

Educational Communications Board Meeting
January 18, 2008
Interim Executive Director Report
Gene Purcell

Since our last meeting in October 2007, a state budget has been adopted for Wisconsin.

As you will recall, there were several versions of the proposed state budget, one of which would have decreased the ECB's state GPR funding for public broadcasting by 50%.

The final budget as adopted by the legislature and signed by the Governor essentially adopted a flat budget for ECB with a "lapse" built in of approximately \$225,000. (A "lapse" in state budget parlance means that an agency's base budget is not reduced, but agencies have to give back a designated amount of GPR each fiscal year.) ECB administration had been anticipating a "lapse" of some kind and had been taking proactive steps to address the lapse. These include delays in filling vacant positions as well as a reduction in expenses for supplies.

However, the state budget also called for the \$225,000 lapse to be in effect for four years (both years of the current biennial budget and the two years of the next biennial budget) which means this will be a continuing challenge for the agency.

ECB's Capital Equipment Budget includes funding approved by the Building Commission at its December meeting for a new tower to replace the current tower at Highland (built in 1953). This is just one of a number of major engineering projects that will be undertaken during 2008 and ECB staff members are currently working on developing a list of priorities for the remaining State Building Commission funding that will be available.

Elsewhere on the agency's financial front you will find a new and improved financial report that will allow you to look back a few years to get a better sense of the agency's financial health. As you'll see, Wisconsin Public Radio and Television are largely on track with meeting their proposed budget goals. However, recent downturns in the economy suggest that the first half of 2008 could be a very challenging fundraising climate for both radio and television.

You will read in the reports that follow of the continuing work of the ECB's various divisions. Whether it's the development of new educational programming for K-12 educators and students, construction of new HD radio stations, working through the final part of the transition to digital television or more internal activities like the consolidation efforts of ECB's IT at the Department of Administration, ECB's work is important and part of our continuing mission to provide high quality public media for Wisconsin.

Education Division Update
Lin Hanson
Director of Education Services

1. Project Updates

- *Democracy it is!* – Program 8 “ Activism and Social Justice” was awarded Ava’s Platinum Award by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals. “These awards recognize outstanding work by creative professionals involved in the concept, writing, direction, shooting and editing of programs. The Platinum Award is presented to entries judged to be among the most outstanding submissions in the competition in terms of quality, creativity and resourcefulness.”
- *Into the Book* web site – The web site that accompanies this reading strategies series for grades 1 through 4 is completed. <http://reading.ecb.org/>
- *World Languages* – This series on assessing world language instruction is on track with production shoots and has visited classrooms in Hartland-Arrowhead, Holmen, Monroe, Oregon, Manitowoc, River Falls, Milwaukee, and De Pere.
- *Personal Financial Literacy* – The first meeting of the Advisory Committee was held in November. The project goal is to provide information and resources for students and teachers on personal financial literacy. Professional development for teachers featuring best practices in teaching personal financial literacy is anticipated to be a major component of this project.
- Datacasts – Datacasts to schools are continuing. The schedule and a list of series available are posted at the datacast web site – www.datacastwisconsin.org. Forty-two school districts currently receive instructional programs through datacasts. Affiliate station WDSE in Duluth/Superior is also datacasting instructional programming thereby making it possible for schools in northwest Wisconsin to receive programming.
- State, Local and Tribal Government – A meeting with the DPI social studies consultant and the American Indian studies consultant was held to discuss developing a series for high school on state, local and tribal government. An advisory committee is being formed for a meeting this spring.
- TeacherLine – ECB continues to partner with PBS to offer TeacherLine professional development courses to Wisconsin teachers.

2. Conferences, Presentations and Workshops

- Education division staff will present workshops this winter at DPI’s New Wisconsin Promise Conference, CESA 5 (Portage), CESA 4 (West Salem), Wisconsin State Reading Association (Milwaukee), Wisconsin School Counselors Association (Stevens Point) and Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association (Milwaukee). Staff will also attend the Wisconsin Association of School Boards Conference (WASB) with a booth in the exhibit hall.
- The education division met for a planning retreat in October to review the strategic direction, and identify goals and tasks for the division for the next 2

years. Major emphasis this year will be on marketing and promotion of ECB's resources and services.

3. Partnership Outreach Activities

- The *Hometown Stories Green Bay* curriculum development team has completed its work and the teacher materials are at the web site http://www.ecb.org/hometown_stories/greenbay/resources.htm .
- The curriculum development team in La Crosse is working on the teacher materials for *Hometown Stories La Crosse*.
- *Wisconsin War Letters* invites students in grades 9 through 12 to interpret primary source narratives from Wisconsin citizen's World War II experiences by creating dramatic readings, video displays and multimedia presentations. This project is coordinated by the ECB, Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Historical Society. www.ecb.org/warletters
- *The War Project* - A special program produced by high school journalists in collaboration with Wisconsin Public Radio and the Educational Communications Board aired on November 11, 2007. These students set out to document true stories from World War II. What they found were tales of bravery, humanity and inspiration. <http://www.ecb.org/warletters/projects.htm#audio>

4. Print and Web Publications

- The *Interconnect* newsletter can be found monthly at ECB's web site – www.ecb.org/Interconnect20. Renamed *Interconnect 2.0*, the monthly newsletter provides schedule information, program updates, and articles of interest to educators.

5. Instructional Programming

- From November through March educators have the opportunity to preview potential new instructional series and provide feedback for future broadcast. <http://www.ecb.org/previews/descriptions.htm> Teachers will also provide input at Teacher Advisory Committee Meetings at the end of February in Ashland, Chippewa Falls, La Crosse, Madison, Milwaukee and Green Bay.

Delivery Division Operational and Project Update

Terry Baun

Director of Engineering and Operations

Division Staffing

No Division staffing changes were made during the quarter. At the Operations Center sector we did transition one LTE position to a FTE 20 hour position in order to reduce overtime costs. There is still one unfilled FTE position in the Operations Center, which at present we have no plans to fill. On the technology services sector of the Division, we are still awaiting approval of our new level of position descriptions which place increased emphasis on both broadcast and IT (computer/data) skills in order to recruit and retain the next generation of ECB technical talent. In the Division administration sector, the required ECB budget lapse will partially be met by continuing to leave unfilled the position of Director of Regulatory and Compliance, with those duties to be shared by the Administrator and the Regional Technical Managers as currently assigned.

Division Meetings

- The Division monthly telephone conference call with all Regional Technical Managers continued throughout the past quarter. A full Division meeting is scheduled for February 20/21 in Wausau.
- Discussions are currently under way to determine the extent of ECB representation at the annual NAB Convention/Engineering Conference to be held in Las Vegas April 11-17th. The annual national meeting for both Public Radio and Television engineers is held in conjunction with this convention.

Operational Items

- Our Division study committee on our Newpoint TCAS remote control and monitoring system has initiated a series of conference calls with technical and management representatives at Newpoint. While we are encouraged that this vendor is now actively communicating with us, significant concerns continue about the willingness of Newpoint to resolve outstanding issues with the speed we require. We continue to examine alternative hardware platforms within and without the TCAS system, as well as ultimately, their compliance with the bid specifications for this project.
- Failure of the transmission line at our Highland FM station WHHI resulted in significant signal impairments in the southwest Wisconsin region during the period of Nov. 6 through Dec. 14th. A cracked flange in the transmission line near the antenna allowed ingress of water and migration of moisture throughout the transmission line. About 85% of the 400 feet of line had to be removed in 20' sections, cleaned, and refitted. Inclement weather during much of this period exacerbated the problem. While operation with an emergency antenna at lower power continued during most of this period, the coverage of WHHI was significantly reduced until repairs were completed.

- ECB has joined our partners at Wisconsin Public Radio in selecting Doug Vernier Telecommunications Consultants to work with us during the current FM filing window and upcoming DTV transition.

Project Updates

- As previously reported, ECB and UW-Extension jointly prepared applications for eight new FM stations to improve the reach of WPR throughout the state. We currently are evaluating the status of those applications and are working with our telecommunications consultants as well as other applicants to maximize the possibility of the selection of those ECB and UW-Extension applications for licensing.
- Bids are being let this month for the upgrade of the following stations to HD radio operation: WHWC, WHBM, WHHI, WHLA, WHDI, and AM station WLBL. These projects should be completed by September of 2008.
- Bids are in preparation for the replacement of the WHHI tower in Highland, with a scheduled completion by the end of 2008.
- 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. These projects will not be completed until the digital transition in February of 2009.
- 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.
- ECB has applied 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 response/continuation of operation planning.

Wisconsin Public Television

James Steinbach

Director of Television

Hometown Stories:

HTS-Green Bay: Premiere events, screenings and broadcast in November were a great success. A great deal of positive feedback from the Green Bay community and statewide. Associated curriculum materials have been completed by WPT, ECB and local educators and will be distributed, along with DVD copies of the program, to schools in the Green Bay area. We are also producing a follow up program about the passion for history in Green Bay coming in 2008.

The project received good coverage through paid and earned media that focused on the Green Bay area and included other WPT markets as well. The Web site at

wisconsinstories.org includes streaming media, transcripts, resources, teacher resources, and the series of articles that ran in the Green Bay Press-Gazette.

HTS-LaCrosse is in edit and the curriculum materials are in development by local educators and the ECB. Broadcast is planned for May.

Looking towards Manitowoc, Racine and the Ashland/Bayfield areas for upcoming HTS episodes.

Way of the Warrior:

Broadcast as part of the PBS National Program Service in November. Patty Loew was also invited to screen the documentary at the festival that occurs in conjunction with the National Congress of American Indians in November, an event attended by nearly every tribal leader in the country. Copies have also been requested by festivals around the world including the Wairoa Maori Film Festival in New Zealand, the Saami Film Festival in Finland and the Winnipeg Aboriginal Film Festival.

Strong local media attention from on WPR, the Wisconsin State Journal, Green Bay Press-Gazette, the magazine of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters and other outlets.

The Wisconsin Channel:

Productions are continuing for the premiere of the channel January 14. Included will be the ***30-Minute Music Hour***, a new music program produced and hosted by Andy Moore. Musicians will perform and talk about their art. The first three programs will feature Pat MacDonald (Sturgeon Bay based), Willy Porter (Milwaukee based) and Robbie Fulks (Chicago based and frequent performer at WI venues). The shows will be streamed live and will be recorded for broadcast in high definition. In addition, lectures and other presentations will be broadcast daily as part of "University Place".

Broadcast Events:

We will broadcast the governor's ***State of the State*** in January, and also the ***Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration*** at the capitol. MLK Day coverage will be broadcast live on the Wisconsin Channel in its entirety. It will also be streamed live. Then an hour-long edited program will broadcast that evening on WPT.

Sports:

As of December 21, we have completed production and broadcast of 18 UW sports events this season including Badger Men's and Women's Hockey, Women's Basketball and Volleyball. That puts us past the halfway point. We're scheduled to cover a total of 34 events this season plus whatever playoff opportunities arise.

Education:

Production is underway for the 7 part World Languages teacher development series. Delivery is August 1, 2008.

High Definition

Sewing with Nancy and *The Wisconsin Gardener* are both making the switch to full high definition production in January.

Holiday Programming

During the 2007/2008 holiday season, we aired 30 programs for various holidays including Christmas, New Year's and Kwanzaa. Those programs were very varied including children's and family programming (*Arthur's Perfect Christmas*, *The Snow Queen*, *Thomas and Friends: Wintertales*); music programs (*Three Tenors Christmas*, *Pops Holiday Party*, *Great Performances "From Vienna: The New Year's Celebration 2008"*); nature programs (*Nature "Christmas in Yellowstone"*) and programs of local interest (*Once Upon a Christmas Cheery in the Lab of Shakhashiri*; *Celtic Christmas Sojourn*).

In addition to a second play of the PBS Kids block, we provided family appropriate programming for the holidays. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day the daytime schedule were stunts of children's and family programming which had some holiday themes. On New Year's Eve we continued our tradition of a day of Wisconsin programming near the beginning of the year, this year it is also a preview of some of the shows people will find on the Wisconsin Channel. New Years Day brought the new Great Performance "*Live from Vienna*" and *Great Performances at the Met "The Magic Flute"*

Outreach

Reel to Real (R2R): Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) have teamed up to create the Reel to Real project, providing tools and education for public libraries and their community partners to host local screenings of WPT programs, followed by outreach events. By bridging the gap between viewing a film and creating community dialogue and action, R2R is designed to meet the individual and community at its core, with powerful effects on issue discussion, community participation and station/library involvement. The project began in March 2007 with a web-based training for 8 libraries in the South Central Library System, followed by a training for 30 librarians at the October 2007 annual WLA State Conference. To date, 17 library events have been held, including 13 for Ken Burns' *The War*, and several screenings as a part of WPT's Community Forums on Race.

Community Listening Sessions:

WPT and WPR hosted a community listening session in Marshfield on 11/14 and Waukesha on 11/28 to gain a sense of what issues are of importance to communities throughout the state. Concerns raised by attendees at both events included Wisconsin's political climate, especially as played out in recent budget deliberations. Participants spoke about a "deep political divide" they sensed within the Wisconsin electorate. Also there were concerns regarding the "Sandwich Generation," individuals caring for both their children and parents. Both sessions discussed how effective resources need to be available for individuals who find themselves in this situation.

Development

December Pledge drive: the 2nd biggest in our history -- \$526,000 statewide (about 5% less than last years, the biggest December ever).

Final Forte: We have reached our fundraising goal for the Final Forte -- especially key has been the work of board of Friends of WHA-TV in contributing and soliciting those gifts. Broadcast in early April.

Hometown Stories: We've received a \$100,000 anonymous gift to support continuation of Hometown Stories into smaller communities (an important part of Wisconsin's story but not always having the capacity to support these projects).

Garden Expo coming Feb 11-13th. Program sponsorship up \$10K and vendor sales up about the same. Sponsors are doubled to four: Blain's Farm & Fleet, Green Power Tomorrow from Madison Gas and Electric, Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association, and Zimbrick Volkswagen. The vendor area of the September '08 Quilt Expo is also sold out as of December.

Wisconsin Public Radio

**Phil Corriveau
Director of Radio**

Mike Crane Named Associate Director/Chief Operating Officer at WPR

Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) has named Michael Crane of Orlando, Florida, the new Associate Director and Chief Operating Officer. His appointment began January 1, 2008, and he replaced Anders Yocom who retired at the end of 2007. His appointment follows an extensive 9-month search process that was interrupted by a UW Extension hiring moratorium last fall, pending passage of the state budget.

As Associate Director, Mike is the WPR operating head and second-in-command, leading the 45-member programming staff of WPR's statewide networks and its national programming service. He is responsible for the overall sound of Wisconsin Public Radio.

Mike has 24 years of public broadcasting management experience. He most recently served as Vice President for Programming at WMFE-TV and Radio in Orlando, Florida. Earlier in his career, he was Manager of WSKG-FM in Binghamton, NY, Associate Station Manager at WUSF-TV and Radio in Tampa, Florida, and Director of Broadcasting and New Media at Vermont Public Radio, a state network. He also has experience as a classical music announcer and "Morning Edition" host.

Sheryl Gasser Named Director of Talk Programming at WPR

In filling another key position, WPR has named Sheryl Gasser of Madison, Wisconsin, as Director of Talk Programming.

Sheryl will be responsible for the selection, scheduling, and production of WPR's statewide talk programs. She will supervise five on-air hosts, 12 talk producers, and a number of board operators, and will be responsible for the editorial content and quality control of all WPR call-in programs. She replaces Joy Cardin, who has been serving as both morning talk-show host and talk director. Cardin will now focus exclusively on her morning hosting duties.

WPR Position Vacancies

As of January 6, 2008, WPR had ten full or half time vacancies for which we are currently recruiting.

- La Crosse Reporter (Sandra Harris replacement)
- Afternoon Talk Producer (Madison or Milwaukee – replaces Peter Donalds)
- Morning Edition producer (new)
- Cardin producer/director (new)
- Three half-time on-air producers (Two Milwaukee, one Madison – Replaces Rita Thomas)
- Audience Services manager (Bonniejean Zitske replacement)
- Superior half-time reporter
- Half-time LTE New Media position

Most of the vacancies are to replace staff members who have left, but the Morning Edition producer and Joy Cardin Show producer/director are new positions designed to strengthen and build audience for our morning drive programs. The half-time position in New Media reflects our growth in internet activities, which we see continuing into the future.

Successful Fall Pledge Drive

WPR had a very successful pledge drive on November 11 – 22... We very nearly cracked the \$1 million mark when all was said and done, with a final tally of \$996,546. Of the 7,100 pledges made, 2,068 (29%) came from new members. That is the second highest percentage of new members in recent pledge drives, with the highest being May 2006 when we focused almost exclusively on new members. Another great aspect of the drive is that 19% of the pledges came in via the web...almost double previous years. Finally, I was pleased to see \$8,000 come in for the HD Classical service, much of it from Milwaukee. So overall, I think this qualifies as the best pledge drive ever for WPR.

The War Project

The Ideas Network of Wisconsin Public Radio featured the work of four up-and-coming high school journalists when it presented *The War Project*, which aired on Veteran's Day, November 11 at 2 p.m.

The project first took shape in April of last year, when Wisconsin Public Radio's Joe Hardtke and the Educational Communications Board's Marta Bechtol collaborated

and issued a statewide call to high school speech, theater and media departments. We were hoping to produce a special program coinciding with director Ken Burns' highly anticipated World War II documentary *The War*, and we were looking for promising young journalists to interview people personally affected by that conflict with the goal of presenting their work in multiple media formats.

After a month-long search, four high school students were chosen and in June they began meeting in weekly sessions with WPR producer and technical director Joe Hardtke. With his guidance, the students sought out guests from around the country, documenting stories from the front lines and at home. Among the stories shared are a fighter pilot's view over the battlefields on D-Day, a Jewish family's dangerous escape from a Nazi death camp, a Japanese-American's look back at his own internment and a conscientious objector's struggle to follow his heart.

The students were in charge of their own work throughout the show's production. They booked the guests, operated the equipment, conducted the interviews, edited the material, and wrote their own scripts. The four student producers did an amazing job of producing an engaging and sound-rich hour long documentary, which also garnered a good deal of press statewide.

Milwaukee Center Lease

The lease between ECB and The Milwaukee Center, where the WPR Milwaukee Bureau is housed, expires on November 30, 2008, and we are searching for alternative space for the bureau. Lease rates have skyrocketed in recent years, and we are now paying almost \$100,000 per year for the space. We are looking for comparable space in the downtown area if possible at a lower price; we may need to go farther out to find an acceptable lease rate, because the rate will need to be reduced by approximately 50%.

New Station Applications

WPR submitted applications to the FCC for eight new non-commercial FM stations during the FCC filing window between October 12 – 19, 2007. They would be full-power FM stations located in Ashland, Rice Lake, Webster, Port Washington/Milwaukee, Adams, Niagara/Iron Mountain, Park Falls, and Rhinelander. As expected, more than 3,000 other organizations nationwide have applied for similar or conflicting stations during the October filing window; 80 of them in Wisconsin. We will need to work our way through the FCC's competitive process to see how many of our applications will ultimately be granted, but we are pretty sure that Ashland and Adams will win outright. The others will face a long process at the FCC, perhaps years before the construction permits are finally awarded.

HD Radio Conversions Hit Snag

ECB Engineering is working hard on our next HD Radio upgrades but the State Department of Administration has delayed the bidding process. This delay was caused in part by serious problems with several of the HD Transmitters purchased during the last round of construction, and we're hoping to avoid those problems with Phase 2 of the construction process. That process is once again underway, and we expect bids on the 5

FM stations in the list to be returned later this spring. We have already received a bid award for WLBL-AM and expect equipment to arrive shortly with installation to begin later in the spring. ECB was forced to request an extension of the CPB grant deadline to November 2008. Six stations have been fully funded through a combination of state and federal grants:

- 1) WLBL-AM Auburndale
- 2) WHWC –FM Menomonie
- 3) WHBM-FM Park Falls
- 4) WHLA-FM La Crosse
- 5) WHHI-FM Highland
- 6) WHDI-FM Sister Bay

On a related HD matter, Volvo has announced that it will offer HD Radio receivers standard throughout most of its product line in 2008. Ford, BMW, Hyundai, and Jaguar are already offering HD Radios in new cars.