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For Immediate Release: Strategic Media for Local Arts Agencies

by Jennifer Neiman, Communications Coordinator, National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies

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When it comes to media coverage, many local arts agencies are so busy being *reactive*, there is often little time to be *proactive*. These days public outcry and funding crises often eclipse the stories that can arouse favorable public opinion about the arts in your community. Due to time constraints, we hope that by mailing press releases and holding news conferences, we will rally public support on the issues. In fact, good, steady, consistent media coverage depends on more than just publicity. When done right, even agencies with only a handful of staff will see results. By learning to build relationships with local reporters, create strategies for press placement, fine tune your message and pitch art stories to “non-traditional” newspaper sections such as business or health, local arts organizations can not only heighten visibility for their agencies and the arts and bolster membership efforts, but also begin to shape public opinion through the media.

This *Monographs* can help you think about new ways to make media work for you. Following an overview of what makes news, this issue will explore how to disseminate that news and suggest new ways of thinking strategically about press coverage. Three examples of local arts agency media efforts give some insight on how agencies like yours are working to address a community’s specific needs.

What’s News?

One of the most important things to understand is the difference between hard news and soft news, or features. Hard news has time value; if not covered *now* it will be stale. Events, poll results, legislative actions and grant awards are all examples of hard news. News can also be soft: not-necessarily-time-sensitive features that can run today, tomorrow or next week. Soft news usually requires more background information, and can take the form of a human interest story or a research piece. Features like these are probably the most popular type of coverage local arts agencies receive, and can be a perfect forum for articulating current issues and concerns either specific to your community or illustrative of a national trend.

Even if something is news, however, it may not be newsworthy. How does what is happening affect the community? Perhaps *who* is involved is significant, or *what*. It is important to give this some thought before you issue a press release. Media people expect you to be specific and relevant. They want facts and focus.

Compiling Your Press List

In preparing your mailing list of news media, first identify those you want to reach. Ask yourself:

- What geographic area do I want to cover?
- Who is my audience? Where are the potential members and letter writers, legislators, public officials and voters I want to inform and influence?
- Which news media will reach this market? Newspapers? Magazines? Radio and television outlets? All of the above?



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The National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies represents the nation's 3,800 local arts agencies in developing an essential place for the arts in America's communities. It helps member agencies with leadership and professional development, research, information and publications, public policy development and public awareness.

The best way to begin compiling your press list is to keep a file of those reporters, editors and other news people who have shown an interest in your organization or field — and whose readers, listeners and viewers you want to reach and motivate. Next, list all the outlets in the region you want to target, and know the names of those who cover not just the arts, but also community development issues, education, business, politics, etc. They are all potential messengers. A media directory will serve you well in this process. It lists news organizations, contacts, phone and fax numbers, circulation figures and more, and is available in most bookstores and libraries (see **Resources** on page 11).

Your list will evolve over time. Keep a file of news and magazine stories, editorials and columns by writers who show an interest in your field, and add them to your list. But remember, this is a broad-based collection of potential press. You should tailor your list regularly, depending on the news itself. Magazines are less likely to pick up hard news, for example, since their deadlines are sometimes months in advance of publication. Radio will not be as interested in covering some aspects of theater as, say, a television station may be. The better you are at targeting your pitch, the more likely you are to get results.

Getting Acquainted

Ideally, a local arts agency's relationship with the news media should be symbiotic — mutually dependent and mutually beneficial. They are looking for news, you are looking for a way to be part of that news. If you can give them something interesting to convey to their audience, you both win.

Do not forget, however, that regardless of how responsive reporters may be to your story ideas, it is not their job to be an agent for your message. Often a reporter picks up on an angle you may prefer he or she left alone; or a story in its final form may not quite reflect what you thought it would based on the material you provided. For this reason, it is best to use caution: media coverage is not always 100 percent positive.

Understanding Media

We have traditionally relied on the morning newspaper for information on community and local events. One of the most dramatic shifts in the past decade has been the public's increasing reliance on the electronic media as the primary news source. But even within the three standard categories of "the media" — print, radio and television — press strategies must take into account the diverse ways in which different media organizations formulate news stories. Be prepared to capitalize on the opportunities offered by these differences. For example:

- Television stations have local news programs, editorial opinions and "talk back" opportunities, public affairs programs, one-on-one interview shows and public affairs "specials";
- Community cable stations can offer local news programming, community access channels and public affairs programming;
- Public television stations provide local news programming as well as a diverse mix of locally produced public affairs programming;
- Radio formats include all-news stations, radio talk shows, public affairs programming and editorial comment; and
- Newspapers have numerous "beat" reporters covering specialized issues for the main news section, editorial page editors, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, the business section, consumer reporters and style sections offering soft news.

Tools of the Trade

Developing a media strategy takes patience, creativity and experience. Executing a media strategy, however, takes technical tips and tactics. Following are the building blocks in your overall success.

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The Press Release

Press releases are the standard vehicle for expressing the who, what, where, when and why of your story. Write them well, and your agency will get the attention it deserves. If poorly written, with flowery leads instead of important information, misspellings and inaccurate or vague data, they'll probably end up in a file somewhere instead of in the paper. It's amazing how many bad releases filter through a newsroom each day. By keeping yours clean (without typos and run-on sentences) and clear (free from personal opinion and frivolous wording), you are already one step ahead of the editor looking to sort the good releases from the bad.

If your release is straightforward, it may be printed word for word by a small or understaffed newspaper. More often, however, it is used as a starting point for a broader story. Either way, here are some suggestions for making yours a keeper:

- Keep it short, punchy and to the point. Limit it to one page, front and back. Double space (for readability).
- Engage your reader with a strong headline and catchy lead paragraph. Use action verbs.
- Think "inverted pyramid": most important details near the top, less important in the paragraphs to follow.
- Assume your reader knows little, if anything at all, about your organization and cause. Be thorough.
- Go easy on quotes. It is not a bad idea to use them — in fact, it often brings a sense of legitimacy to a release if done right. This means making sure it sounds like something a real person would say (check yourself by saying it out loud before sending it out!).
- Favor short sentences over long ones. Don't try to be all-inclusive or you will lose your intent.
- If possible, tie your release to a larger issue. For example, a piece announcing your local arts agency's partnership with the convention and visitors bureau could reference statistics in support of cultural tourism's increasing role in the travel and tourism industry.
- Give the editor a timeframe. By writing "For Immediate Release" on top, you are saying the information is relevant *now*. If it is embargoed information, a grant award or poll results, for example, put "Embargoed Until [date]" and get the release out a day or two beforehand. (Try not to send an embargoed release too far in advance.)
- Include a boilerplate at the end to identify your organization, just a brief sentence or two explaining who you are and what you do.
- Proofread!

Issue press releases only when you have critical news. Your releases will lose impact if you send them out too often. Besides, press releases are not always the way to go. They work best for real news and announcements about upcoming events; but if you have some useful information to share that is more background than news, pick up the phone and call your media contacts, instead.

The Press Conference

A press conference is appropriate if you have a "hot" news item, or must respond quickly to a fast-breaking news story. Call a news conference if you are releasing a major report, if a national news maker or celebrity comes to town, or if you are truly making a major announcement. Sometimes your subject demands a question-and-answer format, but if it doesn't, a press release will do just fine.

Depending on the complexity of your press event and the length of time you have to plan it, written notification to the media can take a variety of forms. A press advisory listing the who, what, when and where should be mailed or, even better, faxed to your key press lists about five working days prior to the event. A press release giving full details of the press conference, findings of reports to be released and

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quotes from spokespersons can be mailed as a further reminder to the press and as written copy for those reporters not attending the event. This should go out around two days before the press conference.

Also a few days prior to the press conference, plan to call all potential news outlets that might cover your event, explaining that you are following up on the earlier materials. Offer to fax the information again as a final precaution. Daybooks, or calendar listings of press events, and newswires are an additional source for getting the word out. Most large cities have an Associated Press (AP) or United Press International (UPI) daybook run by editors in each media region, or market. Mail, phone or fax your information at least 48 hours in advance of your event. Then, call the day before to double-check that the editors used your entry, which should have consisted only of one sentence describing the event and a contact name and phone number.

Press kits are almost always given out at a press event or news conference, and include material packaged to meet the message. Your press kit should also be sent to those reporters who may not be able to attend. What goes in the press kit? Whatever it takes to make the case for the news hook and message with clarity and ease. This usually means fact sheets, news releases, excerpts from publications or other news clips supporting your message, biographies of key spokespeople, photos or other artwork, etc.

An alternative to the press conference is a “media availability,” a specified period of time when spokespersons are put on alert to talk with the media. This way, if several reporters show up, then a news conference is held. If one or two arrive, then individual interviews are arranged. And if no one shows up, spokespeople go about business as usual. Reporters appreciate the courtesy of making individuals available for a certain period of time, and you are freed of potential embarrassment should a breaking story draw attention to another part of town.

Editorials

An important part of your agency’s efforts to win support for the arts in your community will be gathering editorial support from the local media. Newspapers are under no legal obligation to take a position on any particular issue or to present contrasting viewpoints, so you must take the initiative to develop good working relationships with those responsible for developing editorial positions including editors, publishers, managing editors and beat reporters.

The positions on issues that a small newspaper takes are decided by the publisher or managing editor. Editorial positions in larger newspapers are decided by a group from the editorial staff: the editorial board, comprising the publisher, editor-in-chief, managing editor, editorial page editor and editorial writers. Arrange for editorial board meetings whenever an issue important to you and your agency is being debated, such as arts funding, city/county budget cuts, school curriculum development, etc.

If you have never coordinated an editorial board meeting, call one of the contacts listed above, describe your organization and indicate that you would like to arrange a meeting to discuss why it is important for the newspaper to take an editorial position on this issue. If the newspaper does not have a formal editorial board, suggest an informal meeting with the publisher or editor over coffee or lunch. Ideally, you should limit the number of people you bring to an editorial board meeting to two or three. Be prepared to stress from a local perspective why your issue deserves their support using facts, anecdotes, and other details.

If the paper runs a favorable editorial, make copies and distribute to your local elected and appointed officials, Congresspeople, funders and others who may have a vested interest in the arts and your

agency. If the newspaper decides not to take a position or to oppose your position, ask the newspaper to print an opinion-editorial, or op-ed, stating your position.

Op-Eds/Letters to the Editor

The advantage of doing your own commentary is that you can make your points exactly as you want. The disadvantage is that you may spend a lot of time creating a piece that may not make it into print. Before you sit down to create an op-ed, be sure you have a market for it. Feel free to call the paper and present your idea briefly to the editorial page editor, who should give you a good sense of whether it is something the paper is interested in. The editor may even suggest a tangential direction for you to pursue, instead. Op-eds should raise general awareness of an issue while educating policy-makers and positioning your agency as a resource for the media and the public.

When writing an op-ed, it is important to underscore your broader message with examples and statistics of local significance. Some general guidelines and tips:

- **Be clear and concise.** Your op-ed should only be about 500-800 words, including a suggested headline and byline, as well as a very short (one sentence) biographical statement about the author.
- **Remember the reader.** Keep your statements short and punchy. Don't get carried away with jargon or assume your reader knows as much as you do about the subject.
- **Be creative!** Take a fresh approach. Find a way to engage your reader start to finish.
- **Know your timeline.** Newspapers take up to two weeks sometimes to publish an op-ed. Be patient, but keep in touch to find out the status of the piece once you have submitted it.

Another way to make yourself heard through the newspaper is with a letter to the editor. Letters are usually in response to a local issue of importance or a recent article or editorial. Publications are open to critical letters, as long as they are composed in a constructive manner and raise valid issues. Include in the letter your name, address and phone number. Never send an anonymous letter, as the majority of newspapers refuse to publish letters without signatures.

Radio and Television

Much of what has been said about approaching the print media applies equally to radio and television, except that you need to give even greater emphasis to the visual or audio possibilities of your story. Also, remember that on television or radio, there is much less time to get into the details of a story; the average piece is between 30 and 90 seconds.

Get to know the appropriate correspondents, program directors and producers on your nearest public radio and public television stations, since these are often the people most inclined to publicize a non-profit cause in a sympathetic way. Listen to, and watch carefully, what they produce. Then consider how you can mesh your interests with theirs. Think of how you can help them by providing interesting news and feature coverage for their audiences. A radio talk show is one of the easiest and most effective ways to get your word out. The electronic equivalent to the letter to the editor page, its format has the benefit of dialogue during which you can develop your case more fully. And local radio stations reach listeners at home, at work and in transit.

Radio news actualities, which are audio press releases, are excellent tools for local arts agencies because of their relatively low cost and quick turnaround time. Usually no more than a minute long, the radio news actuality typically features a short news bite on an issue, a quote about the news event, and where to go for more information, usually in the form of a phone number. At the cost of \$300 - \$400, radio news actualities can be distributed and used by up to half of all radio stations in a particular state with

On and Off The Record

When talking to members of the media, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the fear that you will be quoted on every word. There are at least three ways of dealing with reporters: on the record, off the record and on background.

- **On the record** interviews should only be conducted by official spokespersons. Reporters will assume that everything said to them is on the record and for quotation, unless otherwise stated at the start of an interview.
- **Background** interviews are discussions with reporters with a prior understanding that the information can be freely used in a story, but without direct quotes. Many agencies instruct all staff except for the executive director to speak strictly on background, reserving the head of the organization as the only official spokesperson. Staff can open discussions with reporters by saying, "I'd be happy to speak with you on background. Most of what I say is exactly what our director says, so to save time I can give you history and context for publication, but not for attribution. You can get direct quotes from our director later." This needs to be made clear prior to the interview, not after.
- **Off the record** is another matter. It is your way of saying that you do not want what you say to be used as quotes, attribution, or even in the article. Such a discussion may be useful in situations where you may need to share information with a reporter, but you do not want your organization quoted or identified as a source. Again, establish rules for the interview at the start. But be careful: if you go off the record too often, you'll try your reporter's patience and, over time, risk losing credibility. Save it for when you really need it.

ment editors on Friday (television stations operate using different "crews," so if you pitch your weekend story to someone on a weekday, they won't be the one to see it through).

- Do not send full press kits to assignment editors. There is no room for excess paper in their annual day files where they keep media memos.
- In your release, if a word or name is tricky to pronounce, insert in parentheses the pronunciation in phonetics after the word.
- Provide background videotape whenever possible, particularly to smaller stations. Whether they use it or not, it may influence the way the station shoots its own story. (Be sure to include only a brief clip, however. And don't expect the tape back!)

one or two day's advance work. (For more on radio, see *Arts on the Airwaves*, page 10.)

Television talk shows are ideal for exploring issues and building awareness of your organization. Appearing on a show is an easy, free and fast way to raise your issue's visibility or get your message across but, because you do not have control of the show, you must be selective about the show you appear on and your spokesperson must be prepared. News-oriented talk shows, ranging from broadcast of local roundtable discussions to network programs, are most receptive to addressing issues, such as the arts. Although the audience is more limited, local television affords easier access and can be invaluable in providing exposure for your issue. Most television and cable stations publish a list of producers and will provide your agency with a copy. You should contact the producer, the host, and the researcher of the program you are interested in; send a letter, along with a press release or press kit, and follow up with a phone call.

When working with local television, here are some tips:

- Organize a list of experts from within your organization or the field, and offer a source list to the assignment editor. (You may want to have a list like this on hand, anyway.)
- Work with specialty reporters, those who consistently cover arts-related or community development stories, as they can help you "sell" the story.
- Send weekend stories to weekend assign-

Picking Spokespeople (And When Media Pick You!)

Common guidelines for a spokesperson apply to print and broadcast media alike. Be sure that you, or the designated spokesperson for your agency, are comfortable talking with the press. Remember that the spokesperson is not seen as an individual, rather as a representative of an organization, an issue, a field. When pitching a story, it is important that the spokesperson be prepared with talking points, including an overall message and specific facts and figures.

Being prepared is important even when it is not you pitching the story. You may get calls asking for a response to a recent piece of local legislation, or an issue that involves your organization. Try to be ready with a standard message that can be applied to most any circumstance; you will feel more secure and less scattered when you are caught off guard. And if you are caught by surprise, you can go back to your message, and take advantage of the questions asked of you as times to get your points across.

More tips:

- Never say “no comment.” If you cannot answer a question, tell the reporter why.
- Going “off the record” is not a guarantee that you are; while reporters generally respect your wishes, juicy details will tempt even the most loyal, and there are no promises what you say won’t end up in newsprint.
- Try to leave no more than two or three main points with the reporter. Seek every opportunity to reinforce your message.

Media Relations: Three Examples

■ Creating a Consistent Message: A Case Study

by Susan K. Pettit, Fulton County Arts Council

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Effective media and visibility depends on a strong message. Before you begin your publicity efforts, think about how you and the other members of the local cultural community come across, both individually and collectively. A unified voice that cuts across disciplines and constituencies is more likely to be heard by members of the media, who sometimes fault arts organizations as a whole for being “flakey” or “disorganized.”

People seem to always ask you the hardest questions when you have the least time. Have you even been in an elevator, struck up a conversation about the arts and been asked why the arts are so important? Before you reached the next floor, did you fumble over an answer, or were you able to clearly communicate the role of the arts in your community? We all should be prepared with a standard sound bite or “elevator talk” at the tip of our tongues. It was for this reason that the Fulton County Arts Council initiated the development of a unified message about the importance of the arts to our community.

Late last year, the Arts Council held a think-tank meeting with arts organizations and community leaders to identify key challenges facing the arts over the next year. Participants stated that they had difficulty effectively explaining to the general public why the arts are important, and were frustrated over different and conflicting messages being communicated by arts, business and community leaders.

In response, the Arts Council convened the executive directors of more than 140 arts organizations in Fulton County in what was to be a series of meetings on message development. A public relations

consultant active in the arts agreed to facilitate these meetings with the many stakeholders in the community who would be charged with utilizing the message once it was developed.

First, the idea of creating message points was presented by the Atlanta Arts Network, a coalition of public relations and marketing staff of arts organizations. More than 30 representatives, over 20 percent of those invited, attended the first meeting and distilled a list of 10 messages that captured the role and importance of the arts in Fulton County. As the group brainstormed, several themes emerged: the importance of the arts to economic and community development, lifelong learning and quality of life.

Next, the Arts Council formed a task force of media professionals including journalists for print and radio, the vice president of the local paper, and representatives from small and large arts organizations, to further refine the messages. The task force also identified creative opportunities for the arts community to utilize the messages and interface with the media to increase community understanding.

Finally, the task force recommendations were presented back to the Atlanta Arts Network for feedback, approval of messages and next steps. Feedback was positive, but some had reservations about launching a long-term initiative with their already stretched and overworked staff. So instead, the group brainstormed 20 ways to use the unified messages immediately by incorporating them into existing outreach, public relations and media efforts, all with minimal or no cost.

Over 60 arts organizations participated in the development of the unified messaging project. There has been a general wall of resistance to thinking differently and to thinking collectively. However, arts organizations appreciated the Arts Council's grassroots approach to message development in a way that was relevant to the community as opposed to other media campaigns that are not necessarily community-specific. The project is still in the implementation stage. As it develops over the next year, the true test of success will be increased visibility of the role of the arts in Fulton County and heightened public understanding of how the arts interface with and impact our community.

■ Launching a Public Service Campaign in the Media

by Greg Charleston, Arts Council of Indianapolis

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One road to publicity is paved with public service announcements. In addition to raising broad awareness of an issue, a public service campaign lets you turn what could easily be a paid ad into editorial.

"If you think of Indianapolis as strictly checkered flags, you're missing the rest of the colorful picture" Thus begins the message of a public service promotion campaign launched by the Arts Council of Indianapolis. Called "The Arts: Indy's Rhythm and Hues," the campaign used radio, television and print announcements to increase awareness of the arts in Indianapolis.

Using the media to launch a public service campaign can be a critical component in establishing an identity for the arts agency; building an image for the arts community; helping increase visibility for artists and arts organizations; and building new audiences for the arts. Working with the local media and other existing organizations and outlets — such as the city and state tourism departments and their publications, city visitor guides, and arts organization program booklets — can help increase the visibility a campaign has on a limited budget.

The Arts Council of Indianapolis launched its promotional public service campaign early last year, and began by looking at what the campaign could and could not accomplish and determining the target audience. Because there are over 150 arts organizations in this community, we believed a public service campaign could not be about promoting individual arts events, but should focus on building a positive image and increasing the visibility for the arts. The Arts Council also decided that it needed to use what the community was known for — in our case, a primarily sports image — rather than resist that image, as we often do.

“The Arts: Indy’s Rhythm and Hues” ads partnered the arts with familiar Indianapolis and Midwest images, including the Indianapolis Colts football team, Indiana Pacers basketball team, the Indianapolis 500-mile race, and agriculture and farming. For example, one of the ads had Indiana Pacer forward Sam Mitchell lacing up a pair of ballet shoes. The tag line read, “Ever wonder where the Pacers get all their fancy footwork?” The ads used humor and played off established stereotypes to reach a very broad, mostly non-arts audience.

The Arts Council worked with the media to first generate publicity. Media kits were distributed and many of these outlets ran features and editorials about the campaign. Local newspapers, radio and television stations also aired the ads as public service announcements. Media relations contacts paid off in helping to secure air time and space.

Television, radio and print ads were then placed around the state and regionally through selected media buys in 27 cities and 61 rural communities, and appeared within a 200-mile radius of the city. We placed ads in statewide radio markets in smaller communities, and through cable television distributors, including spots on CNN, The Discovery Channel, BRAVO, Arts & Entertainment (A&E), Lifetime, and VH-1. All of those proved less expensive than major commercial markets and helped stretch a limited budget.

A 1-800 number incorporated into the ads provided hands-on information for respondents, including a comprehensive city-wide directory of arts organizations, a map of Indianapolis’ cultural facilities, and a promotional information piece on available arts opportunities. The ads and other marketing efforts generated from 50 to 100 calls per week requesting arts information, season schedules and maps. During this time, the Indianapolis Visitor’s Center also reported that they received approximately 200 to 300 calls per week requesting information specific to or inclusive of the arts. The Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association receives more than 108,000 calls per year. Calls concerning specific arts attractions and events generated 18,000 of those calls, or 17 percent of all calls to the city.

The Arts Council promoted the campaign in cooperation with the State Department of Tourism as well. Arts information on Indianapolis was distributed extensively through tourism publications, reaching 2.5 million people in five states through their guides, publications and newspaper advertisements. The ads produced more than 6,500 requests for arts information which were followed up by the Arts Council with maps, directories, schedules and other material on the arts in Indianapolis.

Building media relationships was critical in generating support for the campaign. Contacts with publishers, station managers, public affairs programmers, editors, even reporters, helped gain coverage and exposure. Donated editorial and news stories, along with the advertising time, allowed the campaign to flourish and reach a much broader audience than it would have without that support.

■ **Arts on the Air Waves: Working with Radio**

by Victoria Lord, Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council, Inc.

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With 450 million radios in the United States, this medium reaches more people on a daily basis than any other! And radio can sometimes do an even better job than television creating the mental pictures necessary to transfer your message.

Radio, the sometimes forgotten media, is an incredible communication tool. The Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council (KAAHC) finds that there are many great opportunities on the air for arts organizations and artists to reach the ears of a broad cross-section of people, gain exposure for a variety of arts events and art forms, and creatively reach new audiences.

To those of us living in southern Southeast Alaska, the radio air waves link the populations of our remote island communities together. While our captive audience is those living in places only accessible by boat or plane, your audience may spend a lot of time stuck in traffic to and from work. But wherever they are, they are listening.

KAAHC sponsors a live weekly art report on our local public radio station as part of the “Morning Edition” news program. Each Thursday, the Arts Council staff gives a 10 minute overview on what’s happening in the local art world including activities of KAAHC member groups, gallery openings and upcoming events. At times a guest artist joins in to promote a special art activity. We also sometimes use this as an opportunity to provide information (not opinion) on what is happening with the National Endowment for the Arts, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, our own arts council and public funding issues as they arise. This is also a good venue to very publicly thank our business partners, volunteers and others who have provided support for specific programs.

The radio public service announcement is an excellent way to get the word out and promote your events, especially for organizations with a limited budget for publicity and marketing: it’s free! The KAAHC produces radio spots for all events involving various people from the community as the voices. This is an easy way to get new people involved in an event or engage your target audience as usually people bring with them their connections. We also have a great time . . . working with sound calls for a definite stretch in imagination.

Another way to peak interest through radio is by going live remote from an arts event such as a festival or poetry reading or storytelling session. This engages people in spirit if not in body, and gives those unable to be there a chance to experience the event in the comfort of their home. And you are likely to draw many folks in person the next time around. (And recordings from these activities can be used in PSAs for future events!)

Of course, literary programs are a natural for radio production. In Ketchikan, a local writer produced a series for National Poetry Month: “One Poem a Day Can’t Kill You.” She rounded up 30 community volunteers — doctors, city council members, business leaders — and each recorded a poem, either an original or one by the poet of their choice. Four times a day, beginning with the morning news program, a poem aired. This single project did more to promote awareness of poetry and the Ketchikan Writer’s Guild than a public reading or the Guild’s annual anthology. Another project, “Voices of Alaska,” featured original pieces of poetry and prose about Alaska, and was distributed to radio stations all across the state. This project was supported in part from a grant from the Alaska Humanities Forum.

Other ideas:

- Using radio for live music to promote the arts and particular artists.
- Convene an artist forum to discuss issues like censorship, working with toxic materials, etc.
- Interview local artists — this can be not only interesting, but educational, as well.
- Take part in forums where the topic may not be directly related to the arts, but may touch on an aspect of the arts, such as tourism, economic development and recreation.
- Most of all, listen to the radio!

Conclusion

Effective public relations requires an understanding of how the media works, and the commitment to making it work for you. The tips and tools in this *Monographs* should help you think about or create a media strategy for your organization. Once you are tuned in to what makes a good story, or how local publications respond to issues in your community, or who your best contact is for getting your message in print or on the air, the rest will follow.

NALAA would like to credit the following publications for providing the basis for portions of this *Monographs*: *Getting the Word Out* by Richard Beamish, *The Publicity Handbook*, by David R. Yale and Strategic Media, part of a series created by the Benton Foundation and the Center for Strategic Communications. ▼

Resources

Communications Consortium Media Center
 1200 New York Ave., NW
 Suite 300
 Washington, DC 20005
 tel 202.326.8700

Public Relations Society of America
 33 Irving Place
 New York, NY 10003-2376
 tel 212.995.2230
 home page <http://www.prsa.org>

General Reference

The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. The Associated Press, 1996.
The Elements of Style. Prentice-Hall, 1995.
Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications. Prentice-Hall, 1990.
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Techniques

The Public Relations Writer's Handbook. Merry Aronson and Donald Spetner. Free Press, 1993.
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Media Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media, 2nd ed. Shirley Biagi. Wadsworth Press, 1994.
Organizational Communication, 2nd ed. Gary L. Kreps. Longman, 1990.

Media Directories

Bacon's Media Directories. Bacon's Information Inc., 1.800.621.0561. Clipping service available.
Burrelle's Media Directories. Burrelle's, 1.800.631.1160. Clipping service available.
Gebbie Press All-in-One Directory. Gebbie Press, 914.255.7560.
Working Press of the Nation. Reed Reference, 1.800.521.8110.



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