

BROADCASTING PUBLIC: RADIO STATION KOAC AND THE MAKING OF
MODERN CITIZENS, 1923-1958

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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In 1923 the Oregon Agricultural College began broadcasting market information and weather reports to farmers in the Willamette Valley. By 1958 the programming had expanded to include everything from symphonies to lectures in psychology. This thesis poses the following questions: How did the producers and funders of Station KOAC understand the medium's potential to reach spaces they believed were isolated from the promise of modernity? What were the values that the state prioritized through its funding of Station KOAC? How did listeners understand and experience KOAC? Based on archival research, I argue that the station was recruited to welcome rural and domestic listeners into modernity and simultaneously task them with the maintenance of traditional institutions on which the state relied. However it also brought information and companionship to listeners, who claimed their own citizenship through state-supported radio.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Summary of Area of Investigation and Research Questions

In March 1923, state-funded Radio Station KFDJ broadcast its first program to the residents of Corvallis and the farmers of the Willamette Valley; in 1925 it would become KOAC. Established under the auspices of the Federal Cooperative Extension Service of the Oregon Agricultural College (OAC), an effort of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the station's initial mandate was to disseminate agricultural information and technical education to rural farmers and their families.¹ Radio's ability to deliver education and culture across geographical and social barriers was a thrilling prospect to the leadership of the Extension Service in Oregon, who moved decisively to support the project. In radio they saw not just a tool to disseminate services more broadly, but a way to bypass physical limitations to invite every Oregonian into the modern era.

Similar stories were playing out around the country as radio transformed traditional forms of social organization and altered listeners' experiences of space and privacy. Here I examine how Radio Station KOAC's funders and visionaries hoped to reorganize two social spaces: the domestic and the rural. Both had been largely insulated from instant media and the rapid flow of information and, according to some progressive reformers, from the true promise of modernity. The potential for radio to breach the barriers of space and privacy elicited both hopeful and fearful reactions from both the producers and the consumers of radio. Radio was inseparable from modernization.

¹ Hugh Richard Sloten, "Radio's hidden voice: Noncommercial broadcasting, extension education, and

This research analyzes those hopes and fears. How did the entities involved in the production of radio understand the medium's potential to reach and reorganize isolated spaces that, they believed, hewed to traditional ways of life, including unscientific approaches to farming and child-rearing? How did listeners understand and interact with this new presence in their homes? To answer these questions I examine program guides, budgets, memoranda, and literature produced by KOAC between 1923 and 1958, as well as correspondence from listeners: Letters, surveys, and study group notes submitted by consumers of KOAC programs. These sources show that producers hoped to use the technology of radio to deliver modernity to people who, they believed, otherwise lacked access.

I argue that educational radio was more than just a service or a utility delivering practical information, but rather an exercise in state-building. Institutions like KOAC sent values out over the airwaves with the intention of creating enlightened citizens; often these messages were informed by principles of scientific education and cosmopolitan culture. Most literature on radio in the United States has looked at commercial broadcasters, how the medium has been used as a tool to get ears for advertisers. Very little work has examined how, in the US, radio was used by social reformers. This project aims to tell one part of that story.

KFDJ began as a tiny station, born as an experiment in the physics department of the college, but from early-on, OAC Director of Information Wallace Kadderly anticipated extending the station's transmission to the entire state. Two years later, as he inaugurated the newly renamed KOAC, Kadderly articulated his hope for the station and for the medium. "Radio communication is no longer an experiment or a fad" Kadderly

wrote. “It is past that stage. It is recognized as an agency of education and inspiration, of enlightenment and entertainment. As one writer has said, ‘radio erases city limits and state lines, and causes to disappear the boundaries of nations, creeds and partisanship.’”² The station would reach across those boundaries, carrying KOAC-produced knowledge into the far-flung spaces of Oregon.³ The content that the station was to convey across those frontiers was initially aimed at farmers, but soon also at women and children, urban as well as rural dwellers. Specialized content was developed for each audience, but the themes that ran through all of it reflected the station’s official slogan, “science for service.”⁴ In the interwar years, and at the tail end of the “long” progressive era, the ideal of scientific rationality commanded political will and real resources. Radio emerged with the promise to deliver “progress” into the most secluded spaces, into domestic and rural realms, to outfit all citizens with the tools they would need to participate in the new industrial democracy, to transform all Oregonians into moderns.

The charter of the USDA required that the agency “diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word.”⁵ It is evident that the agency recognized the value of radio for delivering scientific knowledge to rural populations early on; it

² J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972), 3.

³ Oregon State University Extension Service, “Our History.” Web: 3/18/2014
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/about/our-history-03>

⁴“KOAC Radio Programs 1925-26.” From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7.

⁵ Reynold M. Wik. “The USDA and the Development of Radio in Rural America.” *Agricultural History*, 62 (2), (Spring, 1988),177.

established and supported experimental stations at many land grant universities, and defended its real estate on the dial.⁶

Before long, however, the USDA adopted an even more expansive vision for radio. With a direct line into previously sacrosanct domestic spaces, programming on KOAC expanded to include broadcasts intended to train entire families in the ways of “modern science.” This research examines how various entities sought to use the medium of radio to restructure previously isolated rural and domestic spaces according to the tenets of rational modernity, and how listeners responded. The aspirations of the federal and state governments, of reformers and volunteer organizations, of university departments, and of individual producers and consumers of radio are, to an extent, all evident in the KOAC files, each vision jostling for prominence. These entities held different goals for radio and had different visions for how those ends should be achieved, but they were unified by an aspiration for the technology to cross cultural barriers, to finally implant philosophies of cosmopolitan modernity in realms that were considered tethered to “traditional” ways of life. Although public radio was often referred to as a utility, bringing scientific agricultural information to rural farmers, its producers had loftier goals; public radio was also a tool to make modern citizens.

Summary of Approach

This historical project is grounded in archival research. The KOAC papers are housed in the special collections at the Valley Library at Oregon State University in Corvallis. While the archive is far from complete, many documents have been preserved. It is difficult to determine what has been omitted or why, however --proceeding with the understanding that the archive itself is a construction -- there is still sufficient information

⁶ Ibid. 181.

within to gain insight into decisions around programming, content, and audience interaction. What has been preserved demonstrates both the public priorities and the ideas of the reformers and educators at KOAC, as well as their institutions.

Theoretically, this research is informed by Feenberg's attempt to outline a productive a middle-ground between the poles that he identifies as *modernity theory* on one hand and *technology studies* on the other. This approach provides a framework through which we can account for the power imbalance inherent in technological developments without dismissing the ways in which every technology is culturally inscribed, manipulated, and used differently in different contexts by different communities. Feenberg's approach maps a course that helps the researcher account for various kinds of power and influence, but there is another pitfall that I will be careful to avoid: to enter the *modern* was a goal of KOAC's participants, and it is their own understanding of the concept that I will attempt to analyze here.⁷

I proceed with the case study in five chapters. The second provides an overview of the programming on KOAC over the period of 1923-1958, following the ways that producers *hoped* to use radio programming to promote modern approaches to all areas of life and displace more traditional modes, as well as the ways that the station's funding structure affected that content. The third chapter focuses on a specific type of programming: the weekly "expert" lectures that were designed to train mothers in the emerging science of psychiatry. This chapter tracks the radio project as it probed even deeper into protected spaces, seeking to effect nothing short of utopia by reorganizing individual consciousness via psychological methods. In Chapter IV I look at letters,

⁷ Andrew Feenberg, "Modernity Theory and Technology Studies" in *Modernity and Technology*, ed. Thomas J. Misa, et al. (MIT Press, 2004), 74.

survey responses, and study-group notes that illuminate what it meant, both practically and conceptually, for women to *interact* with radio. This correspondence reflects, at least to some extent, how listeners, specifically women, responded to the radio and demonstrates how they used and co-created the medium.

Overview of Introduction

In what follows I describe my project in a brief chapter narrative. Then I place this research within histories of radio, agriculture, gender, progressivism, mental health, and rural modernization and uplift. Each of these represents an enormous literature, so space considerations mean that my treatment of these literatures is necessarily sketchy. A discussion of my methodology follows the literature review.

Chapter Narrative

Chapter II: “The Use of Radio in Democracy”: Programming and Aspirations on Radio Station KOAC

Chapter II (the first of the case studies) examines programming on Radio Station KOAC between the 1920s and the 1950s. Initially intended to distribute agricultural information to rural farmers, the choices KOAC leadership made about programming and the allocation of broadcast minutes indicate shifting social priorities, and shifting hopes for the medium of radio. They also highlight what priorities remained consistent throughout much of the early twentieth century.

In 1921 the Extension Service commissioned a study to determine the efficacy of distributing agricultural information via radio. Based on the (apparently positive) results, the USDA decided to “inaugurate a system of radio broadcasting in order to place at the

disposal of the farm public in Oregon, agricultural information and market news.”⁸ From the beginning, it seemed that farmers were a receptive audience. Wik notes that farm radio ownership grew from 100,000 in 1922 to over half a million in 1925.⁹ Agricultural information remained a central focus, but KOAC’s broadcasting soon expanded to include everything from Beethoven symphonies to lectures on psychology, aimed at bringing culture to Oregon’s rural communities. During that same period, the population of Corvallis expanded by roughly 72%.¹⁰

This chapter examines the relationship between the changing content and the urbanizing community. More broadly, I look at how the producers of KOAC imagined listeners used the programming; how they hoped listeners would integrate it into their lives. Although the balance of the programming changed-- increasing hours allocated for “cultural” segments--the content consistently promoted a scientific perspective, encouraging listeners to adopt expert-approved approaches to everything from sheep-shearing to child-rearing. The scientific orientation of the College, and later of the State Board of Higher Education, is evident throughout the history of Station KOAC. It is also evident that the educational leadership in Oregon saw KOAC as among its most powerful tools in disseminating that more modern approach; programming was selected based on that those principles. A 1925 program guide, for instance, lists the following topics that would be discussed during the Women’s Hour: “Child training, household finances, household equipment and management, house planning and decoration, furnishing

⁸ Grant Stephen Feikert, “The Economic and Technical Aspects of Radio Station KOAC” (Thesis E.E., Oregon State Agricultural College, 1937). 12

⁹ Wik 182.

¹⁰ Benton County Historical Society and Museum. Web: 02/09/2013
<http://www.bentoncountymuseum.org/timeline/decade.cfm?decade=1920>

accessories, millinery and clothing selection, costume design, human nutrition, meal planning, feeding young children, cookery, food preservation, and exercise in relation to health.”¹¹

Programming on commercial stations was generally selected based on its broad appeal. At its inception, the leadership of KOAC were among the relatively small but passionate group of advocates who believed that radio should be used for real social change. In 1926, Wallace Kadderly included in his year-end report a quote from Professor R.E. Rogers of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “Radio stations will have to realize there is a large potential public... that will not be satisfied with entertainment all the time, with music, or jazz or comedy skits, but that will furnish eager and steady audience for the intelligent diffusion of ideas and culture and, in the largest sense of the word, education.”¹² Kadderly writes, “add to that the strictly service features that are fittingly included in programs from an institution that emphasizes the applied arts and sciences and we have the aim of the program director at KOAC.”¹² That education, in other words, would include the diffusion of enthusiasm for a scientifically rational approach to everyday life.

Examinations of public statements such as these, as well as program guides, correspondence, and internal memoranda, provide evidence by which we may interpret not only how the programming changed, but who was determining the programming, whose interests were represented by those decisions, and what they hoped that programming would achieve in the world.

¹¹ “KOAC Radio Programs 1925-26.” From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7.

¹² Morris 5.

Chapter III: “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy”: Women’s Programming on KOAC

The third chapter looks at one of those programs in particular. Women’s segments appeared in program guides as early as 1926, but over the following decades they gained an increasingly central role. By 1941, the Director of Women’s Programming, Zelta Rodenwald, was the third highest paid staff member at the radio station, after the Station Manager and the Director of Agricultural Programming.¹³ Large segments of airtime were set aside for “women’s concerns.” These programs ranged from discussions of “choice of hats” to family health, and in rare cases ventured further afield—away from the home. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, many hours of programming highlighted “mental health and hygiene,” reflecting a popular interest in the new fields of psychology and psychiatry. The cultural fascination with mental health shifted the broad understanding of what motherhood should be. A new dependence on expertise meant that mothers were tasked with “scientific” domestic labor while simultaneously being dissociated from a body of more traditional homemaking knowledge. Radio KOAC delivered the voices of experts into the furthest reaches of rural Oregon, bringing not only helpful hints, but also many new reasons to experience social anxiety about maternal failure. This is not to say the results were uniformly negative -- it is clear from correspondence that many women valued the information delivered via radio as well as the community it allowed them to claim. Nor were women passive recipients, bowing to the influence of the broadcasts. In fact, they participated actively in a variety of ways, corresponding with producers, requesting programming, hosting and participating in a

¹³ Budget 1941-42. From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7, no folder.

variety of study and listening groups. I will discuss the ways that some women used or resisted these new connections in the fourth chapter.

In the 1940s and 1950s, KOAC broadcast “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy,” a weekly program produced as a part of the “Especially for Women” programming through an established partnership between KOAC Radio/The Oregon Agricultural College, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and the Mental Health Association (MHA).¹⁴ Its intended audience consisted of individual female listeners as well as participants in PTA organized “study groups” in rural and urban regions around the state. In this chapter I set out to examine the cultural ideals that were being promoted through this radio programming. I trace how KOAC, the PTA, and the MHA disseminated those ideals—crossing cultural boundaries to implant modern priorities in rural and domestic spaces that the agencies perceived to be “traditional.” I specifically look at the ways in which women, over the airwaves, were tasked with and educated in, the scientific mental health care of their families.

Chapter IV: “Dear KOAC”: Listener Correspondence and the Experience of Radio

In the fourth chapter, I argue that the farmers and women listeners who heard KOAC often did not understand themselves merely as a passive audience. This relationship is particularly discernable in the content of the correspondence from listeners to the producers of KOAC programs at one point of crisis in the station’s history. In 1958 KOAC was under threat of being shut down, this time in order free up funding for a state television station. The station put out a call for audience feedback, and thousands of listeners wrote in to support the station. Together, these letters are a valuable resource;

¹⁴ Gladys D. Chambers, April 1948. From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 3, Folder 48.

among other things, the letters help answer a question about how listeners incorporated and used the radio in their everyday lives.

Because KOAC was funded by the state, the letters reveal that many listeners felt they had some proprietary claim to the station. This sense of ownership became apparent whenever significant changes were proposed. In 1958 most listeners reacted with outrage to the prospect of trading out the radio station for television. One theme that emerged from the scandalized responses was that of concern for the farmers and ruralites, many of whom were out of range or had not upgraded yet to the new medium. While some of the letters came from rural residents themselves, many also came from city-dwellers, concerned for the education and uplift of the country folk. Through these letters, Oregonians exercised direct citizenship. For many of them, that priority echoed a long-standing goal of the station: To deliver modernity to the hinterlands.

These letters are also particularly useful in understanding the significance of KOAC to its female listeners. That radio played an important role in the lives of American women in the early and middle twentieth century has been well established.¹⁵ What has been less discussed in the literature are the ways in which the female audience engaged with the radio that they listened to, and what aspirations they attached to the technology. Women who listened wrote thousands of letters to KOAC, participated in correspondence courses, phoned and wrote in questions for Q&A sessions, submitted surveys, and organized listening groups. It is evident that many of them felt personally invested in the station, in terms of what they heard, what the content meant to them personally, and how the station itself was run.

¹⁵ J. Steven Smethers and Lee Jolliffe. "Homemaking programs: The recipe for reaching women listeners on the Midwest's local radio." *Journalism History* 24, no. 4 (1998), 138.

In January, 1958 Mrs. Virginia Place of Eugene wrote, “I have come to depend on KOAC. It broadens my interests, it opens doors to wider understanding for me. It lifts me above the everyday routine and makes me feel that my place is important in the total scheme of things.”¹⁶ Like many housewives, Place felt that radio connected her to a bigger world; it both took her away from *and* allowed her to attend to the daily household labor. Much of the correspondence preserved in the KOAC archive is similarly glowing, but some listeners took a more assertive tone. “Much of the day’s programs are geared at a lower than adult level,” wrote Ruth G. Kallas, also in January 1958, “but . . . I can occasionally hear some real music, thank heavens! For the sake of the oldsters that listen and enjoy KOAC, please lay all the facts on the table before selling out.” Despite their proscribed representation within the programming, KOAC was a space where women not only felt they had access to a public “space” outside the home but also some measure of control over it.

Letters from listeners to radio stations can illuminate aspects of the audience’s relationship to the medium in the mid-twentieth century. By examining correspondence, this project evaluates how people, particularly “special interest” listeners, listened to the radio, what the programs meant to them, and how they perceived their interactions with it. What did it mean, both practically and conceptually, for people to *interact* with radio? How did people, particularly women, claim agency by choosing how and what to listen to? And, how did those choices affect or determine programming?

¹⁶ Virginia Place, Correspondence, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon, Box 1.

Literature Review: Radio, Modernity, and Competing Visions of National Identity

The Struggle for Educational Radio

Radio historian Susan J. Douglas calls the '20s the “frothy ‘boom’ years of radio, when virtually nothing was fixed.”¹⁷ Reformers and educators saw enormous potential in the new technology, but as McChesney demonstrates, corporate interests and advertisers quickly began to dominate the airwaves.¹⁸ After a long fight, a portion of the spectrum was finally preserved for educational programming, and these licenses were granted to schools. KOAC was a part of the Oregon State Agricultural College and, like many extension services throughout the country, actively used its radio license to reach rural farmers and their families.

Housed in the physics department, KOAC was a creation of science, and the notion that science was synonymous with progress infused its content. A program guide published in 1925 declared that, “The slogan of KOAC is ‘Science for Service.’ Programs will be prepared with that service in mind.”¹⁹ And they were. Radio was celebrated as the tool that would finally deliver modernity to the furthest reaches. From seed preservation to “gardening for health and beauty,” messages endorsing scientific rationality were plied over the airwaves.

Still, even extension service radio was not immune to the pressure of corporate interests. In 1931, KOAC itself was the subject of strong movement on the part of Salem

¹⁷ Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio And The American Imagination*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2004), 56.

¹⁸ Robert W. McChesney, *Telecommunications, Mass Media, & Democracy: The Battle for Control of U.S. Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. (New York: Oxford University Press 1994), passim.

¹⁹ “KOAC Radio Programs 1925-26.” From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7.

business interests to “share” the airtime.²⁰ The college held its ground, but from the beginning, KOAC and educational radio fought an uphill battle. Despite passionate campaigns on the part of many educators and reformers, radio was increasingly deregulated throughout the 1930s. Many of these activists saw advertising as directly antithetical to the public interest. And public radio, they believed, should serve the “public interest”.²¹ As McChesney notes, they formed foundations, councils, and committees; they held conferences and published bulletins. But aside from a handful of hold-out stations, many of whose licenses were (and are still) held by universities, radio belonged almost immediately to capitalist interests. “The favoritism shown commercial broadcasters began with the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) in 1927,” writes J. Wayne Rinks. “By the time Congress created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the first *permanent* regulatory commission for broadcasting, commercial broadcasting was the dominant paradigm.”²²

Scrutiny of this fight constitutes much of the literature in the history of non-commercial radio in this country. Despite losing ground early-on, non-commercial radio has maintained a presence on the dial since the birth of the medium. Programs on KOAC and other extension services (and, later, on community and public broadcasting stations) were products of nonprofit entities, and were produced as contributions to the “public

²⁰ Frank L. Ballard, *The Oregon State University Federal Cooperative Extension Service, 1911-1961*, Oregon State University Extension Service (1960), 215.

²¹ McChesney 94; In radio regulation, as it is elsewhere in regulatory legislation and jurisdiction, the term “public interest” is interpreted in different ways by different parties. While educational broadcasters understood it to mean free and useful information provided to the broadest possible audience, commercial broadcasters (as well as the Federal Radio Commission and many members of congress) interpreted the “public interest” as a) good broadcasting quality and b) general interest content. I discuss this dynamic more thoroughly in Chapter II.

²² J. Wayne Rinks, “Higher Education in Radio 1922-1934,” *Journal of Radio Studies*, 9 (2), 2002.

interest” (itself a contentious concept). Divorced from the influence of commercial sponsors, longitudinal analyses of these state or donation-funded programs can reveal dominant cultural priorities. To the entities involved in the production of KOAC programs, the public interest was served by projecting particular visions of modernity into the ether.

Competing Visions

KOAC may have been relatively independent from corporate messaging, but that does not mean that decisions about programming and content were made with complete autonomy. The Federal Radio Commission exerted control over content on a national level by revoking licenses for particular types of offenses. Radio scholar Bill Kirkpatrick notes that the FRC consistently found cause to revoke licenses for stations that exhibited “local” idiosyncrasies. Instead the agency supported stations that promoted content that reflected, in Kirkpatrick’s words, a “national class” discourse—one that promoted an ideology of a cosmopolitan modernity.²³ Deriding rural specificities of place as parochial, Kirkpatrick argues that national class activists hoped radio would inject modernity into the living rooms and lifestyles of H.L. Mencken’s “prehensile morons” of rural America.²⁴

Mencken’s remark reflects the vitriolic cultural battle that raged, at least in some quarters, between the urban and rural in the 1920s. It was not one-sided. Crop prices, which had been subsidized during the war, dropped 30% to 50% in the decade

²³ Bill Kirkpatrick, “Localism in American Media Policy, 1920-1934: Reconsidering a ‘Bedrock Concept,’” *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, 4 (1-3), (Oct. 2006).

²⁴ *Ibid.* N.P.

following.²⁵ Meanwhile, growing cities called on increased taxes from their hinterlands for economic support. Rural dwellers sometimes responded to urbanization with a combination of fear and anger that manifested in racist and anti-immigrant campaigns that were both cultural and political. “It was not that the new immigrants were pouring into the country districts,” writes Kirschner, “. . .but that they were nesting in the cities at precisely the time when cities were threatening to destroy rural society. The urban threat thus grew as much from the kinds of people who lived in cities as from the economic pressures that attended metropolitan growth.”²⁶ Kirschner’s account suggests a monolithically racist Anglo-Protestant anti-modern rural public. While the reality was certainly more nuanced, angry religious white farmers were often the loudest protesters against the incursion of secular urban culture, gaining a reputation for backwardness that, by contrast, lent a mantle of righteousness to the those marching under the banner of progress. “Radio promised to fulfil the nationalizers' modernizing purpose like no other form of communication,” writes Kirkpatrick. “Part of radio's mystique was its ability to overcome the social limitations of pre-modern life, transcend distance, and connect remote local communities and isolated individuals with the greater social body.”²⁷

It is difficult to overstate how powerful people believed radio as a technology could be in affecting social reform and public opinion. In 1937 Grant Stephen Feikert, a graduate student in Electrical Engineering and former engineer for KOAC, began a thesis on the history of the station with this unattributed quote:

²⁵ Don S. Kirschner, *City and Country: Rural Responses to Urbanization in the 1920s*. (Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 14.

²⁷ Kirkpatrick N.P.

That wonder of the Age, the radio ranks with the press in its potential power to extend the influence of an organization, to create public opinion, to induce public action... Building public opinion and stimulating public action are the functions of all publicity devices, of all publicity technics. Without these devices and technics, organizations cannot achieve their objectives. With them they have the opportunity of influencing national character toward better thought and action.²⁸

Those writing from a science and technology studies perspective are quick to reject the theory that technology only operates as a tool of the dominant, unaffected by nuances and struggles of the real society in which it operates.²⁹ But as the quote above indicates, whether or not radio in fact had the power to impose modernity upon the so-called traditional, it was widely understood to be a valuable tool not just for training, but for exerting influence and inducing action. That understanding of radio as a tool for progress was pervasive among those who commanded resources. In 1914, the land-grant universities were mandated by the Smith-Lever Act to “extend” their research, teaching, and resources to rural America at a time when 50% of the population still lived outside of cities.³⁰ Arriving shortly thereafter, radio was celebrated as a revolution for the extension service.

The numbers suggest that farmers were a receptive audience. Wik notes the number of radios owned by farmers grew from 100,000 in 1922 to over half a million in 1925.³¹ The charter of the USDA required the agency to “diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most

²⁸ Grant Stephen Feikert, “The Economic and Technical Aspects of Radio Station KOAC,” Thesis E.E., Oregon State Agricultural College (1937).

²⁹ Feenberg 74.

³⁰ USDA Extension Service “About Us.” Web: 03/19/2014: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/qlinks/extension.html>

³¹ Wik 182.

general and comprehensive sense of the word.”³² It is evident that the agency recognized the utility of radio for reaching rural populations early on; it established and supported experimental stations at many land grant universities and defended its real estate on the dial. “When Warren G. Harding called a radio conference in Washington D.C. on February 27, 1922,” writes Wik, “W.A. Wheeler of the USDA pointed out that no single use of radio should take precedence over its use for farming, except for marine or aerial purposes.”³³

In 1932, writes Wik, Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas testified about how important he thought radio was to his constituents:

To the farmer, radio...is the sunrise devotional service, the first edition of his morning newspaper, the noonday luncheon club, the stock and grain market, and the nightly... political meeting or symphony. To the farmer’s wife, radio is the cooking school, beauty parlor, household clinic, bargain counter, sewing circle, afternoon tea or musicale, community club, and evening at the theater. To the farmer’s children, it is the comic strip, the home teacher, a ringside seat at a big-league sport, the school of the air, and the white lights of Broadway.³⁴

This comprehensive reach was precisely the intention of reformers in the first half of the twentieth century, who saw in radio an opportunity to export modernity to the countryside.³⁵ Rather than an idealistic pursuit of rural progress, Craig argues that this effort was driven largely by an anxiety among the middle class over the migration of the rural population into urban centers. “Many concluded that the solution was rural modernization,” writes Craig, “a transformation of rural life into something more nearly

³² Ibid. 177.

³³ Ibid. 181.

³⁴ Ibid. 184.

³⁵ Hugh Richard Sloten, *Radio's Hidden Voice: The Origins of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. (University of Illinois Press, 2009) 51.

like that enjoyed by the growing urban and suburban middle class.”³⁶ While Craig’s treatment of the subject is too brief, he suggests that just as radio was used as a tool for rural uplift, it simultaneously served to maintain an agricultural economy on which the urban centers relied. But it was not just economics that drove the reformers’ concern; as noted above, immigration and urbanization also contributed to a sense that America’s national identity was under threat. Varying aspirations for radio revealed that, as Kirkpatrick puts it, “very different approaches to modern life and very different visions of the nation competed politically, economically, and culturally during the 1920s.”³⁷ Just as some saw radio as the harbinger of progressive national cosmopolitanism, others considered it a mechanism to a more virtuous, “truly American,” agrarian lifestyle.³⁸ What competing groups had in common was an aspiration to “flatten out local differences,” Kirkpatrick argues.³⁹

Programs of nationalization, however, were never entirely successful. Cohen demonstrates that, despite the best efforts of reformers and melting-pot boosters, early radio did not create a homogenous mass culture. Because people often listened together, they heard radio through the filter of their ethnic and cultural enclaves. “Communal radio listening mediated between local and mass culture much like the neighborhood store or theater,” Cohen writes.⁴⁰ Rather than initiating people into a modern mass

³⁶ Steve Craig, “‘The More they Listen, The More They Buy’: Radio and the Modernizing of Rural America, 1930-1939.” *Agricultural History*, 80 (1). (Winter, 2006.), 2.

³⁷ Kirkpatrick N.P.

³⁸ Craig 3.

³⁹ Kirkpatrick N.P.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a new deal: Industrial workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, (Cambridge University Press 1991), 133.

culture, listening to radio gave them tools to navigate it while maintaining their own cultural identities. Radio, she argues, actually strengthened in-group values and social conventions.⁴¹

There is evidence that university stations took audience preferences (and differences) seriously. “Stations operated by state universities did not treat audiences simply as passive recipients of messages,” argues Slotten. “They tried to take into account the views of their audience and to build a sense of community among listeners, staff, and students.”⁴² Despite funding from the state, it was critical that university stations appeal to their audience by providing content that listeners liked. Stavitsky notes that these proto-public stations began conducting research into audience preferences in the early 1920s, almost as soon as they began broadcasting, and continued to develop techniques for determining listening habits over the next many decades.⁴³ To determine the best use of radio technology, station leadership turned to the new field of market research—a scientific approach to understanding public opinion.

According to these principles of market research, Taylor notes that “uses of radio technology had to be found for every modern person—man, woman, and child.”⁴⁴ That producers found uses of radio technology for women is often addressed in the academic

⁴¹ Ibid. 135.

⁴² Slotten (2008) 4.

⁴³ Alan G. Stavitsky, "Listening for listeners: Educational radio and audience research." *Journalism History* 19, no. 1 (1993), 12.

⁴⁴ Timothy D. Taylor, "Music and the rise of radio in 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, and the Transformation of Intimacy," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002), 435.

literature, but women also used radio. In the next section I examine the literature about women, radio, and progressive organizing

Gender, Radio, and “Progress”

Commercial and educational radio alike traversed boundaries that had formerly been delimited by geographical distance as well as by gendered notions of the public. Radio entered domestic spaces in the years directly following the 19th amendment. Claiming citizenship, women were reorganizing their relationship to the political public just as radio was reorienting the privacy of the domicile.⁴⁵ Recently feminist scholars have discussed the meaning of those reorientations, identifying the medium as a link between the public and private spheres—one with ambiguous consequences. “[Radio],” writes Lacey, “both mediated and recuperated challenges to the established delineations of the separate spheres while in itself constituting a radical extension of the public sphere and a redefinition of the private.”⁴⁶

It is clear that radio’s relationship with women in their homes was far from a monolithic experience and most scholars have identified how the medium failed to help women claim full citizenship. Instead, accounts of gender and radio in the early twentieth century tend to point up a range of adverse effects the medium exerted on the status of women as emergent public citizens. Andrews has argued that radio often served as a means of inserting oppressive notions of domesticity into the home, policing normative boundaries by offering women’s programming that reinforced a limited range

⁴⁵ See Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: gender, German radio, and the public sphere, 1923-1945*, (University of Michigan Press, 1996); Maggie Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves: Broadcasting, Domesticity and Femininity*, (Continuum, 2012).

⁴⁶ Lacey 15.

of appropriate activities⁴⁷ To Lacey, radio acted as a sort of safety valve for releasing steam from rising feminist tensions, thereby forestalling significant progress. It brought the public into the home so women would be less likely to move into the public.⁴⁸ Still, though sometimes fraught with conservative values, Lacey argues that radio did serve to extend the public sphere to women, and it was particularly advantageous to women in traditionally isolated rural and working-class communities.⁴⁹

Radio could be, in turns oppressive and emancipatory. Reformers and boosters at the time saw mainly emancipatory promise of radio and fought to extend both reception and programming to the most sequestered female listeners. Bourgeois feminist groups provided much of the energy for this movement. Lacey notes that in Germany in the 1920s, speakers were generally recruited from their ranks.⁵⁰ Although the specifics of the movements were different, in the United States middle-class women were also behind the drive to modernize via radio. Family, homemaking, and mental health programming on KOAC were outgrowths of progressive era movements, and were among the most popular, a topic which I examine in Chapter III of this thesis.

The Utility of Radio

That radio was intentionally harnessed to deliver modern perspectives into the home has been noted by many scholars. Taylor examines photographs of rural and racialized

⁴⁷ Andrews 6.

⁴⁸ Lacey 40.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 236.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

“others” listening to the radio in the 1920s. “These pictures,” he writes, “showed how radio was thought to have conquered both space, and time, from modern to premodern.”⁵¹

In her work on women, radio, and modernity in Weimar Germany, Lacey does address the ways that bourgeois movements and institutions in that country harnessed radio to rationalize housework. Ultimately studying radio and women points up what Lacey calls “women’s ambivalent relationship to modernity”; women could either be assimilated into the public sphere, or the myth of gender difference could be defended. The consequence of this encroachment of scientific knowledge on areas of “traditional” female expertise was the deskilling of the domestic labor force. “The disruption of time-honored, ‘natural’ practices,” writes Lacey, “together with the scientification of domestic and mothering tasks, undermined women’s faith in their instinctive abilities and in the ways of their mothers and created a willing audience for the professional expert.”⁵² But that is not the end of the story for Lacey. While radio may not have fulfilled its emancipatory promise, it did create some space for women as members of, as she says, the “political public,” allowing them to participate in national conversations. Lacey argues that radio acted to reinvigorate Arendt’s conception of the public sphere, stalling modernity’s erosion of a “common feeling” for the world.⁵³

⁵¹ Taylor 436.

⁵² Lacey 153.

⁵³ Ibid. 233.

Theoretical Approach

A goal of progressive reformers generally, and of supporters of KOAC in particular, was a broad reorientation to the modern. These reformers hoped that a citizenry educated in the ways of science would be able to participate productively in the new “mass” society. Feenberg outlines an approach that marries the useful parts of modernity theory with those from science and technology studies (STS). The former, he argues, presupposes a natural distinction between technology and society; technological development generalizes technical rationality which necessarily impedes upon the “qualitative richness of the traditional social world.”⁵⁴ Modernity theory understands technologies as inherently “deworlding,” but fails to address that they are produced, used, and interpreted in a thoroughly social reality, thus reifying a positivist notion of progress.⁵⁵ From an STS perspective “there is no stable, pre-given telos of technological development because goals are variables, not constants, and technical devices themselves have no self-evident purpose.”⁵⁶ But Feenberg argues that STS fails to contend with the often top-down nature of technology. By bringing these two approaches together, we can account for the real impact of rationality on society while also understanding society’s impact on technologies themselves.

Methodological Discussion

An historical project, archival documents have informed this research at all stages. Working primarily within the special collections at the Oregon State University Libraries,

⁵⁴ Feenberg 74.

⁵⁵ Feenberg 74.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 92.

my interpretation of the story of KOAC grew out of a range of documentary sources, each offering important content and each imbued with traces of the context in which it was produced. The documents I examined here included program guides, program transcripts, correspondence, internal memos, budgets and proposed budgets, a master's thesis, an unpublished manuscript, and a published memoir, among others. John Scott suggests there are four criteria by which any document should be evaluated: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning.⁵⁷ The wide range of document types—each with its own set of authors and intended audience—means that those four measures must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Still, some general observations apply, and it is worth taking a moment to consider each of the criteria.

Authenticity refers to the genuineness of the document. Is it what it is purported to be, or what the researcher believes she is reading? In the case of KOAC, these records were primarily preserved for academic posterity. It appears that most of the documents in the collection were gathered and hastily converted to microfilm, after which the paper originals were likely destroyed. The microfilm has been stored in the special collections at Oregon State University. Some paper documents remain, bound and stored in the special collections at University of Oregon. These documents have rarely been accessed. In short, the stakes are low. It seems unlikely that anyone has found reason to tamper with them.

Credibility is a criteria used to determine whether the document is free from distortion; this measures how accurately and sincerely an account is reported. Ultimately, credibility asks the researcher to be skeptical-- to identify the ways in which

⁵⁷ John Scott, *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

the documents may reflect the interests of those who recorded it.⁵⁸ In order to assess credibility, a researcher must understand who produced the account, and for whom. The range of documents examined in this project were produced by various authors for various audiences. Some, such as program guides and transcripts, were intended for a listening or *potentially* listening public. Others, such as budget reports, were created for authorities at the level of the university, state, and federal governments. Memoirs were produced for the public and for posterity. Testing the credibility of each of these sources requires a different set of skeptical questions.

Representativeness (or typicality) becomes an issue when historical documents have been carelessly or selectively preserved. It is critical that the researcher recognize that the archive itself is a construction; decisions about what is preserved and what is destroyed are generally made to serve particular interests. In the case of the KOAC papers, the correspondence that has survived, for instance, is poorly organized. Certain letters, such as those that reflect enthusiasm about the station's programming, have been carefully preserved, identified, and logged. Few letters that have been preserved are critical of KOAC in any way. Again, the task of the researcher is to read skeptically.

Finally, Scott suggests the researcher subject the documents to a test of "meaning." Essentially, he argues that interpretive understanding can only be achieved through fine-grained sensitive analysis of not only the documents, but the social, political, and economic contexts in which they were produced. Indeed, this criteria encapsulates the greater goal of this project.

These criteria are useful, if blunt, instruments. They serve as a starting point. But, just as Scott calls for skepticism, a researcher must approach the tools themselves

⁵⁸ Ibid. 22

critically. Lindsay Prior suggests that these criteria establish only one evidentiary aspect - one must also consider how the documents have been made and “recruited” in a more political sense. Documents are not produced and consumed in a vacuum. The complexities of the regime under which a given document was produced shape how it was both formed and consumed. “What is of interest here is that impact of these clear traces of collective action are routinely effaced and then subsumed under the author-function – so that the ‘author’ functions as the creator.”⁵⁹ Reading a given document as a product of collective action provides a lens by which to understand the contexts, strictures, mores, and rules which determined how the document was produced.

Conclusion

The technology of radio is only meaningful insofar as it is imbued with the values of the society in which it operates. Radio itself does not impose scientific rationality nor does it grant emancipated citizenship. Using radio as a tool for social change resulted in consequences that were both intended and unintended. As Feenberg puts it, “technologies serve needs while also contributing to the emergence of the very needs they serve; human beings make technologies that in turn shape what it means to be human.”⁶⁰ This tension is manifestly apparent in the development of radio in the twentieth century. Emerging at a moment of great change, with the ability to cross previously impenetrable boundaries, radio seemed to bear revolutionary potential as well as repressive power, always different from different perspectives. As Douglas puts it,

⁵⁹ Lindsay Prior. *Using Documents in Social Research*, (Sage, 2003), 12.

⁶⁰ Feenberg 92.

Americans – torn as we are between our passion for ‘progress’ and our desperate desire for tradition – love and hate what machines do to and for us, often at the same time... this inclination to invest certain technologies, especially communications technologies, with extravagant hopes about their potential to extend democracy, reasserts itself repeatedly in America. And few technologies have been more freighted, time and again, with such dreams and disillusionment than radio.⁶¹

Those dreams invested in Radio Station KOAC by entities from the federal government down to the station engineer and its listeners, are the subjects of this paper.

⁶¹ Douglas 20.

CHAPTER II

“THE USE OF RADIO IN DEMOCRACY”:

PROGRAMMING AND ASPIRATIONS ON RADIO STATION KOAC

In the third year of its in operation (1925), KOAC’s first program director, Wallace Kadderly, suggested that “to KOAC broadcasts should be applied the question ‘do they serve the listener; do they aid him in his everyday or seasonal interests or problems; do they contribute to something of value in a cultural or aesthetic sense?’”⁶² Kadderly could not have expected those questions would come to define competing poles of opinion at the station, at that point a collection of circuitry that was barely more than a college physics experiment. In 1925 Radio Station KOAC broadcast informational programming three nights a week, for a total of four hours and 45 minutes. Agricultural programming aired on Monday evenings from 6:50 to 8:00 pm; programming for homemakers was broadcast Wednesday evenings 7:20 to 8:00; and from 7:20 to 9:00 on Fridays the station broadcast lectures on the arts and sciences from faculty at the Oregon Agricultural College: “entertaining and instructive material that has application to the daily lives of Oregonians.”⁶³ That year roughly 15,000 people lived Benton County, where the station was located. By 1946 KOAC was operating on 5,000 watts, reaching 90% of farm homes in the state.⁶⁴ By the end of the 1950s the population of Benton County had grown to nearly 40,000. KOAC was broadcasting 12 hours a day, 72 hours per week.

⁶² Morris 5

⁶³ “Radio Programs of Station K-OAC 1925-26,” Oregon Agricultural College Extension Service, Corvallis, February 1926, Reel 7, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁶⁴ Frank Ballard, *The Oregon State University Federal Cooperative Extension Service, 1911-1961*, unpublished manuscript (1960), 224

Radio scholar Hugh Slotten argues that KOAC was “by far the most important university station in the western United States serving the needs of agriculture.”⁶⁵ Other non-commercial stations in Western states had more limited broadcast ranges, and were usually more short-lived, less organized enterprises. As Corvallis and the state urbanized, however, KOAC’s listenership also changed, and the balance of programming shifted. In this chapter I ask what the programming on KOAC reveal about the priorities of the various stakeholders involved. How did priorities change and why? In what follows I look at how the producers of KOAC understood their listenership: who the listeners were; what they said they wanted to hear; what the station thought they should listen to; and what the station was mandated to provide. I argue that changes in programming and station rhetoric expose an increasing tension between a commitment to cater to KOAC’s atomized audiences and a desire to reflect the new cosmopolitanism of Corvallis. Underlying this cultural tension was a conflict between the station’s mandate to provide agricultural information and external pressures to “commercialize” (i.e. broadcast advertisements, sponsored content, and adhere to popular tastes), and was further complicated by shifting priorities at the Federal Communications Commission. I base this argument on a body of evidence in the KOAC collection-- documents that include program guides, budgets, correspondence, memoranda, reports, and trade publications. When taken together this collection points to the changing outlines of Radio Station KOAC, a uniquely twentieth century institution, over the course of 4 decades.

⁶⁵ Hugh Richard Slotten, "Radio's hidden voice: Noncommercial broadcasting, extension education, and state universities during the 1920s." *Technology and Culture* 49, no. 1 (2008), 35

This chapter begins with a chronology of the station between 1921, when the station launched and 1958, when it underwent a significant reorganization. This timeline maps institutional as well as cultural changes at KOAC, and will serve as a point of reference for the discussions that follow.

Chronology

“Hello

1892 – the magic word was *telephone*

1902 – the password of the year was *automobile*

1912 – the word of the hour was *movie*

1922 – Everybody’s lips were saying *radio*... ”⁶⁶

So read the promotional brochure (Fig. 1) advertising the brand new KFDJ, broadcasting from the physics department on OAC campus. In November 1921, Paul V. Maris, Director of the Oregon State College Extension Service, had met with officials at the United States Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Washington, D.C.. They discussed the value of the new technology of radio as a means of disseminating market information, and Maris returned to Oregon with a directive to investigate the possibility. County Extension Agent Frank Ballard was tasked with the investigation, and in 1923 came to the conclusion that “The facility with which information can be sent out, the desirability (sic) to personally address thousands of prospect students... many of the receiving sets in use are located in isolated places where the influence of college would

⁶⁶ KOAC, Oregon State Board of Higher Education, 1922, OreZExcec, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

seldom be felt any other way.”⁶⁷ The investment in radio as an educational tool, Ballard believed, was justified.

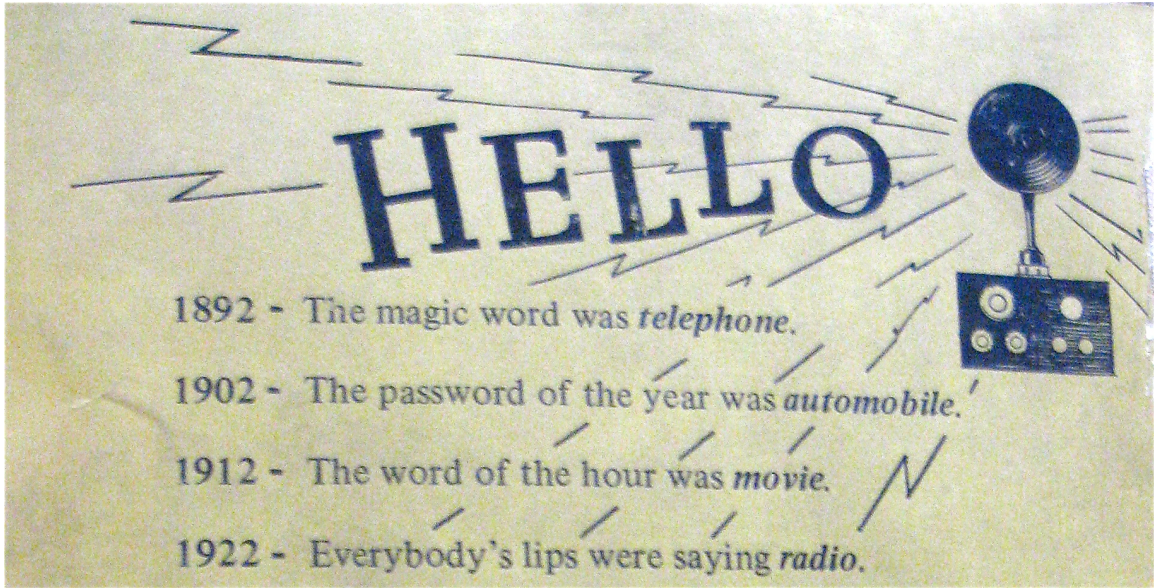


Figure 1. KFDJ Promotional Brochure

Ballard’s study “indicated that the Agricultural Extension Service should inaugurate a system of radio broadcasting in order to place at the disposal of the farm public in Oregon, agricultural information and market news,” recalled KOAC Engineer Grant Stephen Feikert years later.⁶⁸ The language around the development of the station indicated that it would be nothing if not practical. The founders’ very pragmatic application of the medium, however, did not dampen the heady enthusiasm of those who would launch and run the station. Its future director, James Morris, was a high school student in Eugene when that station began broadcasting. “It was the end of World War

⁶⁷ Frank Ballard, “Report of the Radio Technical Committee,” (May 1923) Reel 7 Folder 25, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁶⁸ Grant Stephen Feikert, “The Economic and Technical Aspects of Radio Station KOAC” (MS Thesis, Oregon State Agricultural College, 1937), 12

I,” he remembers, “and the fellows were back from France where they had used this great new discovery to communicate between trenches. Many of them had learned the code and were talking back and forth sending messages over this great new device.

“Milt stuck a pair of ‘cans’ on my ears. All I heard was the hum from the power line right outside his window – but that was enough to get me interested.”⁶⁹

A high school radio enthusiast, Morris had tested radio sets on KFDJ. As a student at Oregon Agricultural College, he began working in the physics lab that housed the station, then went on to become a physics professor at the Oregon Agricultural College, and Program Director at KOAC. For Morris, and many of the others who witnessed the birth of the medium, the launch of the station signified progress toward a more equitable future. Radio in general and KOAC in particular would carry up-to-date information into the far reaches of Oregon, information that would enable rural people to participate as informed citizens in the modern world, as well as to enhance their chances of material well-being.⁷⁰

When Morris first tuned in to KFDJ in 1921 it was probably Wallace Kadderly’s voice he heard. Kadderly was the director of information and exhibits for the agricultural extension. More than any other person, he was responsible for the vision that would guide KOAC for the next many decades. Kadderly was tasked with extending the resources of the college, and radio was an ideal extension tool. “Radio will replace no established means of carrying the college to the people of the state,” Kadderly wrote in 1925, “It can, however, be made a most potent supplement, or complement, to these

⁶⁹ Morris 1.

⁷⁰ Morris 11.

activities. Evidence at hand indicates that through the microphone the college is reaching into the homes of a host of citizens to whom Oregon Agricultural College is but a name and who know little if anything of its purpose or works.”⁷¹ Radio could literally extend the resources of the college into the homes of people who barely knew what college was.

Throughout the 1920s, OAC’s extension project was unwaveringly committed to teaching applied science. As the station found its footing, establishing regular programming hours, identifying broadcast themes, commanding more resources, and advertising for listeners, the singular focus on applied science began to shift. In October of 1925 it was able to increase its transmitter to 500 watts.⁷² Language around the project became more expansive, though still under the model of “Science for Service.” In 1927 Paul Maris wrote this statement for a report on station activities.

A few generations ago colleges were open only to the privileged few. Now the sons and daughters of people of all walks of life attend our higher institutions of learning. During the last half century we have witnessed the development of land-grant colleges, in which liberal and cultural education has been combined with training for the practical pursuits of life and for service to the state. The radio now breaks down the barriers of time and space and opens the way to extend immeasurably the type of teaching and of service. Without cost, without loss of time, within your own home, you may select from the programs presented, lectures and combinations of lectures, which relate to your personal problems and interest, and which, if closely followed, will contribute to your service and personal improvement.⁷³

From Maris's perspective, the college was extending progress to people who had, until the technological triumph of radio, been stuck in a benighted past. KOAC invited them into a future that was bright and efficient, and into a citizenry that was broadly educated and scientifically informed.

⁷¹ Ibid. 8.

⁷² “History of Radio Station KOAC” (1927), Reel 7 Folder 25, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁷³ Wallace Kadderly, “A Brief Resume of Radio Activities” (December 1946), Reel 7 Folder 41 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

In the late 1920s, KOAC also began to defend itself as a public resource. The station was funded by a changing cast of governmental agencies, a fact which, at least at the beginning, was considered somewhat of an inevitability. The station was an arm of the state college, which had been supported by the public since it was designated a land grant fund recipient in 1868. It clearly served the public interest, and the airwaves seemed an inexhaustible resource. But by the end of the 1920s commercial interests were making claims on frequencies, or simply overriding them with interference. The regulatory apparatus had been established by the Radio Act of 1912 primarily to address wireless issues that became apparent following the sinking of the Titanic.⁷⁴ It granted the Department of Commerce the authority to issue fines and revoke licenses, but the agency was ill-equipped and ill-inclined to defend weaker parties. It became clear that the airwaves were in fact a scarce resource. It also became apparent that commercial broadcasting was a real and growing threat, something that KOAC leadership had not anticipated. In his 1921 feasibility investigation, Ballard had expressed an almost flippant attitude toward commercial broadcasting. “It is our opinion,” he wrote, “that many of the large commercial broadcasting stations will discontinue sooner or later as the newness, and consequently the advertising value, wears off. This will leave the field practically free to the educational institutions.”⁷⁵

By the late 1920s the airwaves had become crowded. While many regulatory bills had been introduced in congress, they had all failed to pass. In order to push legislation through, the Hoover administration rolled back the woefully outdated regulation that had

⁷⁴ Slotten (2000) 8.

⁷⁵ Frank Ballard, “Report of the Radio Technical Committee,” (May 1923) Reel 7 Folder 25, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

emerged from the Radio Act of 1912, instigating chaos. Congress moved hastily then to pass the Radio Act of 1927, which also established the Federal Radio Commission (FRC). The FRC was tasked with decreasing the number of stations on the air but, as McChesney notes, it was not operating on specific guidelines. Instead it granted licenses based on the broadcaster's ability to serve the "public interest, convenience, or necessity."⁷⁶ Just as in the case of the public utilities law from which it was borrowed, the ambiguous phrasing of the Radio Act of 1927 would result in decades of legal battles and confusing policy decisions.⁷⁷ Ultimately, as McChesney points out, the FRC interpreted the public interest clause to mean they should guarantee the best possible reception quality in all media markets, which was highly favorable to well-funded commercial broadcasters.⁷⁸

For the first time, but far from the last, KOAC was required to justify its value to the people of Oregon in terms of the public interest clause of the new FRC policy. In 1927 Maris penned a plea to the Federal Radio Supervisor, Seventh District in Seattle, hoping to stop commercial stations aggressively interfering with KOAC's frequency.

It is consistent with sound public policy, convenience, interest and necessity that the people be permitted to derive the benefits of their large investment in research and teaching in the applied sciences and liberal arts... much of the material to be disseminated is of timely nature, having a direct relation to the welfare of the people. This includes information related to the control of pests and diseases of crops and livestock, to markets and business conditions, to health and sanitation, to citizenship and government⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Robert W. McChesney, *Telecommunications, Mass Media, & Democracy: The Battle for Control of U.S. Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. (New York: Oxford University Press 1994), 18

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 18

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 25

⁷⁹ Paul V. Maris to O.R. Redfern, April 14 1927, Reel 7 Folder 42 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

It was contrary to sound public policy, he added, that programming be “biased by private commercial motives.”⁸⁰

Maris’ argument was met with skepticism. 1929 marked the moment when the federal government ceased to envision radio as a public utility like water or electricity; instead of serving users they should strive to serve a broad listening public. Non-commercial stations like KOAC had two strikes against them. The first was that non-advertising stations had lower budgets, which meant that producing the amount and audio quality of the programming demanded by the FRC would put them deep in the red. The second was that the commission opposed the use of the airwaves for “private or selfish interests.” Paradoxically, advertising did not fall under this category; rather, it was the non-commercial stations that were considered to be peddling propaganda. The rationale, the Commissioners believed, was simple: via the marketplace, the public would decide what the public wanted to hear.⁸¹

Over the next many years the fight against commercial broadcasting became KOAC’s central focus, along with most other non-commercial stations in the United States. The FRC had created conditions for the networks to explode. CBS and NBC affiliates, which accounted for 6.4% of the radio market in 1927, made up over 30% in 1931. Taking operating power into account, McChesney notes, “NBC and CBS accounted for nearly 70 percent of American broadcasting by 1931.”⁸² Advertising found fertile ground in radio and commercial broadcasting flourished. The airwaves, however, were crowded and the

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ McChesney 26.

⁸² Ibid. 29.

FRC meant to maximize their economic potential. In early 1931 the FRC issued General Order no. 105, which threatened to revoke KOAC's license unless the station aired a minimum of 12 hours of programming per day.⁸³ Commercial competitors were making increasingly aggressive plays for the frequency.⁸⁴

In February, Maris wrote a passionate letter to W. J. Kerr, President of the State Board of Higher Education, begging for further appropriations to support an expanded schedule. "This asset the State cannot afford to yield to commercial interests," he wrote. "The issue is one of far-reaching consequences, a fact nationally recognized."⁸⁵ But by September of that year, without additional funding forthcoming from the State Board, station leaders were seriously considering commercializing KOAC; it was the only way, they thought, it could remain on air.⁸⁶ The FRC scheduled a hearing for October 13, but with only days remaining, the decision was made to go to a 12 hour schedule regardless of funding.⁸⁷

Early the next year, KOAC conducted an audience survey "for the purpose of discovering what value the station actually had."⁸⁸ These new forms of applied social science research were critical for non-commercial stations between the 1920s and

⁸³ Untitled, undated document, reel 7 folder 25 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁸⁴ Wallace Kadderly to L.R. Breithaupt, January 21, 1931, reel 7, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁸⁵ Paul V. Maris to W.J. Kerr, February 19, 1931, Reel 7 folder 16, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁸⁶ Meeting minutes, Committee of Board of Regents, September 22, 1931, Reel 7 folder 16, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁸⁷ Untitled, undated document, reel 7 folder 25 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

1950s.⁸⁹ The results of KOAC's survey were unexpectedly positive, and based on the strength of the numbers, the State Board of Higher Education voted to appropriate \$36,000 to support a 12-hour broadcast schedule that fiscal year.⁹⁰

At the same time, Oregon's education system was undergoing a large-scale reorganization. KOAC, which had been under the jurisdiction of the Federal Cooperative Extension Service, was now made a department of the General Extension Service which itself was part of the State system of Higher Education. Instead of being a unit of a single institution, then, KOAC became "a representative of all of them."⁹¹ While the Federal Cooperative Extension had supported primarily agricultural programming, funding streams from multiple institutions "brought a broadening of program content which tended to serve more fully the social and cultural needs of KOAC listeners."⁹² While KOAC maintained a commitment to agricultural programming, over the following decades the emphasis would shift further toward "cultural" content. Those themes, and the space between them, would come to define the character of the station. It reflected the changing community of which it was part.

In 1935, however, the priority remained to rural communities and agricultural programming. Audience surveys taken that year show that programs related to farming

⁸⁹ Stavitsky 12.

⁹⁰ Untitled, undated document, reel 7 folder 25, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁹¹ "Chronological Summary of Trends in Subject Matter and Content of KOAC Programs," April 7 1941, Reel 10 Folder 20, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁹² Ibid.

were by far the most requested.⁹³ In following years, the rhetoric around agriculture began to change, subtly at first. In the first decade of its existence, Radio Station KOAC's producers viewed it primarily as a tool to teach hard skills and applied science. Agriculture remained central to the identity of the station, but by the late 1930s the goals of KOAC (and of the university) included the improvement of rural *culture*. "A fundamental objective of agricultural extension work is to establish in Oregon a more efficient and profitable agriculture, a better farm home and a more wholesome rural life."⁹⁴

I do not mean to suggest that the goals were not part of a cohesive vision for the station. What is interesting, however, is that the balance began to shift; the rhetoric grew grander as the programming became more general. As cities in Oregon grew, gestures toward a cultural cosmopolitanism were filtering into the KOAC vision. In 1938 the State Board of Higher Education voted to appropriate funds for a remote station at the University of Oregon in order to broadcast academic lectures on subjects like speech, psychology, and art that extended far from the tilling techniques of the Extension Specialists.⁹⁵ Agricultural programming continued to take precedence, but internal station reports and memoranda now often framed rural communities as culturally underserved populations. One 1939 report discusses "the station's very sincere attempt to develop the educational radio station as an aid to the public schools of Oregon,

⁹³ "University of Oregon Program Service," April 16, 1935, Reel 1 Folder 9, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁹⁴ W.L. Teutsch, "Statement Concerning County Agent Use of Radio Station KOAC," December 20, 1938, Reel 7 Folder 35, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁹⁵ Untitled, undated document, reel 7 folder 25, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

especially those schools not located in the larger centers, and therefore lacking some of the advantages of the larger schools.”⁹⁶

This perspective was not unique to the Oregon Agricultural College and its extension service. In 1946 a Washington, D.C. marketing firm conducted a survey of rural listeners, and circulated a letter to station managers with findings suggesting that service to the intended audience was faltering. The survey found that “[m]ore and more complaints were coming in to the FCC, USDA and to Congress – saying that many stations are failing to serve the best interests of rural people.”⁹⁷ A month later, at a national conference sponsored in part by the USDA, Maurice Wieting, the Director of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, gave a controversial talk titled “Radio has Failed the Farmer.” He asserted that “stations make their money serving rich and urban areas... I take the position that these valuable radio wave-lengths belong to all people.”⁹⁸

Despite evidence that most rural people preferred agricultural programming, casting rural communities as underprivileged justified an approach to programming that emphasized culture and refinement. From its inception, KOAC had operated on Progressive Era ideals of efficiency and rationality, but until the late 1930s programming had been largely practical, responding to requests from farmers for more modern techniques and more up-to-date market information.

Non-commercial educational stations were some of the strongest bastions of local programming, unaccountable to national advertisers, focused on local and regional needs

⁹⁶ Ibid. 5

⁹⁷ Charles F. Warden to “Station Manager,” Reel 14, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁹⁸ Maurice Wieting, “Radio has Failed the Farmer,” Reel 1 Folder 12, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

and financially incentivized to cater to them. But pressure from the FCC was always present for KOAC management. In a 1940 letter to the OAC administration, a station manager wrote that he had been hearing whisperings that Chairman Fly and the other FCC commissioners “looked with considerable disfavor upon educational stations such as our own KOAC because they were considered to be primarily propaganda agencies for particular institutions.”⁹⁹ This pressure tended to push content in a direction that was more general than special interest, more “civilizing” than practical.

But I would argue that the shift was due to more than regulatory weight, and is in fact at least partially explained as a local cultural shift that one might expect to accompany rapid urbanization. To understand this point, it is useful to consider the pace of demographic change in the Willamette Valley: The population of Corvallis was now 8,392; 20,838 people lived in Eugene; and at 305,394 Portland was a mid-sized city.¹⁰⁰ As the state changed so did the state college, and with it, the radio station. The individual administrators, managers, and producers working to get broadcasts on the air at KOAC were educated, self-consciously erudite, cosmopolitan, and modern. In Corvallis, what had recently been a farm town was now a small city, and many of its inhabitants thought of themselves as urban. There is some indication that at times KOAC’s producers felt a mild embarrassment that their modern technology was tethered by such prosaic content.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Luke Roberts to V.V. Caldwell, October 10, 1940, Reel 1 Folder 12, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁰⁰ ["Number of Inhabitants: Oregon"](#) (PDF). *18th Census of the United States*. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved July 13, 2015.

¹⁰¹ Feikert 84.

The striving toward a cosmopolitan modernity fit awkwardly with the functional mandate of the station, but KOAC managers were adept at marrying the lofty and the pragmatic. In a 1941 report to college administration, station management wrote:

A radio station such as KOAC may be of great worth if it is administered so as to produce a wide-spread service to the people of the state. It is peculiarly advantageous when operated by the system of educational institutions as one of the means whereby the major purpose of education in improving the human stock and enhancing production may be more effectively realized... Its objectives, then, should be the realization of a program of the widest possible service to the people of Oregon in their effort to attain a high level of culture and more fully realize the values of the great natural wealth of the state.¹⁰²

It is worth noting, however, that the report identifies the primary and central “endeavor” to accomplish these lofty ends as developing programs “especially adapted to the needs of the 65,000 farm families of the State of Oregon.”¹⁰³

The tension between rural and urban priorities began to bubble up more frequently in the 1940s. On May 15, 1942 Extension Editor John C. Burtner wrote a memo responding to an uproar among the faculty of the various campuses of the Oregon State System of Higher Education. They had complained that the “mimeographed news” about campus goings-on included disproportionate space devoted to updates on agricultural and homemaking programs, to the exclusion of all other programs. “Practically all of the weekly papers have a predominantly rural circulation,” wrote Burtner in response, “and hence emphasize agricultural and homemaking material. The non-agricultural news from

¹⁰² Frederick Hunter, “Report and Recommendations on the Reorganization of Radio Station KOAC,” January 20, 1941, Reel 7 Folder 34, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

the campus finds its major outlet in the special correspondence to the Portland papers and the press associations.”¹⁰⁴

That rural people were primarily interested in agricultural programming was not an assumption on the part of the station management; it had been established by repeated surveys, and KOAC proceeded as if it were a simple fact.¹⁰⁵ The station began to see its audiences as disparate groups, with distinct interests that rarely crossed over. That did not stop them attempting to “uplift” the rural communities, but there are indications that they saw a chasm between those who had joined the modern world and those who had not. It was *about* the latter group that they wrote this, but it was *for* the former: “KOAC has consistently worked toward its goal to bring about an enlightened citizenry – to the end that they may have awakened social consciousness, experience a greater economic freedom, and enjoy finer cultural satisfactions.”¹⁰⁶ As though they were truly disadvantaged, station took a paternalistic position toward their rural listeners.

Lofty enlightenment ideals were not the only problems that began to emerge around agricultural programming. The quality of general programming had improved, but it was proving more and more difficult to produce agricultural programming that was up-to-par. There was high turn-over among Directors of Agricultural Programs, which was generally due to a low budget and too large a workload.¹⁰⁷ But the bigger problem was

¹⁰⁴ John C. Burtner to Frederick Hunter, May 15, 1942, Reel 2 Folder 17, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁰⁵ “Report of the Radio Technical Committee,” May 25, 1923, Reel 7 Folder 25, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁰⁶ “Chronological Summary of Trends in Subject Matter and Content of KOAC Programs,” April 7, 1941, Reel 7 Folder 9, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁰⁷ From Britton to Allen Miller, March 23, 1945, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

finding able men with agricultural education and experience during wartime. The problem was not KOAC's alone. In a 1945 letter from a radio station in East Lansing, Michigan, the station manager wrote that he had been looking for a Director of Agricultural Programming for a year. "In our case," he wrote, "we decided to wait until the manpower situation has released some men."¹⁰⁸

It is unclear if agricultural programming began to improve as veterans returned to the home front, but there seems to have been renewed energy for the topic on the air: Agriculture was a way to engage and employ veterans, and the college scrambled to create opportunities for them. In 1945 there were about 140,000 veterans, about half of whom were from rural areas. The G.I. Bill supported rural veteran's agricultural education, and extension workers were sent into the country with the specific directive to help bring the new farmers up-to-date. At the radio station, returning veterans in agriculture lent farm-related content a cultural relevance, a kind of worldly glamor that international news and cultural content possessed but agricultural content was lacking.¹⁰⁹

Despite a desire on the part of the producers to create more glamorous content, the medium of radio was especially well-suited to reach rural and farm populations. A memorandum circulated in October of 1945 described the results of a national survey: "You will be particularly interested in the findings because they indicate the farm

¹⁰⁸ From Robert Coleman to Allen Miller, August 24, 1945, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁰⁹ "Remarks of James Morris, Program Manager, KOAC, Before the Extension Specialists Workshop," May 23, 1947, Reel 10 Folder 20, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

listeners tune to news more frequently than residents of villages, while village residents listen more often than city dwellers.”¹¹⁰

Not only did rural listeners tune in in greater numbers, but there was also funding specifically tied to farm programming. Since 1929, the station had been under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Higher Education, but funding through the Board was unstable. Ballard notes that some members objected to the cost of the station and were particularly eager to sell station, now a valuable asset. In 1936 the Federal Extension Service took over the budget for agricultural and women’s programming. The arrangement allowed for a somewhat more stable budget at KOAC, and as Program Manager Allan Miller wrote a decade later, “provided for a reasonable schedule of such activities designed for service to the agricultural interests of the State.” A similar program, they pressed, should be introduced to provide funds for general interest content. Still, the arrangement complicated the KOAC’s accountability structure, and the dedicated funding restricted the station’s autonomy and flexibility.¹¹¹

In a document titled “Problems and Future of KOAC,” Miller addressed the conflict in different terms:

The State System must decide which of two quite divergent policies to pursue in programming: Whether (1) to broadcast for a class audience serving in general as a supplement to commercial radio, or (2) to program for mass consumption. The latter course has been in effect in recent years. It is recommended as the proper course for service and education in the use of radio in democracy.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ To William Teutsch from Allen Miller, October 16, 1945, Reel 4 Folder 81, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹¹¹ Allen Miller, “Problems and Future of KOAC,” January, 1946, Reel 13 Folder 78, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹¹² Ibid.

It was important that they continue serving rural populations, Miller wrote, but they should aim to attract a broad audience. Miller cast the issue as “class” versus “mass,” a distinction that referred to the struggle many media outlets faced between creating content for special interests or general interest audiences. For KOAC the question was how much time and funding should be allocated to agricultural programming and how much to general programming, a question that was resulted in internal turmoil at KOAC.¹¹³

Dismissive of the provincial “class” audience of farmers, KOAC producers, many with their own urban and cosmopolitan aspirations, chafed at the prosaic content they were obligated to broadcast. The 1947-48 annual report described the commitment in almost comical terms. Farm people preferred, “in this order: (1) farm market, crop, and weather information. (2) Information on farming, (3) News about farmers and farming. (4) Information on national agricultural problems. The farm programs on KOAC have been patterned as closely as possible from this preference.”¹¹⁴

Farm listeners may have been devoted to agricultural content but, despite greater funding, in terms of content, it diminished anyway. By the 1950s general interest programming heavily dominated the schedule. In 1954 agricultural programming made up only 11.8% of weekly broadcasting minutes.¹¹⁵ Farm listeners were dedicated to

¹¹³ Allerton House Seminar Proceedings, 1950, University of Illinois, Reel 4 Folder 88, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹¹⁴ Robert Ebert, “Annual Report of Arnold C. Ebert, Agricultural Radio Producer,” Oregon State College Extension Service, November 30 1948, Series III: Annual Reports, 1923-1952, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹¹⁵ “General Extension Division Bulletin, Radio Programs February 1954, KOAC, Oregon State Board of Higher Education, 1954, Ore eZExgac, Special Collections and Archives, Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

KOAC, but without content to directly engage their vocational interests, they began to fall away. In the next section I break out these numbers to take a closer look at how programming changed on KOAC between 1923 and 1958.

Program Changes by the Numbers

Program Guide Analysis

To revisit some numbers introduced at the beginning of this chapter, Benton County in 1925 had a population of 15,000. KOAC was broadcasting a total of four hours and 45 minutes, much of which was devoted to agricultural and applied content. With 40,000 by the end of the 1950s, Benton County had become strikingly more urban.¹¹⁶ KOAC was broadcasting 12 hours a day, 72 hours per week.¹¹⁷ To understand the transition KOAC programming underwent from an agricultural focus to a more general interest, or “cultural” emphasis, I looked at a sample of program guides that spanned the time period. Initially I hypothesized that the change in programming tracked with the population growth of Corvallis. The results indicated that that was true, but also that the story was more complex.

The analysis of program guides reveals that agricultural programming did decrease steadily and significantly during the period under review (Table 1). In 1925, agricultural programming accounted for 30% of KOAC ‘s broadcasting time. As KOAC added broadcast hours, that number began dropping—and fairly rapidly. In 1927 agricultural

¹¹⁶ “The History of Benton County,” Benton County Historical Society and Museum. Web: <http://www.bentoncountymuseum.org/timeline/decade.cfm?decade=1920> (accessed on 2/9/13).

¹¹⁷ “General Extension Service Bulletin, KOAC Radio Program Guides,” General Extension Division, Oregon State System of Higher Education 1958, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

programming constituted 26% of broadcasting minutes. By middle 1950s, that number was under 12%.¹¹⁸



Table 1. Agricultural content compared to general interest content.

There were qualitative changes in the programming over that period as well. On Monday, February 8, 1925, for instance, the entire evening was devoted to lectures on a variety of agricultural interests by local experts in the field: “Farm Flocks of Sheep in Eastern Oregon” was followed by “Important Potato Diseases” (6th in a series on potato production), then “Baby Chicks and What They Represent.” Other evenings of programming included “selection of hats” and “how to adjust automobile brakes”).¹¹⁹ Early programming was practical, audience specific, and production intensive.

¹¹⁸ “General Extension Service Bulletin, KOAC Radio Program Guides,” General Extension Division, Oregon State System of Higher Education 1958, Reel 10, Folder 12, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹¹⁹ “Radio Programs 1925-26 of Station K-OAC,” KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

By 1945, the agricultural programming appeared in two regular blocks per day, the noon and evening Farm “Hour,” each, in fact, 45 minutes, 15 minutes of which was devoted to USDA produced spot market reports. Meanwhile, programs such as “Music of the Masters,” “Oregon – Land of Legends,” and “Belgians at Home” were given more airtime.¹²⁰

Listener Surveys: Program Preferences

When KOAC was required to justify its use of state funds, it frequently turned to its listenership, and survey returns were often very high. Most of these were informal—calls for letters from listeners stating program preferences. In 1932, KOAC came under threat when the State Board of Higher Education questioned the value of the station because of its increasing budget requirements. Writing in 1960, Frank Ballard, former director of the extension service, reflected that an announcement was made “over KOAC on two succeeding days that continuation of the station was in jeopardy. Immediately 2,904 letters flooded the station offices. Only six of them suggested discontinuation.”¹²¹

The original call to listeners from KOAC had been passionate:

We do not wish to influence your attitude in this matter. However, we do urge that you keep THIS fact in mind: if KOAC is discontinued it is probably gone forever. If the state forfeits the valuable unlimited broadcasting license now held by KOAC, the public’s rights on the air thus forfeited undoubtedly can never be regained.¹²²

Most letters came from Oregon, but correspondence also arrived from California, Washington, and Idaho. Of the 1,788 letters that arrived from Oregon, 1,680-94%-

¹²⁰ “Weekly Program Guide from Radio Station KOAC,” 1945 Reel 7, Folder 12, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹²¹ Ballard 215

¹²² “Who Listens to KOAC? A Study Conducted Through Announcements Over the Station.” (1932), Statement Number Two, Reel 1, Folder 6, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

identified agricultural programming as specifically important.¹²³ Listener support for farm-related programming would fall off dramatically in the postwar period. In 1958 the station sent out another listener survey, since the leadership felt under threat from the new medium of television (which had proved attractive to extension service leadership, who proposed to sell the station and reassign the radio budget to the college’s nascent TV station). According to Ballard, “a thousand letters were received from 100 Oregon communities, all but four supporting continuation of radio broadcasting.”¹²⁴ An analysis of a sample of those letters shows that only 29% specifically mentioned agricultural programming as important, a 65% drop off (Table 2).

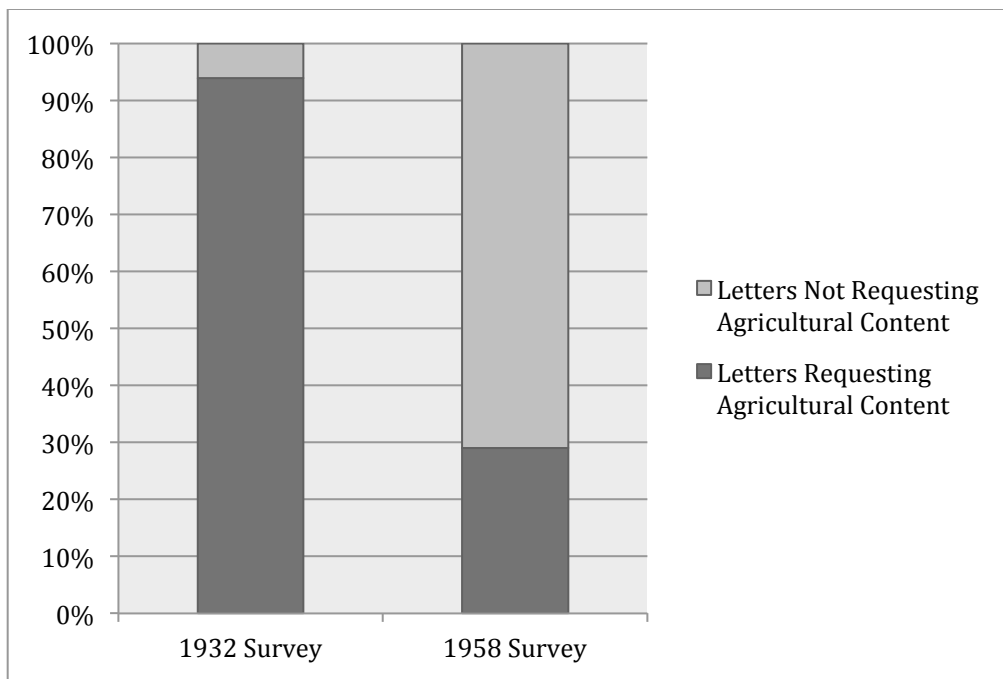


Table 2. Letters requesting agricultural content.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ballard 226.

Station Rhetoric

The State Board of Higher Education remained skeptical of the radio project, and over the years, KOAC was often required to justify its use of state funds. But while both listener preference and programming shifted toward education, culture, and entertainment, the rhetoric of station management remained doggedly focused on agriculture.

In the postwar period agricultural programming had decreased significantly but the discourse around the agricultural service of the station remained central in reports, program guides, and correspondence. In 1944 significant resources were devoted to a thorough study of the preferences of farm listeners.¹²⁵ In 1946, the position of Agricultural Radio Program Director was established for the first time. In 1948 the station issued a report suggesting that “as the state owned station, KOAC is looked to by its listening farm audience for the best and latest agricultural information.... the success of this means of disseminating farm, market and agricultural information has resulted in an ever increasing development of extension broadcasts.”¹²⁶ Even into the late 1950s, agricultural programming was highlighted as a centerpiece of the broadcast schedule.¹²⁷

The rhetoric around farm programming paired with the real diminishing content point to the crisis of identity occurring within KOAC itself. High-minded cosmopolitan aspirations seem to have been broadly shared at the leadership level of the station, but the

¹²⁵ Ballard 220.

¹²⁶ Ebert, Roger C. “Report of Agricultural Program Director from December 1, 1947 to November 30, 1948” Reel 7 Folder 9, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹²⁷ “Notes from the County Extension Agents,” Reel 8, Folder 6, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

commitment to agricultural programming was material. Agricultural and Homemaking content was supported through an agreement with the Federal Cooperative Extension Service, a relationship that was long-standing but always somewhat tenuous.¹²⁸ In a 1944 internal memorandum concerning schedule changes, Assistant Director of the Extension Service, L. Teutsch, noted bluntly that “if the time of the evening Farm Hour is reduced and changed at this particular time it may result in unfavorable reaction of farm leaders which in turn might influence appropriations in the coming legislature.”¹²⁹ As the real content drew further away from the “class” (special) interests of farmers, it was incumbent upon station leadership to make the case that it was in fact still central, occasionally leading them to make statements that were patently untrue. For example, the 1947-48 Annual Report stated that Extension broadcasts of “farm market and agricultural information” had been “ever increasing” since the station's founding in 1923.¹³⁰ In fact, such programming had steadily decreased, by at least 14%, in the postwar period.

To understand why KOAC producers were so powerfully drawn away from agricultural programming, despite their protestations to the contrary, we need examine the context around the content. In the next section I will look at the changing relationship of the college and the town to its hinterlands, as well as the position and attitudes of some of the producers and managers.

¹²⁸ To Frederick Hunter from Frank Ballard, Reel 1 folder 10 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹²⁹ Untitled document, Reel 7, Folder 9, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹³⁰ Robert Ebert, “Annual Report of Arnold C. Ebert, Agricultural Radio Producer,” Oregon State College Extension Service, November 30 1948, Series III: Annual Reports, 1923-1952, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

“Rural and Remote”: Farm and Home as Cultural Backwaters

Producers at KOAC certainly did not intend to alienate rural dwellers, and they likely were not even aware of their own dismissive attitudes toward farm programming. Over the period examined here, however, the rural became increasingly *other*. The cast of producers and collaborators at KOAC were largely local, most from the Willamette Valley, though some came from Portland. A large majority of station staff were educated at the OAC (see Appendix A). They came from a world deeply tied to the land and farming.¹³¹ KOAC staff now participated in the faster paced world of the cosmopolitan modern, but were still close – at least physically and culturally -- to more provincial ways. Perhaps it was an anxiety about sliding backwards into a smaller world that drove some to attempt to erase the idiosyncrasies of the local. One teacher who participated in KOAC’s School of the Air wrote, “Each day as we become more and more ONE WORLD the importance of radio in education asserts itself.” Radio, she implied, was a tool that should be used to launch people as modern citizens.

Conflation of Farm and Home Spaces

In planning their programming, KOAC designated a variety of audience categories. These were not static, being reframed frequently to suit different purposes as the audience changed, and as KOAC learned more about to whom they were broadcasting. One category, however, held relatively stable, and its endurance alone reveals the way KOAC understood its audience. From the launch of the station until its restructuring in 1958, KOAC classified farm and home listeners as one and the same. In their literature, the

¹³¹ Leona Stringfellow Correspondence, Reel 2 Folders 15-43, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

station casually conflates these seemingly discrete groups, treating them as a single unit whose differences were not worth mentioning. A 1936 legal document, for example, puts forth an agreement between the Extension Service and the State System of Higher Education “as to the length of time allotted to Agriculture and Home Economics program, and specific hours on a daily schedule for the entire ensuing year.”¹³² So, why were home and farm listeners’ joined in the eyes of these institutions?

The simple answer is funding, which remained in line with the station’s original mandate. Farm and home content made up two of the three original blocks of programming when the station launched in 1923. In June 1936 the relationship was further formalized when the Federal Cooperative Extension Service took responsibility for the salaries of both the Director of Agricultural Programs and the Director of Home Economics programs. This dedicated budget stream was higher than that allocated for general programming (including news and music), and--though funding from the Federal Cooperative Extension Service seemed at first unstable—the contracts stipulated that the two positions would be transferred to a different department in case of a shortfall. That is, even if all other programming was cut, farm and home content would remain.¹³³

Combined funding for farm and home audiences explains why, to station management, home and farm were equivalent. Surveys did indicate that "farm women," as they were consistently identified in KOAC literature as well as on-air, listened to homemaking programs somewhat more frequently than non-farm women.¹³⁴ In farm

¹³² To Frederick Hunter from Frank Ballard, Reel 1 folder 10 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ “The Kind of Radio Programs Farm Families Want,” Reel 7 Folder 12, Extension Circular 460, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

women the two categories of listeners intersected, but generally they remained discrete with separate interests and priorities (i.e. non-farm women did not listen to agricultural programming, while farm men did not listen to women's programming). Why then, through the enormous cultural changes of the 1920s-50s did farm and home remain united as the station's priority?

I would argue that there are three, related, reasons. The first is a long-lingering version of Hofstadter's conception of the "agrarian myth." To Hofstadter, the "agrarian myth" referred to a sentimental attachment to a virtuous rural past, one in which the yeoman farmer supported his family by working closely with the land. As ruralites abandoned farms for improved fortunes in cities, and as farming itself became increasingly commercial, these idyllic images became more and more nostalgic. "The agrarian myth," writes Hofstadter, "represents a kind of homage that Americans have paid to the fancied innocence of their origins."¹³⁵ In the twentieth century, the technology of radio was seen as a way to preserve that innocence while extending to it certain privileges of modernity. "The General Extension Division and the Federal Cooperative Extension", wrote Dean V. Caldwell, "have one basic philosophy: namely, extension of the facilities of the State System of Higher Education to the people of Oregon who are unable to secure these services on the various campuses."¹³⁶

It was not just the rural to which Caldwell referred, however. Homes, and the women who dwelt in them, were included in the numbers unable to otherwise secure campus resources. And there is a sense that, through radio, the state was attempting to preserve a

¹³⁵ Richard Hofstadter, *The age of reform: From Bryan to FDR*. (Vintage, 1955), 24

¹³⁶ To Frederick Hunter from V. Caldwell, "KOAC Progress Report," January 20, 1941, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

domestic sphere that seemed to be under threat of collapse. By extending to homemakers some elements of the modern world, in a way the extension services inoculated them against the urge to fully join it, a topic I consider more fully in Chapter III. Hofstadter notes that the farm itself was seen as maternal. Farm journals in the early twentieth century often appealed to young men not to leave their agricultural homes. “In the imagery of these appeals,” Hofstadter writes, “the earth was characteristically a mother, trade a harlot, and desertion of ancestral ways a betrayal that invited Providential punishment.”¹³⁷ Preservation of both the farm and the mother as social ideals was central to the work of KOAC.

The second, related, reason that farm and home were conflated in the eyes of KAOC management and the extension services is that agricultural/rural spaces and domestic spaces were seen as equally removed from the modern world, cultural backwaters where the light of the modern era barely shone. It is worth revisiting a statement from Paul Maris, Director of College Extension system in 1929.

The radio now breaks down the barriers of time and space and opens the way to extend immeasurably the type of teaching and of service. ...[W]ithin your own home, you may select from the programs presented, lectures and combinations of lectures, which relate to your personal problems and interest, and which, if closely followed, will contribute to your service and personal improvement.¹³⁸

This was an important part of the national narrative around radio. “Socially constructed for twenty years as the pinnacle of modernity,” Kirkpatrick writes, “part of radio's mystique was its ability to overcome the social limitations of pre-modern life, transcend distance, and connect remote local communities and isolated individuals with

¹³⁷ Hofstadter 33.

¹³⁸ “A Brief Resume of Radio Activities,” Oregon Agricultural College, January 1, 1927, Reel 7 Folder 41, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

the greater social body.”¹³⁹ Though this was the earnest intention of KOAC, there was tension that ran deep – to many of the producers it seemed those far-flung ruralites were never going to truly transcend that distance; the differences were between rural and urban were simply essential.

A final, third reason was the shortage of funding. Because the station operated for decades with a dearth of resources, its very existence was tenuous. At moments KOAC came close to shutting down, and those times of crisis expose some of the station’s more basic values and goals. It is also useful to consider the strategies that the state, the extension services, and the station’s producers considered to keep the station alive.

Throughout many of these crises, a recognizable tension emerged; funding from the extension services allowed the station to continue to operate, but it also tied its hands. In 1936 that dynamic was reinforced when the Federal Extension Service took over funding for certain types of content, namely agricultural and homemaking.¹⁴⁰ This was a benefit to the station, but it also limited its flexibility and removed from KOAC staff the ability to fully determine the shape of the station’s programming.

Into this dynamic another complication was introduced. The FRC’s regulatory environment shifted from ambivalence toward non-commercial stations to hostility. The agency interpreted the public interest clause of General Order 40, which required stations to operate in the public’s interest, convenience, and necessity, to mean that programming on each station should be “well-rounded.”¹⁴¹ In other words, content should be general,

¹³⁹ Kirkpatrick N.P.

¹⁴⁰ To Frederick Hunter from Frank Ballard, Reel 1 folder 10, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁴¹ McChesney 26

aimed at a mass audience rather than a “class” audience, as KOAC referred to their farm and home listeners. KOAC felt increasingly torn between the two directives: if it failed to serve its agricultural listenership it would lose the funding that was secure; however, if it continued to devote the bulk of their resources to those categories, the FRC would target the station as promoting a special interest (and it did, at times tacitly, at others overtly).¹⁴²

Despite the station’s stated commitment to remain non-commercial, the possibility of converting the station to a commercial enterprise arose with regularity. In 1931, for example, the FCC ruled that KOAC was in violation of Section 5 of General Order no. 105 which states that license-holders must maintain a regular operating schedule of 12 hours per day.¹⁴³ Funding seemed out of reach, so the Board voted to commercialize.¹⁴⁴ Ultimately, the station was able to petition the FRC for a one year extension, and secured funding from the state based on the impassioned response to a listener survey. In 1941, the regulatory agency (now the FCC) demanded that KOAC operate on 5,000 watts, which would be another enormous expenditure. Again, the station leadership, this time under the direction of Manager Allen Miller, accepted the inevitability of going commercial, and was again able to secure necessary funding by appealing to the state based on audience testimonials.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² To V. Caldwell from Zelta Rodenwold, Reel 1 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon; To W. Kerr from Paul Maris, February 19, 1931, Reel 7 Folder 16, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes, Meeting of Committee of Board of Regents, September 22 1931, Reel 7 Folder 16, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes, Meeting of the Committee on Radio Station KOAC, January 13 1938, Reel 1 Folder 9, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Still, the possibility of going commercial proved a constant temptation for station. It would increase the station budget by tens of thousands of dollars, allowing them to operate with a full schedule and reach the entirety of the state. It was not only the funding that was tempting, however. Gaining independence from the extension services would free the station up to pursue a different kind of programming. They were convinced that the way forward was to move away from the more practical content directed at farm and home listeners, and to allocate their budget to offer “popular programs to attract large audiences.”¹⁴⁶ Commercialization was seen as the best route to achieve programming for mass consumption. Listeners (both urban and rural), however, were firmly committed to the station remaining commercial free. “Each time such a sale seemed imminent,” reflected Ballard in 1960, “friends of the station brought about expressions of support from listeners which were surprising both in their volume and their emphasis.”¹⁴⁷

Small Town Cosmopolitans and Backwaters, Disregarded

1946 survey of KOAC’s program service informed listeners that “KOAC carries a wide range of programs, both service and entertainment, planned especially for the listening audience in the state of Oregon. These include a well-balanced variety of programs for both rural and urban listeners.”¹⁴⁸ The distinction between rural and urban listeners was important. To the OAC educated staff at the station, perhaps it was the

¹⁴⁶ “A Survey of KOAC’s Program Service,” January 1946, Reel 13 Folder 78, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁴⁷ Ballard 220.

¹⁴⁸ “A Survey of KOAC’s Program Service,” January 1946, Reel 13 Folder 78, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

nearness of the farm that lent an anxiety to the distance the producers attempted to put between their modern “urban” world and the provincial world from which their families had likely recently emerged.¹⁴⁹

A 1947 manuscript of a presentation by then KOAC Station Manager James Morris reveals the paternalistic disregard that seems to have been common among producers.

The national networks used to say (years ago) to prepare your broadcasts for 13-year-olds. And we scoffed at the remark!... made fun of the statement! But today we see these agricultural statistics, and we compare the 13-year-old with the person who has acquired the 7th or 8th grade education. There isn't much difference, is there?

It was not as though farm people could not learn, Morris believed, rather they did not want to.

Some of you are thinking that the job of the educational broadcasting station is to educate its listeners. You are saying that we should be using the facilities of the station to lift the level of the listener above this 7th or 8th grade educational standard he has set for himself... Sufficient that he gains the information which put to good use on his farm may save him hundreds of dollars.¹⁵⁰

The above statements are anomalous only in terms of brashness. Similar sentiments are evident throughout KOAC's records, though perhaps more quietly patronizing. One newsletter suggests casually that just because a housewife enjoys “Portia Faces Life,” a popular soap opera, producers should not actually assume she is not interested in more erudite fare.¹⁵¹ Writing to Station Manager Allan Miller in 1945, Director of Agricultural

¹⁴⁹ To Mrs. DeHaven from Leona Stringfellow, February 22, 1949, Reel 4 Folder 78 KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon; Leona Stringfellow Correspondence, Reel 2 Folders 15-43, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁵⁰ Remarks of James Morris, Program Manager, KOAC, Before the Extension Specialists Workshop,” May 23, 1947, Reel 10 Folder 20, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁵¹ Allerton House Seminar Proceedings, 1950, University of Illinois, Reel 4 Folder 88, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Programs, Roger Ebert suggested that “[t]he radio station is concerned with the techniques of capturing and holding the attention of chosen listeners and ... the creation of an appetite for understanding which can be satisfied in preselected and concrete fashions.”¹⁵²

Women, farm and rural dwellers were different from city people, Ebert and Morris seem to insist, but the educated staff at KOAC know what they need. Hofstadter argues that for generations educated Americans have presumed to understand the desires and needs of rural people. “But,” Hofstadter writes, “what the articulate people who talked and wrote about farmers and farming— the preachers, poets, philosophers, writers, and statesman – liked about American farming -- was not, in every respect, what the typical working farmer liked.”¹⁵³ While educated Oregonians appeared to want nothing more than to extend the opportunities of science and cosmopolitanism to rural dwellers, KOAC documents suggest that they were also maintaining a boundary between themselves and the older world – a topic I consider in more depth in Chapter III.

At KOAC, the language that management and producers used to discuss this distinction centered around education. Education granted entry into the world of the modern. And, despite the ostentatious attention that KOAC paid to the vaunted ideal of educating farmers, Morris did not hesitate to clarify that, “it is not your dual purpose at the same time to educate the listener in more technical words, to improve his command of

¹⁵² From Britton to Allen Miller, March 23, 1945, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁵³ Hofstadter 24.

language, or in other ways to lift his level above his schooling.”¹⁵⁴ One can appreciate this distinction between educated and uneducated in the language producers used to discuss to programming KOAC directed at the non-farm audience. However, it is in more candid moments that the imagined distinction between “classes of people” clearly emerges; in a memo about production technique KOAC producers urge their county extension agent/reporters to “know their audience,” and laud the efforts of those individuals who “do the best job with just a homey, elbows-on-the-table type of delivery.”¹⁵⁵ The message is clear: KOAC has different audiences, and those audiences should be treated differently.

Conclusion

Between the early 1920s and the late 1950s, both Radio Station KOAC and the world in which it operated transformed. Launched as a scientific experiment with the goal of broadcasting practical information, KOAC was, in both form and content, devoted to applied knowledge. The station was born into an agrarian world, and the knowledge that benefitted the community was to explicitly support the industrial needs of farm families who were the economic backbone of the Willamette Valley. As Oregon towns urbanized, however, the boundary between the rural and the urban came into sharper relief.

Agriculture continued to sustain the region economically, but another kind of capital began to gain value. In Oregon towns, education became a kind of cultural capital. It

¹⁵⁴ “Remarks of James Morris, Program Manager, KOAC, Before the Extension Specialists Workshop,” May 23, 1947, Reel 10 Folder 20, Reel 4 Folder 81, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁵⁵ “Tips for Type and Mike,” Oregon State College and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Corvallis, Oregon, September 30 1948, Reel 3 Folder 56, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

was also a vehicle of social and geographic mobility. Committed by law and funding to serve rural needs, the upwardly mobile urban-dwelling producers of KOAC programming chafed under their obligations. They strove to be cosmopolitans, part of a bigger world. While they were superficially committed to Progressive Era ideals of preparing everyone to participate in an enlightened citizenry, KOAC was increasingly irked by the provincialism of their audience. A tension emerged between their mandate to extend modernity to the rural and an urge to ensure that social and economic hewed close to the status quo. In the patterns of programming on KOAC, we can see that by the late 1940s, despite reams of reports and loud protestations to the contrary, KOAC and the small-town cosmopolitans who guided it, failed to fully welcome farm families into the modern.

CHAPTER III

“LET’S KEEP MENTALLY HEALTHY”:

WOMEN’S PROGRAMMING ON KOAC

Women’s programming occupied a special place in KOAC’s broadcast day. Along with agricultural content, programming specifically for women received dedicated funding through an agreement with the Federal Cooperative Extension service. Unlike agricultural content, however, topics considered of interest to women ranged further afield – away from practical advice and dry market information -- into frontiers of science and culture. For KOAC producers, educating housewives fulfilled both federal mandates and cultural aspirations. Radio programmers assumed that, like farm-listeners, many housewives were educationally impoverished. Radio could be used to overcome boundaries that restricted women’s access by providing a carefully curated body of knowledge. A 1936 press release from the Department of the Interior Office on Education makes it clear that the promise of radio for women’s education was commended nationally. “For many women marriage means the end of formal schooling, but their desire for education lingers on.” The circular continues “Wrote one Eastern housewife: “If there is anything else you may send me that will help expand my knowledge, along any line, I will be glad to get it, as I had only six grades of actual schooling.”¹⁵⁶

In this chapter, however, I argue that delivering expert knowledge to women in their homes accomplished certain other ends as well. The radio promised that women did not

¹⁵⁶ United States Department of the Interior, “Women Form Largest Group of Educational Radio Audience,” Washington DC, August 1936, Reel 10 folder 20, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

need to leave their homes to bring themselves into the modern world. It also further professionalized housework, adding scientific knowledge about everything from bathroom sanitation to mental health to the already extensive list of household responsibilities. The material effects were complex. Reformers and broadcasters intended the bits of knowledge to allow housewives to feel included in progress. The tasks that came along with the new expertise, however, meant that housewives' time was overwhelmed by responsibilities that were endless, mundane, and framed as terribly consequential. Taken together this meant that women would have neither the inclination nor the time to leave the home. Additionally, they could remain productive while listening. Ultimately radio would serve to maintain the domestic boundaries its advocates ensured it would eliminate.

In the 1930s and 40s, series of "mental health" programs were broadcast throughout Oregon. "Let's Keep Mentally Healthy" was a weekly program, produced as a part of the "Especially for Women" content through an established partnership between KOAC Radio/The Oregon Agricultural College, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and the Mental Health Association (MHA).¹⁵⁷ Its intended audience consisted of individual listeners as well as participants in PTA organized "study groups" in regions around the state. This chapter examines the collaboration between the three institutions, identifying cultural ideals that were being promoted, and tracing how KOAC, the PTA, and the MHA disseminated them. I specifically look at how women, over the airwaves, were tasked with, and educated in, the mental health care of their families.

¹⁵⁷ Gladys D. Chambers, April 1948, Reel 3, Folder 48, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

KOAC producers believed that these programs would help create a more enlightened world; one in which women could participate in progress while remaining safely inside their domestic sphere. Beyond simply educating housewives, I argue that the advice that was disseminated during these programs put a great deal of pressure on mothers to raise their children in deference to certain principles; according to the experts, neglecting to do so would have constituted a direct contribution to all manner of social ills. Although it is not possible to assess the extent to which mothers adopted the program's recommended approaches, the language and content used in the transcripts of the KOAC programs bear a heavy admonishment to conform.

The first home economics program was broadcast over the air in June 1924. "This new method of teaching," writes former OAC Extension Service Director Frank Ballard, "attracted wide attention and was enthusiastically received."¹⁵⁸ By the late 1930s, "Especially for Women" programming occupied a significant portion of the day, and included series on beauty, gardening, and current events.¹⁵⁹ In partnership with the Parent Teacher Association, the Especially for Women programming also included a number of series on physical and mental health. The information in these programs was generally more practical than academic. The women's programming on KOAC was directed, at this time, by Leona Stringfellow, who was also responsible for booking guest experts for the mental health programs. These guests included representatives from churches, schools, sanitariums, the "Oregon Mental Hygiene Association," and other

¹⁵⁸ Ballard 214.

¹⁵⁹ Author unknown, *Daily Programs. KOAC, October 1 to December 31, 1939*, Reel 16, Folder 169, From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

organizations. The guests wrote their own scripts in the form of interviews, and either voiced them themselves or the station provided an actor to do so.¹⁶⁰

In this chapter I focus primarily on the 1948-49 transcripts of the “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy” program. At times throughout the chapter I suggest that the perspective of the experts featured on the program is based upon the platform of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH). Sol Cohen has traced the language the NCMH introduced as it was disseminated throughout education and parent circles. Such language, Cohen argues, constitutes a base of evidence through which researchers may trace influence.¹⁶¹ One of the clear indications of NCMH language influence is the use of the term “mental hygiene.” Although it is not clear when the term first appeared on KOAC, in 1929 a series called “Child Development and Behavior Problems and Parental Education” was launched on the radio, supported by the Household Administration Department of the School of Home Economics. In introducing the program an announcer read,

During the past few years many requests for information have come to the college by parents and teachers who are eager to add to their equipment, and understanding of what mental hygiene and good physical conditions can give to them in helping to meet their responsibilities to children.¹⁶²

Between 1929 and 1948, the term mental hygiene appeared often in the transcripts of the programs. On October 5, 1948 KOAC began broadcasting “Let’s Keep Mentally

¹⁶⁰ Leona Stringfellow to Jack R. Parsons. February 21, 1949. Reel 16, Folder 169, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁶¹ Sol Cohen, “The Mental Hygiene Movement, The Development of Personality and the School: The Medicalization of American Education,” *The History of Education Quarterly* 23(2) Summer 1983, 134.

¹⁶² Author unknown, description of KOAC Program Features, Household Administration Department of the School of Home Economics, September 30, 1929, Reel 11, Folder 5, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Healthy,” sponsored by the Mental Health Association of Oregon. Mrs. Jocelyn, the executive director, introduced the organization and the program

I think most of you who have been listening to mental hygiene programs over the radio will recall the Oregon Mental Hygiene Society. They sponsored the series “Mental Hygiene Speaks” over KOAC last year. In the late spring the Board decided to change the name to Mental Health Association of Oregon, believing that such a name more truly expressed the fundamental goals of the agency. Namely, positive mental health.¹⁶³

Despite the name change, the organization’s positions and advice seems to have remained largely influenced by the, now decades old and fairly entrenched, position of the mental hygienists who believed that developmental psychology applied en masse could solve large-scale social problems.¹⁶⁴

Communities of Discourse: Language and the NCMH

In his study of the Mental Hygiene Movement and the school, Cohen develops a theoretical framework based on language and discourse. Drawing from the work of Hayden White, C. Wright Mills, Burkardt Holzner, J.G.A. Pocock and others, Cohen argues that language use draws us into a “community of discourse” with shared values. The language of the NCMH is traceable as it filters through thought leaders, into education, and then society more generally, drawing more and more people into the

¹⁶³ “Miss” Joslyn. Transcript, “Service and Giving as a Factor in Mental Health.” October 5, 1948, Reel 3, Folder 47, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁶⁴ NOTE: Missing from the current analysis is a significant discussion of the racial and class implications inherent in the hygienist program. While there is no blatant prejudice apparent in the transcripts, the lack of acknowledgment of differing cultures, opportunities, and material conditions indicates that there did exist significant built-in discrimination. Emphasis on normality and Americanism can be read in terms of uneasiness about immigrants and their cultures. Future study should take up this angle.

hygienists “epistemic community.” “In short,” Cohen writes, “language use constitutes an invaluable source of evidence for the diffusion and adoption of ideas.”¹⁶⁵

Cohen, writing in the early 1980s, drew on the concept of “epistemic communities” primarily from the Holzner’s discussions of the concept from the 1960s and 1970s. Holzner and his co-author Marx defined epistemic communities as those which have a shared faith in scientific methods as a way to produce truth.¹⁶⁶ That definition is useful for the study of the Mental Hygiene Movement, and the movement’s methods of communication. Meyer and Molyneaux-Hodgson, however, note that this interpretation has largely disappeared as the concept of the epistemic community has been absorbed by schools of global policy and international relations. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, scholars began to re-define epistemic community as “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge.”¹⁶⁷ This newer interpretation views the epistemic community as a “natural” response to a problem. In order to apply that concept to the work at hand, it will be necessary to revive Holzner and Marx’s original meaning.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Cohen 134.

¹⁶⁶ Burkart Holzner and J. Marx, *Knowledge affiliation: the Knowledge system in society*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979), 107.

¹⁶⁷ P. M. Haas, 'Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization*, 46 (1), (1992), 3.

¹⁶⁸ Morgan Meyer and Susan Molyneaux-Hodgson, “Introduction: The Dynamics of Epistemic Communities,” *Sociological Research Online* (May 20, 2010).

Literature Review: Scientific Motherhood, Mental Hygiene, and the PTA

Susan Armitage notes that much of women's early history in Oregon and Washington comes from scraps of oral history. In the late 19th century, like elsewhere in the country, middle-class Northwest women began to organize around social and civic reforms ranging from suffrage to the arts to settlement houses. Though it faced stiff resistance, women had gained the vote in the Oregon, Washington and Idaho by 1912-- eight years before women's suffrage was adopted nationally. Temperance and labor reform movements were similarly successful, mostly, argues Armitage, because of very effective organization. "The relative recency of settlement in the Pacific Northwest gave women opportunity for institution-building that eastern women, in longer-established regions, did not have. Club members who began by founding libraries and other uncontroversial institutions often turned to more activist sorts of social reform."¹⁶⁹ Viewing the community as an extension of the home, middle-class women felt (or were encouraged to feel) that it was their direct domestic responsibility to manage and care for social ills.¹⁷⁰

The mental hygiene movement grew out of progressive activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁷¹ The organization at the center of the movement was the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH), which was founded in 1909 by reformers from various elite academic and scientific backgrounds. Hygienists believed that the majority of social ills stemmed from "personality development" gone awry.

Identifying and treating personality problems in young children would prevent a host of

¹⁶⁹ Susan Armitage, "Tied to Other Lives: Women in Pacific Northwest History," in *Women in Pacific Northwest History*, Karen J. Blair, ed., (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 16.

¹⁷⁰ William J. Reese, "Between Home and School: Organized Parents, Clubwomen, and Urban Education in the Progressive Era," *The School Review* 87(1) Nov. 1978, 4.

¹⁷¹ Cohen 128.

problems in later life, for the individual and for society. If enacted widely, the hygienists' approach would lead to a kind of "psychiatric utopia." Hale writes that the mental hygienists had an essentially spiritual faith in science.

[The] watchword was "Science," that is, the new sciences of psychiatry and psychology would replace traditional religion. Mental hygiene would supplant theology as the foundation of the new order. Its priests would be the psychiatrists, the social workers, the psychologists, the experts of the new scientific psychology. They would replace the authority of the family in matters of health, child-rearing, and education.¹⁷²

The hygienists aimed their rhetoric at "families," which theoretically included men. Grant notes that child-rearing advice literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often slipped back and forth between "mother" and "parent." However, during that same period, the mother emerged as the "pivotal parent."¹⁷³ Mental health programming on KOAC referred to the audience of "parents," but the segments themselves were classified specifically under "women's programming."¹⁷⁴

Women's roles in progressive era movements were characterized by a tension between agency and subjectivity. Lacey notes that the project of modernity, often driven by women themselves, was fraught with ambiguity.

Science, which since the Enlightenment had been elevated as the new secular arbiter of truth, and which had once acted as a liberating force in opening up all areas of life for objective, critical investigation, was increasingly used and abused to give credence to all manner of assumptions and attitudes. Biologists, psychologists, and philosophers sought 'scientific' reasons for given gender differences and claimed to find them.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Nathan G. Hale, JR., *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 84.

¹⁷³ Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.

¹⁷⁴ Author unknown, program notes. May 3 1949, Oregon. Reel 3, Folder 47, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis.

¹⁷⁵ Lacey 151.

Motherhood reformers aspired to reorganize according to scientific principles. Rima Apple discusses the relationship between physicians and mothers, the emergence of “scientific motherhood” in the late 19th century, and its expansion throughout the 20th century. Apple defines “scientific motherhood” as the process by which “[i]nstinct and tradition in child-rearing were replaced by all-important medical and scientific advice.”¹⁷⁶ Between the 1920s and 1940s, intuitive parenting was increasingly maligned by (primarily male) professionals and the institutions of which they were a part. While mothers were encouraged to educate themselves in the principles of scientific care, Apple argues that by 1930 physicians were rigorously defending their professional jurisdiction from outside challengers. Joseph Brennemann, one of the nation’s leading pediatricians, granted that women needed some instruction, but “too much instruction would create a mother who might question her doctor and such a woman, he believed, was an obstacle to the health of her child.”¹⁷⁷ In practice, Apple argues, scientific motherhood was laden with inconsistencies.¹⁷⁸

The NCMH felt it critical and urgent to ensure the broadest reach of the developmental knowledge.¹⁷⁹ A primary effort of the organization was to establish “child guidance clinics” (CGCs) in communities throughout the country. The first clinic opened in 1920, and by 1932 there were 232 clinics in operation. The vision behind the CGCs was to assess and treat “disturbed children” from all (often poor, ethnic or immigrant)

¹⁷⁶ Rima D. Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 57.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 100.

¹⁷⁹ Cohen 129.

backgrounds, but by the 1930s the patients were primarily those from middle-class families.¹⁸⁰

Like Apple, Kathleen W. Jones traces the rise in expert authority over the intuitive knowledge of mothers. She argues that professionals behind institutions such as the CGCs--which identified the source of children's maladjustment in the pathology of their mothers-- were responsible for reinforcing a widespread campaign of mother-blame. But Jones argues mothers and female social workers often co-opted the therapeutic setting, using the CGCs as spaces enact their expertise as well as to air their grievances. Jones writes that women actually did benefit from the clinics. "Both middle-class self-referred mothers and [female] social workers found in the new procedures temporary means to resolve issues of powerlessness, in relationships with husbands and children, or in alliance with the psychiatric professionals."¹⁸¹ Similarly, Julia Grant argues that child study groups offered women opportunities to participate in the discourse around child mental health.¹⁸²

Child study groups often began as efforts of university extension programs in conjunction with other institutions, such as the Parent Teacher Association. Grant writes that PTA's child-study groups played a large role in the dissemination of scientific and psychiatric approaches to parenting. At the same time, the urgency of scientific

¹⁸⁰ Jeroen Jansz and Peter van Drunen, *A Social History of Psychology*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 70.

¹⁸¹ Kathleen W. Jones, "'Mother Made Me Do It': Mother-Blaming and the Women of Child Guidance," in *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth Century America*, Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 115.

¹⁸² Julia Grant, "Modernizing Mothers: Home Economics and the Parent Education Movement, 1920-1945," in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), passim.

campaigns drew more mothers into the Association. In 1932, the PTA was receiving reports from 3,055 child study groups.¹⁸³

The PTA was eager to use new communication technology, like the radio, but the organization also was uniquely situated due to its connection to public schools. Cohen argues that, along with the CGCs, the NCMH focused its most concerted campaigns on the public education system. It launched a crusade aimed broadly at thought leaders who would wield the most influence on the people who were ultimately in charge of the day-to-day curricula and classroom structure. The approach was pragmatic—it was critical to reach children before they could become “maladjusted.” Parents could not be compelled to raise their children according to the hygienist platform, but all children were required to attend school. The NCMH determined that its resources would be most effective if they were directed at influencing the educational system from the top down. If a transformation of the curriculum was a primary goal of the NCMH, however, parent education was a high secondary goal. The PTA’s child study groups became catalysts to influence and train parents.¹⁸⁴

This review has so far traced the frequent convergences between the histories of motherhood, education, and psychology. To a lesser extent, labor history and regional history have intersected in these literatures as well. Though Cohen, Apple, Grant and others focused on the efforts of the NCMH at disseminating new ideas, little attention has been paid to the way that different communication techniques were used, particularly

¹⁸³ Grant (1998) 60.

¹⁸⁴ Cohen 129.

with regard to the radio programming that emerged from the organizational coalitions of the NCMH, the PTA, universities, and educational radio stations.

When the partnership between the PTA and the Oregon State Agricultural College Extension Service began, it was the late 1920s, a time when the possibilities of radio seemed virtually infinite.¹⁸⁵ Although historians have largely focused on the commercialization of the airwaves, there were many alternative movements in early broadcasting. “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy,” and many other programs on KOAC and other extension services (and, later, on community and public broadcasting stations) were products of non-profit entities, and were produced with intention as contributions to the public interest. A careful reading of the programs that were broadcast priorities for these movements can illustrate the cultural tensions inherent in state priorities.

Analysis

Mental Health Care as Work

The experts featured on “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy” were generally careful to address their audience in gender-neutral terms. It is clear, however, that the information was intended for women. “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy” was categorized as a part of the “Especially for Women” programming on KOAC, and guests’ language often slipped in ways that betrayed assumptions about their audience. From the perspective of Prentiss and others, fathers were relative non-entities in the mental health care of their children. They were the parenthetical parent: “if the mother’s (or father’s) mental health is good—

¹⁸⁵ Douglas 56.

if she is a secure adequate person—she wont have to resort to hitting her child.”¹⁸⁶ The task of caring for the mental health of the family belonged to women.

In the “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy” program, the mental health care of children was framed in the language of high-stakes professionalism. “The most important role young parents play is that of teacher or educator in the most impressionable years of the child’s life,” suggested Mrs. Sara Watt Prentiss, head of child care and training at the Oregon State College, on November 2, 1948, “All too often, they are quite unprepared for this role.”¹⁸⁷

Grant writes that in the 1920s, many educators “proposed that making a career of marriage and motherhood provided a solution to the predicament of the college-educated wife and mother.”¹⁸⁸ While by 1948 it was more acceptable for women to enter the extra-domestic workforce, aspects of this campaign are evident in the way the producers of “Let’s Keep Mentally Healthy” address their audience. At KOAC the ideal of the mother in the home continued to hold purchase—it was not something that was available to everyone but it was the gold standard of family life, and it was the responsibility of the state, via KOAC, to help support it whenever possible. Still, even the domestic world needed to move into the modern era. The partnership between the PTA and KOAC coalesced around the goal of delivering up-to-date therapeutic knowledge into the domestic sphere. An article in the *National Congress Bulletin*, a PTA periodical, applauded the effort in 1948.

¹⁸⁶ Prentiss 7.

¹⁸⁷ Prentiss 1.

¹⁸⁸ Grant (1998) 63.

The Oregon Congress of Parents and Teachers has brought the influence of the *National Parent-Teacher: The P.T.A. Magazine* within the sphere of everyone in the state who has access to a radio. In cooperation with radio station KOAC in Corvallis, Oregon, the congress is providing a series of broadcasts based on the Magazine's study course articles and outlines. Discussion of these articles and outlines relating to child guidance problems on preschool, elementary school, and adolescent levels are heard over station KOAC twice a week.¹⁸⁹

As with farmers and agricultural content, KOAC programming for women invited mothers into a community of informed citizens, but not all the way in. The station and its partners also used the medium to maintain traditional economic and social structures. One way KOAC attempted that maintenance was by framing motherhood as a profession. "Isn't it strange that we require years of training for most jobs," remarked Ms. Joslyn, Executive Director of the Mental Hygiene Association of Oregon in 1948, "we have thought that just because people are parents they will know how to rear children – the biggest and most important job there is. This is changing slowly – but all too slowly..."

Representing motherhood as a career gave women an explicit professional designation, but it also justified the intensification of social pressures. "In terms of practice," writes Apple, "scrupulous adherents to scientific motherhood faced a maze of time-consuming tasks."¹⁹⁰ In the early twentieth century mothers were urged to carefully follow the programs laid out by scientific and medical experts. By the middle of the 20th century, Apple writes, psychology had become a central aspect of those programs.¹⁹¹ This is borne out by information disseminated by the NCMH and other groups through venues such as KOAC.

¹⁸⁹ National Congress Bulletin, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁹⁰ Apple 101.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 107.

A central message in many of these discussions regarded the social adjustment of the young child. Being socially well-adjusted had many requirements. Among the most important, however, was simply being *social*. In a broadcast on January 4th, 1949, Reverend Thomas Klink of the Mt. Tabor Methodist Church put it simply, “one of the real marks of mental health, and one of the great aids in achieving it is the informal company of congenial people.”¹⁹² In KOAC’s conversations around sociability many of the experts blamed maladjustment on physical and cultural isolation. This was a particularly present danger for two groups – the rural, isolated by physical space, and mothers and children, isolated by the boundaries of the domicile. So, while mothers should indeed remain in domestic spaces with their children, they also needed somehow to convey to them a sense of belonging and accountability to the new “mass” social world. Essential to that goal was fluency in contemporary social codes, and respect for the social contract. Such mores could not be conferred in the vacuum of the home, nor in the void of the rural; they needed to be trained into children. “All of us need to develop a healthy conception of law and order,” remarked one KOAC guest, “and a willingness to accept what is best for the group when it comes in conflict with our personal desires... human beings do not learn to accept authority easily.”¹⁹³

Allegiance to the group could only be achieved through exposure and education. KOAC producers and guests believed it was urgent, but there was a tension in that urgency. In the preceding decades, speakers on KOAC expressed deep concern over the

¹⁹² The Church as a Factor in Mental Health, Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁹³ Ina Dean, “The School as a Factor in Mental Health,” Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

time children were spending outside the home. In an “Especially for Women” transcript from 1932, Dean K. W. Jameson noted the anxiety over changing norms. “Parallel with this change,” Jameson observed, “another influence has been active during the days of our advancing civilization; those affecting the character of the child. When a child was taken from the home and placed in the school he came under the direct influence of outsiders, of teachers and companions.”¹⁹⁴ By 1949, however, children not familiar with the social rules were not only exposed to ridicule, but considered maladjusted and threats to the civilization they were unable to understand.

Again, two types of children were considered most at-risk: those sheltered by their mothers and those isolated by distance. The consequences were dire. In a February, 1949 broadcast, Ina Dean, Assistant Supervisor of Special Education in Portland Public Schools recounted a cautionary tale, worth quoting at length.

I remember John, an eleven year old boy who rebelled against the laws of safety patrol. He had recently come from the country, and saw not reason why he should not cross the street in much the same manner as he wandered across the fields. He refused to walk in the safety lanes. He ignored the stop and go signals of the patrols. When he was brought before the principal for failure to comply with school regulations, he was a screaming, kicking, biting rebel against authority.... One of the schools’ greatest opportunities as a socializing force is to help children accept authority as reasonable and constructive, rather than as something to be afraid of or something to be resisted”¹⁹⁵

Anxiety about slipping backwards into a primitive culture pervades the scientific advice that went out over the air in the late 1940s. KOAC and its partners were vexed by tradition, something that they felt they needed to both run from and uphold. The rural,

¹⁹⁴ KW Jameson, “New Trails for the Family,” November 21, 1933, Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁹⁵ Ina Dean, “The School as a Factor in Mental Health,” Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

which had not long ago been considered an agrarian utopia of American self-sufficiency, had become a site not only of retrograde thinking, but of evolutionary regression. As one speaker put it, we had become civilized, but that position was far from secure.

We have built up a veneer or covering that prevents many of the traits of the savage from showing up in our daily behavior. We have learned to substitute behavior that is acceptable to society for the individualistic traits of our forefathers. The desire to act as our forefathers did, though, is still buried, not too deeply, in us.¹⁹⁶

The state, the schools, the PTA and child guidance clinics, they could only do so much. Over radio, speakers beseeched mothers to learn the ways of scientific motherhood; mentally fit children would grow to be mentally fit democratic citizens, able to quell rebellious impulses, prioritize group needs, and avoid the many pitfalls that led to pathology. Ultimately, it was the mothers who were responsible for maintaining civilization. It was their job.

Many Paths to Failure

If motherhood was considered a job description, it was one which was remarkably difficult to perform correctly. Experts and broadcasters projected a binary worldview, and one in which there were many more opportunities to fail than to succeed. Cohen notes that a central maxim of the mental hygienists was that “nothing fails like failure.”¹⁹⁷ Although the hygienists roundly rejected using the concept of failure as a tool in child-rearing, parental failure was upheld as a constant hazard. Children were either “well-adjusted” or they had “distorted personalities.” They could be “perfectly normal,” or they could be “ruined for life.” The parenting qualities that led to happy, normal

¹⁹⁶ “Play as a Factor in Mental Health,” Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁹⁷ Cohen 135.

children or to maladjusted unhappy children similarly split into positive and negative categories. *Good parents* were pragmatic and firm, but also exhibited “genuine love and affection.” *Poor parents* – the ones who were sure to ruin the mental health of their children—were either too strict or too wielding, too cruel or too overprotective. A content analysis of the transcripts from six of the programs from 1948 and 1949 listed 19 positive personality characteristics, indicating parental success. Examples of those characteristics include “happy,” “patient,” and “normal.” For the 19 instances of positive outcomes, however, there are 42 types of negative personality characteristics, including “balky,” “hostile,” and “stammering.” These were examples of parental failure. It was much easier to fail than to succeed.

Effective mothering was akin to walking a tightrope, “parents may have two major dangers to guard against in child training,” warned Dr. Gerhard Haugen, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Oregon Medical School, “these are the danger of over-protection and the danger of irresponsibility. Either can be harmful to a child’s mental health opportunities.”¹⁹⁸ The audience listening to Prentiss a few months earlier would have learned that it was not just about doing the right things, but doing them at the right times, “There is a proper timing, sequence, and degree in the application of controls and restraints (discipline) in relation to the capacity of a growing organism to support them without distortion or trauma.”¹⁹⁹ There were dire consequences for pre-emptive training, “a person’s mental health can be just about ‘ruined for life’ as we say,” said Prentiss, “if an attempt is made to push him into learnings for which he is not

¹⁹⁸ Haugen 10.

¹⁹⁹ Prentiss 5.

ready.”²⁰⁰ But missing a child’s training window also carried the threat of lifelong and compounding consequences, “if the difficulty [slow learning] isn’t corrected before school age, the reaction of the other children can cause new reactions which also need correcting.”²⁰¹

From the perspective of the program’s producers, and the experts who were their guests, the mental well-being of a child was a matter of public concern. If a parent was found to be failing, there were organizations and programs that would be mobilized to correct her. “Traditional” techniques that didn’t correspond with modern psychiatric theories frequently needed correcting. Mothers who failed to embrace a scientific approach, or who isolated their children in their homes, were contributing to the downfall of the society. Haugen recounted an anecdote of a mother who coddled her children, keeping her boys home from school and letting them wear “long curls at the age of six and eight—like Little Lord Fauntleroy.”²⁰² Eventually the children went to school, where they did not fit in.

The reaction was just about what you’d expect. This case first came to the attention of authorities when they were brought to the a child guidance clinic because they were constantly fighting with other students. It’s fortunate, actually, that matters came to a head when they did, because there was still time for the boys to learn to get along with others in spite of their mother.²⁰³

Mother-blame has a rich history in the United States. Ladd-Taylor and Umansky write that “over the past century, women [were often] classed as ‘bad’ mothers: those

²⁰⁰ Haugen 4.

²⁰¹ Prentiss 9.

²⁰² Ibid. 7.

²⁰³ Ibid. 7.

who did not live in a ‘traditional’ nuclear family; those who would not or could not protect their children from harm; and those whose children went wrong.”²⁰⁴ During the beginning and middle of the twentieth century, this last category grew to encompass mothers whose children were moody or angry, too quiet or too loud. The consequence was the widespread vilification of mothers whose methods fell outside of the norms and whose cultural locations fell outside the mainstream. As Ladd-Taylor and Umansky write, “in attempting to ‘save’ children—and make them ‘American’—social workers frequently engaged in disputes over childrearing with immigrant and working class mothers. A good American mother, they insisted, did not swaddle her infant or give her a pacifier. She did not feed her baby garlic or sausage or tortillas....A good mother would not place a talisman around her child’s neck to ward off the evil eye.”²⁰⁵ And she most certainly wouldn’t let her child wear “long-curls.”

“47% More We-ness”

If the rhetoric around imperfect motherhood seemed heightened, if the anxiety over creating normal children seemed overblown, it is because in the eyes of the NCMH and those experts to whom they passed their intellectual legacy, it was more than the mental health of individual children that was at stake. It was the future. It was civilization. The plea was insistent: Join the moderns, or we will all be dragged back into chaos.

Only through guiding our children’s learning, that is, disciplining them, by methods which will build and preserve good mental health can we hope to preserve our democracy.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, *“Bad” Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 3.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 11.

²⁰⁶ Prentiss 13.

Asked about new findings in the field, Prentiss recounted a study in which pre-adolescent boys worked first with democratic leaders, then with autocratic leaders. Under the autocratic regime, aggression was found to be “30 times as high,” tension was greater, group structure was less stable and there was more “individual activity.” Under the democratic structure there was found to be more friendliness, more spontaneous cooperation, and “47% more ‘we-ness.’”²⁰⁷ In order to avoid a fractious nation, regional differences needed to be flattened, traditional approaches abandoned. To achieve that kind of happy, friendly, “we”-oriented democracy, Prentiss and Haugen both suggest, parents must work hard to raise children who were, above all, normal.

ANN’CR: It sounds as if you would suggest a sort of “middle of the road” attitude for the family.

Haugen: That’s about right. That, of course, isn’t just my idea...it’s more an expression of society’s desires that the individual will not stray too far one way or the other from a prescribed pattern of behavior. That “middle of the road” is just another way of saying that a person is conforming to society’s standards.²⁰⁸

The keys to a healthy society were healthy young citizens, and those came from healthy mothers who followed the rules. Because they perceived the stakes to be so high, hygienists apparently felt no qualms about calling in the “authorities” if parents strayed from the approved paths. In their eyes, everything depended upon it. “[A]nd so,” concluded Mrs. Prentiss’ segment on November 2nd, 1948 “the responsibility of the parents and teachers of young children is to show in their persons and their own habitual patterns the kinds of citizenship that will make it possible for the human race to survive

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 11.

²⁰⁸ Haugen 3.

in the future.”²⁰⁹ If implemented properly, the experiment in mental hygiene would result in a perfect, and perfectly homogenous, society.

Conclusion

The hygienists took their role as educators seriously. Cohen traces the explicit and strategic effort of the NCMH to disseminate their beliefs as widely as possible. Although it is not language they would have used to describe their work, they were attempting to draw mothers into an epistemic community. An epistemic community which, as in Holzner and Marx’s original conception, elevates science; an epistemic community in which everyone speaks the same language and holds the same values. These communities are often invisible or taken-for-granted, sometimes they occur more-or-less naturally, but often they are products of intentional programs to influence public opinion. The present analysis is a case study of the intentional promulgation of a worldview.

Via the radio, housewives were invited to join the modern world. But that membership came with a price. To be a modern mother meant straddling a very awkward divide. Create a warm nest, but don’t let your children get too comfortable there. Train yourself in modern scientific knowledge, but only put it to work within the boundaries of your own domestic space. The hygienist program delegated the responsibility for the well-being of society to mothers. Every maternal failure was viewed with anxiety. While the reformers generally appear to have been well-meaning, the rather unachievable goal (a psychiatric utopia) they set before mothers doomed them to failure. While the mental hygienists rejected the extreme and pessimistic positions of eugenicists they too attempted to erase variances in culture. The hygienists believed in nurture over nature--

²⁰⁹ Prentiss 14.

one was not doomed by one's genetics. One could only be irreparably damaged by maternal failure at proper guidance.

CHAPTER IV

“DEAR KOAC”:

LISTENER CORRESPONDENCE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF RADIO

For many of the housewives who tuned in to KOAC, the station was more than a source of information or entertainment. It connected their homes with the world, gave them something to talk about, and, for many women, was their companion. It chatted to them about everything from garden roses to troublesome children to foreign wars. It may have burdened them with the unrealistic expectations of psychiatric experts, but for the women who listened to KOAC radio also served a variety of personally valuable functions. For listeners the relationship was complex -- they developed a friendship with the station itself.

“What a fortunate day it was for me several years ago,” wrote Mrs. Oren Aldrich, a listener from Springfield, “when I ‘discovered’ your station, for it has been my constant friend and teacher since then.”²¹⁰ This comment would have touched a nerve with people in the middle of the twentieth century, who were still grappling with the fallout from the rapid urbanization and industrialization of the preceding half century. The 1920 census was the first to show that the population of the United States was equally divided between rural and urban.²¹¹ One consequence of these social and economic changes -- eliciting a particularly visceral response from social scientists -- was the deterioration of

²¹⁰To KOAC from Helen Aldrich, Springfield, Oregon, January 27, 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. (1 79)

²¹¹ “Statistical Abstract of the United States,” 1921, Reports of the Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, 54.

traditional rural and small-town social networks. This was, as a sociologist put it in 1948, “one of the most significant reasons for radio’s attraction: the failure of friendships.”²¹²

To Chicago School-oriented scholars, the loss of primary social connections was an indication of cultural disintegration. In contrast to face-to-face communication, there was a danger in the connections that people seemed to be forming via communications technologies – they were false friends, inauthentic communities.

“Much has been written in the social sciences about the importance of the break from small communities and enforced isolation of the modern urban housewife,” wrote Ruth Palter in a study on radio published in 1948. To fill the void, she writes, “[t]he radio is spoken to, cajoled, scolded with apparently little self-consciousness. It has become so much a part of the household that using it as another person – in fact, speaking of it as ‘company’ and as ‘someone in the house’ – is neither strange nor unexpected.”²¹³ Housewives treated the radio like a real friend and, according to Palter, a kind of association that they preferred to “real” human friendships.

The anxiety that some cultural observers were experiencing about radio reflected a broader discomfort with technology in the home. In a 1976 essay, Ruth Schwartz Cowan first took issue with the functionalist assumption that the industrialization of domestic spaces wrested housework from women, leaving them with an abundance of leisure time.²¹⁴ With machines performing the duties of homemaking, idle women turned to more sinister interests like women’s liberation, which in turn led to divorce and the

²¹² Palter 253.

²¹³ Ibid. 253.

²¹⁴ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More work for mother: The ironies of household technology from the open hearth to the microwave*, Vol. 5131 (Basic Books, 1983).

destruction of the family unit. Cowan dismantles the claim. However, that even as late as the mid-1970s, many still found the argument compelling is evidence of the broad and abiding unease over the relationship between women and technology.

Radio's position was different, though. While other technologies were seen as releasing housewives from housework and, by extension, from the home, I argue that radio was seen as a tool to entice them to stay. This perspective descended directly from the social theory of the time, one that saw even social conflict and tension as functioning to maintain the status quo. Writing in 1954, for instance, Max Gluckman identified rituals of rebellion in the traditional African populations he was studying. He argued that these rites operated as a safety-valve, letting off steam so that social dissatisfaction would not reach a boil-over point.²¹⁵ Similarly, Lewis Coser identifies safety-valve institutions that "divert hostility onto substitute objects... that function as channels for cathartic release."²¹⁶

Listening to radio hardly constituted "engaging in conflict," but it was -- in some ways -- a subversion: It allowed women to feel as though they had breached a barrier, accessed aspects of modernity, without challenging their own roles within the established social order. And at KOAC, that function was not only acknowledged, it was advertised. In an "Especially for Women" program pamphlet from 1945 the station called all homemakers "washing dishes, ironing, cleaning, dusting, or just straightening up the house each day" to listen in to a program called "the World is Our Affair." Programs

²¹⁵ Max Gluckman, *Rituals of rebellion in south-east Africa*, (Manchester University Press, 1954).

²¹⁶ Lewis A. Coser, *The functions of social conflict*. Vol. 9. (Routledge, 1956), 41.

included “Re-education for World Security,” “Problems of the War’s Displaced Peoples,” and “Trusteeship in Southeast Asia.”²¹⁷

To the producers of radio, to many of the small town cosmopolitans of Corvallis and other agricultural cities and towns who yearned for modernity but were tied to tradition, radio seemed to allow women to have it both ways. What rarely emerges in the discourse around this transition are the experiences of the listeners. While it is impossible to capture actual experience in all its richness, in this chapter I attempt to complicate the narrative of domination and to explore some of the ways that listeners experienced and used radio; the ways in which they co-created the experience of the medium. The contrast here also illustrates the political malleability and multiple meanings of the technology.

The Letters

How did the listeners engage with radio? It is a difficult question to answer. Despite the utilization of market research techniques to gauge listener interest, the ways in which KOAC’s audience integrated radio-- and the messages the medium carried -- into their own lives remains largely a mystery. One resource, however, does give us a glimpse into what radio meant in the lives of listeners. In 1958, the State Board of Higher Education considered reallocating resources away from Radio KOAC to fund educational television and selling KOAC to a commercial station. To gauge public sentiment, the station put a call out to listeners for feedback, asking if listeners would benefit more from one medium than the other. On January 30 County Extension Agent Wilbur Burkhart went on air to

²¹⁷ Especially for Women Program Guide, KOAC, May 21 1950, OreJe, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

ask listeners to weigh-in via letter on the proposed sale of KOAC to a commercial station. He made it clear that the more personal the letters the better, “be sure that you take the few minutes to do it yourself and not let the question to be taken so lightly that you assume someone else can do it as well.”²¹⁸ The request framed the question in such a way that elicited answers about how listeners *used* radio, what it meant in their own lives, and how they perceived the ways the medium effected society.

Citizenship

Citizenship was a KOAC catch-phrase in the middle of the twentieth century. Ostensibly open to all, to be an educated, cosmopolitan, politically engaged modern citizen was the ideal.²¹⁹ The reality of a rather traditional agrarian Oregon, however, sat uncomfortably with the standard of modernity. Much of the programming on KOAC attempted to alleviate the dissonance, particularly for its women listeners. The tension between the two principles is evident In the 1947 program guide, which read, “KOAC is pleased to give you another booklet devoted to programs ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN. In the following pages you will find listed dates, topics, and speakers for hundreds of broadcasts planned with the hope of enriching your lives as *homemakers and citizens*” (Italics added).²²⁰

Aside from absorbing content that “educated” and “uplifted” them, however, there was another way that listeners engaged in citizenship with KOAC. The set of letters

²¹⁸ Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²¹⁹ The category tacitly precluded others: Non-whites, working women, and the poor, among others.

²²⁰ Especially for Women Program Guide, KOAC, 1947, OreJe, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

written into the station in 1958 reveals a few themes that together give some sense of how listeners both used Radio KOAC and understood their role vis-à-vis production, schedule, and decisions around resource allocation. Perhaps more than other media, the tax-supported structure of KOAC meant that many listeners literally felt ownership of the station. When the State Board of Higher Education or station leadership made decisions that listeners did not agree with, they were sure to hear about it. In Oregon, state-funded radio was considered a public utility, a right. The 1958 questionnaire about resource allocation brought that sense of ownership into relief. As one listener from Eugene wrote on January 26th of that year, sans salutation:

I am a retired farmer, but I still pay taxes in Oregon. I have a good cabinet radio in the living room, a small bedside radio, and one in the family car. Any or all of them have operated perfectly for the last year or longer without any assistance from a radio repairman. We have one TV, less than a year old and it divides its time about equally between here and the repair shop.²²¹

To some extent, the complaints lobbed at television were a predictable rejection of a new medium. It is notable that the writer relies on the language of citizenship to justify his position. It is not as a consumer, but as a taxpayer that the listener's perspective gains credibility.

Many of the letters, like the one above, originate from a personal experience or push back with a preference. Other listeners, however, saw in KOAC an opportunity to intervene in the politics and priorities of the state. As taxpayers, listeners often seemed to believe that the station should represent their interests. For a great number of listeners who wrote in at the beginning of 1958, one of those priorities was the broad distribution

²²¹ To KOAC, January 26 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

of notions of modernity and culture to *others* who they believed otherwise lacked access.

Wrote one Mrs. Mildred Von Steenburgh,

How about the people, the housewives, the students, the farmers, living east of the cascades? Television has a restricted local audience, while radio can be picked up for hundreds of miles, reaching a far larger audience. As one of the Oregon taxpayers I am willing to see some of the state surplus used for the continuance of this worthwhile station.²²²

“People in out of the way places without TV pay taxes,” another listener added.

“Let’s not forget them.”²²³ The civic concern of KOAC’s urban and suburban listening audience extended beyond access for ruralites, however, to encompass the quality and type of content that would reach them. As educated taxpayers, many of these listeners felt it was their responsibility to demand “constructive” and “informative” programming for the sake of those who were unable to advocate for themselves. Paul Trueblood, Head of the English Department at Willamette University in Salem and KOAC listener, wrote that the suggestion that the station might be sold was “both distressing and inconceivable.” He continued,

I write to urge strongly that the station continue to operate as a state-owned radio service to thousands of appreciative listeners who enjoy and need its programs. The cultural enrichment of the folk of the state is invaluable... As a college educator and as a private citizen I urge you with all the earnestness at my command to continue with KOAC as a state-owned radio station.²²⁴

Katherine Averill, a housewife from Portland, noted that commercial radio was unlikely to carry content such as lectures from the Cooper Union Forum or discussions like “Patterns of Thought.” While she appreciated the programming herself, she was

²²² To Chancellor John Richards from Mildred A Van Steenburgh, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²²³ To KOAC from Cora Lee Nelson, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²²⁴ To KOAC from Paul G. Trueblood, Salem, Oregon, February 2, 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

considering more than just her own family as she wrote the letter. “In this period of our country’s development,” she wrote, “we need more educational use of all the mass media rather than less. I certainly do not complain when my tax money is used for such purposes.”²²⁵

“Atrocious Sounds”: Music, Race, and the Struggle for “Culture”

The listeners’ softly paternalistic reaction to the sale of KOAC was directed against certain elements in commercial radio, where KOAC was going to feed its educational radio programming after the sale of the license. The standards on commercial stations were considered poor, the music coarse, the culture low-brow. Was that, a number of listeners wrote to ask, how the state wanted to direct its resources? “I consider it not in the best interests of the people of the state,” wrote Otto Lundy, who identified himself as a 54 year resident of Lane County, a relatively urban area, “to discontinue KOAC and channel your programming through the commercial station where we have to sort out 80% riff-raff to get 20% of something worth while.”²²⁶ While the letters reflected the personal taste of the writers, listeners frequently framed the issue around the needs of vulnerable populations. Housewives, farmers, ruralites, and others who did not have other access to “culture” might stumble upon commercial radio and be steered off-course. It is worth noting, though, that to the listeners who wrote in, the vulnerable populations were usually “other”; urbanites wrote about their concern for farmers, educated

²²⁵ To Dean James W. Sherbourne from Katherine K Averill, Portland, Oregon, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²²⁶ To KOAC from Otto Lundy, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

housewives wrote about their concern for uneducated housewives; the narrative around people falling victim to primitive tastes was always about someone else.

Classical music and news of the world could serve to uplift the rural and domestic populations, turning them into junior modern citizens. By the same token, however, listening to “riff-raff” would diminish their capacity to participate; they would be downgraded to something not quite modern. “Your music is worthwhile,” one listener from Monroe wrote, “not a lot of heathen racket and junk.”²²⁷ Listeners perceived in radio a power that spread over a broad range of human experience. “Heathen” music could damage mental health, physical well-being, and most importantly, culture. As another listener wrote, “[t]he atrocious sounds that emanate all day long (with a few exceptions) are detrimental to the nerves and the stations are not playing fair with their advertisers by foisting such barbaric music upon the public.”²²⁸

Never entirely explicit, the racist subtext that ran below many of the letters bubbled to the surface most clearly in descriptions of the content broadcast by commercial stations, particularly in contrast to that of KOAC. Mirl Vawter, a listener from Portland, expressed her distaste carefully:

Every station, it seems, is broadcasting about two-thirds rock’n’roll and one third lurid commercials. We will simply turn off the radio and return to silence. We love and live with music but will forgo the version of it that most stations seem to think is suitable for their listeners.²²⁹

²²⁷ To KOAC from Warden R. Brown, Monroe, Oregon, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²²⁸ To KOAC from B. Olcott, Portland, Oregon, February 12 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²²⁹ To KOAC from Mirl Vawter, Portland, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

The sentiment is more evidently expressed in a letter from Mr. E. L. Knapp, an employee at the Roseburg News and Review who wrote, “your station has been an oasis in a desert of boogy-woogy (sic) stuff.”²³⁰ Both Rock and Roll and boogie-woogie are music that (even when played by white musicians) reference African American song styles; they stood as the “heathen” opposite of civilized (and civilizing) classical and white ethnic folk songs.²³¹ In this narrative, civilization was equated with whiteness.

Listeners believed that the programming held a special civilizing power, but it was a formidable tool that needed to be deployed carefully. Un-savvy rural and domestic listeners were vulnerable populations, likely unable to distinguish the barbaric from the civilized. If barbaric music was all they could access, the popular narrative seemed to suggest, they may well throw in with the barbarians. If medium is not careful to deliver culture, they could be lost. By the same token, if it can deliver, those populations can learn to participate as citizens.

Productivity and Listener Resistance to TV

KOAC for Farmers

Of even more concern to listeners was the reallocation of resources to television. Interest in visual media was intensifying, however, and increasing numbers of KOAC listeners from urban and suburban areas were interested in non-agricultural topics. From the perspective of Information Services department of the General Extension Division, the funds seemed as though they would be better invested in a growing visual medium.

²³⁰ To KOAC from E.L. Knapp, Roseburg, Oregon, February 5, 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²³¹ The Czechoslovakian Hour was among the more popular of KOAC’s programs.

Presenting information visually seemed to offer a great deal of promise for educational purposes.²³²

Listeners, however, were almost universally opposed to the reallocation. There were a number of aspects of the proposal to which listeners objected. Access was one. Though television ownership was rapidly increasing, in 1958 TVs were still relatively sparse in Oregon, and generally concentrated in urban areas. They were expensive, programming was limited, and reception was often quite poor, particularly in rural and less developed areas. “Over the State at large,” wrote a listener from Corvallis, “I believe that KOAC is of greater value to more citizens, and I know that it’s loss would be a serious blow to innumerable farmers, and those many families who own perhaps several radios, but no TV.”²³³

But access was hardly the only problem. The anxiety about the introduction of state-supported television was diffuse; listeners reacted with nervousness to the change, a general shift away from the way things had been done. They also a number of social maladies introduced by the medium and there was a widespread discomfort with the television “lifestyle.” “I do disapprove of the dark caverns people live in, in order to have TV on,” opined another listener from Corvallis.²³⁴ TV was associated with laziness, a lack productivity, and for the listeners of KOAC there were two populations whose productivity mattered a great deal: farmers and homemakers.

²³² Ballard 227.

²³³ To James Morris from T.S. Owens, February 1 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²³⁴ To KOAC from Edith A. (illegible), Albany, Oregon, February 9 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Farmers supported the economy of the state. They listened to KOAC primarily for information specific to agricultural concerns. Radio, for farmers, was a practical tool – it would be missed. The publisher of *Oregon Farmer* wrote in to explain the value of KOAC to the state’s agricultural community. Though urbanizing, he argued, the state was still “fully 49% rural.” And rural Oregon, he wrote,

has confidence in KOAC, especially in its farm market reporting, farm news reporting, interviewing of extension specialists and other educational programming. While those working close to the soil may have but limited time for watching television, radio programs may often be tuned in as the work continues.²³⁵

It was easy for farmers to listen while they worked, he continued, because “reception may be had in the dairy barn, farm shop, office or workshop, the family car, pickup, truck, etc.” It was accessible, a valuable tool, but without KOAC nobody feared that farmers would stop farming.

KOAC for Homemakers

It was the productivity of the other population, however, that caused the greatest concern among KOAC’s listenership. Television threatened to divert the attention of housewives, to lure them to the couch, away from the tasks critical to maintaining an acceptable home. “How can a woman do her kitchen work when in most cases the television is in the living room?”²³⁶ Asked Mrs. Mildred Cowger, a listener from Scio, echoing a common refrain.

The reaction to television, however, was not monolithic. A number of KOAC listeners regarded it with cautious interest, even promise. Framed in the language of

²³⁵ To Station Manager James Morris from Gene McNulty, Portland, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²³⁶ To KOAC from Mildred Cowger, Scio, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

citizenship, some listeners saw television as a natural extension of the civilizing dimension of radio. “Please let my tax dollars go for the support of both KOAC radio and television,” wrote Mrs. Donald J. Stoops of Monmouth, “If the treasury showed a surplus last year, certainly Oregon isn’t too poor to support both radio and television for the enlightenment, enrichment, and education of its population.”²³⁷

But if the introduction of television was progressive, it came with elements of progress that were uncomfortable to much of Oregon’s media-consuming population. That women, in particular, would have to *sit* in order to take in the broadcasts threatened a division of labor that was rapidly becoming more tenuous. Ehrenreich and English introduce the concept of the “domestic void,” which emerged with industrialization in the early twentieth century, which removed manufacturing from the home. “Educators, popular writers and even leading social scientists fretted about the growing void in the home.”²³⁸ Lacey notes that women wasting time was, according to Max Weber’s interpretation of the Protestant work ethic, “the deadliest of sins.”²³⁹ To alleviate the cultural anxiety, into the void flew a plethora of new domestic obligations, from knowledge about the latest research in developmental psychology to the complete eradication of microbes in the home.²⁴⁰ “How do they think the women will ever get the thousand and one tasks around the house done if they cannot turn up the radio and go

²³⁷ To KOAC from Mrs. Donald J. Stoops, Monmouth, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²³⁸ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For her own good: Two centuries of the experts' advice to women*, Anchor Press, 2005, 158.

²³⁹ Max Weber in Lacey 152.

²⁴⁰ Ehrenreich and English 178

ahead with their work?” asked a listener from Sweet Home. “Isn’t there enough divorces in Oregon without having our men folk come home and finding all the women setting (sic) around the TV?”²⁴¹

In 1958 Oregonians were beginning to sense the rumblings of the widespread dissatisfaction that led to the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s. Letters from KOAC’s listeners express many of the themes Betty Friedan addressed five years later in the *Feminine Mystique*, particularly around issues of the nuclear family and expectations of women’s domesticity. Into this dynamic came television, which was viewed with suspicion. Would it add pressure to an increasingly unstable normative family structure seemed as though it was beginning to tremble under the weight of women’s perceived dissatisfaction? “The crisis of the family,” writes Lacey, “was a myth that articulated deep-set anxieties about political and social instability intrinsic to the crisis of modernity but which sought explanation in the private sphere.”²⁴² Writing about a different time and place, Lacey’s observation remains relevant to the case at hand. KOAC producers and listeners alike believed that the cultural dynamic could be either exacerbated or alleviated by media piped into the home. A listener from Eugene echoed widespread anxiety when she wrote,

And how about housewives? We can knit, yes, while escaping the commercials on TV, but we cannot watch while tending babies, washing dishes, ironing, off in the utility room tending washing machines and dryers, not unless we have extra TV in basement and kitchen, and not then if we propose to do a thorough job of household labor.²⁴³

²⁴¹ To KOAC from Mrs. Boyd McCoy, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁴² Lacey 22.

²⁴³ To KOAC, Eugene, Oregon, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

As one Portland listener put it emphatically, “[i]t should never be forgotten that: ONE CAN LISTEN TO RADIO RIGHT WHILE ENGAGED IN HOME DUTIES. You can’t do this with TV.”²⁴⁴

While a great many listeners worried about women’s continued productivity, the frustration of many homemakers with their proscribed opportunities is also clearly evident in the letters. For some homemakers who chafed under the tedious slog of their responsibilities, KOAC took the edge off. “Frankly,” Mrs. Doris Katz wrote from Corvallis, “I don’t know how housework would get done without Gladys Chambers there to take my mind off the drudgery of scrubbing and cleaning.”²⁴⁵ Another housewife, Mrs. C.B. Pratt from Clackamas, wrote to ask, “who can watch television all day and absorb the valuable essences of living while doing housework, which incidentally I don’t much like.”²⁴⁶

Radio as a Safety Valve

Isolated in private domiciles, unable to access education or use the education they had accrued, performing menial labor, and often lacking adult conversation, KOAC became lifeline for many housewives in Oregon. When the private sphere began to feel constrictive, they could simply switch on the radio. By the late 1950s, radios themselves were cheap; many people had mobile units or a different set in each room. The

²⁴⁴ To KOAC, Portland, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁴⁵ To KOAC from Doris Katz, Corvallis, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁴⁶ To KOAC from Mrs. C.B. Pratt, Clackamas, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

technology brought the *world* into the home, but what KOAC offered was a curated world. It was access that allowed the homemaker to feel as if she were participating in a world of erudite cosmopolitanism – one that held appeal for many women who had mixed feelings about the domestic bargain to which they had agreed. “KOAC off the air would be a distinct loss to me,” wrote one homemaker. “My college education ended after one year with the popular degree of Mrs. Still I do not feel that degree has ended my education; your radio station presents a constant but varied stream of subjects to widen my learning.”²⁴⁷ As another put it,

homemaking is a satisfactory and rewarding part of life, but so many daily duties are manual, leaving the mind free. Where else can a young homemaker find so much stimulation in so many ways daily? Each day I find myself learning and growing in my attitude towards myself, my family, my friends and the world because of your programs.²⁴⁸

The term “safety-valve” is sometimes applied to institutions that allow discontented groups and individuals to “let off steam.” While the concept is abstract, as a metaphor the characterization is compelling. In some senses, KOAC did serve the function of providing relief from loneliness and the sense of intellectual isolation in the lives of many of the housewives who listened. Throughout the 1950s, as women returned from wartime work outside the home, tension around the requirements of domesticity intensified; some frustrated homemakers asserted their positions. Many of the letters to KOAC express concern around maintaining traditional domestic boundaries.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ To James Morris from Elaine Montiscone, January 23 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁴⁸ To KOAC from Helen Aldrich, Springfield, Oregon, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁴⁹ For example: To KOAC from Mrs. Boyd McCoy, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

KOAC itself made no bones about the fact that its intention was to provide stimulation to housewives who might otherwise be wearied by their duties to the point of abandonment or insanity.²⁵⁰ And indeed, there was some evidence that, if not driven to insanity, many housewives in the KOAC listening area really would feel cut-off if not for the station. It was considered a vital utility. Confronting the possibility of life without KOAC, many letter writers, but particularly housewives, used the language of deprivation. As a housewife from Corvallis put it, “This family would feel intellectually impoverished were we deprived of the many good things you bring us, which we could get nowhere else.”²⁵¹ Another, from Sweet Home wrote, “But surely, there must be many others who would be deprived of your fine programs if the radio station should be discontinued. I often say ‘I couldn’t keep house without KOAC.’”²⁵²

The function KOAC performed was allowing a conscribed access to intellectual, cosmopolitan modernity. By giving women a sense that they could be engaged as citizens while performing their domestic duties, stakeholders in the radio project believed that they could stave off the question that Betty Friedan later identified as “is this all?”²⁵³ For many women listeners to KOAC it was enough. Mrs V. E. Way from Eugene wrote emphatically, “[p]lease – stay just as you are! Music- poetry – books – we love you!

²⁵⁰ Especially for Women Program Guide, KOAC, 1947, OreJe, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

²⁵¹ To KOAC from Helyn Worthington, Corvallis, Oregon, January 26 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁵² To KOAC from Gertrude Wodtke, Sweet Home, Oregon, January 27 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁵³ Betty Friedan, "The Feminine Mystique. 1963." *Reprint. New York: DeU* (1983), 15

A bright spot in each day and certainly ‘something to tip to’ in a confused world.”²⁵⁴ But if KOAC seemed to offer access, it was not full engagement with the new post-war society; producers and funders of KOAC expected the relationship to be one-sided. From a functionalist perspective, Radio KOAC created a circumstance in which women could fulfill the obligations of married life without experiencing isolation so completely; in other words, it let off the steam so things would not boil over.

KOAC as a Friend

Radio did make housework more palatable to an increasingly restless population, but the narrative of KOAC as safety-valve function is hardly comprehensive. By far the most notable and frequent theme that emerges in the letters is the concept of *KOAC as friend*. “I should think,” wrote one housewife, “that many people in the open country and in smaller towns would miss you very greatly. Personally, it would be losing an old friend on whom I depend a great deal.”²⁵⁵ Ruth Schwartz Cowan argues that households grew smaller at the same time that more work accrued to the housewife.²⁵⁶ Not only were middle-class women tasked with a greater number of household responsibilities, they simultaneously lost the support of a household staff. Perhaps even more important, however, was the fact that they lost the adult dynamics that existed within homes when they were seen as spaces of productivity, rather than spaces of domesticity; that is, when the people who worked in them earned monetary compensation. While it is difficult to

²⁵⁴ KOAC from V.E. Way, Eugene, Oregon, February 4 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁵⁵ To KOAC from Albirria B. Pope, Portland, Oregon, January 24, 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁵⁶ Cowan.

say with confidence that such dynamics led to camaraderie or friendship, it is clear that households became more isolated places.

Homemakers in the middle of the twentieth century were contending with a double deprivation. They lost the world of work that had only recently, in a formal sense, been opened to them. They also lost adult interaction. The happy banter from the women's programming was aimed at alleviating those feelings of isolation. Zelta Rodenwold, Mary Louise Armstrong, Lillian Schoelman, Leona Stringfellow, and Gladys Chambers each directed the women's programming on KOAC during the postwar period. All five women were graduates of home economics programs, four of them from the OAC. Directorial tenures were short because the directors tended get married and resign their positions in order to become housewives. They were recognizable to their listeners, who regarded them as knowledgeable peers. And while cheerfully offering friendship, the language in the program guides also re-inscribes the role of the homemaker:

Yes, Especially for Women are these daily, morning programs planned! If you will arrange your homemaking activities so that you can be near your radio from 10:15 to 11:00 o'clock, you can tune into KOAC at 550 kilocycles on your dial and have a chat with the station's home economist and her many friends. Some women plan to do their mending, their ironing, dusting, dish washing, or similar activities at this morning hour in order to gain the fullest benefit from these programs. Frequently they save their rest time for the 2:00 p.m. broadcasts **ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN.**²⁵⁷

The companionship that KOAC offered to women may have been fraught with retrograde objectives, but the important point is that it was companionship, and that is how many of the housewife listeners experienced it. To a woman otherwise quarantined not only from culture, but from friendship, KOAC filled a void. So, when Mrs. Louise

²⁵⁷ Especially for Women Program Guide, KOAC, 1947, OreJe, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

Hilzman wrote in that “[y]our station is an intelligent companion to the housewife during her day at home,” she was reflecting on a very authentic feeling of companionship.²⁵⁸

Lacey points out that actual democratization of information would have granted broad access to both the reception and the *production* of the medium.²⁵⁹ Still, that housewives felt true companionship with the technology of radio, that they derived a real emotional relationship with the medium, is important. In her study of radio consumption in Mexico City in the 1990s, Rosalía Winocur notes that radio’s media effects are mitigated by the consumer’s “particular cultural interpretation that is self-referential and located in the objective and subjective conditions of each social group.”²⁶⁰ KOAC listeners filtered both the technology and the content into their own lives through their diverse universe of experiences. But there was also another dimension to the relationship between housewives and radio. Devoted listeners felt neither force-fed nor spoon-fed by the content; they did not perceive the relationship with KOAC as one-sided. This element of the dynamic was actively encouraged, as evidenced below in the 1947 program guide for “Especially for Women.”

“Exchanges” from you are welcomed. Do send in any good ideas that you have found valuable in your homemaking, or you may have an inspirational thought or bit of verse you would like to share, or a request for a favorite musical number you would like to hear. If so, KOAC will welcome hearing from you. We want this daily program to be one ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ To KOAC from Louise Hilzman, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁵⁹ Lacey 6.

²⁶⁰ Rosalía Winocur, "Radio and Everyday Life Uses and Meanings in the Domestic Sphere." *Television & New Media* 6, no. 3 (2005), 331.

²⁶¹ Especially for Women Program Guide, KOAC, 1947, OreJe, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

In the realm of radio, particularly women's programming, homemakers felt they had some degree of agency. Douglas notes that, in general, "early programming also generated tens of thousands – sometimes hundreds of thousands – of fan letters a week."²⁶² The mail addressed everything from coupon offers to personal problems, but the point is that the letters were written with an earnestly held belief that the author's voice would be heard. The extent to which they were is unclear, however the sense of power, along with access to culture and information, made KOAC a valuable feature in the lives of postwar homemakers in Oregon. Homemakers came out in droves to claim their right, as tax-paying citizens, to keep their radio station. "Can't you think," wrote Mrs. J.W. Peabody from Stayton, "rather of staying with your old friends and letting them help you if possible?"²⁶³ KOAC was not just a friend to women. It's female listeners were true friends to KOAC.

Conclusion

Radio KOAC was many things to many people. Like many new, it was invested with almost magical aspirations. The station's producers and financial backers at all levels of government believed that it could make a uniformly modern society out of the far-flung and still largely rural population of Oregon, while maintaining many of the traditional institutions on which the economy and social structure of the state relied.

KOAC, however, was also a tool for the listeners. Because KOAC was taxpayer supported, many listeners felt a literal ownership of the station. Therefore they felt no

²⁶² Douglas 134.

²⁶³ To KOAC from J.W. Peabody, Stayton, Oregon, January 28 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

compunction requesting a different kind of programming, complaining when they disagreed with a statement, or applauding something done right. Most seemed to have sincerely believed that their opinions would be both taken to heart and brought to the board room. Beyond that, radio made tangible benefits available to listeners.

There is no inherent contradiction here. Radio's position is ambivalent. It can be read simultaneously as a tool of oppression – extending just enough to citizenship to middle class white women from throughout Oregon to keep them in their homes – and as a tool of liberation – providing access, agency, and community to an increasingly isolated population.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

“The clock didn’t stand still for anyone.”
-- J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*.

In 1923 time seemed to be moving faster: People were moving faster, information was moving faster, and many began to worry about being left behind. Radio Station KOAC, established to instantaneously deliver market reports to farmers, was in the business of speed. With a battery-operated set, farmers could hear the latest science about nutrition for dairy cows, along with trends for milk pricing, all while doing the morning milking. But savvy reformers recognized another value in the station; it could bring people up-to-speed culturally, economically, and as citizens. More importantly, it seemed KOAC could do so without interrupting the essential labor of homemaking and agriculture.

When in 1972 former Station Manager James Morris reflected on the history of KOAC, he recalled feeling that crush of time. “When the clock says this is the hour and the red light goes on from the control room ... take the several components you have in the studio,” Morris writes, “and with these mold and adjust so as to give the listener the best and most complete broadcast possible.”²⁶⁴ But in retrospect he asks why were we in such a hurry? KOAC, he suggested, was just a small, scrappy station after all. Whatever it was they were able to pull off, well, they ought to have been happy with it.

This may have been an easy position to take in 1972--other technologies had surpassed radio, and those early struggles seemed quaint. But Morris seems to have been forgetting how truly urgent these transitions felt to those who were living through them.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 175.

The description published in a 1946 program guide for a show called “The World is our Affair” captured that breathlessness. “In our shrinking world where distances are now measured in air-hours and news travels from other parts of the globe to us in a few minutes, we are inevitably influenced and materially affected by what happens elsewhere. The world is indeed our affair, whether we want it or not.”²⁶⁵ Between 1923 and 1958 KOAC had one foot in that modern, cosmopolitan future and one in the local, agrarian past. For much of that time, radio allowed Oregonians to exist in both worlds simultaneously.

This thesis traces how that balance shifted over time. In Chapter II I analyze the discrepancy between the programming on KOAC and the ways that station leadership talked about the programming. The station was established in a firmly agrarian world. Like a tractor, radio was a new technology that would make farming more productive. To interested state and federal agencies, that productivity was a compelling enough reason to provide funding. And according to the farmers in the Willamette Valley, it was an effective experiment. Great numbers of farmers tuned in, many responded to KOAC with gratitude, and among those there was consensus on the kind of programming they appreciated: market reports, agricultural education content, and farm news.

Radio had succeeded by providing practical aids for farming, but the world was changing around KOAC. As Oregon towns urbanized, the Oregon Agricultural College began to offer a broader, less applied, education. The staff at the radio station, college

²⁶⁵ “The World is Our Affair,” Oregon Division of American Association of University Women, Especially for Women Program Guide, KOAC, 1945, OreJe, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

graduates many of whom came from small but growing cities, reflected those cultural and demographic changes and they saw in the promise of radio something grander than an agricultural device. It could be used to serve the economic improvement of the rural population, but why not also their cultural uplift? KOAC began to feature more content in line with that objective.

Just as the producers became more ambitious, federal regulators became more demanding. The Federal Radio Commission (and the later the Federal Communication Commission) had an altogether different perspective on the value of radio: It should be financially productive, the signal should be clear, and “propaganda” should be avoided at all costs. The regulatory agency regarded not-for-profit stations housed in public institutions as useless, at best. Because they represented an institutional perspective, they were also highly suspect. For decades, the FRC put pressure on educational stations like KOAC, implementing ever stricter requirements that ultimately forced most of them to sell out to commercial interests. At moments, KOAC leadership saw selling commercial air-time as the only option. It was difficult to secure sufficient funding to broadcast at the required wattage, and difficult to produce enough content to broadcast on a full-time schedule, as the regulators required. The reality was that agricultural content was often dry, and it was challenging to produce enough of it to fill the schedule. This factor too drove the station away from agricultural content, in the direction of music, lectures, and world news.

Caught between the competing demands of the regulators and funders, producers began to consider other options. Going commercial would guarantee sufficient financial support to release KOAC from the obligation to prioritize farm content, allowing it to

broadcast a greater range of programming and to appease the regulatory agency. For decades this option tempted KOAC leadership, but each time a sale was imminent, the station's listenership protested vigorously; each time, state funding was secured, and the station remained a public concern.

In Chapter III I look closely at the content of one of KOAC's most popular programs, the series called "Let's Keep Mentally Healthy." A priority since the station's inception, women's programming was formalized as a main concern when funding was transferred to the Federal Cooperative Extension service in 1936. Unlike agricultural content, however, women's programming could satisfy the requirements of the funders while broaching a range of topics that were more stimulating to some of the producers. Of particular interest to the producers of women's programming were subjects that reflected a broader cultural fascination with scientific approaches to parenthood. Together with the National Parent Teacher Association and the Mental Health Association, KOAC producers saw radio as an ideal tool to communicate modern ideas about motherhood to isolated housewives.

Again, the value of radio was that it could be a path to the future without undermining the past--women could become modern citizens without leaving their homes. They could receive an education, gain important skills, and learn to heed expert advice while maintaining traditionally gendered activities and boundaries. This, reformers hoped, would satisfy rumblings of dissatisfaction among women who were becoming increasingly aware of the ways in which the world was changing ever more quickly around them.

In fact, "Let's Keep Mentally Healthy" and similar programs did not liberate mothers; the programs tasked housewives with greater responsibility while simultaneously reinforcing established notions of appropriate domesticity. The new responsibilities were loaded with a dramatic narrative around the survival of civilization; maternal failure in a variety of areas (including the mental health of their families) could result in a dysfunctional society. What energy housewives may have had for feminist activism was liable to be sapped by the enormity of their newly reframed position within the home. KOAC's programming perpetuated a vision of modern motherhood in which women needed to be trained in scientific knowledge, but only put that education to work within the boundaries of her domestic space.

In Chapter IV I attempt to give that story more dimension by examining the voices of KOAC's listeners. The people who heard KOAC had a broad range of experiences with the technology of radio and the content it delivered. In 1958, when the station was under threat of closure, KOAC leadership issued a request for listener feedback. The resulting 2,000 letters are anecdotal illustrations of the myriad ways in which many experienced and interacted with the medium. Still, certain themes emerge. For many of the listeners, particularly those who were isolated by the expanse of space or the walls of a home, radio was meaningful beyond the content that was piped into their homes. Contrary to the expectations of its producers, listeners were not passively adopting the values that were carefully selected for and delivered to them. Instead they used radio to suit their own needs. In some cases this independence coincided with the intentions of producers and reformers hoping to make modern citizens while maintaining traditional institutions; in

some it did not. In almost all cases, however, it seems that listeners made radio work for them.

The themes that emerge from the 1958 letters give a glimpse into that aspect of KOAC – *how* listeners made the radio work for them. The three themes I explore most thoroughly in this project are *citizenship*, *productivity*, and *friendship*. Because KOAC was supported by taxes (a fact which the broadcaster often pointed out to its audience) many listeners felt they had a right to participate in decisions about how to allocate the station's resources. And one of the needs most urgently felt by the urban listening audience was the cultural lag in rural or isolated areas of the state. It was not for themselves but for those underserved farmers and housewives that listeners wrote in, requesting college lectures and classical music. Perhaps even more fervently than KOAC producers themselves, these listeners believed that the technology of radio bring about a better future for the state and its citizens.

Aside from radio's civilizing power, many listeners were also concerned about the productivity of Oregon's farmers and housewives. In addition to its ability to reach across spatial expanses, what was special about the medium of radio was that it could be consumed while the listener worked. Worried that television would make *others* idle, tax-paying listeners who wrote in were compelled to support radio; it was a way to bolster the productivity of Oregon's citizens.

Still, what comes through most unmistakably in the 1958 letters is something much more personal—the sense of KOAC as a friend. For many women listeners especially, the voices of the hosts were the only other adult voices they heard during daytime hours. They listened daily, and those voices became familiar. The companionship housewives

felt with those voices was real and significant. It helped ameliorate the isolation and tedium of household labor. If it also served as a safety valve, letting off steam so they did not explode with rage or implode with loneliness, many of the housewives who listened to KOAC experience radio as a true benefit, something they valued very deeply. Through the 1958 letters we can see that radio's meaning in the homes of Oregonians was incredibly complex. It was simultaneously a tool of subjugation and prejudice, agency and liberation.

Susan Douglas points out that certain technologies tend to ignite “extravagant hopes” with their democratic potential.²⁶⁶ In the first half of the twentieth century, as radio harnessed the ether to cross barriers of time, space, and culture, it carried those extravagant hopes with it. In this project I have attempted to understand the nature of those hopes at Radio Station KOAC: What were they? To whom did they belong? What did they mean for listeners and for Oregon? The simple answer is that KOAC--and the hopes, dreams, and grand plans that swirled around it--was many things to many people. Some goals were realized, some failed spectacularly, some resulted in unintended consequences. In peeling back those layers, however, this project ultimately reveals the ungainly position of a technology burdened with the weight of so many big ideas and exalted ambitions. Between 1923 and 1958, Radio Station KOAC was recruited to welcome rural and domestic listeners into modernity and simultaneously task them with the maintenance of traditional institutions on which the state relied. It also brought information and companionship to listeners, who claimed their own citizenship through state-supported radio.

²⁶⁶ Douglas 20.

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON KOAC STAFF

Personnel files are spotty and lack details about the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of station staff, but it is possible to make some generalizations based on the evidence available. Key personnel at KOAC between 1923 and 1958 were largely local to Benton County and often educated at the OAC.²⁶⁷ In 1932 Kadderly wrote in the *Oregon State Monthly* to “introduce” members of the staff; seven of the nine he listed took their degrees from the OAC.²⁶⁸

There were four station managers between 1923 and 1958. Wallace Kadderly served from 1922 to 1933; Luke Roberts served from 1933 to 1941; Allan Miller served from 1941 to 1945; and James Morris served from 1945 to 1963. All but Miller had graduated from the OAC, and both Roberts and Morris had been on staff at the station from its founding.

Turnover was somewhat higher among directors of women’s programming. Morris notes that it was hard to retain women in the position because they kept marrying off.²⁶⁹ Still, staff who filled that position came from similar educational backgrounds. Three of five directors of women’s programming took degrees from the OAC, while one graduated from Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa and one graduated from Indiana University—comparator institutions in small agrarian cities.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Reel 2 Folders 15-43, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

²⁶⁸ Morris 11

²⁶⁹ Morris

²⁷⁰ Reel 4, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

APPENDIX B

FIGURES

The figures included in this appendix are intended to illustrate the sources I have referred to throughout the text. The appendix is included on the advice of my committee, who believed the images added dimension to the story of KOAC.



Fig. 2. Drawing of KOAC Transmitter Building. From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7 Folder 42.

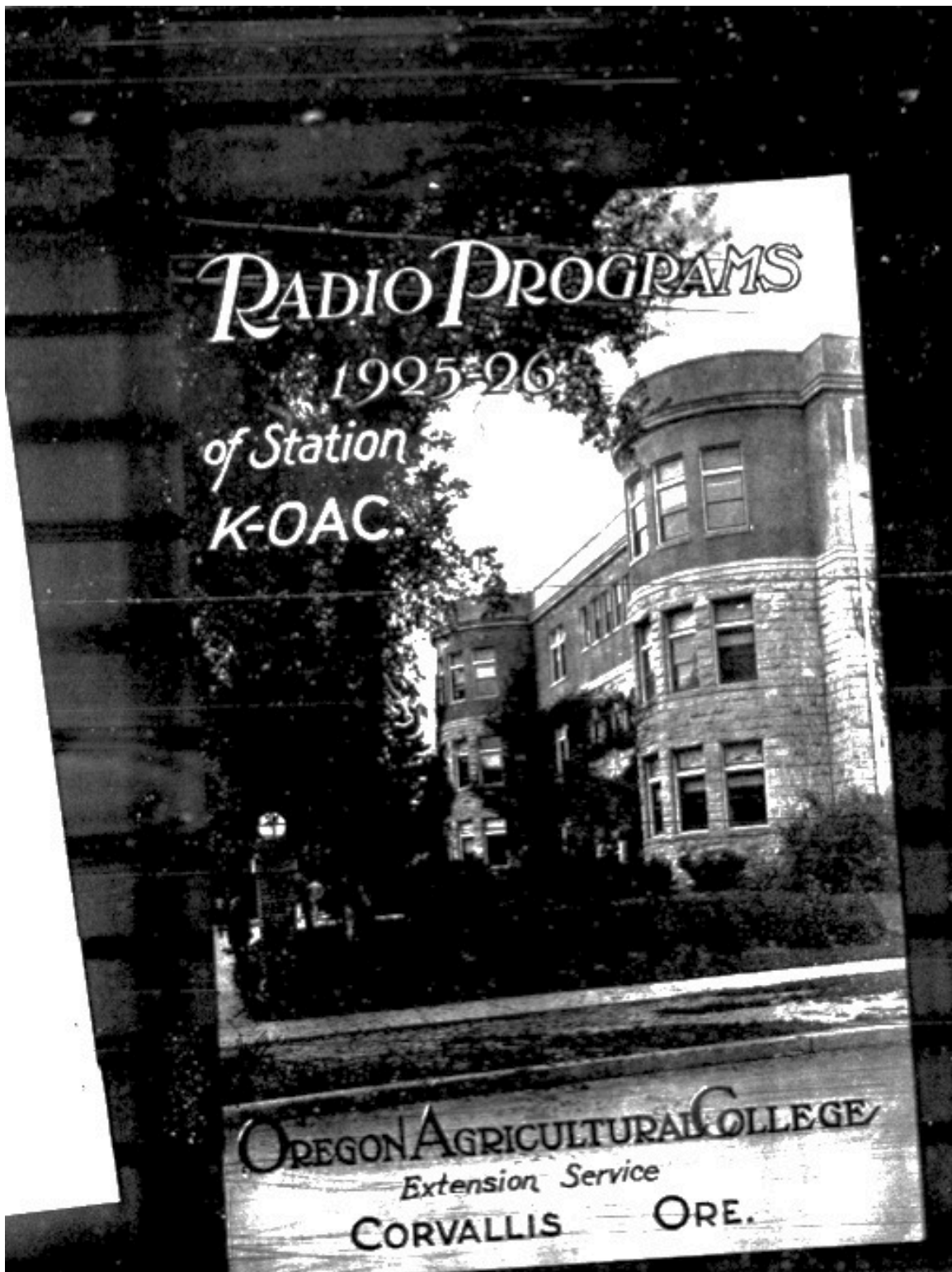


Fig. 3. "KOAC Radio Programs 1925-26." From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7.

Oregon Agricultural College Extension Service

PAUL V. MARIS
Director

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics
Oregon Agricultural College and United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperating
Paul V. Maris, Director
Printed and distributed in fulfillment of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914

KOAC Radio Programs 1925-26



CORVALLIS, OREGON

The bulletins of the Oregon Agricultural College are free to residents of Oregon who request them.

Fig. 4. "KOAC Radio Programs 1925-26." From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7.

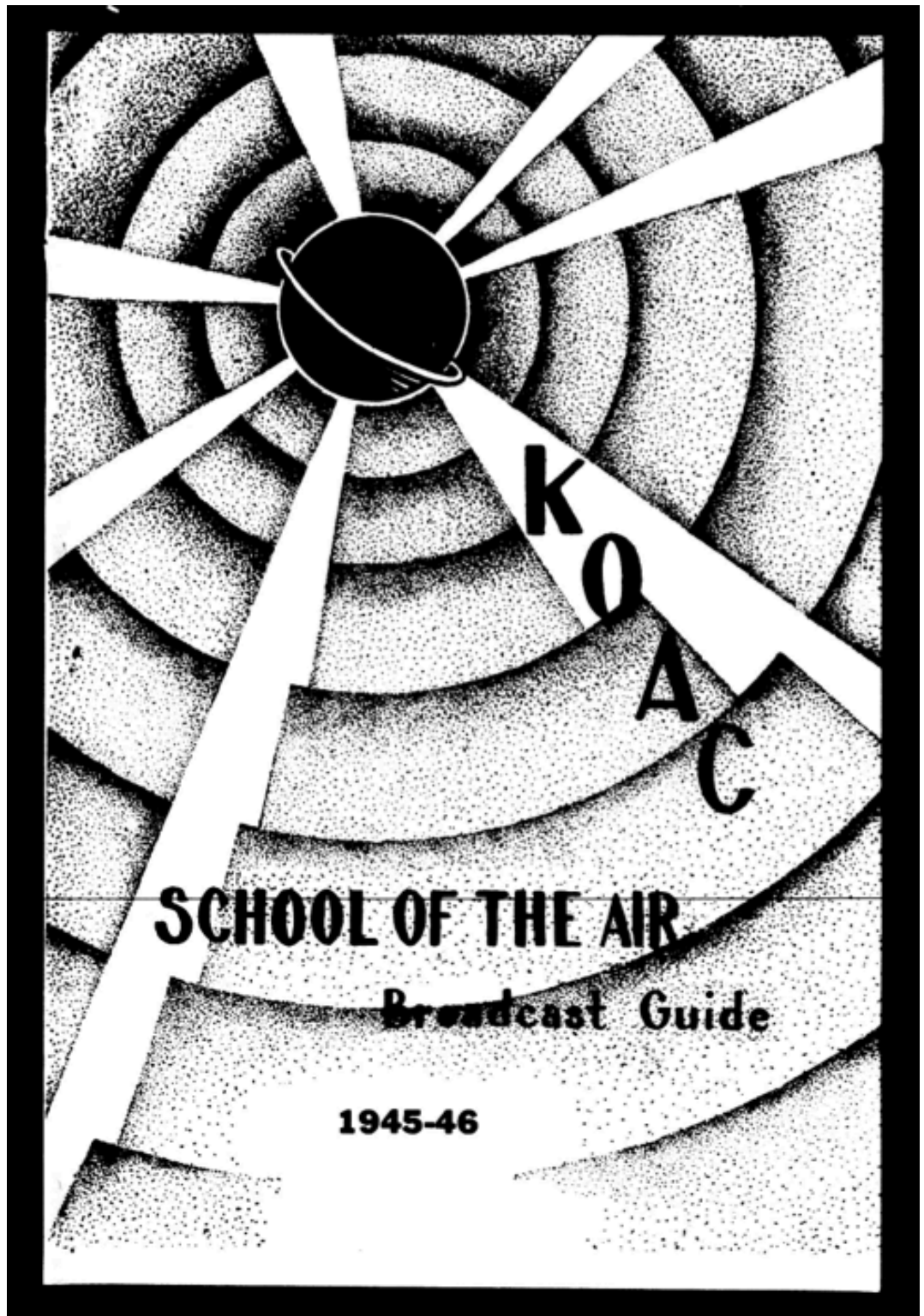


Fig. 5. KOAC School of the Air Broadcast Guide 1945-46, from KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 7 Folder 12.

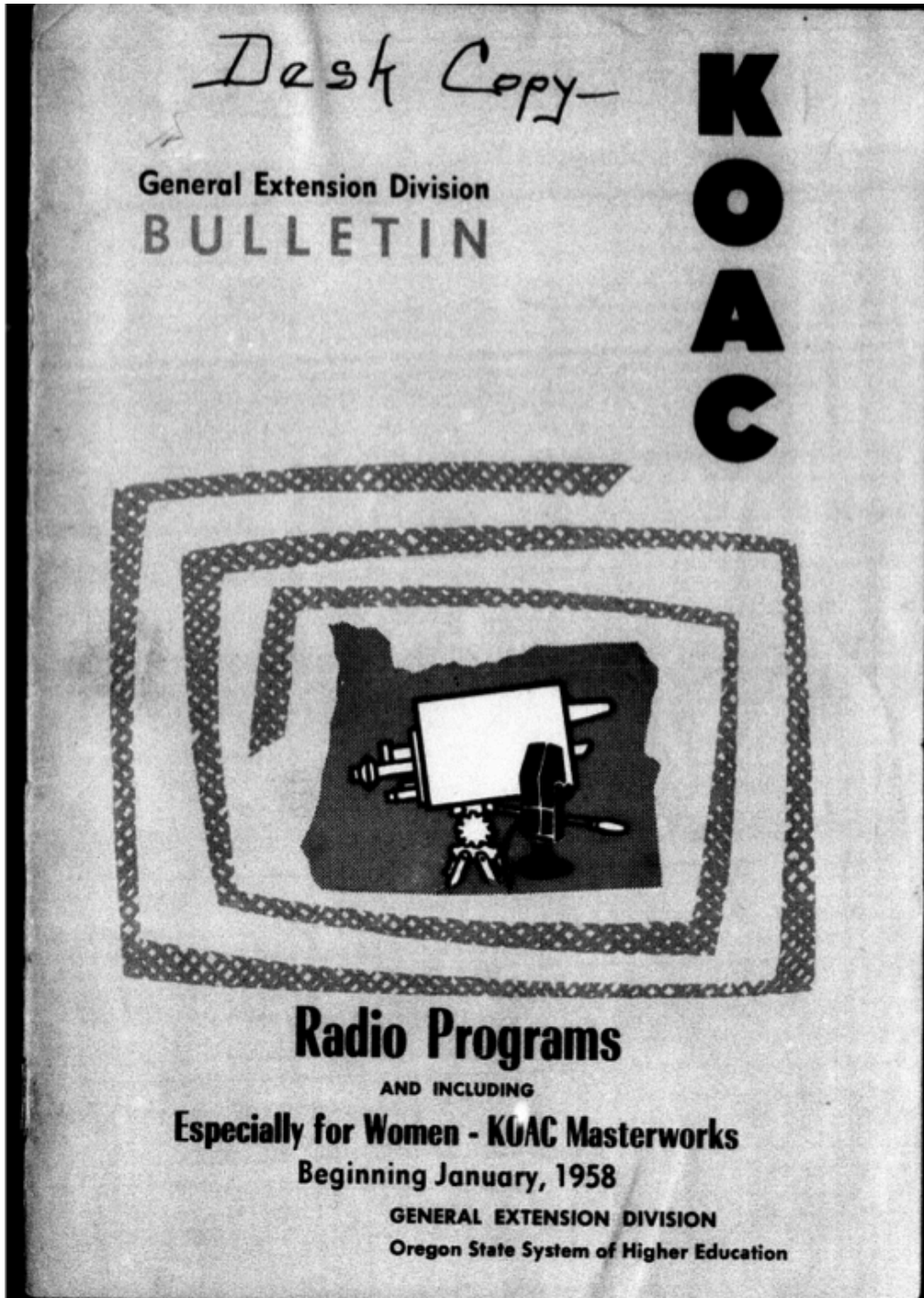


Fig. 6. KOAC Program Guide 1958, from KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon, Reel 10 Folder 12.



Fig. 7. Farm family gathered around table on which radio receiver is set & listening to radio for entertainment. Location: Hood River County, OR, US / Date taken: July 20, 1925 © Time Inc



Fig. 8. The first KFDJ (KOAC) staff (l to r) Webley Edwards, announcer, Wallace Kadderly, director, Jacob Jordan, engineer, Grant Feikert, operator. From J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972), viii.



Fig. 9. KOAC staff of 1932 (l to r, front to back) Anthony Euwer, Wallace Kadderly, Zelta Rodenwold, Byron Arnold, Dix Perkins, James Morris, Luke Roberts, Grant Feikert, Don Kneass, Cy Briggs. From J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972), vi.

Let's Keep Mentally Healthy*
KOAC Broadcast, May 3, 1949.
Dr. Gerhard B. Haugen.

May 3
2-2:30

ANN'CR: Today, we present the 8th in our regular series of broadcasts sponsored by the Mental Health Association of Oregon - a member agency of the Oregon Chest. Today's discussion is by Dr. Gerhard B. Haugen, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Oregon Medical School in Portland. Dr. Haugen treats the subject of "The Family As a Factor in Mental Health." Could you tell us, ~~how~~ just how great a factor you would consider the family to be in any particular person's mental health?

HAUGEN: The family is undoubtedly one of the greatest single factors....if not the greatest. In any discussion of mental health, it's important to remember that a good mental outlook, or a poor one, is usually the result of not one factor, but many. The individual is the result of everything which happens to him, plus his native traits and inherited physical characteristics. We won't try to discuss inherited characteristics today. They make up an entire subject themselves. But the environmental and inherited traits of the individual have their earliest connection with the family as a group, and the result is that the family has the most important bearing of any single factor in the early development of the individual.

ANN'CR: How early in life does this factor become important?

HAUGEN: Practically from the first few days after birth. When the child is born, it knows nothing....it has a few instincts, but that's all. Shortly after birth, it begins to learn from the immediate family. This learning process is mostly by imitation, and for that reason, the family is especially important. In order to learn the proper methods of action the child must learn them by imitating proper methods. So, whether the family wishes to or not, it begins to shape a child's behavior immediately.

Fig. 10. First page of the transcript for "Family as a Factor in Mental Health," broadcast May 3, 1949. Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

LET'S KEEP MENTALLY HEALTHY

ANNOUNCER: The Oregon Mental Hygiene Society presents the fifth program of the series, "LET'S KEEP MENTALLY HEALTHY." Today's discussion, entitled, "THE SCHOOL IS A FACTOR IN MENTAL HEALTH," was prepared by Miss Ina Dean, Assistant Supervisor of Special Education in the Portland Public Schools.

The work of her department is that of providing Special Education facilities for children who, because of some physical, social, or emotional handicap, are having learning difficulties. Since her chief concern is for children with problems, we have asked her to tell us about some of the difficulties which bring children to her attention, and how the school can help them adjust to the problem of everyday living.

MISS DEAN: Good afternoon to the mothers of our school children, and to all others who are interested in youngsters and their problems.

If you were asked where a child receives the most valuable and lasting lessons in how to get along in the world, you would probably answer, "In the home." And you would be right. If you were to name the next most important institution in shaping the lives of our children, your answer would probably be, "The school." Again you would be right.

Now let's try another question. What is it that makes the school so important in the lives of its pupils? Would your reply be something like this: "The school is where they learn the Three R's," or maybe this: "The school is where the child becomes acquainted with the accumulated knowledge of the ages?" In either case, your answer would be only partially right.

The school has a much wider responsibility than that of imparting book knowledge. It is a tremendous force in determining whether a child will get along in the world happily or not. The difference between the schools of today and those of a generation or more ago, is not so much in what we teach our children, but

Fig. 11. First page of the transcript for "The School as a Factor in Mental Health," broadcast date unknown. Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY
FEDERAL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

1911 - 1961

This is the story of 50 years of the off-campus educational program of Oregon State University carried on by the Federal Cooperative Extension Service.

It purposes to recount some of the improvement brought to the state through the teaching of applied science mainly in agriculture and home economics, and closely related subjects, to those citizens who have been unable to attend courses at the University for the resident instruction offerings in these and other fields.

A purpose also is to present certain unique methods which have been developed for teaching a voluntary clientele.

It will, in a measure, sketch the progress of the Extension 4-H Club program.

Fig. 12. First page from Frank L. Ballard, *The Oregon State University Federal Cooperative Extension Service, 1911-1961*, (Oregon State University Extension Service, 1960).

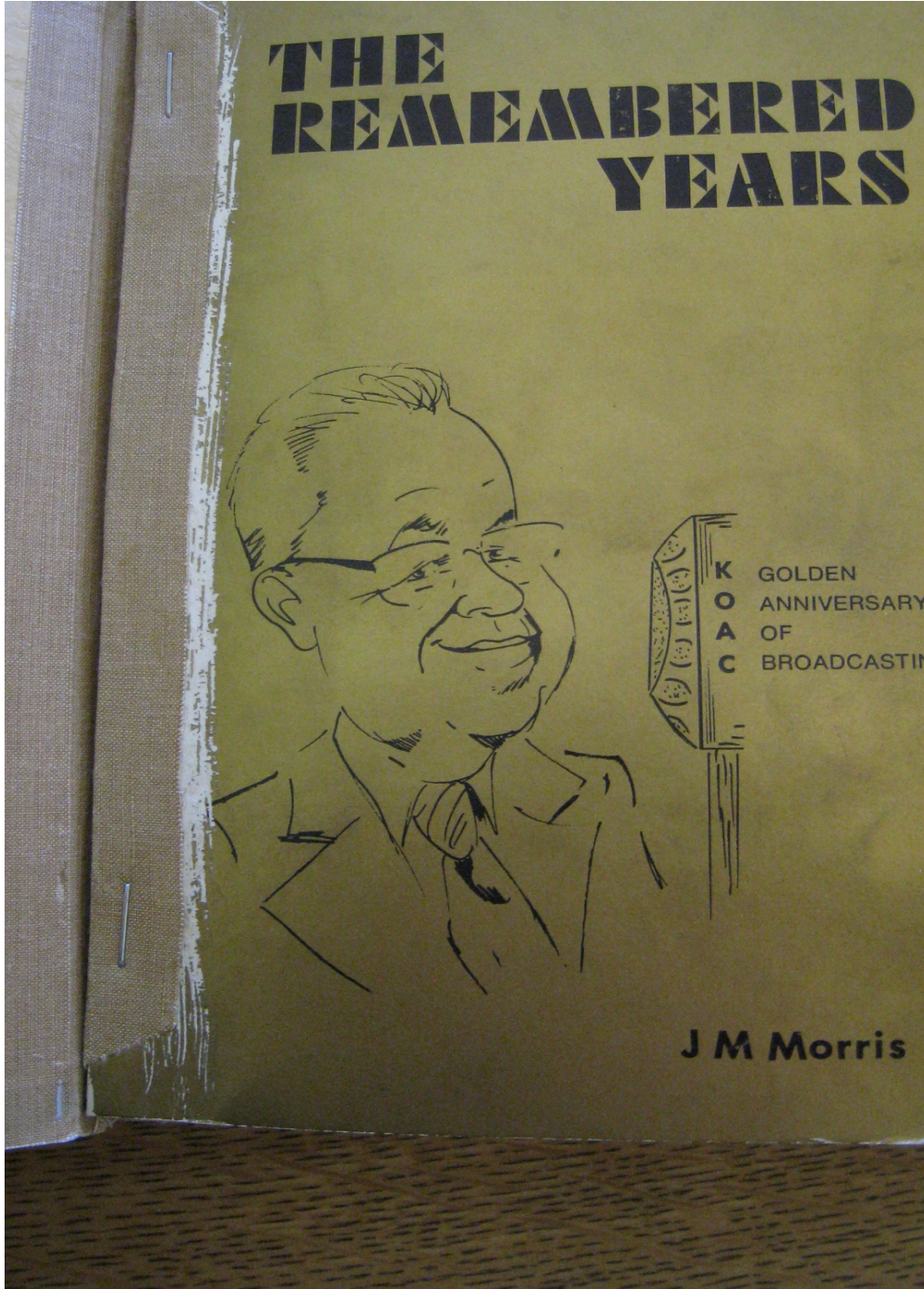


Fig. 13. Cover, J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972).

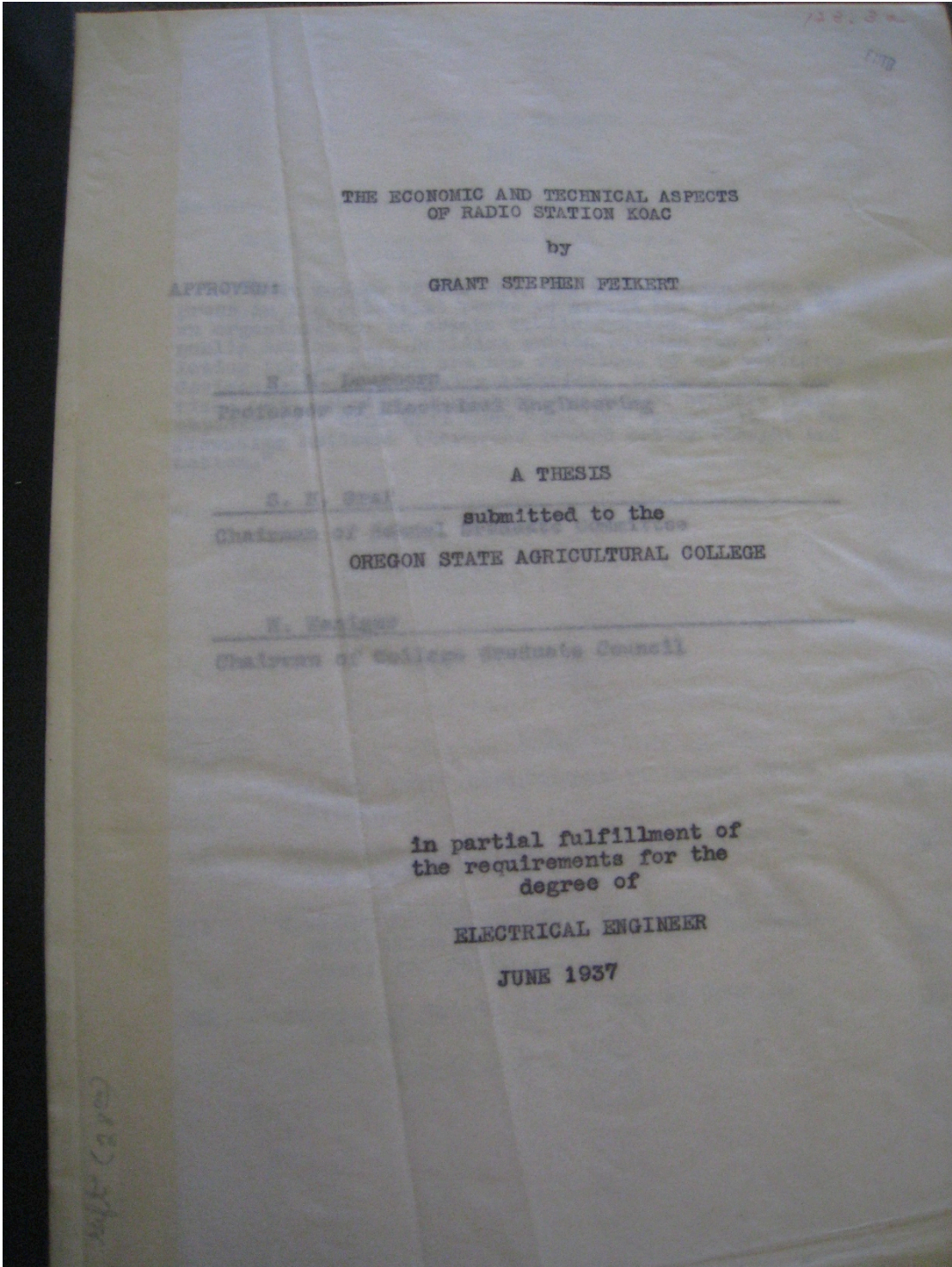


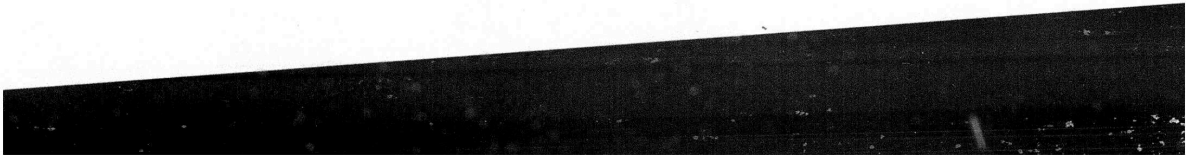
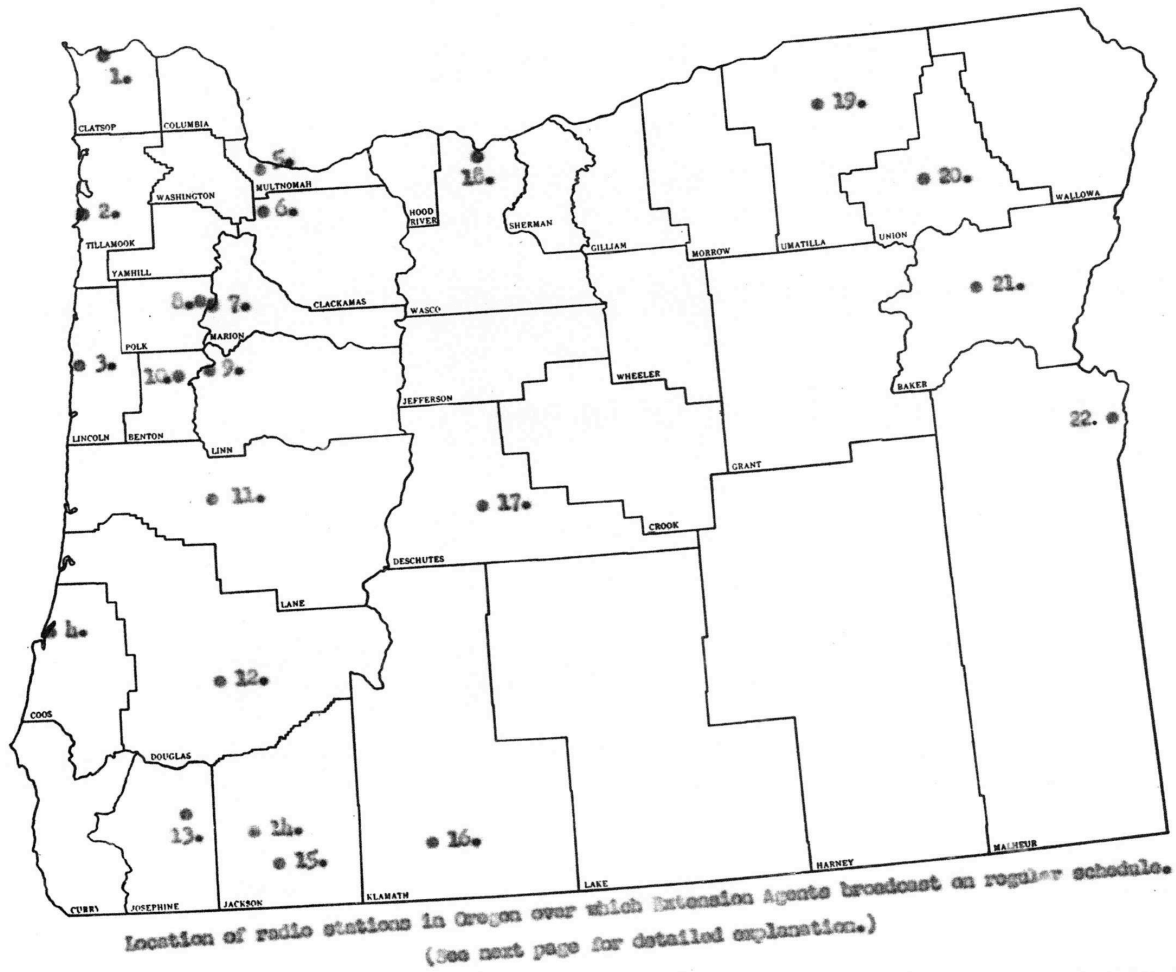
Fig. 14. Cover, Grant Stephen Feikert, "The Economic and Technical Aspects of Radio Station KOAC" (Thesis E.E., Oregon State Agricultural College, 1937).



Fig. 15. KFDJ Installation. J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972).



Fig. 16. The KFDJ Studio located in the administration building of the Oregon Agricultural College. Wallace Kadderly announcing a group of college musicians.



J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972).

Fig. 17. Location of radio stations in Oregon over which KOAC Extension agents broadcast as regular schedule.

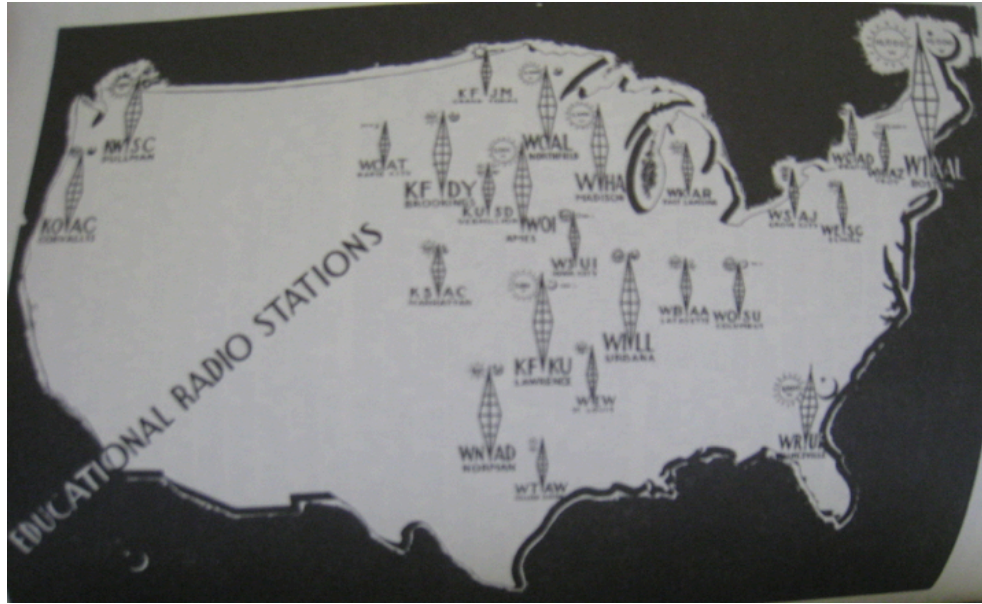


Fig. 18. Map of educational radio stations, late 1930s (precise date unknown. From J. M. Morris, *The Remembered Years*. (Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications 1972), 40.

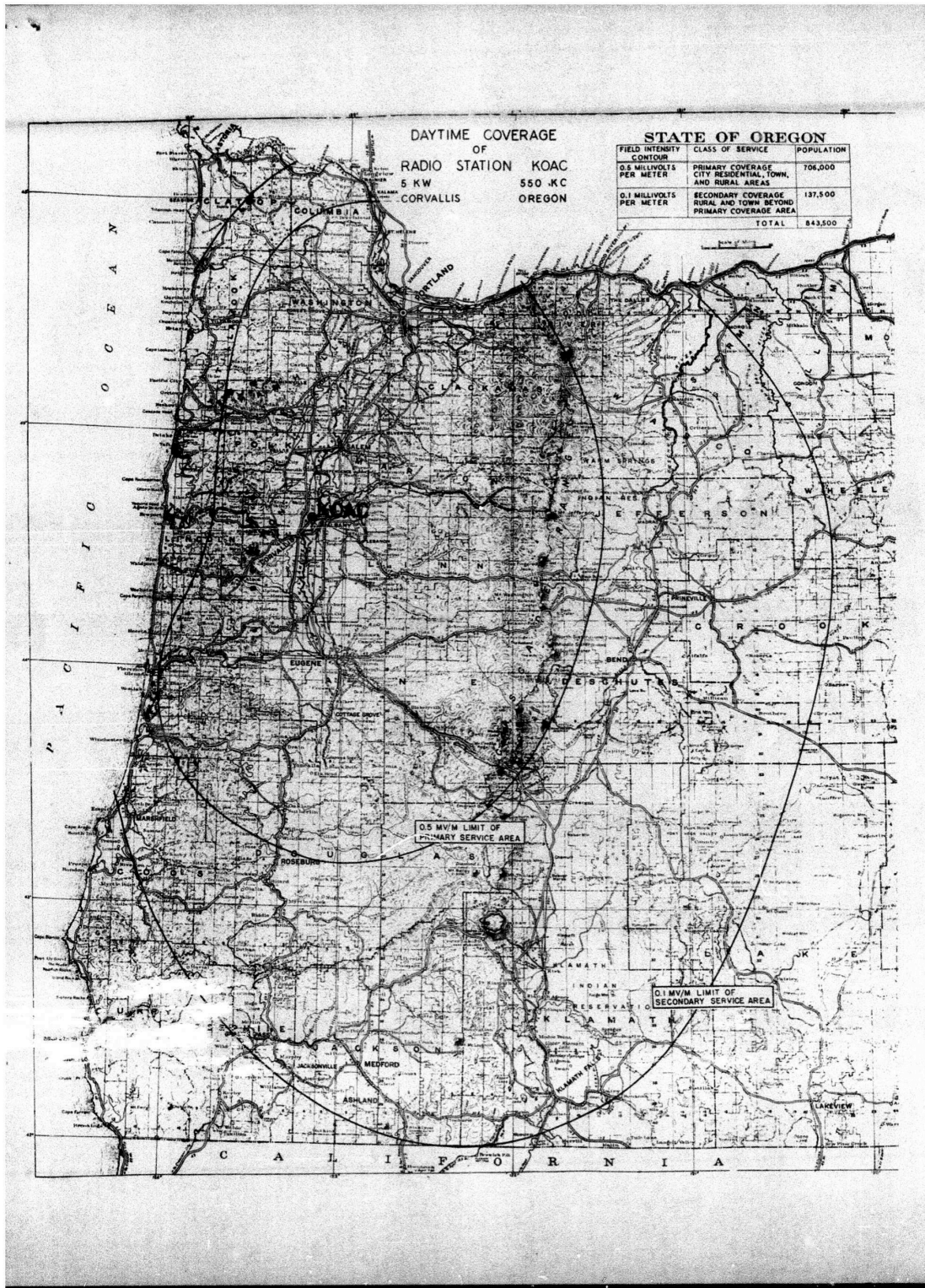


Fig. 19. Daytime coverage of KOAC at 5000 watts

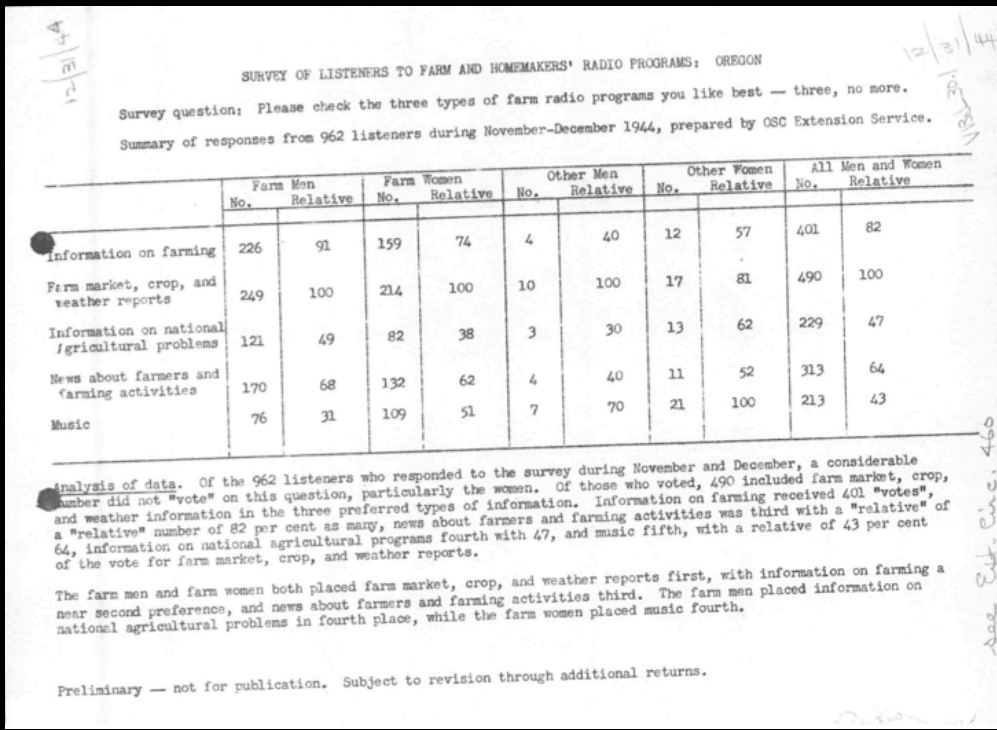


Fig. 20. OSC Extension Service. "Survey of Listeners to Farm and Homemakers' Radio Programs: Oregon." 1944, From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

KOAC First for Farm Programs

Radio Station KOAC was indicated as the station most frequently turned to for farm programs by both farm men and farm women. In fact, the preference expressed was pronounced. The number of farmers expressing preference of KOAC was 194 as against 170 expressing first preference for all other stations. This preference was not so pronounced among farm women, although 362 indicated preference for KOAC compared with 75 for the second preferred station. The total of first preferences for the other stations combined was, however, slightly more than the expression for KOAC.

Table 3.

STATION PREFERENCE (FARM PROGRAMS)

Station:	Farm Men			Farm Women			All Farm Men and Women				
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	Total	Rel.
KOAC	194	48	14	168	40	14	362	88	28	478	100
KOIN	34	35	17	41	35	15	75	70	32	177	37
KGW	11	40	29	20	34	15	31	74	44	149	31
KWIL	32	28	5	29	25	2	61	53	7	121	25
KXL	16	15	18	22	18	12	38	33	30	101	21
KEX	15	25	11	20	17	10	35	42	21	98	21
KRNR	26	9	5	35	9	4	61	18	9	88	18
KALE	7	6	10	7	4	6	14	10	16	40	8
KORE	9	9	-	15	4	2	24	13	2	39	8
KSLM	7	13	6	4	6	4	11	19	10	40	8
KBND	12	-	-	9	-	-	21	-	-	21	4
KFO	1	7	3	2	7	1	3	14	4	21	4
KWJJ	1	1	3	1	-	-	2	1	3	6	1
KIRO	2	1	1	4	-	-	6	1	1	8	2
KOCS	-	-	3	2	1	-	2	1	3	6	1

Farm Men Listen to Farm Programs Frequently

More than one-half the men indicated listening to farm programs more than twice weekly.

Listening once or twice weekly were 104, and 72 rarely. Farm women, as would be expected, do not listen to farm programs as frequently as men, although the number who do listen is significant. Listening more than twice weekly were 219 farm women; 141 listened once or twice weekly. Of all farm men and farm women listening to farm programs, more than one-half indicated listening more than twice weekly.

Fig. 21. OSC Extension Service. "Survey of Listeners to Farm and Homemakers' Radio Programs: Oregon." 1944, From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

♦ DAILY PROGRAMS ♦ KOAC

October 1 to December 31, 1939

Programs in italics are from the KOAC Studios at the University of Oregon at Eugene

MONDAY

9:00 a.m. The Housemakers' Hour—9:08 Neighbor Reynolds
 9:00 a.m. Weather Forecast
 10:01 a.m. Music
 10:15 a.m. Story Hour for Adults
 10:45 a.m. Music
 10:55 a.m. The School of the Air—10:55 Today's News; 11:00
 The Story of Song; 11:15 Children Are Arrive
 11:30 a.m. Music of the Masters
 12:00 noon United Press News
 12:15 p.m. Farm Hour—12:16 W. S. Averill, Benton County
 Agent; 12:30 Spot market reports
 1:00 p.m. Music
 1:15 p.m. Variety
 1:45 p.m. Music
 2:00 p.m. Family Dollars and Cents
 2:30 p.m. Music
 2:45 p.m. Guard Your Health
 3:00 p.m. Music
 3:15 p.m. People of Other Lands
 3:30 p.m. Music
 3:45 p.m. The Monitor Views the News
 4:00 p.m. The Symphonic Hall Hour
 4:30 p.m. Stories for Boys and Girls
 5:00 p.m. On the Campuses
 5:30 p.m. Music
 5:45 p.m. Vespers
 6:00 p.m. Music
 6:15 p.m. United Press News
 6:30 p.m. Farm Hour—6:32 Agriculture as viewed by Oregon
 editors; 6:45 Market reports and reviews; 7:00
 Soil Conservation Service (1st and 3rd Mon-
 days); OSC Poultry Department (2nd and 4th
 Mondays); 7:15 OSC Soils Department
 7:30 p.m. 4-H Club Meeting
 8:00 p.m. School of Music
 8:15 p.m. The World in Review
 8:30 p.m. School of Music
 8:45 p.m. Ninety Years of Oregon Journalism
 9:00-10:00 Oregon State College Hour

TUESDAY

9:00 a.m. The Housemakers' Hour—9:08 Neighbor Reynolds
 9:00 a.m. Weather Forecast
 10:01 a.m. Music
 10:15 a.m. Story Hour for Adults
 10:45 a.m. Music
 10:55 a.m. The School of the Air—10:55 Today's News; 11:00
 Big and Little in the Zoo; 11:15 The Magic
 Cassevent
 11:30 a.m. Music of the Masters
 12:00 noon United Press News
 12:15 p.m. Farm Hour—12:16 Floyd Mullen, Linn County
 Agent, and Walter Letts, Polk County Agent
 (alternate Tuesdays); 12:30 Spot market re-
 ports
 1:00 p.m. Music
 1:15 p.m. Variety
 1:45 p.m. Music
 2:00 p.m. Personality Problems (on alternate Tuesdays, for
 study groups, begins Oct. 10)
 You May Not Believe It, But— (on alternate Tues-
 days, begins Oct. 3)
 2:30 p.m. School of Music
 3:00 p.m. Music
 3:15 p.m. Daughters of the American Revolution
 3:30 p.m. Music
 3:45 p.m. The Monitor Views the News
 4:00 p.m. The Symphonic Hall Hour
 4:30 p.m. Stories for Boys and Girls
 Elementary Education (on alternate Tuesdays, be-
 gins Oct. 3)
 5:00 p.m. On the Campuses
 5:30 p.m. Music
 5:45 p.m. Vespers
 6:00 p.m. Music
 6:15 p.m. United Press News

Fig. 22. KOAC Program Guide 1939, From KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 10.

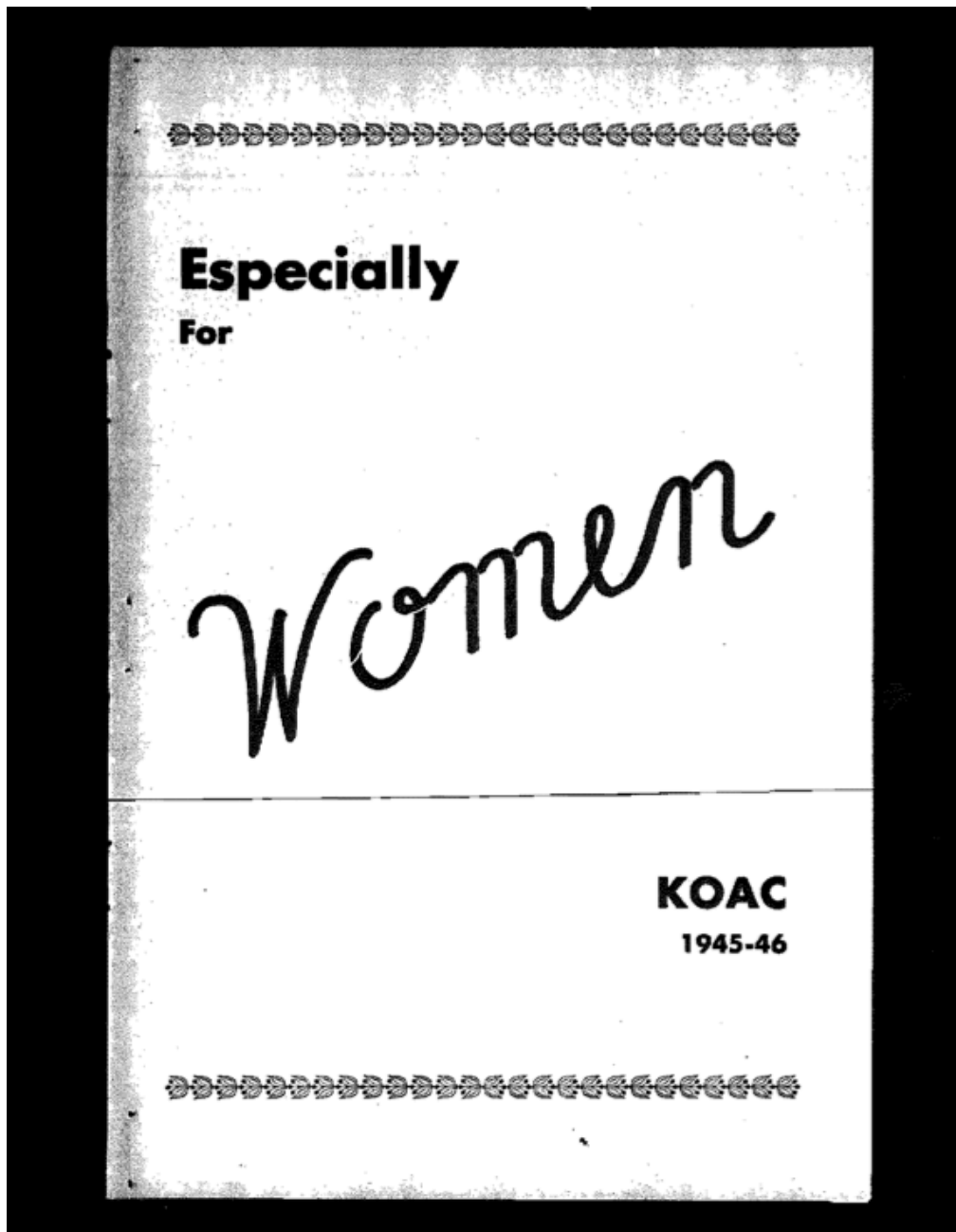


Fig. 23. Cover of Especially for Women Program Guide, 1945-46, from KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon. Reel 10.

***Weekly Programs From Radio Station KOAC, the State-Owned Station, Corvallis, Oregon 55C**

TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
10:00 The News	10:00 The News	10:00 The News	10:00 The News	10:00 The News
10:15 Especially for Women	10:15 Especially for Women	10:15 Especially for Women Calling Mrs. Oregon (10:30)	10:15 Especially for Women It Happened Today (10:30)	10:15 The News
11:00 Oregon School of the Air Adventures in Research	11:00 Oregon School of the Air The Starry Skies	11:00 Oregon School of the Air Magic Casement Stories	11:00 Oregon School of the Air Nature Trails	10:30 Story Game
11:15 The Concert Hall	11:15 The Concert Hall	11:15 The Concert Hall	11:15 The Concert Hall	10:30 Especially for Women Children's Theater (10:45)
12:00 The News	12:00 The News	12:00 The News	12:00 The News	11:00 The Game
12:15 Noon Farm Hour Market Reports (12:30)	12:15 Noon Farm Hour Market Reports (12:30)	12:15 Noon Farm Hour Market Reports (12:30)	12:15 Noon Farm Hour Market Reports (12:30)	12:00 The News Market Reports
1:00 Ride 'em Cowboy	1:00 Ride 'em Cowboy	1:00 Ride 'em Cowboy	1:00 Ride 'em Cowboy	1:00 Variety
1:15 Oregon School of the Air The News' Watch	1:15 This Day Army Recruiting Service	1:15 Oregon School of the Air Let's Sing, America	1:15 Oregon School of the Air Tell a Story (1:35) Our Everyday Things (1:55)	1:00 The News Market Reports
1:30 Melody Time	1:30 Melody Time	1:45 Melody Time	1:30 Melody Time	1:30 Voice of the Day as a day as a day
2:00 Mental Health Speaks (1st) The World Is Our Affair (2d and 4th) Nursing Information (3d)	2:00 Behavior in the Making	2:00 Home Garden Hour	2:00 The Clubwomen's Half Hour	1:45 Pre-Announcements 2:00 Traffic
2:30 Oregon School of the Air What's That Word?	2:30 Oregon School of the Air Stories That Live	2:30 Memory Book of Music	2:30 Memory Book of Music	2:15 Memory
2:45 Memory Book of Music	2:45 Memory Book of Music	3:00 Oregon Reporter	3:00 Oregon Reporter	2:15 Memory
3:00 Oregon Reporter	3:00 Oregon Reporter	3:15 Music of the Masters	3:15 Music of the Masters	3:00 Science Program Elementary Program in Elem and curri in Radio Assistant which prep or coll ing curri
3:15 Music of the Masters	3:15 Music of the Masters	4:00 The News	4:00 The News	3:15 Music of the Masters 4:00 The News 4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
4:00 The News	4:00 The News	4:30 University Hour	4:15 Strictly Jazz	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
4:15 Favorite Hymns	4:15 College Workshop	5:00 On the Upbeat	4:45 Children's Theater	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
4:30 Journeys Behind the News	4:45 Children's Theater	5:45 OSC Studio Orchestra	5:00 On the Upbeat	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
4:45 Children's Theater	5:00 On the Upbeat	6:00 The News	5:45 OSC Studio Orchestra	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
5:00 On the Upbeat	5:00 On the Upbeat	6:15 Dinner Melodies	6:00 The News	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
5:30 550 Club	5:30 550 Club	6:30 'Round the Campfire	6:15 Dinner Melodies	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
6:00 The News	6:00 The News	7:15 Evening Farm Hour Market Reports (7:15)	6:30 Music of Crechodowakia	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
6:15 Dinner Melodies	6:15 Dinner Melodies	8:00 County Salute	7:15 Evening Farm Hour Market Reports (7:15)	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
6:30 'Round the Campfire	6:30 Lest We Forget	7:15 Evening Farm Hour Market Reports (7:15)	8:00 County Salute	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
7:00 Farmers Union	6:45 Guest Star	8:00 County Salute	7:15 Evening Farm Hour Market Reports (7:15)	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
7:15 Evening Farm Hour Market Reports (7:15)	7:00 Farmers Union	8:10 In Your Name	8:00 County Salute	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
8:00 Radio Shorthand Contest	7:15 Evening Farm Hour Market Reports (7:15)	8:45 The News	8:10 In Your Name	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
8:30 Veterans News Review	8:00 Radio Shorthand Contest	9:00 Music That Endures	8:45 The News	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
8:45 The News	8:30 Veterans News Review	9:45 Evening Meditations	9:00 Music That Endures	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
9:00 Music That Endures	8:45 The News	9:45 Evening Meditations	9:45 Evening Meditations	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia
9:45 Evening Meditations	9:00 Music That Endures	9:45 Evening Meditations	9:45 Evening Meditations	4:15 Call of the 4:45 Children's Theater 5:00 High 5:30 550 Club 6:00 The News 6:15 Dinner Melodies 6:30 Music of Crechodowakia

also features college sports in season from the University of Oregon and Oregon State College as well as lectures, convocations, and other events of interest and listen for announcements of these special broadcasts.

Fig. 24. KOAC Program Guide, 1957, Special Collections and Archives Oregon Market Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

OREGON MENTAL HYGIENE SOCIETY

Member of Portland Community - Oregon Club

MISS JUNE J. JOGLYN
Executive Director

228 Post Building
Portland, Oregon
Water 6691

DR. HERMAN A. DOCKEL
Medical Adviser

Sept. 25, 1948

Miss Lillian Schloeman
Radio Station KOAC
Corvallis, Oregon

Dear Miss Schloeman:

Enclosed please find two copies of the radio script "Service and Giving as a Factor in Mental Health" for the October 5th broadcast.

As Miss Joslyn will not be able to come, we hope you will be able to find some one to read the material.

Sincerely,

Mrs. M. J. Hoffman
Mrs. M. J. Hoffman
Educational Director

LJH/er

Oct. 5

Board of Directors

<p>President Mr. Harold E. Wink</p>	<p>At-Large President Mr. F. H. Jentz</p>	<p>2nd Vice President Mr. Terry Palmer</p>	<p>3rd Vice President Mrs. Harbo H. Leake</p>	<p>Secretary Mr. Irving Edna</p>	<p>Treasurer Mrs. W. S. Corliss</p>
<p>Mr. Leonard D. Allen Mr. Gordon M. Andrews Mr. Homer G. Angell Dr. S. Gordon Roberts Dr. David W. S. Baird Dr. Fred W. Campbell</p>	<p>Dr. James Coughlin Mr. Wayne W. Cox Mrs. Henry L. Corbett Dr. John F. Connor Judge Abby Graham Dr. Henry H. Dixon</p>	<p>Dr. Harold W. Edgerton Dr. John W. Evans Mr. Wm. S. Felderhammer Mrs. Philip Hart Dr. Ernie Hill</p>	<p>Mr. Tom Hougherty Mrs. L. E. Jones Dr. G. F. Kellie Mr. James L. Lamb Judge Donald F. Long Dr. Leslie Young Macken</p>	<p>Mr. F. A. McDonald Mrs. Donald McGraw Dr. Peter Obergren Mr. Rex Peterson Mr. Paul A. Salzman Mr. John F. Richardson</p>	<p>Dr. Forrest S. Kralie Mrs. Thomas Roberts Dr. Philip B. King Mrs. Susan Strong Dr. Donald Watt Rev. Paul S. Wright</p>

Fig. 25. Letter from Mrs. M.J. Hoffman, Oregon Mental Hygiene Society to Lillian Schloeman, KOAC Director of Women's Programming, September 25, 1948. Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

OREGON CONGRESS of PARENTS and TEACHERS, Inc.

214 EDUCATION CENTER BUILDING
PORTLAND 4, OREGON

September 20, 1948

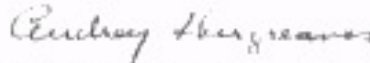
Mr. James Morris, Program Manager
Radio Station KOAC
Corvallis, Oregon

Dear Mr. Morris:

Thank you for sending the copy of "Especially for Women". We are wondering if there are enough available for us to mail to each of our local units. If not, would it be possible for us to have a few copies to send to our national office.

We believe the program planned for the coming year will accomplish a great deal in the parent education field through new and better study groups, and I am especially pleased with the introduction given the series.

Sincerely,



Mrs. E. Hargraves
President

Aller

Fig. 26. Letter from Mrs. E. Hargraves, President of the Oregon Congress of Parents and Teachers to James Morris, KOAC Station Manager, September 29, 1948. Reel 2 Folder 32, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Dear KOAC:

3354 Crest Drive
Corvallis

I have never written a letter in praise or criticism of radio programs. I am sure there are thousands in this area who number among your silent audiences.

This does not mean that I, as well as my family, have not used & enjoyed KOAC. My first impression of Corvallis, 5 years ago was an intelligent and well presented radio station & I have made it a part of my daily living ever since.

Frankly I don't know how housework would get done without Gladys Chambers there to take my mind off the drudgery of scrubbing & cleaning. The classical music is unusually fine and comes at just the right times - your tapes of guest speakers have been always ~~been~~ depended on for those times when we haven't

Fig. 27. Letter to KOAC from Doris Katz, Corvallis, Oregon, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

been able to attend the actual presentation.

I could go on + on but I'd like to offer a possible suggestion: if the ~~available~~ radio + T.V. programs could be one + the same - in other words simultaneous broadcasts where suitable + where not - fill in with classical music on the radio programs - I'm sure much expense could be cut down + yet we would have a streamlined KOAC:

I wish a hearing had been arranged in Corvallis as I'm sure your most enthusiastic listeners are there + find it inconvenient to travel to Eugene or Salem.

There is not one other radio station today worth listening to so if KOAC goes off the air the radios will be packed away with my old wringer washer

sincerely

Doris Katz

My husband shares the same sentiments -

Fig. 27 (Continued).

2/7/58

KOAC Radio Station
Corvallis, Oregon

Gentlemen,

May I add my
small plea to those of
your hundreds of devoted
listeners.

Pub-ese - stay just
as you are! Music -
poetry - books - we
love you! A bright
spot in each day and
certainly "something to
tip to" in a confused world.

Yours truly,
Mrs. V. E. Way

1716 E. 24th Eugene

Fig. 28. Letter to KOAC from V.E. Way, Eugene, Oregon, February 4 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Cottage Grove, Oregon
January 30, 1958
Ladies & Gentlemen of KOAC;
I can not,
of course, speak for others, but wish
to register my own vote; which is,
KEEP KOAC ON THE AIR.

Your programs have been most valuable
to many of ^{us} and mean much to us
folks of the soil, and I believe also to
town people.

Many of us do not have Television.
I am sure you will wish to do
what's best for us all.

Truly yours,
J. A. Seeger

Fig. 29. Letter to KOAC from J.A. Seeger, Cottage Grove, January 30 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

6241 SW Luradel
Portland 19, Oregon
February 5, 1958

Dr John R Richards
Chancellor, Oregon State System of Higher Education
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

OFFICE OF CHANCELLOR

FEB 8 1958

Dear Dr Richards:

Please let me add my voice to the protests to the
selling and discontinuance of Radio Station KOAC
at Corvallis.

This welcome addition to radio listening adds
so much thru its classical music programs.
It contributes materially to the spread of all
kinds of factual information, both in schools
and in the homes. Why end something so worth-
while?

Radio does not have to be looked at to be enjoyed.
Television does. Also how about the people,
the housewives, the students, the farmers,
living east of the Cascades? Television has a
restricted local audience, while radio can be
picked up for hundreds of miles, reaching a far
larger audience.

As one of the Oregon taxpayers I am willing to see
some of the state surplus used for the continuance
of this worthwhile station.

Sincerely

Mildred Van Steenburg
(Mrs) Mildred A Van Steenburg

Fig. 30. Letter to John Richards, Chancellor, Oregon State System of Higher Education from Mildred Van Steenburgh, Portland, OR. February 5 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

January 24, 1958

KOAC Radio
Corvallis, Oregon
Dear Sirs:

I should think that many people in the open country and smaller towns would miss you very greatly.

Personally, it would be losing an old friend on whom I depend a great deal. With the exception of 2 programs on KOIN, the combined weekly Portland stations give me only a tiny part of what I receive from the widely varied programs carried by your station. Many a time in the earlier

Fig. 31. Letter to KOAC from Albirria Pope, Portland, OR. January 24 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

2

days the "Upbeat" and "Children's Theatre" have done much to lessen tension. Your children's stories have been wonderfully fine. I liked "Trail Dog" and "Big Red".

I am refreshing my German with "Hier Deutschland" listened "Over the Back Fence" and to English and French Press Reviews; go to Cooper Union, learn about "Oregon Resources"; took literature course last year, attend Evening meditations and every day there is much good music, and so much else. "Teller and the Tale" for some reason brought back memory of "Tales of the Valiants".

TV is expensive and if it is found the greater number is served in that way, we

Fig. 31 (continued).

the radio audience will
have received much in-
formation and pleasure.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Albinia B. Pope

MRS. ALFRED H. POPE
4214 N.E. Hazelton Place
Portland 13, Oregon

Fig. 31 (continued).

Feb 5, 1958

Clackamas, Oregon

Radio Station KOAC.

Dear Sirs,

I am a house wife who listens to your station. I am very much opposed to KOAC going off the air. I think the only program that I don't enjoy and profit by to some extent is the short hand dictation Tuesday afternoons. I even like the Farm Market News and the Childrens stories. who can watch Television all day and absorb valuable essence of living while doing housework which incidentally I don't much like.

Anyway here is my vote

Sincerely

Carol J. Pruitt
(Mrs. C.B.)

Fig. 32. Letter to KOAC from Carol Pruitt, Cottage Grove, January 30 1958, Reel 8 Folder 1, KOAC Records (RG 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

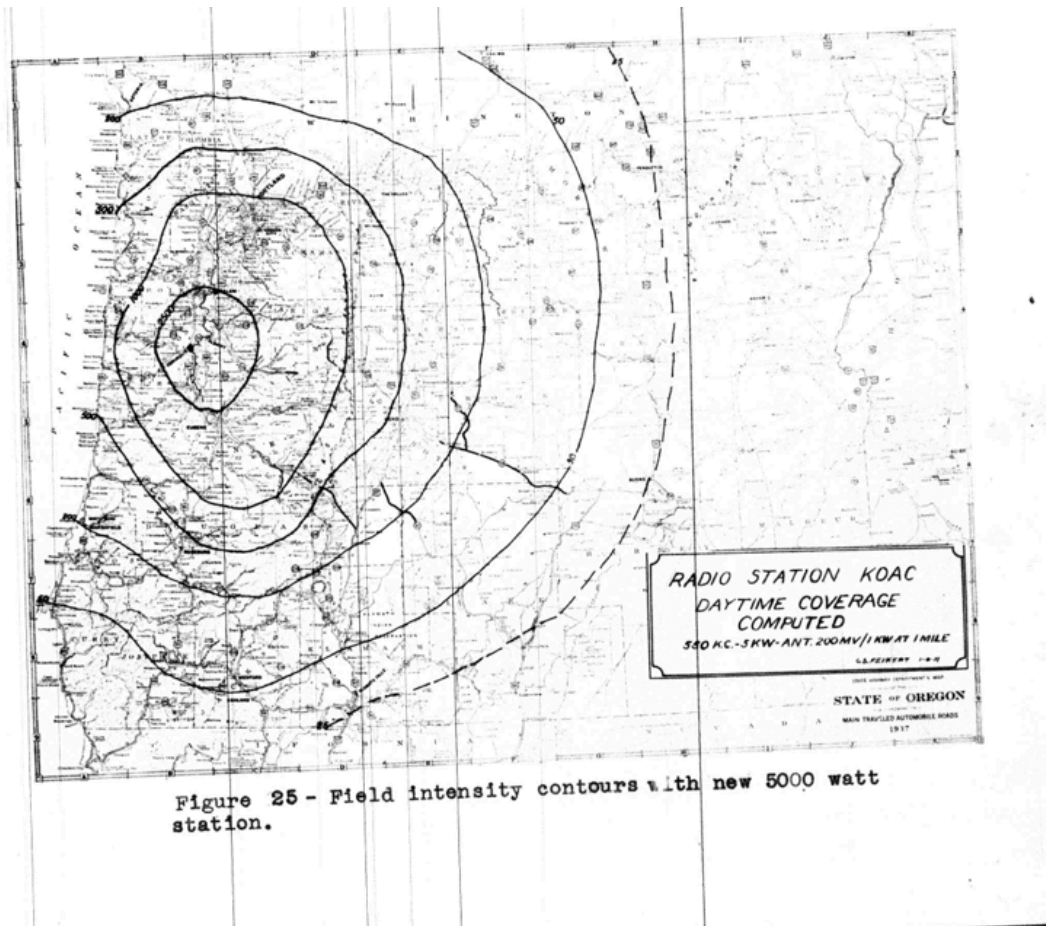


Figure 25 - Field intensity contours with new 5000 watt station.

Fig 33. From Grant Stephen Feikert, "The Economic and Technical Aspects of Radio Station KOAC" (Thesis E.E., Oregon State Agricultural College, 1937), 97.

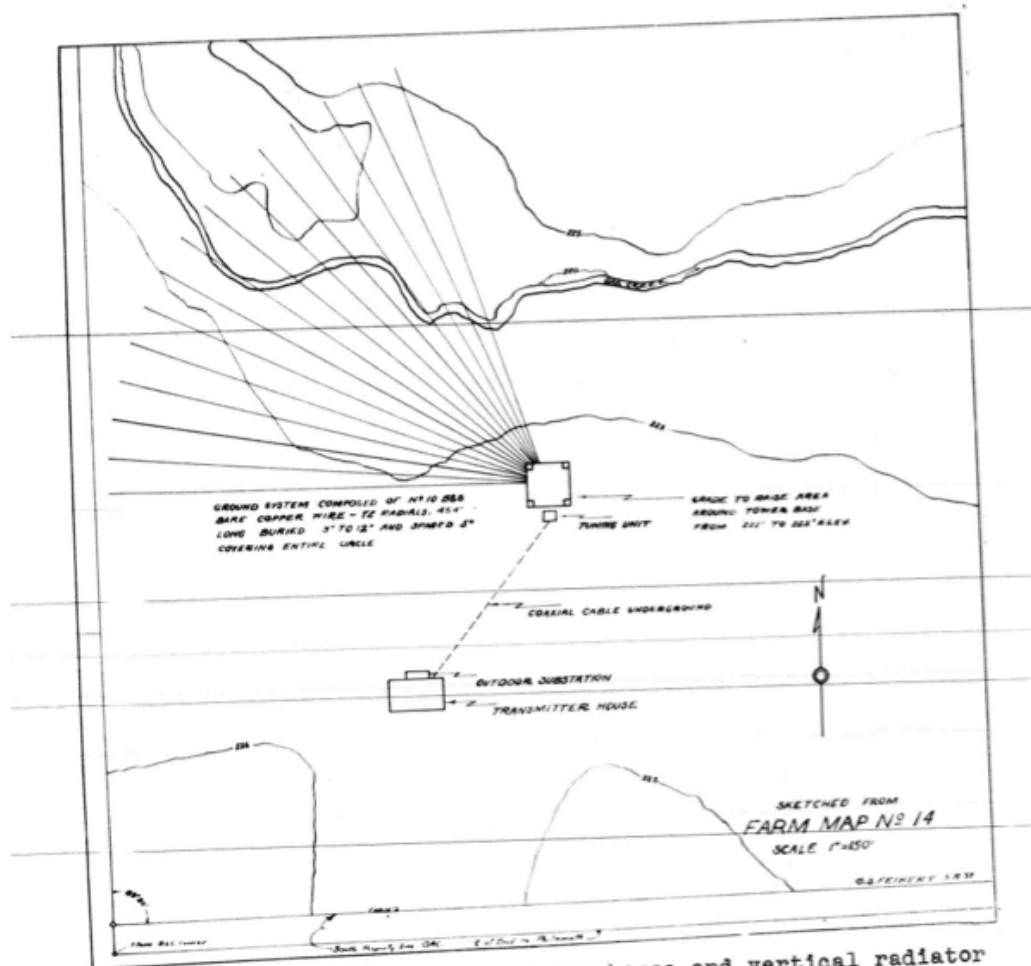


Figure 19 - Location of transmitter house and vertical radiator on the Young Tract, suggested grading and ground system specifications.

Fig 34. From Grant Stephen Feikert, "The Economic and Technical Aspects of Radio Station KOAC" (Thesis E.E., Oregon State Agricultural College, 1937), 97.

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