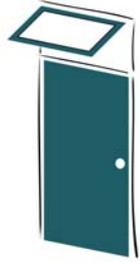


the transom review

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Edited by Sydney Lewis



Brooke Gladstone

About Brooke Gladstone

Brooke started out in print journalism, writing on defense policy, strip-mining, cable television, and public broadcasting (the latter for Current.) She also wrote and edited theater, film and music reviews for *The Washington Weekly*.

Her freelance pieces (on topics ranging from orgasmic Russian faith healers to the aesthetics of Pampers) have appeared in the *London Observer*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *The American Journalism Review* and *In These Times*, among others.

Brooke's world changed in 1987 when NPR's Scott Simon asked her to fill in as senior editor for his still-new program, *Weekend Edition Saturday*. They finally gave her the job, and a couple years later, she became senior editor of the daily news magazine, *All Things Considered*.

In 1991, Brooke was awarded a Knight Fellowship at Stanford and a year later she was in Russia, reporting on the bloody insurgency of the Russian Parliament and other interesting stories for NPR.

In 1995, Brooke was packing for home while NPR was creating its brand new media beat. That became her job, and so it has remained, sort of. After six years on the media beat in NPR's New York Bureau in midtown Manhattan, she was tapped by WNYC several subway stops downtown, to help relaunch *On The Media*.

She took over as managing editor and co-host and *On The Media* was reborn in January of 2001. It has since doubled its audience and won quite a few awards by brazenly showing how the journalism sausage is made.



Brooke has won several awards too. She's most proud of the one recently bestowed by the Milwaukee Press Club for lifetime achievement, called the Sacred Cat Award. However, much to her dismay, *On The Media's* staff stubbornly refuses to perform any of the associated rituals.

Intro by Jay Allison

Public Radio depends on trust. In a time when most media is overtly manipulative and you'd be a fool to trust anyone, public radio manages to retain a decent rep among its listeners. Of course, that rep can be blown with a few choice wrong moves. Careful.

The show "On The Media" takes a clear-eyed look at all media, public radio included. You tend to trust Brooke Gladstone (and her co-host Bob Garfield for that matter) because they're so straight ahead, funny, not puffed up. Are these attributes among the core values of public radio? Should they be? In her Transom Manifesto, Brooke meditates on the way we sound now, and the way she wants to sound, and the way she's getting there. Read her Three Waypoints for making the trip.

Brooke Gladstone's Manifesto

INTRODUCTION

When I joined NPR in 1987, I was a print reporter and editor. My career was undistinguished, I knew nothing about radio production and would never have gotten in the door today, but Scott Simon “big footed” me in because he felt like it.

(We had met in 1982 when reporting on the big financial scandal that nearly sunk NPR. I was working for *Current* and he was covering it for NPR. Five years later he bumped into my husband at the Smithsonian when Dizzy Gillespie was donating his trumpet, and said he needed an editor to fill in for an absent staffer on his show.)

So, at the age of 32, I came into NPR as a radio baby, bred like an orchid in that hothouse atmosphere of mission and radio values and respect for the audience. I couldn't believe my luck then and marvel at it now. What's more, NPR was pretty nice to me. After three years I went from senior editor of Scott's show to senior editor of *All Things Considered*, then reported from Moscow for three years and served as the network's first media reporter for six years. NPR even let me fill in as a host from time to time. It rarely messed with my stories. When I went on the air, it gave me very little guff about my purple prose and nasal voice. I had no beef with National Public Radio.

So why did I quit?

Or more to the point (as one colleague asked and many thought) why on earth would I leave Valhalla to go to a local station to work on an overlooked and under-funded, five-year-old dead shark of a show called (insert yawn here) *On the Media*?

Well, I was bored. I had worked at the media job twice as long as I'd ever worked on anything, and when I get bored, I start to screw up. I hadn't screwed up yet, but I knew if I hung around much longer I probably would. (It's good to know these things about yourself.)

But if I was sick of the beat, why did I go to *On the Media*?

Well, for one thing, Dean Cappello, who is in charge of programming at WNYC, which produces the show, really wanted me. I was incredibly flattered. Cappello wanted a new life for *On the Media*, which had already used up two lives, having first launched as a local call-in in 1995, and then gone national as a magazine-style show a couple years later. It had a talented (tiny) staff and an excellent host in Brian Lehrer, but Brian was already producing 10 hours of live radio a week for WNYC, and had to parachute into *OTM* after his show and in the evenings, to do the interviews and read the copy. The overworked producers had great instincts but little experience, and there was no editor. As a result, *OTM* was wildly uneven and circling the drain.

But WNYC pays a lot of dues to NPR. So the station chiefs convinced NPR to pony up a little more support, found some other funding, applied some creative money management, and decided to relaunch the show, one more time.

Mission Impossible

Just before, or maybe just after my hire, I was in Cappello's office and he delivered what I think of as the "mission impossible" speech. My assignment, should I choose to accept it, was to jumpstart the shark, to turn *OTM* into a real, viable, national program. One that people would actually want to listen to. Oh god, really? About the media? Which I was beginning to hate?

So I got to thinking about what I liked about the beat and what I didn't. What I liked about NPR newsmagazines and what I didn't. And slowly, the manifesto evolved.

Now I was the one invited on to Transom, so this is from me. But the manifesto, if it could be called one, is a full collaboration of Cappello, Senior Producer Arun Rath, co-host Bob Garfield, producers Katya Rogers, Janeen Price, Megan Ryan, Tony Field, technical director Dylan Keefe and Mike Pesca (who was an inspiration while he was with us). But,

as I took Cappello’s meaning (and maybe I’m wrong), if the program stayed dead, it would be my failure. So I may as well be the one to lay out the philosophy from which we built the jumper cables.

First -- the beat. What I didn’t like about the media beat at NPR was that I would be asked to do a three-and-a-half minute piece every time Tina Brown passed wind (or so it seemed to me.) I wasn’t interested in that, and I lived in one of the half-dozen zip codes where people genuinely cared about Tina Brown [former *New Yorker* editor-in-chief].

The fact was, for six years I had a Howie Kurtz monkey on my back. He writes a widely read media column for the Washington Post. He has great sources, and he’s often first on the big media stories. He’s also first on stories that aren’t big, or even interesting outside of certain social circles. But Howie writes for a newspaper. If people get bored they turn the page, they don’t throw out the paper. There’s no page-turning in radio, only channel switching. So you have to make people care about every story. That was always my first priority on a beat as abstract and vicarious as media, and sometimes it was hard. But try as I might, I found that some “insider” stories weren’t worth selling.

I covered the big news, but I also wanted to do pieces on where media and culture collide, where media holds up the mirror to culture, pieces on advertising, TV and movie trends, stand-up comics, you name it. I wanted to show how the media sausage is made. NPR wanted those stories too, but I still had to do pieces that I couldn’t even sell to me.

I’m not going to focus much on the way we configured the beat at *OTM*. It’s changed over time. 9-11 and the war made it more serious, more centered on journalism. And it will keep changing. But we do all the pieces I wanted to do, plus lots more that would never have occurred to me.

Point #1 of the Manifesto

Don’t limit your scope. It’s good to have an organizing principle but it should be violated at will. (Like when Bob did a story on vanity license plates, which doesn’t exactly qualify as “media,” but was a fabulous story.)

Having worked on a couple of general interest magazine shows, I have reveled in the pursuit of any compelling story or idea that comes along without respect to beat or bailiwick. How liberating is journalism without a brief! But there are drawbacks. The danger is that programs that can be about anything may wind up being about nothing. The wheel has to be reinvented each time: out of a universe of possible topics, what to talk about this week becomes an excruciating question. It’s worse when a program has a small staff and limited resources. One inspired way around the problem is to organize each show around a theme, which has worked so well for *This American Life* and *Studio 360*. With time and

advance planning, they compensate for the lack of resources and produce great radio. That doesn't work for us because we are tied to the news and can't re-run shows (though we certainly "repurpose" individual pieces and interviews.)

So actually, it helps us to know what we're about (journalism, freedom of information, cultural and/or linguistic trends reflected in the media, impact of media on attitudes, manipulations of and by the media, etc.) It gives us a starting point. But none of us would last if it had to end there. Automatic pilot is death to a program like ours. If we can't make media relevant and compelling even to those who don't think they care about it (including those of us on staff), then the show will suffocate.

So Bob does vanity license plates and I do Everquest and we do privacy and Broadway and eBay and cell phones and all sorts of things that fall slightly outside the confines of "media" but entirely within the confines of "whatever we are dying to do and can make a halfway decent case has something to do with the way human beings interact." There's a higher bar for stories like that but they do get on the air.

Point #2 of the Manifesto

Get good people, and use them. You are an idiot if you disrespect the ideas of anyone on the staff. Only a few ideas make it on the show, but they all deserve an airing and even a knockdown drag-out fight if the passion runs high.

The reason why *OTM* is less predictable than most news shows is it draws ideas from everywhere. This is the most collaborative show I've ever worked on. A co-host who is also a managing editor creates a dangerous power nexus that can strangle a program, so we don't let it happen. There are no "junior" members on the staff. Rigid hierarchies (and I have participated in them at NPR) squander a lot of brainpower, and we can't afford to waste any.

Prelude to Point #3 of the Manifesto

Here's what I like about most public radio news magazines. The reporting is solid, the subjects are important and relevant, and the level of discourse is high. The audience is respected. These are the keys to public radio's success. While more and more news outlets slice up consistently smaller pieces of the audience pie, public radio consistently gains listeners, so it's doing something right.

Here, in my humble opinion, is what's wrong: As they become the primary news source for more and more Americans, public radio newsmagazines are restricting their own ability to move listeners. Like physicians in medieval times they seek to balance the four humors (so as not to be too choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic or melancholy) by bloodletting. Public

radio newsmagazines are looking a little pallid these days, because the passion has been drained off.

There are strong personalities and neutral ones. Hot ones, like Scott Simon or Susan Stamberg, Jacki Lyden or Robert Siegel, are risky. People will love them, but they will also loathe them. The neutral personalities that hold most of the on-air positions on public radio today are safer. They bring us the news, they keep the discourse high. They are polite to the guests and the listeners. We don't hate them. We don't love them. We don't know who they are.

The Part About Radio

When you read a newspaper (increasingly, public radio's model) the reporter generally is absent. When you watch TV, the reporter is showing and telling, with pictures and charts. When you watch TV, in the back of your mind is the certain knowledge that tens of thousands of other people are watching with you. With radio, you can almost feel the breath of the reporter on your cheek. Radio is personal.

Only on radio do hosts and reporters serve as the listener's surrogates. Only radio can maintain the illusion of a one-to-one relationship. Listeners need that person to guide them through the story, paint the picture, explain the situation. Listeners respond, actively, to the audio equivalent of a raised eyebrow, the vocal transmission of amusement or fear. It's like dynamite. It can blow up in your face. But skillfully applied, it provides context far more intensely than an avalanche of words.

Passion is a part of life. Public radio is all grown up now. It should be able to handle it. But we all know where unbridled passion can lead: To that rolling cacophonous quagmire that is the rest of talk radio. All contention, no content. All bias and prejudice, no exchange of ideas. All heat, with nary a glimmer of light. I wouldn't do it if they paid me a million bucks. (Well, maybe a million.)

There has to be a third way. We've all had debates that were a trifle tense, that involved some little gesticulation and saliva spray, that were still nuanced and fair, and ultimately more satisfying than the standard polite exchange.

Point #3 of the Manifesto

Look for ways to use the passion that accompanies conviction to make better radio.

So here's what we did with *OTM*. We figured any show that includes a fair measure of criticizing one's professional colleagues had better come clean. So Bob and I regularly practice full disclosure, and rarely use locutions that distance us from what we really mean

(as in: “What do you say to the critics who say...”) unless we really don’t share the criticism we’re presenting.

We have opinions, and we state them, and we allow the guests whatever time they need to respond. We ask a lot of follow-up questions. Sometimes we do push politeness to hammer away at a question if it isn’t answered the first, or second time, but we really do see ourselves as the listeners’ surrogate, and they deserve an answer (when we can get one) and not an evasion. Otherwise, why bother?

Every once in a while, if it’s interesting or illustrative, we leave in our mistakes. If, for instance, in a particular interview, we find that we’ve been barking up the wrong tree, the same tree we think listeners may be barking up, we let the interviewee correct us - rather than retake the question.

But we don’t leave it in if it isn’t meaningful. We edit like crazy. We shorten and move things around. Editing may be *OTM*’s dirty, little secret. Things you hear are rarely anything like they happened in real time. We are excruciatingly possessive of our weekly hour and the listener’s ear.

Mostly though, we use what we’ve got. After all, *OTM* has about as conventional format as there is -- just interviews and pieces with maybe an essay or parody thrown in to round out the hour. So we keep it moving. When we’ve used up the good stuff, we leave it. At least that’s how it’s supposed to work. Sometimes our shows are great, sometimes they suck. We learn from our mistakes. And yes, we always try to keep the level of discourse high.

A Final Thought About Public Radio in the Third Millennium

Public Radio is in great shape, for all the reasons I mentioned earlier. It is an oasis in a broadcast landscape where high ideals and intellectual engagement are drying up. But we don’t have to use the soothing rhythm that is public radio’s trademark tempo for every discussion. We can alternate the pace, syncopate. We can be true to our individual voices. Today’s news consumers are different from those a generation ago. They are inundated with outlets. In fact, they are - all of them - conscious media critics, navigating a torrent of chatter. They’re either going to trust you, or they won’t. In the interests of full disclosure, and journalistic ethics, and better radio, we should reveal ourselves. Let them know who they’re dealing with - flesh and blood people who live in the same world they do.

A Conversation w/ Brooke Gladstone

Editor's Editors, Editor's Wants

Jackson - *January 20, 2004 - #10*

I could ask who edits you, Brooke, when OTM is "edited by ... Brooke"? And what is your approach to editing? ...I wonder where you see the line between the story the reporter sees and what the editor wants to read/hear?

Tackling The Trajectory

Brooke Gladstone - *January 20, 2004 - #13*

Who edits the editor? These days, Senior Producer Arun Rath is my editor and I may argue but I don't overrule and my pieces are much better for it. Similarly, I write many of the intros and edit the rest, Arun looks them over before we read them, and others (often producer Tony Field) will do some fact-checking.

What does "edited by...Brooke" mean? I write lots of the copy. I help shape and order the ideas in the hour. I listen to a rough cut of most interviews and change things around with the producer. I used to edit all the pieces but now we subcontract them mostly to Sharon Ball, the former editor of NPR's cultural desk, and Arun usually does the rest. I only edit staff pieces, which means Garfield and Arun, plus assorted others that for whatever reason I simply decide to do.

How do I edit? My main concerns are clarity, pace and impact. Every piece has a central idea, and that idea has a trajectory. I follow the trajectory. If the idea circles around and closes in on itself, I try to break it down and untangle it. If the reporter comes to no conclusion I force him/her to write one. If the writing is clogged with, say, piles of adjectives when a simpler more powerful metaphor could do the job, I help search for one.

I do NOT substitute my voice for the reporters', though I will try to strengthen that voice, and I will check that what they wrote is, in fact, what they really mean to say. I do not substitute my ideas, either. But if they don't have one, I'll hammer away until they do.

What it boils down to is - whose side are you on? I'm on the reporters' side. I'm there to help them get where they want to go...What the reporter sees is all that matters (although sometimes it turns out it isn't a story.)

A Broken Draft

Jad Abumrad - *January 20, 2004 - #15*

When you as an editor encounter a very-broken first draft, how do you go about fixing it without sacrificing the reporter's point of view? Especially with a show like OTM, which has a very-particular sound. Are there rules you follow on preserving voice?

Say Something

Brooke Gladstone - *January 21, 2004 - #17*

A piece isn't fixable if you can't find an interesting story to tell, no matter how good the tape or how stylish the writing. Writing can be tightened, refined, enlivened. The pace can change. So can the beginning, the middle and the end. But only if you are actually saying something. Sometimes you can write a sentence for a reporter, or contribute an idea, but you can't force them to say it. If they embrace it, then it's theirs and you haven't screwed with their voice. If they resist it, you have to drop it, and try another way.

The Constraints Of The Medium

Jackson - *January 20, 2004 - #16*

While I admire the idea that "what the reporter sees is all that matters," there are, of course, the other elements in the story: quotes, for example, informational sources (print and TV news reports).

Is it possible for the reporter to see it all? What about the constraints of the medium, the constraints of the format, the constraints of resources?

Curb Your Appetite

Brooke Gladstone - *February 2, 2004 - #30*

No, it's not possible for a reporter to see it all, or tell it all on the radio, so its best that the reporter scale the story down to fit the medium, Deb Amos once observed that you can only get a couple of ideas into a piece. I try to stick to one or two, support them with interviews, sound, copy, information from other media (appropriately credited of course) and explore them the best I can. Biting off more than I can chew is the most common mistake I've made (and encountered as editor.)

A Member Of The Audience

chelsea merz - *January 27, 2004 - #23*

Has editing infiltrated your life? Can you listen to radio, read, watch television and film without thinking 'Oh, I would have done that differently.' What are those rare moments

when you become a member of the audience-- when you are just reading, listening, viewing? Or is that not an option for you?

Stand Back, She's Got That Look In Her Eye

Brooke Gladstone - *February 2, 2004 - #30*

Editing for me is like a hundred yard dash of mental concentration. Others may be natural editors, but for me it involves a needle-fine laser-beam of effort applied in real time. "What am I missing? An inconsistency? An idea left hanging? A missing back announce? Fuzzy language? A papered-over transition? The whole point? What didn't I understand but didn't notice I didn't understand?"

Who can live like that? When I am listening for fun, I am just a member of the audience. When I'm editing, I'm still a member of the audience, only on PCP.

Pique Sample

Jackson - *January 31, 2004 - #24*

I wonder if you might try to articulate what qualities or characteristics in a story pique your editorial interest.

Head Work The Hook

Brooke Gladstone - *February 2, 2004 - #30*

That's when I REALLY am a member of the audience. It's all subjective of course. The first prerequisite is that it interests me. And if it doesn't, I may push and pull the idea a bit, like a lump of clay, until we can make something interesting out of it. But I prefer ideas that go somewhere. We get a lot of those pitches (both from the staff and outside) along the lines of - there's this guy who's doing this thing that's kinda interesting. And it may be, but where do you go from there? How will that help people cope with a problem, or give us a special insight into something we find hard to understand? What does it teach us about ourselves? And especially, can you tell it like a story? (That last one is tough.)

One piece I did that I liked the most was years ago - I got a notice about a gallery show featuring the work of a guy who drew blueprints of TV sit-com houses. Well, that's kinda interesting. But not enough of a story, until I found out that that guy was obsessed with TV sitcoms because he was a kid in the early '60s and his parents worked and he'd cut school to watch TV, had no friends or extracurriculars. He just wanted to be Wally Cleaver. He lived an entirely vicarious life and he wasn't functioning all that well as a grown-up. When I interviewed him, he'd been "clean and sober" from TV for two years. Now THAT was a story that could tell us something about modern life.

So I guess I like reporters to do the head work. You find the kinda interesting hook, and then use it to go somewhere. It helps a lot if the reporter knows WHY he/she is responding to the subject. What got to them. That's probably the thing we need to hear. (Another reason why having an identifiable person as reporter makes better radio.)

Blinded By Science

Jackson - *February 4, 2004 - #32*

How does one prepare for a subject one doesn't know? There is a "personal angle," a "revealing aspect" to this story, but I wonder if you might offer insights on how to overcome being blinded by science and still get the story out.

Go Narrow, Not Native

Brooke Gladstone - *February 6, 2004 - #34*

When I'm starting from absolute zero, I make a lot of phone calls until I find someone who is relatively plugged into the subject, and has no particular axe to grind. Then I take them to lunch and milk them. I ask every question, toss out every concern and random talking point that I have rattling around inside me and see what they say. They'll usually dismiss a couple of my notions outright (generally my favorite ones) and then grab on to some others and start talking about the arguments that rage over them. That's where I usually find my story. (Then I'll ask my source for some names and numbers.) You can't narrow down your subject by yourself - you just don't know it well enough. But you have to narrow it down. If you just plunge in, equipped only with your passion, you'll go native without a roadmap and find yourself utterly lost.

(BTW - when I talk about following what you care about, I don't necessarily mean a 'personal angle.' I don't think reporters should intrude on their stories with a lot of personal observations and opinions. I just mean they should follow their interest, react to it and communicate it, because obviously, if they don't care about it no one else will.)

Media MIA

scott carrier - *January 25, 2004 - #18*

I think the media has done a poor job of presenting other ways to fight terrorism besides going to war. We've killed thousands of people in Afghanistan and Iraq now, and the threat of terrorism has only gotten worse. Everybody I talk to readily admits this is true, and yet their reply is always the same, What else can we do?

Well, what else can we do? Is driving hybrid cars our only option?

I don't think it's the media's job to come up with the answers, but I do think it's the media's job to present the public with alternatives. And I think it's partly the media's fault that we're

in this position to begin with. We shouldn't have had to depend upon CIA and FBI warnings.

Legwork And Nerves

Brooke Gladstone - *January 26, 2004 - #19*

Interesting question about reporting on alternatives. It does happen, quite a lot, but mostly it's relegated to the Op Ed and commentary pages. Here are a couple of reasons why I think that is.

It requires legwork. You need to cultivate experts that lay outside the standard rolodex of usual suspects. You need reporters that understand the issue assigned to the task of presenting alternative approaches. The current 24-hour way news cycle in broadcasting require reporters recycle stories all day long. It takes real commitment to detach them from the grind. In print, there's the opposite problem of the shrinking news hole along with shrinking budgets. So it's both hard and expensive. We all know investigative reporting has taken a hit, generally. And with the emphasis on ever-widening profit margins, it's probably not an investment that news outlets are eager to make.

The other reason has to do with the increasing nervousness of news managers. We're living in an environment where reporting on anything outside the conventional wisdom smacks of advocacy. (And since the right-wing is in power, alternatives are likely to emerge from the left, so reporting on them leaves news outlets open to charges of left-wing bias.) Mainstream media outlets are pretty risk averse. Reporting outside the narrow terms of the debate as defined by Washington is risky. So it's less likely to happen in the general course of things, unless the passion of a reporter or an editor makes it a priority.

Going Global

Thomas Marzahl - *February 23, 2004 - #41*

Are you fairly limited in terms of the topics you can cover from around the world - in particular outside of the *Western* world - because of a. language/cultural barriers b. resources - getting reporters to do stories from elsewhere c. making them interesting to the listener?

Universal Linchpins

Brooke Gladstone - *February 23, 2004 - #42*

We cover a lot of media news from elsewhere - China, Russia, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Serbia, Haiti, India and Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan, and of course the UK. Not as much as we'd like because, as you suggest, it's hard to find the people to do the stories.

Usually, we cover what we can in two-ways. And of course, you have to pick the moment. There are many places where the story is always grim and seemingly unchanging, and it may be hard to convey their importance. Usually, we try to zero in when there's a turning point, a change for better or worse.

Language and cultural barriers? Almost always - perhaps that's where experience working abroad helps. There are aspirations, conditions and ideas most of us comprehend or share, and those are the linchpins on which we try to hang the story or interview.

Caring For The Audience

Jackson - *February 29, 2004 - #44*

I wonder if you would add more editors to the pubrad mix...Only the stations who really think about what is said over their air (for example, by running all copy through editorial) actually demonstrate any interest and caring for the audience.

Editorial Fertilizer

Brooke Gladstone - *March 2, 2004 - #48*

I believe (predictably) that editing talent is extraordinarily thin within public radio - thinner than on-air or production talent, thinner even (and this is a tough one) than management talent (although I possibly could be argued out of that one.)

Editors' contributions are generally invisible, their pay is as low or lower than reporters' and they get the blame for anything that goes wrong.

Editors are regarded as luxuries within the system (I mean, stories can and do get on the air without them) and of course editors range widely in quality. Most reporters have been at the receiving end of bullshit editing, and it's even worse when it comes from a kid, who's in the job because public radio sees this as close to an entry-level position.

I, for instance, came directly from print, 17 years ago. I had some reporting and editing experience, but it was still pretty early in my career. Why should any seasoned radio reporter have trusted me?

You have to love editing, for itself alone, to stick with it. People who have the opportunity to move (to reporting, say) frequently do. But the loss of a good editor (even if he/she becomes a good reporter) is more serious than it may seem. Because editors pass what they've learned to reporters, and reporters pass what they know back. Thus, a good editor can become a conduit for spreading that combined wisdom through the system.

Public radio is still, at it's heart, improvisational medium. That's both a weakness and a strength. People reinvent themselves, new ways of working are devised all the time, old tricks are discovered anew.

But there are things that don't have to be reinvented every time, for instance: ways to use language for different purposes that always work. Or narrative devices that both make an impact and save time. Or how to avoid mistakes that everybody makes sooner or later. Experience trumps training, but training can help, or at least exposure to what others have learned.

In a perfect world, that's why editors exist. They know something, the reporter knows something, the process lets a little air into the vacuum - the solitary work of most radio reporters.

About Transom

What We're Trying To Do

Here's the short form: Transom.org is an experiment in channeling new work and voices to public radio through the Internet, and for discussing that work, and encouraging more. We've designed Transom.org as a performance space, an open editorial session, an audition stage, a library, and a hangout. Our purpose is to create a worthy Internet site and make public radio better.



Submissions can be stories, essays, home recordings, sound portraits, interviews, found sound, non-fiction pieces, audio art, whatever, as long as it's good listening. Material may be submitted by anyone, anywhere - by citizens with stories to tell, by radio producers trying new styles, by writers and artists wanting to experiment with radio.

We contract with Special Guests to come write about work here. We like this idea, because it 1) keeps the perspective changing so we're not stuck in one way of hearing, 2) lets us in on the thoughts of creative minds, and 3) fosters a critical and editorial dialog about radio work, a rare thing.

Our Discussion Boards give us a place to talk it all over. Occasionally, we award a Transom.org t-shirt to especially helpful users, and/or invite them to become Special Guests.

Staff

Producer/Editor - *Jay Allison*

Web Director/Designer - *Joshua T. Barlow*

Editors – *Sydney Lewis, Viki Merrick, Chelsea Merz, Jeff Towne, Helen Woodward*

Web Developers - *Josef Verbanac, Barrett Golding*

Advisors

Scott Carrier, Nikki Silva, Davia Nelson, Ira Glass, Doug Mitchell, Larry Massett, Sara Vowell, Skip Pizzi, Susan Stamberg, Flawn Williams, Paul Tough, Bruce Drake, Bill McKibben, Bob Lyons, Tony Kahn, Ellin O'Leary, Marita Rivero, Alex Chadwick, Claire Holman, Larry Josephson, Dmae Roberts, Dave Isay, Stacy Abramson, Gregg McVicar, Ellen Weiss, Ellen McDonnell, Robin White, Joe Richman, Steve Rowland, Johanna Zorn, Elizabeth Meister



ATLANTIC PUBLIC MEDIA

Atlantic Public Media administers Transom.org. APM is a non-profit organization based in Woods Hole, Massachusetts which has as its mission "to serve public broadcasting through training and mentorship, and through support for creative and experimental approaches to program production and distribution." APM is also the founding group for *WCAI & WNAN*, a new public radio service for Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket under the management of *WGBH-Boston*.

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