is the general manager. He has one person as news director but says "everybody is part time in news." The news director makes about \$14,000, but that's deceptive. That's how much Nardiello assigns to news, but since the news director is also the morning disc jockey, the total pay is closer to \$30,000. Some part-timers work by the hour at \$7-10 per hour, and some are paid by the story.

Between the Olympics and tourism, 1996 was a good year, and Nardiello says station raises were about 7 percent. He says he doesn't know what to expect in 1997.

One of the biggest problems Nardiello faces is turnover. Because it's a tourist area, he winds up losing staff to his own audience—media people vacationing in the area hear and meet his staff, and he loses them to both other radio stations and to television.

This is not an issue for Monique Mata at KMGZ-FM (top 40) in Lawton, OK (medium market). Mata doesn't think there are any full-time radio newsmen in Lawton anymore. She's news director and promotions director but works just 20 to 24 hours per week. Mata says radio newsmen in Lawton make \$6-7 per hour, and she says television reporters don't do any better—except they're full time. Mata got no raise in 1996, but she says she's confident she'll get one this year.

"I could not support myself in this job," says Mata, who, with her husband, owns two businesses in town. "I just love it. Maybe not getting up early in the morning, but I love what I'm doing."

Doug Nadvornick, news director at public radio station KPBX-FM (varied programming) in Spokane, WA (large market), says 1996 was "still bad but slightly better than 1995." Nadvornick has one newsmen in the \$16,000 range and another around \$17,000, but his goal is to get them to \$20,000. Still, he says they've come a long way from the \$12,000



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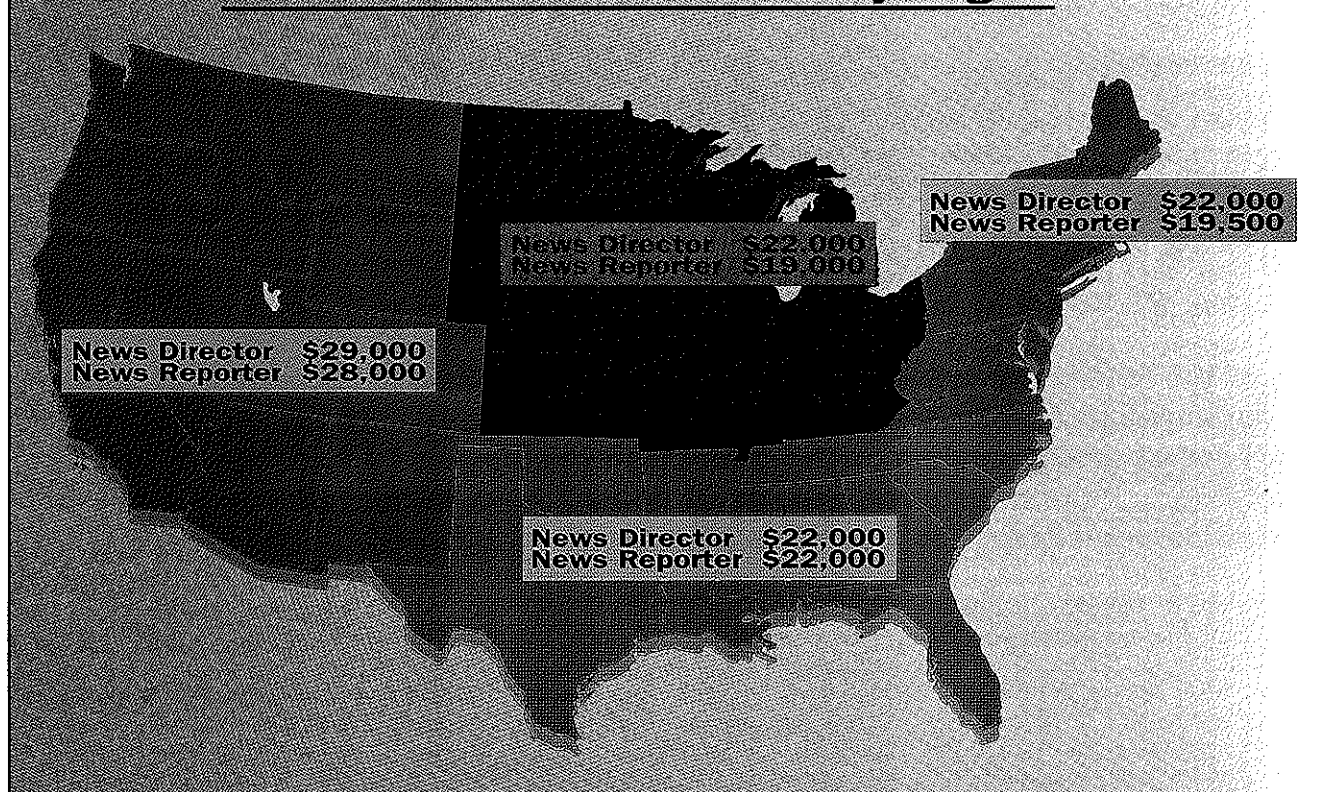
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Median Radio News Salaries by Region



In radio, stations in the West paid the most, followed by the South, with the Northeast and Midwest nearly even.

Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size

Market Size	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$36,500	\$27,000	\$22,000	\$21,000
News Producer	24,000	30,000	20,000	22,000
News Anchor	26,000	21,500	20,000	13,000
News Reporter	35,000	23,000	18,000	18,000

Major markets were defined as those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are below 50,000.

range just three to four years ago. As news director, Nadvornick makes around \$25,000. Raises have tended to be in the 1.5- to 3-percent range, but he expects this year to move up to 2 to 5 percent.

Nadvornick figures the news salaries at KPBX are "probably on a par" with the four to five other radio reporters in the city. "Three stations are fairly serious about (news); some pretend, and others don't give a damn."

1996 was a "very good" year for salaries at news/talk WIBC-AM in Indianapolis (major market). News Director Leigh DeNoon says raises were

4.5 percent across the board, and she expects 1997 to be similar, although it's too early to tell for sure.

DeNoon says most of the radio reporters in Indianapolis make in the mid-\$20s—and most of them work for WIBC, which has eight people full time and one part time. The only other radio reporters on the street in Indianapolis work for the statewide Network Indiana.

DeNoon says it's hard to find veteran radio reporters. "A lot of young people are interested in trying this before going into TV," says DeNoon, "but it's difficult to find people who really want to do this." ■

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