

Internet radio and its future: A classroom experiment
by John F. Barber, Ph.D.
The Creative Media & Digital Culture Program
Washington State University Vancouver
Vancouver, Washington, USA

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Invited Ricardo Fadul (fadulradio@gmail.com)

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In spring 2013, my students and I investigated opportunities and affordances for future radio when its content, transmission, and reception are contextualized by digital technologies and cultures of the Internet. Available via Wi-Fi enabled mobile devices, we thought Internet radio may encourage participants/listeners to converse/collaborate regarding content production, as well as interrupt/influence/customize the program stream, thus making future radio a many-to-many, mobile, non-linear, social, and collaborative experience, an audio network providing global reach even while remaining local in its focus. We called this new form of Internet radio "Audio Bash." As for content, we selected two genres—radio drama and radio art, both without a primary emphasis on the human voice—that seemed especially suited to our vision of future radio.

As a social, collaborative network, Audio Bash allows participants to create and share sound files using a web interface. Participants upload sound files to their personal accounts, which can be previewed by other participants. Copies of these original files can be moved to personal work spaces, where, using a software mixer / editing platform included in Audio Bash, they can be combined and remixed with other files. The result is a new sound file, comprised of several originals. Sound files, original or remixed, may be streamed from individual workspaces in Internet radio-style broadcast formats. The number of listeners, and the rankings / feedback they provide, serve as the basis for determining "wattage," or popularity for individual content creators / broadcasters. Higher wattage means increased visualization on maps of Audio Bash members' geographical locations. These features and affordances suggest that Internet radio may become decentralized and hyper-local, with broadcasts featuring collaboratively produced content covering only an immediate neighborhood, for example. The implications are interesting. Imagine driving across the country, or across the city, listening to hyper-local broadcasts representing content

choices made by people living in those immediate areas rather than distant corporate offices.

The prototype Audio Bash mixing / editing platform does not facilitate beat-for-beat editing. As a result, we focused on radio drama and radio art as appropriate content. As an additional challenge we envisioned both as containing only a minimum of human vocalizations. Instead, we strove to create drama and sound art for radio using mechanical, environmental, and other sounds. The overlay of soundscape, sound collage, phonography, and field recordings was inspiring, and some students produced aural dramas narrating dreams and events in their daily lives. One group created a sonic portrait of the city. Another attempted to portray a narrative using sounds of a bowling alley. One group sonically depicted the states of water: liquid, steam, and ice.

For my students and myself, this course was a learning experience. Many students had never before made audio recordings or edited the results. None had considered sound(s) as the basis for digital storytelling, or investigated radio as a medium for communication and collaboration. Some have continued their course projects and are seeking opportunities to build them to the next level of conception / application. For me, the course provided an insight for how the functionality and affordances of Internet radio might significantly reshape the future culture of radio.

Author biography

John F. Barber, Ph. D. teaches in The Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver (<http://www.dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/>). In spring 2013, he taught a course entitled "Internet Radio: Theories and Practice" where he and his students worked to envision and build a prototype for a new form of Internet radio centered around a collaborative, social, audio network. The results from this class were presented by Dr. Barber and several students at the "What is Radio?" conference in Portland, Oregon, USA, 25-27 April 2013. Dr. Barber is the faculty advisor for the student-run radio station at Washington State University Vancouver: KOUG radio (www.kougradio.com) and he has built and maintains his own Internet radio station, Radio Nospace (www.radionospace.net). Learn more at his website: (www.nospace.net/john)