

News, Talk, & Public Affairs Report - June 2021

When WORT closed down, we were charged with converting hundreds of volunteer living rooms, bedrooms, and closets into small broadcast studios. We distributed countless microphones, headphones, recorders, sound-editing software; trained volunteers and made guides on best practices for broadcasting at home.

Some shows were pre-produced. The *Buzz*, *A Public Affair*, and the 6pm news stayed live throughout the pandemic. Each of those took a staff member to engineer. Myself, Richelle Wilson, Doug Holtz, and volunteers Ken Brady and Dylan Brogan contributed significant time each day to engineer. Thom Jones gracefully provided a sounding board and kept up with my changing lists of technical issues in the studios.

As I write this, we are *just* beginning the first step of reopening, by bringing back sorely needed engineers for shows. I appreciate everyone's patience as we refamiliarize engineers with the studios and our new method of virtual broadcasting, and provide a bit of refresher training along the way.

The News Department ably and ethically kept up with a summer of racial justice protests, even as news seemed to change by the minute. There is a lot I could say here, but I will just say covering such a large and nuanced movement was complex, and pushed our mental, emotional and physical endurance. We could not have done it without Jonah Chester's grace under pressure.

The WORT News Department won ten awards for our coverage last year. We took home five Wisconsin Broadcaster's Association awards, including a first-place win in spot news for Jonah. We took home five Milwaukee Press Club awards, including a gold win in a hard feature for myself and a gold in best writing for Stu Levitan. Martin Rakacolli, Jade Iseri-Ramos, and Gianofer Fields also took home awards.

Amidst the extra demands on my time, I onboarded literal dozens of new hosts, reporters, feature producers, and collective members during the pandemic — remotely. It's incredible to think some came and went during the pandemic without seeing the inside of our studios. But I am grateful so many new volunteers have stuck — and cannot wait for them to see inside the station for the first time.

This year came with both financial and opportunity costs. I had to put an entirely different list of projects on hold, which I am just starting to plan for again. And frankly, it came with personal costs, too. In an overused inspirational quote from the pandemic,

Mr. Rogers said look for the helpers. Well, I am privileged to always find people who are helping.

Music Director Report for the 2020 Annual Meeting

2020 was one hell of a curveball for the music department, forcing us to adapt in many ways. This meant some temporary changes we're now in the process of reversing, keeping us extremely busy. Once we're all back where we started, we'll pick up momentum and use it to push forward many projects including: digitizing our whole CD library; remodeling it into music workspaces and meeting/lounge areas; and training off-air volunteer teams to produce in-studio sessions and live remotes.

We're determined to reach new listener sponsors with outstanding social media content and get involved with more community events, so we need you *all* to keep us informed of your program specials and we'll promote them every way we can. We'll ask for your cooperation on live remotes and pre-emptions. We'll do everything possible to increase listener engagement. We're now asking hosts to fill out an **Annual Review Form**, which helps us help you do your very best programs, and to plan ahead for changes.

On that note - **Terry O'** left *Diaspora* and we have an open hire for Thursday mornings. **Megan Elliott** left *Her Infinite Variety* to join *Queery*, and **Simone LaPierre** joined *HIV*. **Tony Endless** stepped down from *Weekly World Noise* and we now have **Erik Kramer** alternate Sundays. **Bill & Bobbie Malone** retired to Texas but not from WORT on the 4th Wednesdays each month; the talented **Art Stevenson** and **Nate Gibson** joined **Steven & Marianne Daggett** on the rest.

DJ Catwoman left 5th Fridays rock at 8 pm open for great shows like '80s prodigal punk pioneer **Reasonable Facsimile's 40th Anniversary Special April 30**, **July 2nd's Nirvana special**, and **Chuck Prophet live on August 13**.

Condolences to **Harry Rag, FRP & Art Schuna** who all lost family members during the past year. We also mourn friends like former world folk host **Bill Livick**, xxx xxx xxx [anyone I missed.] Special thanks to Glenn, a great pleasure to work with for so many years, who took such loving care of all you volunteers. Wow, we're already halfway through the year...it's so good to wake up from the last one.

FROM THE MUSIC ASSISTANT/PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

The first half of 2021 was a continuation of what we'd learned in 2020. We wrangled shows and archives and promoted just a few events. I spent a lot of time downloading (and ripping) music and re-configuring the CD library. WORT was a pretty well-oiled machine after a year of being (mostly) virtual. The fact that the technology existed to enable hosts to record at home, send us their shows which we then placed on the air is still incredible and fortuitous. Community radio managed to stay on the air despite the challenges and this experience made us stronger as a group and smarter about how to create compelling content.

The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter and we're just now bringing hosts back on the air which will bring some relief for the music department. There's a lot of work to be done that was derailed by the pandemic: organizing regular live music on all shows, collecting music and information from local musicians, setting up remotes throughout Madison and making connections to our peer organizations to see how we can better reach the community at large. I enjoyed the autonomy of being able to keep things trucking along when we didn't have any choice but I am hoping to make WORT bigger and better and more inclusive in 2021.

Tech and Facilities Annual Meeting Report

We did a lot this past year considering a pandemic swirled around us. This included

- A full update and repair of our pledge database system (CiviCRM)
- Cleaned up a major website breach
- Got all computers connected to Active Directory and all updated to Windows 10
- Replaced the A/C at the transmitter again.
- Did some major upgrades to our HVAC units at the station to improve air circulation and quality
- Developed, in conjunction with Public Media Apps, a mobile app to bring WORT to the hands and earbuds of everyone. We also have an Alexa skill to get WORT natively on your Echo device.
- Replaced the ceiling tiles in the lobby and hallway – looks much cleaner!
- Our license with the FCC was renewed through 12/1/2028!
- Updated the phone system including a fiber optic connection as well as a more stable fiber optic connection at the transmitter
- Increased out bandwidth for internet through Hoyos Consulting
- Replaced the water heater which had been in place for something like 30 years. I wouldn't have, but it finally broke.
- Moved both the web site server and the archives/streaming server to new hardware and operating systems still housed at 5nines.

All that said, we still have a lot to do around WORT this coming year.

- Number one is getting back to having actual people here building radio!
- The basement windows are falling apart – waiting for a quote for glass block to fill them up.
- One of the lobby windows has rotted woodwork. Also waiting on a quote.
- The boards in each Combo are quite old and showing their age. They will need to be replaced sooner rather than later. Replacing them, however, will greatly expand our capabilities to take on the future or even weather another pandemic.
- Building an area for student journalists to become engaged with radio and WORT specifically.

Or, if this is too long, we can just dynamically cloudify cross functional adoption to enthusiastically impact cost effective synergy.

Business Development Report

It has been an extremely challenging year for me. Businesses were closed and are just now starting to rebound. Underwriting saw a decline as all events-based underwriting grinded to a halt. On a good note, all of our long-term underwriters renewed their contracts in this difficult period. In-person fund raising events have also not been possible. Fortunately, the revenue lost by these circumstances was more than made up for by two grants from the CPB totaling more than 200k. I continue to manage the CPB grant reporting and have several reports I must complete throughout the year in addition to managing compliance by staff in completing the anti-harassment training required by CPB. Their support is well worth the effort.

When the station closed to volunteers I began to engineer the 8 O'Clock Buzz on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, so those shows could remain live. I fulfilled this spot for 16 months. Working with Brian Standing, Jan Miyasaki, Jerome Dillard from ExPO, and Tony Castaneda was a pleasure. They are all so fun, it made it not so bad to be up at 6am 3 days a week.

Our former bookkeeper also resigned in January with two weeks' notice, so I had to step in and perform the day to day functions of processing daily deposits, running the Evergreens, completing payroll, keeping credit card accounts paid, and paying all the bills. All of this was being done while I was on the Hiring Committees for a bookkeeper, and then a Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator. Both of these commitments also took a great deal of time.

As I plan for WORTstock and the Willy Street Fair underground stage I am eager to get back to community events and meeting business owners in the community to discuss support for WORT.

Doug Holtz, Business Development Director

Listener Sponsor Development Director 2020 Annual Report

Income for the Listener Sponsor Development department was \$578,000 in 2020, down \$42,000 from 2019. We received a \$92,000 bequest in 2019, so I was pleased we were able to make up \$50,000 of that bequest in other ways in 2020.

Our 2020 fundraising message was consistent over the year: we need money NOW to make broadcasting possible under drastically changed conditions. This received a generous response from our listeners. It was a clear message about something they valued (WORT) being imperiled, with a clear answer on how they could help, through their financial support.

It was an excellent illustration of what WORT has been missing for many years: clear, urgent, mission-driven fundraising.

Keeping the lights on *is* a compelling message during a pandemic, when people lose many of their touchstones and are aware of the costs of broadcasting under unusual conditions. But it's not compelling when it's the same message we talk about every pledge drive, year after year.

Current compelling messaging I am seeing from non-profits, especially community radio stations similar to ours, focuses on: new programming that specifically addresses systemic racism, bringing more diverse voices into news/talk/music coverage, increase coverage by community members of the concerns specific to their community, increased planned collaborations with local progressive groups.

All of us, Board, staff, volunteers, and listeners, need to come up with a vision of what WORT could accomplish in our community, given the financial resources.

Our Treasurer has or will report that WORT has a good amount of money in reserves. But my work with donor data leads me to ask that this reserve money be viewed with caution.

Caution because the number of new WORT donors is rapidly shrinking and has been since we started keeping electronic records 20 years ago.

Since 2001, the number of new WORT donors has steadily declined, from 1500 in 2001 to 397 in 2020. The percentage of new donors to total donors has also decreased, from 40% of our total donors in 2001 to 12% in 2020. 12% is *not* a healthy number of new donors.

Random checks of the ages of new donors in 2020 revealed an average age of 54. We are not adding younger donors, as we used to in the 80s and 90s.

Our income has steadily **increased** during the last 7 years, even while the number of new donors has steadily **decreased**.

How?

Because donor retention has improved significantly. From 2001 to 2014, our donor retention was at or near the national average of 45%. Donor retention is the percentage of donors who give last year and again this year. The average for all non-profits has hovered around 45% for the past two decades.

But since 2014 that number has risen each year at WORT. We went from 45% donor retention in 2014 to 62% donor retention in 2019, to 66% in 2020. This has hidden our devastating drop in new donors. Donor retention has limits: donors die, move, and experience life changes that don't allow them to continue giving. We are at the point where new donors are not replacing departing donors and that's when we start eating our tail.

If we don't increase the number of new donors we will soon see steady, substantial decreases in annual income from individual donors and we will not have the budget to support current staff levels, let alone the additional staff that some staff and Board members believe is necessary.

From Former Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator, Glenn Mitroff

As I begin my retirement after more than 21 years as WORT's first Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator, I extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who I've had the honor and privilege to work with. Thank you for contributing your time, talents and financial support to maintain and improve WORT's service to our community.

Over the past 15 months, I have missed seeing and working with you at the station and at community events. I have especially missed our volunteer receptionists and hope that they will soon be able to return to the station. I am grateful to all of the volunteers who created programming remotely and to those volunteers who were onboarded and trained without having access to the station. I am so happy that the phased reopening of the station to volunteers has begun.

The major focus of my final six months was creating the best possible handover of the Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator position. The Staff Collective and the Board put considerable effort into revising and updating the position description. Utilizing suggestions from the UW Diversity Forum presentation: "Creating a Fair and Equitable Hiring Process" our hiring committee of two staff members, two Board members and three volunteers worked diligently from late February through late April, guided by our incredible Chair Jane Richard. Amongst a pool of highly qualified applicants, the hiring committee unanimously recommended that the Board offer the position to Adrienne Ranney.

Having worked closely with Adrienne over the past weeks, I am thrilled with how quickly she has settled into the position. She has incredible leadership and organizational skills and I think she is a perfect fit for the position. Adrienne will be a great asset to the station, expanding and improving our volunteer program and deepening connections within our community.

Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator Report for the 2021 Annual Meeting

I began my onboarding and training on May 31st with Glenn Mitroff and the WORT collective. Glenn's last day was June 11th, 2021 and since then I have been working on my own in the position. Glenn provided thorough in-depth training which left me equipped to perform my duties right away. Glenn has also left an open line of communication for me to contact him if I have any questions, which is incredibly courteous of him.

Since operating as the sole Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator beginning June 12th I have reached out to the following organizations to have a presence at their events and perform promo exchanges:

- Kujichagulia Madison Center for Self-Determination 6/19: Juneteenth march from the Fountain Of Life Church to Penn Park. WORT volunteers and I carried WORT banners as we marched in the parade. Our logo was also included on promotional material in exchange for us airing a promo for the event. Jonah Chester collected Vox Pops for the Kiosk which is becoming a new feature that I will be helping out with at events.
- #IssaUsThing Juneteenth Celebration 6/19: After the parade at Penn Park, I went to Elver Park to table this separate Juneteenth event. I had recruited volunteers to help table throughout the day. DJ Boss Lady informed me of this event and was a huge help getting it organized.
- Briarpatch Youth Services is presenting the Teens Like Us Pride Prom 6/26: We will be tabling the events with show hosts and volunteers. We have been airing a promo for this event in exchange for tabling space.
- Madison Public Library is presenting It Takes A Village 6/29: Chali Pittman informed me of the organizer's interview on the 8 O'Clock Buzz. I reached out to him about WORT tabling the event for a promo exchange. Our logo is also on their flyers for the event. Many volunteers have already signed up for the event.

I am working on a number of new partnerships with local organizations — with a focus on more engagement from younger listeners, LGBTQI+ listeners, communities of color, and the West and South Side Madison neighborhoods where WORT is not as present. There are many more events planned for this summer including the Volunteer Picnic on Sunday, July 11th.

I am thrilled to be a part of WORT and so excited for the future.