**Technology in radio and TV news**

**by Bob Papper**

* HD in TV
* How digital is TV news?
* Winners and losers in the digital race in TV and radio

There are almost always a variety of technology-related question in the RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey, and this year I thought it made more sense to gather them together in one article rather than having pieces of the technology puzzle scattered here and there.

**High Definition in TV**

Percentage of stations broadcasting local news in high definition - 2015

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes | No |
| All TV | 83.3% | 16.7% |
| Market: |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 90 | 10 |
| 26 - 50 | 97.4 | 2.6 |
| 51 - 100 | 84.8 | 15.2 |
| 101 - 150 | 78.9 | 21.1 |
| 151+ | 69.6 | 30.4 |

As more and more stations broadcast in HD, the rate of growth continues to slow -- up 10 points two years ago, just under 8 last year, and 5 points up this year. As usual, small stations in the biggest markets held down the percentage at top 25 operations.

**How digital is local TV news?**

Periodically, I get asked about the most commonly-used equipment and software in the news business. So this year, I asked news directors about how much of their video is shot, edited and played back digitally, what equipment they most often use to shoot and edit video, and what software they use to write and deliver the news.

The typical TV station gathers all its video digitally, but the averages are lower than that. Overall, 92.6% of news video is gathered digitally. At the low end: 87.2% for the biggest markets (1 - 25) up to 97.2% for stations with the biggest staffs (51+). NBC stations and stations in the West were on the lower end of the scale -- although both were still in the upper 80 percentile range.

The camera war was pretty much a dead heat, with Panasonic edging out Sony, 39% to 38%. JVC came in third at 22% with 1% other. The Panasonic P2 was the single, most commonly mentioned camera, but the range of models varied a lot.

Video editing is almost all done digitally -- hitting an average of 97.5% of the total and 100% in the top 25 markets. The lowest group was non-commercial stations at 95%.

Most common newsroom video editing systems:

Grass Valley Edius 36.4%

Avid 18.2

Final Cut Pro (Apple) 15.2

Adobe Premier 12.7

Harris Velocity 4.8

Sony Vegas 3.0

All other 9.7

The percentage of news material played back and aired digitally -- again, near 100%. Overall, it was 95.9% but a complete 100% in top 25 markets.

I was surprised to see the newsroom computer system quite so dominated by one company, with AP's ENPS in a majority of reporting newsrooms:

AP ENPS 55.2%

Avid iNews 33.1

Comprompter 3.9

Microsoft 2.8

Apple 1.7

All other 3.3

**One-Man-Bands - 2015 Update**

Call them one-man-bands, multimedia (MMJ) or backpack journalists -- their use had been growing over most of the last six or seven years -- until last year.

Percentage of TV Newsrooms Reporting Using One-Man-Bands - 2015

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes, Mostly Use OMB | Yes, Use Some OMB | Yes, But Not Much Use | No, Do Not Use |
| All TV | 51.2% | 29.2% | 10% | 9.6% |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 10 | 42.5 | 22.5 | 25 |
| 26-50 | 27.5 | 40 | 15 | 17.5 |
| 51-100 | 46.9 | 38.3 | 6.2 | 8.6 |
| 101-150 | 74 | 16.4 | 6.8 | 2.7 |
| 151+ | 78.7 | 12.8 | 6.4 | 2.1 |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 8.5 | 55.9 | 16.9 | 18.6 |
| 31-50 | 50 | 34.4 | 6.2 | 9.4 |
| 21-30 | 76.2 | 15.9 | 6.3 | 1.6 |
| 11-20 | 90.6 | 6.2 | 3.1 | 0 |
| 1-10 | 71.4 | 14.3 | 9.5 | 4.8 |

But the relentless march of the increasing use of one-man-bands or MMJs continues again in this year's survey. Overall, the use has gone up an average of 2-3 points per year for the last five or six years -- and that pace continues with this year's numbers. The staffing (and hiring) article tracks MMJs separately from reporters. And this year, for the first time, I separated MMJs from reporters in the annual salary survey. You can take a look at those results in the salary article. Spoiler: MMJs consistently came in lower in salary.

**New Technology in Radio - 2015**

Periodically, we ask radio news directors about the use of digital technology in the newsroom.

Use of digital audio equipment 2015

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median |
| News material gathered digitally | 72.8% | 80% |
| News material mixed and edited digitally | 82.9 | 100 |
| News material played back/aired digitally | 81.7 | 100 |

All of these numbers rose from last year, although news material gathered digitally barely went up. As usual, bigger markets and non-commercial stations are most likely to gather, mix and playback news digitally.

**Shopping for new technology**

Technology shopping in radio has been plunging over the last several years, and the decline appears to be accelerating. Three years ago, 38% of radio news directors and general managers said they'd be making no technology purchases in the next year. Two years ago, the number rose to 44%. Last year, 69.3% said nothing. This year, the abstention crowd is up to an astonishing 78.6%. And that number didn't vary much no matter how you sliced it. Non-commercial or commercial, number of stations, market size, geography ... no real difference. The only group that was noticeably more likely to purchase new technology included radio newsrooms with 10 or more staffers. And even there, more than 58% said no plans for new purchases.

For the relatively few in the market for new purchases, the answer to *what* new technology continues to spread out. Digital audio recorders are usually at the top of the list. Last year, recorders tied with computers at the top. That's true this year as well, but the margin is much thinner ... simply because the numbers are so much lower. At almost the same level: iPhones and tablets. Barely behind that came internet-related and streaming products along with various studio equipment. Then cameras and phone systems, but the numbers were very small.

***Bob Papper is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.***

**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2014 among all 1,688 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,704 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,281 television stations (75.9%) and 316 radio news directors and general managers representing 868 radio stations.

Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting it from others and women TV news directors) are based on a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.