

Rockefeller Underwriting of Local, Regional, and National Educational Broadcasting Experiments, 1934-1940

By Josh Shepperd

Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies
The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

joshshepperd@gmail.com

© 2013 by Josh Shepperd

Several publications and recent reports have chronicled John Marshall's decisive place in communication history. Reports by Buxton,¹ Kridel,² and Tobias,³ have examined the Rockefeller Foundation's (RF) crucial role in the formation of educational media in the 1930s, which has included the study and basis of media effects research. As this report will show, Rockefeller initiatives in the 1930s also served as an essential foundation for the development of American educational broadcasting, the precursor to public broadcasting. The RF archives reveal that the origin of noncommercial broadcasting methods and organization commenced as an advocacy response to the Communications Act of 1934, which privatized radio frequency allocations. Experiments between 1934 and 1940 were designed to determine the most effective spatial organization for a non-profit approach to broadcasting. Ultimately educational proponents settled on a national model, influenced by the success of and the Office of Education's Federal Radio Education Committee suggestions. Underwritten by the RF, the Office of Education developed models for curricular standards and streamlined communications technology administration and distribution adapted by National Educational Television and Radio in the 1950s.

Passed in 1934, the Communications Act stipulated that frequency delegations best served “public interest” in private hands because commercial broadcasters offered the most opportunities for program availability.⁴ Consequent commercial allocations by the FCC decimated a decentralized educational radio experiment largely based in Midwestern colleges and land-grant universities, but the policy also provided clear contours for future institutional development. Previous to 1934, hundreds of universities had used radio to extend distance learning initiatives to reach urban and agrarian audiences. The quality and efficiency of these experiments varied widely. Though a few land-grant institutions in the Midwest had produced quality programming, by and large, most stations remained undeveloped and with little understanding of how to utilize the radio medium.⁵ While early practitioners had begun to develop methods for electronic distance learning, there had been little research or investment of how to implement technology effectively for curricular purposes, and many universities subsequently cut funding to campus radio stations or abandoned radio entirely.

After 1934 educational advocates were joined by two influential organizations that increased the quality and diversity of experimentation: The RF and the federal Office of Education (OOE), especially Commissioner John Studebaker, who also oversaw the Federal Radio Education (FREC). These institutions, driven by a belief in technology’s capacity to offer universal public education, became staunch advocates for educational radio, and together they sought to build scaffolding for a noncommercial broadcasting system that would have to survive with significantly less funds, frequency allocations, and professional-quality practitioners than would commercial network broadcasters.⁶ In consistent contact, between 1934 and 1940, these two organizations determined that the most important issue facing educational broadcasters was

the need to develop a sustainable administrative construct to organize into a stable alternative to commercial broadcasting.⁷

Calling upon a progressive-era vision for educational technology, in total, John Marshall underwrote four large-scale spatial experiments over six years: local, regional, national, and international, (the World Wide Broadcasting Federation, already covered by William Buxton's report) with funding allocated based on several criteria:

- 1) How do we best provide local populations with free access to public education?
- 2) What types of programming would best attract local audiences?
- 3) What methods would gain the most support from local civic agencies and governmental institutions?

This conclusion of this period of experimentation resulted in a consensus that the Office of Education had provided the best administrative example for educational broadcasting. This research report centers on the three U.S.-based experiments under consideration in the 1930s, as chronicled in the RF archives.

The Serendipity of the Humanities Project for Radio Experimentation

How did the Rockefeller Foundation come to fund early educational broadcasting and communication research? In a 1933 report the RF trustees endeavored to underwrite projects responsible for “bringing the humanities from books, seminars, and museums into the current of modern life.”⁸ The committee was concerned that funding, up until that point, centered too strongly on non-applied research as a “sole method”⁹ of cultural uplift. Funding research on historical humanities alone, they worried, might miss the target of stimulating new humanities movements and methods. Hence, just previous to the Communications Act of 1934, the RF had begun to search for “direct ways of extending the area of public appreciation [that] called for

assistance from persons with intimate knowledge of the ways in which the American public now gains its culture.”¹⁰ They settled on the relatively consistent yet still-developing domains of broadcasting, motion picture, and museum culture, as potential sites for stimulating intellectual and civic motivation. Due to the media’s ability to reach larger target demographics with immediacy, as well as its unusual capacity to influence opinion and cultural knowledge through content practices, technology was a logical choice for new investment. The RF trustees commissioned investigative reports to explore possible lines of inquiry.

Working under David H. Stevens, a professor from the University of Chicago, who ran the Division of Humanities until 1949, John Marshall would repeatedly make uncannily astute research grants that prognosticated many of the foundations of media research and practice. Marshall pulled from progressive conceptual bases to select practitioners and researchers, especially Stevens’ vision. In *The Humanities in Theory and Practice*, Stevens wrote that the function of the humanities was to make “the individual a citizen of the world in matters of the spirit—to create within him his own forms of mental, emotional, and spiritual freedom.”¹¹ This could be accomplished, he posited, by recreating imagination “beyond the ordinary”¹² via the transmission of values, meanings, and critical informed research. Stevens’ conclusion was that the humanities could expand the teaching of the arts by spreading “public appreciation”¹³ to the widest net of reception, via radio, film, drama, libraries, and museums. The aim of the project was to preserve and develop American cultural traditions, promote cultural understanding among nations, and continue with obligations from previous programs in philosophy and education. At the program’s inception Marshall believed the best way to achieve this would be to disseminate and chronicle “regional life,”¹⁴ in which Native American, urban, and southern experiences

could be accumulated and curated through recording, and then spread as wide repositories of knowledge that would be available at universities.

Due to an invitation to a conference on educational broadcasting by the FCC and the Office of Education in 1934, Marshall realized an opportunity to improve a still-fledgling approach to pedagogy and culture via radio. His initially focused interest in radio was soon expended to the question of new media in general, and by 1935 the RF had secured fifteen written reports that highlighted new methods and techniques surrounding international education and mediated communication.¹⁵ Among recommended initiatives included methods of radio broadcasting. While the radio spectrum had been delegated to the centralized, national model of NBC and CBS in 1934, the RF noted that educational broadcasting provided the widest and most opportune counterpoint to commercial broadcasting to “render invaluable intermediary service”¹⁶ to a listening public. In alignment with the RF’s initial vision, land grant based institutions had been the sole group dedicated to the use of radio for cultural localism. However, since radio had been inscribed as an almost exclusively *non*-public domain, Marshall noted that cooperative endeavors between commercial and educational interests would be necessary for the purpose of expanding public access to media, and he sought a way to encourage the noncommercial sector and its potential to serve civic interest.

The RF’s relationship with the burgeoning educational movement turned out to be crucial for the development of public broadcasting. Both Marshall and his grant receivers were interested in evaluating radio for the purpose of extending educational initiatives and civic participation through new media. Since educational radio practitioners were often trained academic researchers, investment by the RF immediately led to several focused projects on how to improve the use of radio for education, most famously the Princeton Radio Project (PRP).

While Marshall began with the question of how to realize radio's cultural potential for distributing American folklore and minority representation, the basic issue of how to disseminate cultural information quickly turned out to be the most pressing problem. On top of the well-chronicled communications methods devised by the PRP, correspondence shows that proponents hoped to address methods of delivery of noncommercial content (such as regional folklore) to diverse and remote publics.

To begin the “spread”¹⁷ of appreciation of American cultural experience, Marshall looked to methods of personnel training as a first step. Previous to the Communications Act educators had failed to institutionalize a rigorous program of best practices and broadcast aesthetics—two standards that commercial broadcasters had streamlined. With the FREC Marshall paired researchers, networks, and the fledgling noncommercial practitioners to improve educational broadcasting toward the stated regulatory stipulation of promoting public interest. The “New Program” in the humanities consequently approved seven initial programs on April 10, 1935, totaling \$112,500, to fund every exploration of broadcasting organization to see which would work best.¹⁸

Localism—The University Broadcasting Council of Chicago

In 1935 John Marshall received an application for a Chicago-based educational broadcasting consortium. According to the application by the University Broadcasting Council (UBC), based out of the University of Chicago (UC), Chicago provided an unusually rich terrain for cross-institutional collaboration for noncommercial broadcasting with local universities, museums, researchers, and commercial interests all dedicated to its improvement.¹⁹ The UBC was headed by Allen Miller, who had served as head of the Radio Department at the University of Chicago. He intended to develop “radio programs of cultural and educational value to

strengthen the development of a regional center to promote cooperation between radio stations and educational institutions in the Chicago area.”²⁰ Applying for \$64,500 to cover salaries and telephone line rental, UC, Northwestern, and DePaul intended to create a board of trustees that consisted of two representatives from each participating university. The Council planned to coordinate, develop, schedule, and broadcast radio programs of an educational nature from a central office in the Loop district of Chicago. As an attempt to institute a rigorous form of educational localism, in which a cosmopolitan center provided an opportunity for top researchers to produce new administrative and aesthetic forms, the UBC was an attractive experiment for Marshall.

Marshall strongly supported the project, based upon a piece written by Miller titled “The Problem of Educational Broadcasting and a Plan for Its Solution,” in which he described educational broadcasting’s problems, but also envisioned the promising capacity of radio to reach wide urban audiences. Due to “increased complexity and variability of modern society,” Miller argued that continuing education “throughout life” had become a need of paramount importance.²¹ Radio held the unique potential to be the most economical and powerful media for dissemination of information and education to a large and widely scattered adult audience. The UBC, Miller argued, would be an excellent test for educators to consolidate intellectual talent within close proximity to address an already built-in audience. A recent study of Chicago had shown that nearly fifty percent of all radio listening homes followed University of Chicago radio features at some point in the week, amounting to nearly 250,000 potential listeners.²²

Such an experiment based out of a large diverse city such as Chicago would address the basic problem facing educational radio: only a small fraction of educational radio’s potential had been realized, as educators had previously been “ignorant” of the problems and techniques that

would make curricular broadcasting viable. Professors had lacked sufficient knowledge of the standards of education and the radio as an apparatus. Stations had relied too strongly upon a professor-class of broadcasters, but wider audiences held little interest in listening based upon expertise alone. Noting that the strengths of personality and technical ability seemed to be “far more important considerations in educational broadcasting than academic reputations”²³ to a wide audience, Marshall hoped that radio could develop new instructional techniques reflective of commercial aesthetics, such as high content value, as a method for the improvement of curricular reception.

Yet, the conundrum they faced was that while a more populist/aesthetic approach was favorable, the goal was for educational radio to meet standard criteria. It was crucial that educational broadcasting remained in the domain of educators. Having such a large and attentive population would provide for quick input on improvement. The University Broadcasting Council planned to create a centralized infrastructure in a heterogeneous environment in which localized experts would have easy access to other experts. Marshall believed that such cooperation could quickly streamline project errors on a step-by-step basis. Further, such an arrangement would reduce costs, increase programming for an urban community, insure scheduling so that hours of rented time would be covered, increase efficiency, and insure that the politics of liberal education were observed. Chicago also was unique in that it offered wide access to radio affiliates of NBC and CBS, as well as the “superstation” independent WGN.

As head of the project, Allen Miller proved to be an aggressive and competent director. In line with Marshall’s intent, Miller commenced a study directed at how commercial broadcasting arranged and organized their institutions as a model for the UBC. Miller traveled to Washington and New York to a positive reception from Merlin Aylesworth of NBC, Fred Willis

of CBS, and Phil Loucks of the National Association of Broadcasters. Aylesworth was impressed enough that he agreed to introduce the UBC project to the NBC board to assist with the training of educators.²⁴ This led to the participation of Judith Waller, who was the educational director for NBC in Chicago. Miller further gained collaborative support of other educational institutions such as the Field Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Chicago Public Library, and the American Medical Association. Within a short period of time an impressive consortium had been constituted that was able to take advantage of the best in education and commercial methods in the Chicago area.

Yet, however promising such widespread support from major institutions initially appeared, Miller was not provided with as good a working cooperative as he and Marshall had hoped. Viewed as a peripheral experiment to the classroom instead of a sustainable project, administrators at the major universities were unwilling to allow faculty course remissions to concentrate on programming and development. Worse for Allen, faculty had little understanding or interest in learning the sophisticated economies of scale that sustained media industry production. Quality programming by academics with no prior experience proved to be a nearly impossible task, and a series of documents point to the difficulty of coordinating simple activities such as auditions for on-air talent or reviewing scripts.²⁵ These problems were further exacerbated by a lack of consistent talent available in rotation for educational broadcasts. Anecdotally, one musical education show run by a local school district had the problem of being staffed by hosts and an engineer prone to technical flaws and resistance to the stated educational goals of the initiative, reportedly calling recommended pedagogical techniques “high falutin’ notions,”²⁶ and Miller had no replacement on hand for the hosts so the show continued.

In his assessment Miller wrote that such problems were helpful for improving the UBC's overall awareness of best practices in radio broadcasting, and by the end of the Council's first two-year experiment, both Miller and Marshall had felt that they made some limited progress. The first year was, according to a letter from Miller to Marshall, one of initial organization in which assembling a staff and balancing educational quotients with commercial aesthetics led to a high turnover of participants.²⁷ However, the second year helped to develop the scaffolding of an educational approach to mass-audience programming. Though progress was uneven and scattered, it was not Marshall who pulled the plug on the experiment. By the third year Miller was receiving "less and less help from members of the faculty except for the few who serve on Council committees and take part in the Council's programs."²⁸ The result was that his bosses at the University of Chicago—Robert Hutchins and William Benton—wrote to Marshall that a large uncooperative consortium of local broadcasters would be difficult to execute and that the university no longer wanted to support the project.

However, Benton wrote in another letter that one program that predated the UBC showed a great deal of promise: the University of Chicago Roundtable. While he felt that the UBC signaled a "fledgling approach," Benton did remain optimistic that in spite of the general propensity for UBC programs to be "of mediocre quality due to lackadaisical faculty interest," that the Roundtable provided a new educational genre in which experts discussed "world events and the specificities of their findings."²⁹ The Roundtable ran for twenty-two years and became the standard format for later political shows, as well as public broadcasting news interview formats. Even more interestingly, Robert Hutchins and William Benton's interest in radio had been piqued. Benton went on to become a Connecticut Senator and one of the great champions of noncommercial broadcasting in 1950s regulatory debates that preceded public broadcasting,

and later became the head of UNESCO's international broadcasting initiatives. Robert Hutchins consequently continued to work with educational broadcasters until 1959 as Associate Director of the Ford Foundation, which funded educational broadcasting after the RF moved on to other projects in the early 1950s. Unfortunately for Miller this was the end of the UBC, but his experiment inspired other educators to pursue fundamental goals around infrastructure, best practices, and consistency of content to rival commercial broadcasts.

Regionalism—The Rocky Mountain Radio Council

In 1937 A.G. Crane, President of the University of Wyoming, proposed a similar project to the University Broadcast Council of Chicago, which he called the Rocky Mountain Radio Council.³⁰ Crane already had extensive experience with educational broadcasting, having worked for the Payne Fund of Ohio and its activist moniker the National Committee on Education by Radio (NCER). Crane envisioned a wider radius of broadcasting than localism, proposing that a multi-state consortium centered in Colorado and Wyoming create a regional broadcasting initiative in which widely separated populations would have access to the same free education. He noted that the UBC had served a small if populous region, and had hoped to extend the same concept to a wider, less populous, mountainous region. Marshall responded in a April 13, 1937 letter that Crane was perhaps being a little too ambitious and not practical with his proposal to reach such a wide radius, as no technical infrastructure had yet been built and commercial telephone wire rentals were few and far between in that area. "Crane tended to assume that educators are already prepared for effective work in broadcasting."³¹ However, Crane had already gained the support of quite a few local organizations, and the allure of trying a similar educational project with a multi-state audience, as well as the support of public land-grant universities and connected state departments led Marshall to support the project. It was an

ambitious initiative. Crane had not only proposed an experiment in educational radio regionalism, but had also hoped to increase the technological development of radio technology itself, *while* creating a sustainable supplementary teaching aid via radio, as conceived and coordinated through multiple institutions and associations separated by vast expanses of land.

In a September 21, 1938 letter, Crane wrote a preliminary plan for broadcasting services in which he listed his objective as follows: “The Rocky Mountain Radio Council is proposing to establish an organization and facilities for producing cooperatively a public radio program to be known as the Rocky Mountain Public Program.”³² The program planned to broadcast on commercial stations through rented wire time, similar to the UBC. However, the organizational arrangement was more sophisticated and advanced than the UBC. Crane had arranged for “listening schools”³³ to be fixed with radio sets, be supplied with listening and curricular instructions, and to respond to broadcasts with suggestions. Further, Crane was responsible for implementation of the first major innovation, later taken up by the important advocates that successfully lobbied for the Public Broadcasting Act, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters: the pressing of records of quality recorded shows to be broadcast at convenient times for each participating station.³⁴ Also of interest, due to the initiative’s regional nature, placement among public land-grant institutions, and attempt to qualify educational broadcasting as “public interest” programming, Crane began using the term “public broadcasting”³⁵ to describe the RMRC’s plan. This appears to be the first institutional usage of the term, broached multiple times in letters to Marshall, who recorded the term in his personal diaries.

The RMRC was an early success for regional distribution. Similar to the UBC, the first couple of years were shaky and largely comprised of accumulating and training staff, but by 1940 the Council had accumulated active participation from twenty-seven institutions including

all of the regional universities, and was successfully broadcasting over fourteen distinct radio stations.³⁶ Crane was in part successful because he began logistics so crucial to sustainable administration. In a July 22, 1939 letter he wrote: “The plan is remarkably simple. It is nothing more or less than the proposal for cooperation, first between producers of social broadcasts and second between the producers and transmitters of the programs. The plan provides the machinery for united, collective effort.”³⁷ Crane felt that the initiative was subsequently adaptable to other stations and networks. Having worked first as an activist for educational broadcasting before 1934, and then as a university president, Crane was in a serendipitous position to conceive a sustainable educational “network” that still maintained fidelity to fundamental civic goals and educational philosophies. RMRC broadcasts were approached as experiments for the purpose of increasing the general quality of educational radio best practices, later to serve as an example for other institutions. Instead of a city-based consortium, the Council had also incorporated twelve regional schools to coordinate and cooperate toward the creation and improvement of educational broadcasting. The radius of broadcasts was largely centered in Colorado and Wyoming, but programs also reached parts of Nebraska, Kansas, and New Mexico.

Like the UBC, the project was subject to a combination of external interferences previous to 1940. In 1939 Crane came down with a protracted illness that stalled several initiatives. Around that time Marshall sent Robert Hudson of the Adult Education Council of Denver (and later CBS, the National Educational Television Research Center, and the Communication department at the University of Illinois) to monitor the quality of programming.³⁸ When a negative review returned, Marshall temporarily cut off funding for the project. Crane appealed to Marshall for a smaller grant for continuation, by which time Marshall looked to Paul Lazarsfeld, professor at Columbia University and RF funded radio researcher, for a professional analysis.

Lazarsfeld was skeptical that a centralized “network” that manufactured educational records could act as an efficient counterpoint to commercial broadcasting. However, he lauded Crane’s unusual ability to successfully coordinate the first operating educational infrastructure to include distribution and manufacturing.³⁹ That such an infrastructure worked, led to renewed interest by Marshall under the condition that measurement metrics be taken of the curricular success of specific programs. Crane had created a consistent mode of production in which most affiliated stations were playing the same programming to regional “public” listenership. Meanwhile, Robert Hudson was appointed to replace Crane as director of the RMRC, and due to his relationship with Marshall, support was extended. By 1940 the RMRC had produced thirty-two programs in eight continuous series, and broadcast one hundred and nine times over its thirteen affiliates.⁴⁰

Upon receiving a second wave of RF funding in 1940, Hudson expanded services to include divisions of workshop centers in which studio auditoriums would be available for educational listenership. He also set up a trained, experienced, public relations center on behalf of the Council. However, due to internal politics, A.G. Crane was ousted as president of the University of Wyoming in 1941. Robert Hudson’s working relationship with Marshall began his prominent career in the educational broadcasting movement. Crane’s career did not end there though, and he went on to become governor of the state of Wyoming. The RMRC, which during WW II became a crucial site for the dissemination of official governmental information to the region, disbanded in 1950.

National Broadcasting—The Office of Education

Among serendipitous events in 1934, John Studebaker, the Superintendent of Des Moines public schools, was appointed U.S. Commissioner of Education and was tasked with overseeing

the development of federal initiatives related to educational broadcasting for the Department of the Interior. He commenced the first federal investment in electric education under the Federal Radio Education Committee (FREC) while working in concert with land-grant universities for noncommercial broadcasting advocacy. Together federal and state-based educators founded a successful campaign that subsequently worked as the National Association of Educational Broadcasters until the 1980s. Studebaker viewed radio as an important technological extension of national educational initiatives such as town-hall meetings called “public forums,”⁴¹ as well as general civic and curricular programming.

Upon arrival at the Office of Education (OOE), which directly preceded the Communications Act, Studebaker noted both the lack of channels available to the OOE, as well as the contrast between radio and the classroom regarding coherent standards for educational broadcasting practice and administration. Studebaker turned to Marshall to underwrite federal investment in educational broadcasting research. Since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had been recently created to regulate private investment in technology, with no stipulations for public service, little money could be set aside for Studebaker’s FREC. Such funding would have been seen as a conflict of interest with recent federal policies. Hence, in 1936 Studebaker’s office applied for several grants from the RF. His application noted that their request was designed to “enlist” radio broadcasting as an instrument for education.⁴² Under the umbrella of the FREC, Studebaker increased communication between hundreds of educational, independent, and commercial broadcasting stations, a number of national educational organizations, and the FCC, toward the nationalization of noncommercial broadcasting. Studebaker intended to aid in the “development of educational programs in the fields of science,

history, current affairs, and social studies, and a technique of distribution in collaboration with public education authorities.’’⁴³

In practice the FREC was an unusual composite of radio interests—the FCC, educational, advocacy, philanthropic, and even commercial organizations were among those represented on the council, all with an eye for the improvement of educational broadcasting. While due to frequency scarcity, commercial interests had strongly lobbied against educators previous to 1934, the unexpected result was that the networks felt burdened by stipulations in the Communications Act that networks produce “sustaining” programming to carry the slack of educational stations that no longer existed. For this the networks turned to Studebaker to locate what programs would be deemed valuable and sought to collaborate with the OOE toward the production of documentary and classroom programming.

With RF grants Studebaker organized three conferences between 1934 and 1939 and began the first educational radio clearing house for OOE approved scripts.⁴⁴ The FREC was further successful in uniting different interests in common discourse, and this influenced the newly constituted Federal Communications Commission to favor progress toward educational frequencies. As mentioned above, the FCC had been formed in 1934 as an outcome of the Communication Act, and its primary goal was to regulate technological research and frequency allocations. As federal technocrats FCC employees did not stand against noncommercial interests, though they were compelled to require broadcasts to follow standards of regulation. The FREC began to work with the FCC to study frequency availability for educational broadcasts. Their research noted ample airtime available for educational programming. Optimistic for the capacity for educators to gain more stations, they released a joint document stating that the goal of the project would be to “eliminate controversy and misunderstanding

between groups of educators and between the industry and educators,” as well as “promote actual cooperative arrangements between educators and broadcasters.” Subsequent FCC commissioners contributed (in varying degrees) to the delegation of frequencies for schools and universities.⁴⁵

FREC’s wide connectivity among players in the radio industry soon snowballed into several important steps toward the creation of the scaffolding for a national noncommercial approach. Identifying sixteen initiatives, the FREC applied for and received \$168,620 in RF funds toward addressing problems of educational broadcasting methods and administration.⁴⁶ These initiatives included studies of difficulties by educators in using the radio medium, cooperation between states and regional broadcasters, school broadcasts, the training of station managers, and a study of the effects of broadcasts upon adults and children. In a tepid sign of support the commercial advocate, the National Association of Broadcasters, donated \$27,000 to the FREC for educational development.⁴⁷ These investments led to the creation of several initiatives in the promotion of educational broadcasting, especially the difficult task of creating a sustainable organizational standard and a distribution center for programs.

In line with documentation as early as October 1935, the OOE planned to promote a federal base for educational broadcasting, detailed in the document: “What the Office of Education Can Do.”⁴⁸ In the proposal the OOE proposed to

“assemble checking committees and other administrative responsibilities, mimeograph sample copies of scripts to be sent out on a mailing list for those groups requesting the service, prepare and distribute suggestions for proper production of the scripts, try out the scripts under the supervision of production and music directors, write and arrange necessary music, and carry necessary overhead for early production, including line rental, heat, light, stationary, etc.”⁴⁹

Many of these initiatives merely mimicked the Office of Education’s extant services for school districts. So it was not a difficult transition for the FREC to imagine and then create a national

clearinghouse for quality educational scripts and curricular goals, shipped for small fees to universities and school districts. That such large federal and philanthropic institutions were working together on this project piqued the interest of other institutions from the Carnegie Corporation to William Paley at CBS, who began to work with Studebaker and FCC chairmen E.O. Sykes and Anning Prall.⁵⁰

As stated above, these initiatives led to a series of conferences about the direction to take with noncommercial media. In the second of three large FREC conferences in 1937, for example, Studebaker spoke to the problem of reconciling public and private interests for the purposes of democratic public control of radio. While the Communications Act had labeled all broadcasting approaches with such a perspective as “propaganda,” including educational broadcasts, the 1937 conference compelled the FCC to amend the Act. Stating that “it is impossible to determine the character or value of a broadcast merely by its origin or sponsorship,” FCC representatives motioned toward mutual cooperation between educators and gatekeepers.⁵¹ This led to the FCC proposition that “educators engaged in broadcasting are to be given a better understanding of the industry’s methods for periods of three to six months.”⁵² The RF funded a comprehensive study program in promotion of FREC initiatives, and NAEB educators were directed to various apprenticeships and internships with the networks to study program production and administration. The FCC noted that educators had known “relatively little of listener interests on which broadcasting has to build,” and that educators could not rely “upon their judgment of weighing these factors in broadcasting without some surer knowledge of them.”⁵³ Studebaker’s technocratic facilitation between the OOE, FCC, networks, educators, and Marshall, proved to be a fundamentally crucial occasion toward the realization of a federal wing of noncommercial broadcasting. Subsequently, educators structured their approaches to best practices around a

hybrid mix of network administration, office of education organization and standards, and appeal to FCC standards for meeting the criteria of the public interest, while developing core curricular goals for radio.

I wish to thank the rigorous staff of the Rockefeller Archive Center, especially archivist Nancy Adgent, who was generous with her professional advice and personal time, Thomas Rosenbaum for his helpful knowledge of Rockefeller history, and Erwin Levold and Judy Russo for their useful editing suggestions.

Editor's Note: This research report is presented here with the author's permission but should not be cited or quoted without the author's consent.

Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online is a periodic publication of the Rockefeller Archive Center. Edited by Erwin Levold, Research Reports Online is intended to foster the network of scholarship in the history of philanthropy and to highlight the diverse range of materials and subjects covered in the collections at the Rockefeller Archive Center. The reports are drawn from essays submitted by researchers who have visited the Archive Center, many of whom have received grants from the Archive Center to support their research.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

ENDNOTES:

¹ <http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/buxton.pdf> .

² <http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/kridel.php> .

³ <http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/tobias.pdf> .

⁴ Communications Act of 1934: <http://transition.fcc.gov/Reports/1934new.pdf> .

⁵ "Radio in the Schools," Folder 3693, Box 358, Series 1.2, General Education Broad (GEB).

⁶ Grant-in-Aid application from Federal Radio Education Council, Folder 3950, Box 332, Series 200S, Record Group (RG) 1.1, Rockefeller Foundation (RF).

⁷ RF Trustees Meeting, April 10, 1935, Folder 50, Box 5, Series 911, RG 3.1, RF.

⁸ "New Program in the Humanities," April 10, 1935, Folder 156, Box 29, Series 900, RG 3.2, RF.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Program in the Humanities," 1933, Folder 159, Box 29, Series 900, RG 3.2, RF.

¹¹ David Stevens, "The Humanities in Theory and in Practice," March 31, 1937, Folder 158, Box 29, Series 900, RG 3.2, RF.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Program in the Humanities, *ibid.*

¹⁵ "New Program in the Humanities," *ibid.*

¹⁶ RF Trustees Meeting, *ibid.*

¹⁷ "New Program in the Humanities," *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

-
- ¹⁹ Grant-in-Aid Application, University Broadcast Council, June 21, 1935, Folder 3394, Box 284, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Allen Miller, "The Problem of Educational Broadcasting and A Plan for Its Solution," April 8, 1935, Folder 3394, Box 284, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Marshall Interviews of UBC participants, April 23, 1935, Folder 3395, Box 284, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ²⁵ Letter from Allen to Marshall, July 22, 1937, Folder 3397, Box 285, Series 200R, RG1.1, RF.
- ²⁶ Letter from Allen to Marshall, August 21, 1936, Folder 3395, Box 284, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ²⁷ Miller to Marshall, April 28th, 1937, Folder 3397, Box 285, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ²⁸ John Marshall Diaries, Interview with William Benton, December 29, 1937, Folder 3397, Box 285, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ²⁹ Letter from William Benton to John Marshall, February 16, 1938, Folder 3398, Box 285, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³⁰ A.G. Crane, Preliminary Prospectus for a Rocky Mountain Public Radio Service, April 29, 1937, Folder 3320, Box 279, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³¹ John Marshall Diaries on A.C. Crane, April 13, 1937, Folder 3307, Box 277, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ A. G. Crane to John Marshall, July 22, 1939, Folder 3308, Box 277, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³⁵ John Marshall Diaries, November 20, 1937, Folder 3712, Box 360, Series 1.2, GEB.
- ³⁶ Reported in April 1941 Application for Renewal Funds, Folder 3315, Box 278, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³⁷ Proposal—Rocky Mountain Radio Project: A Plan for Cooperative, Regional, Broadcasting in Public Interest, July 22, 1939, Folder 3310, Box 278, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³⁸ A.G. Crane to John Marshall, May 22, 1939, Folder 3308, Box 277, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ³⁹ Paul Lazarsfeld to John Marshall, February 26, 1940, Folder 3307, Box 277, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴⁰ Robert Hudson to John Marshall, March 4, 1940, Folder 3311, Box 278, Series 200R, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴¹ Department of Interior Press Release, October 21, 1936, Folder 3950, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴² John Studebaker (Federal Radio Education Committee) Application for Grant-in-Aid, October 22, 1936, Folder 3950, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Department of Interior Release, "Increased Radio Activity in Schools is seen by Educational Script Exchange, June 16, 1937, Folder 3951, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴⁵ Federal Radio Education Committee Internal Report, Jan 12, 1937, Folder 3951, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴⁶ Grant-in-Aid Application, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ "The Work of the Federal Radio Education Committee," 1936, Folder 3950, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴⁸ Department of the Interior, "What the Office of Education Can Do," October 3, 1936, Folder 3950, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Federal Radio Education Committee, Internal Memo, January 12, 1937, Folder 3951, Box 332, Series 200S, RG 1.1, RF.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid.