

**Educational Communications Board Meeting
January 16, 2009
Executive Director
Gene Purcell**

It isn't news to anybody reading this that the budget (whether it's state, federal, or program revenue) is the number one item facing public agencies as the new year begins.

Given those challenges, it's no surprise that many of our discussions at the ECB revolve around those various budgets.

However, what shouldn't be lost in all of these discussions is the fact that 2008 was a busy and productive one for the ECB and its staff.

So, without further ado, I'll present an abridged version of the ECB's accomplishments for 2008. The list is a tangible reminder that, despite the challenges facing all of us, the ECB and its partners are fully engaged in providing the citizens of Wisconsin with public service.

January:

- Board of Directors for ECB meets.
- NT to Active Directory Migration for ECB's IT takes place as part of the overall consolidation of ECB IT.
- Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) names Michael Crane of Orlando, Florida, Associate Director and Chief Operating Officer. His appointment began January 1, 2008, and he replaces Anders Yocom who retired at the end of 2007.
- The long-awaited, improved encoder for WPT is put into service in the Beltline Operations Center. The inauguration of service with ECB's new Tandberg DTV encoding system took place on January 15th. The new technology available with this upgrade will provide higher quality digital transmission for WPT now and following the digital transition in February of 2009.
- The Wisconsin Channel takes to the air on WPT and immediately includes two new ongoing series: "30 Minute Music Hour" which features Wisconsin musicians with diverse styles and "University Place" a daily series of general interest lectures and life-long learning opportunities.
- Milwaukee Center Lease: The lease between ECB and The Milwaukee Center, where the WPR Milwaukee Bureau is housed, expires on November 30, 2008. A search begins for more affordable space.
- Governor Doyle's "State of the State" address predicts a tough budget year.
- WPR Staff Speaker Series begins – WPR staff members talk about their work.

- Bids are being let this month for the digital upgrade of ECB stations WHWC, WHBM, WHHI, WHLA, WHDI, and AM station WLBL. These projects should be completed by September 2008.
- The Delivery Division schedule of monthly telephone conference call with all Regional Technical Managers continues in 2008. A full Division meeting is scheduled for February 20/21 in Wausau.
- Wisconsin Public Radio Association meets.
- ECB is awarded "Best Instructional Series" from NETA for "democracy it is!"
- The replacement of the WHHI tower near Highland is approved and work begins on bid preparation. The project, totaling over \$1,000,000, will continue into 2009.
- Bids are also being let in January for the transition of the WPT-TV translators to digital operation and a channel change for Park Falls WLEF-DT to 36.
- ECB applies for a federal grant to establish a remote backup file storage and playout system for WPT at our suite at the WHA-TV transmitter building. This would not only provide media backup storage but would also function as an emergency transmission site as contemplated in ECB disaster planning.

February:

- New neighbors move into the Beltline building as the Division of Gaming takes over the first floor.
- ECB staff change our e-mail address to firstname.lastname@ecb.org
- The WPR pledge drive does well and meets its goal of \$775,000 and adding 1,000 new members
- WPT covers the State of the Tribes address to the state legislature on Tuesday February 26.
- WPR opens the doors of its Madison headquarters at Vilas Hall on February 24, and welcomes more than 300 listeners to an open house. Neil Conan, host of NPR's Talk of the Nation, is the special guest.
- WPT's 15th annual Garden Expo is a great success. Despite extremely bad weather, over 16,000 people attended.

March:

- "The ECB Story" is seen for the first time since its premiere in 1973. This half-hour documentary style program details the sign-on of ECB's first TV station in Green Bay and features comments from ECB staff and state officials such as then Wisconsin Governor Patrick Lucey
- WPT Pledge raises about \$720,000 on 4,822 pledges - just below average for the March drive.
- WPT wins 7 awards from the Milwaukee Press Club

- WPT receives several large gifts including \$60,000 from the West Foundation in Manitowoc as a lead gift for Hometown Stories: Manitowoc - Two Rivers. In addition to that, we receive a \$100,000 gift to help build a small town fund for the HTS series and a \$100,000 gift, over four years, for Children's' Outreach.
- IT consolidation continues at the Beltline with the transition of ECB's network drives from Beltline servers to DET.
- "democracy it is!" receives a 2008 Parent's Choice recommendation award.
- Wisconsin Public Television wraps up another successful broadcast season of 34 sporting events.
- WPT and the Educational Communications Board once again partner to sponsor the 14th annual Reading Rainbow Young Writers & Illustrators Contest. This year there were a record number of entries, with 630 children participating.

April:

- WPT and WPR collect 7 awards from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association
- Board of Directors for ECB meets.
- WPT and WPR collaborate for the second year on a broadcast of "Wisconsin Young Artists Compete: The Final Forte" a concert competition produced in partnership with the Madison Symphony Orchestra.
- Production on the new Wisconsin Channel series "Director's Cut" begins this month. This series features interviews with Wisconsin independent filmmakers along with excerpts from their work.
- ECB representation at the April PBS and NAB Engineering Meetings in Las Vegas consists of the Division Administrator, 3 division managers, and 3 engineers. Two ECB engineers receive full scholarships to attend the PBS meetings.
- In conjunction with ECB IT, the Delivery Division establishes an on-line engineering reporting system and station equipment database, now undergoing beta testing. The system allows monthly paper-free reporting for all engineers and will provide an ongoing operational history of systems.
- In anticipation of the new FCC rules on Digital TV, ECB develops an on-line Public File system for all five of our TV stations, which is shared with our partners at WHA-TV.
- ECB Delivery Division works with our partners at the Department of Transportation's Division of State Patrol, to repurpose ECB's under-utilized Chilton site through installation of a new tower and building for DOT. ECB will retain ownership of the site and will occupy space on the new tower and building for existing and future projects.
- Bids are in preparation for the replacement of the WHHI tower in Highland.

- Bids have been let for new transmitters and the extension of HD radio service to WHWC, WHBM, WHHI, WHLA, WHDI, and AM station WLBL.
- The UW Social Science Research Council awards \$92,598 to WPR to produce a series of programs with information on Islam and the Muslim world. The grant provides funds to reach out to local, national and international communities through new media activities such as websites, podcasts, blogs, chats and digital storytelling, as well as a broadcast series on Jean Feraca's "Here on Earth" radio program.
- The rising price of scrap metal spurs thefts throughout Wisconsin, including at some ECB sites.
- Bill Estes, the Regional Manager for WPR in Milwaukee and an ECB employee since 1973, dies unexpectedly.

May:

- Hometown Stories-La Crosse premieres with a public screening at the Rivoli Theater in downtown La Crosse drawing more than 500 people and is broadcast statewide on WPT later in the month. ECB's Education Division works with a group of La Crosse area teachers to develop teacher materials to accompany the program.
- Work is already underway on the next Hometown Stories program – this one will focus on Manitowoc/Two Rivers.
- WPR's short pledge drive nets \$150,000 and 1207 pledges in 3 days.
- The Department of Administration audits ECB's p-cards and travel expense records: We pass with flying colors.
- Wisconsin Public Radio Association meets.
- The bid process is proceeding for small projects at ECB field sites, including air conditioning, roofing, paving projects, and tower painting and maintenance.
- WPT is producing coverage of three Concerts on the Square this summer, thanks in large part to funding received from the John and Carolyn Peterson Charitable Foundation that has provided enough funding for us to produce three concerts for three consecutive years.

June:

- ECB Education Services is invited to present at DPI Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster's weekly Cabinet meeting
- "democracy it is!" receives a Cine golden Eagle award for the "Activism & Social Justice" program.
- "Here and Now" and "In Wisconsin" both produce special coverage of Wisconsin's devastating floods. Governor Jim Doyle is in the WPT studio for an exclusive and extensive interview on Friday June 13, directly after touring some of the hardest hit parts of the state.
- Education Services staff reviews program segments from Wisconsin Public Radio's "To the Best of Our Knowledge" for curriculum relevance. The goal is to make the resources on the web site more accessible to students and educators through database enhancements.

- WPR finishes Fiscal Year 2008 with membership showing a 5% increase over Fiscal Year 2007,
- Space in Federal Plaza in downtown Milwaukee is identified as the next home for WPR's Milwaukee studios. The move of the current studios is planned for late 2008.
- WPR says goodbye to classical music host Vicki Nonn and honors her 37 years of service with a live farewell broadcast on June 25 with co-host Norman Gilliland, followed by a party with many staff and former staff members.

July:

- Board of Directors for ECB meets.
- First meeting of the Advisory Committee for the State, Local and Tribal Government project is held.
- WPT's "Way of the Warrior" wins the 2008 National RTNDA/Unity award.
- A new cleaning crew takes over at the Beltline. Beltline staff stops wearing Hazmat suits.
- Education Services latest production - "World Language Assessment: Get in the Mode!" premieres at a Beltline gala event.
- ECB's Ed Services staff is featured in the Wisconsin Association of School Boards publication.
- "Small" projects currently being worked on in Delivery and Engineering include: Driveway repairs, HVAC repair; tower repairs and painting; Interior/Exterior Building repairs; roofing repairs and satellite dish & conduit repair.
- The Alternate Inspection Programs (operated through the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association) results in all 5 ECB digital Television sites passing - meaning they're exempt from routine FCC inspections for the next 3 years.
- WPR says goodbye to Randall Davidson who moves on to manage WRST-FM at UW-Oshkosh.
- Deb Girard, longtime Audience Services staffer at Vilas and former ECB employee, passes away after a long illness.
- Pat Braley, who retired from ECB Ed Services in 2005, passes away.

August:

- ECB's annual "Parade of Programs" schedule of instructional programming is published. There are fewer paper copies this year as the publication continues its migration to the web.
- The 11th annual Wisconsin PBS Kids Open House is held on Friday, August 1st at Vilas Hall. Nearly 1400 "kids of all ages" attend and learn about extending the educational value of the shows broadcast on PBS Kids.

September:

- ECB tests its phone trees for COOP.
- "democracy it is!" is nominated for a Midwest Emmy - Outstanding Achievement for Children's programming and WPT receives three nominations of its own.
- Malcolm Brett is elected to the PBS Board of Directors
- WPT and PBS move the usual August pledge drive to September to avoid the Olympics. \$297,664 is raised on 2,160 pledges.
- Legislative Audit Bureau staff, based at the Beltline, begin ECB's annual audit.
- Work on the installation of digital transmitters is completed at 6 ECB radio stations - WHWC, WHBM, WHHI, WHLA, WHDI and WLBL.
- Bids were let for replacement of the WHHI tower in Highland in early September, with a scheduled project completion in the spring of 2009. The purchase of an additional ¼ acre of land for the project triggers federally required studies to be reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office and representatives of Native American populations indigenous to the area.
- The State Building Commission approves \$2,230,000 and PTFP awards \$688,000 to purchase and equip a new remote production facility (truck) putting WPT well on the way to providing a true, statewide service of remote, high definition, multi-camera productions.
- WPT's Quilt Expo is held at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. This year's attendance of 14,935 people was more than a 10 percent increase over last year.
- WPR's one-hour documentary, "Bridging the Shores: The Hmong-American Experience" premieres September 12th on both the News & Classical and Ideas Networks.
- "In Wisconsin" and "Here and Now" become full HD productions.
- The Joy Cardin show begins a statewide tour, with live audience programs broadcast from each of the seven WPR regions.
- WPT's 9th annual early childhood conference in the Fox Valley is held in Kimberly.

October:

- Board of Directors for ECB meets.
- Wisconsin Public Television begins full-time HD broadcasting.
- WPR holds its October pledge drive during a week when the stock market experienced its largest weekly drop since the 1930's. The drive makes 95% of its goal.
- Education Division staff members host the ECB exhibit booth and presentations at WEAC convention (Madison) and at the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA) Convention (Wisconsin Dells).
- ECB Delivery Division has let bids for the updating and addition of digital capabilities to our existing satellite uplink facility. When completed in late

2008, this conversion will give ECB the ability to perform state of the art uplinks and downlinks in both digital and analog modes.

- After an extensive national search, WPR welcomes Christina Clarkson as its first Lee Ester Fellow. She recently received her master's degree from Syracuse University and will spend the next nine months in the WPR newsroom improving her reporting, writing and editing skills.
- The Wisconsin Public Radio Association is the recipient of the "Friend and Advocate" UW Colleges and UW Extension Chancellor's award.
- WPT's election coverage this season focuses on both the presidential race and control of the state legislature.
- Two new 30-minute programs about the transition debuted on Oct. 1: WPT's program ("WPT's Guide to Digital TV") features Patty Loew as host; and PBS's show with Norm and Kevin from "This Old House". A phone bank is set up to take questions during the debut broadcasts and over 400 calls are received.

November:

- The 6 WPT-TV Translators throughout the state cease analog broadcasting and are converted to full-time digital operation.
- Legislative Audit Bureau staff finishes the audit that began in September.
- Phil Corriveau undergoes heart surgery; Mike Crane fills in during his absence.
- ECB's Marta Bechtol is elected to the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) Education Council Board
- Production begins on the Personal Financial Literacy Project with taping at Rhinelander High School, LaFollette High School (Madison), Ripon High School, Neenah High School, Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee, Glacier Edge Elementary School, (Verona)
- ECB's Paul Meyer provides CPR and AED training to ECB staff and other agencies in the Beltline building. Marta Bechtol, Chad Reuter, Lucinda Mack and Lin Hanson are certified.
- Education Division staff members host an Exhibit booth and presentation at Wisconsin Association For Language Teachers (WAFLT) Convention (Appleton) and an information table at Student WEA (Wisconsin Education Association) Conference (Green Bay)
- Education Division staff step fill in gaps created by the resignation of the communications specialist and the office operations associate with the hiring freeze in effect. Thanks to everyone for going above and beyond their usual tasks!
- The Wisconsin STEM Portal Development Team forms. This collaboration of individuals from public agencies and private organizations comes together with the goal of developing an online clearinghouse of resources for all STEM-related educational/employment/career activities in Wisconsin. Partners include the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Engineers and Scientists of Milwaukee, The Center on Education and Work – UW Madison, Information Technology Association of Wisconsin

(ITAWi), Wisconsin Technical College System, Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Science Network, and the ECB.

December:

- ECB staff participates in a DOA-led Pandemic Planning Exercise.
- The WPT December pledge holds its own despite the worst economy in decades.
- Work on the conversion of the Beltline satellite uplink from analog to digital is complete.
- Production begins on CPB STEM Community Engagement Project with taping of the First Lego League competition (Madison)
- ECB hosts a meeting of the Governor's Council on Financial Literacy with First Lady of Wisconsin Jessica Doyle. The meeting includes an Introduction and demonstration of the Personal Financial Literacy Project.
- Poster session presentation at Building the Heart of Successful Schools Conference (Wisconsin Dells)
- "Fans of ECB" Facebook page is created
- ECB YouTube Channel is created with 68 (so far) videos posted.
- Fifty-one datacast sites in Wisconsin are now receiving instructional programming. The newest sites include Mauston (due to new digital translator), Kimberly and New Auburn.
- Education Division staff member Kristin Leglar is invited by State Superintendent Burmaster to become a member of the Entrepreneurship Task Force that will be developing the Wisconsin Content Standards for Entrepreneurship.
- The FCC notifies WPR that a Construction Permit has been issued for a new FM station in Ashland.

-2008 ends.

So there it is; 2008 in a nutshell.

And, this report leaves out the 24/7 nature of ECB's work – the programming; operations; and field staff that keep our public broadcasting and public safety systems operating.

There is no doubt that 2009 will be a challenging one on many fronts, but rest assured that at this time next year, you will be looking at an equally impressive list of accomplishments.

Thanks to the board, the staff at ECB, and our partners for their work in making 2008 the success it turned out to be.