



Selected Papers of #AoIR2020:
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PANEL

PODCASTING IN TRANSITION: FORMALIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

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Podcasting has thrived since its popularization in 2004 as a bastion for amateur media production. Over the past ten years, however, entrepreneurs and legacy media companies have rapidly expanded their interests in podcasting, bringing with them professional standards and the logics of capital. Breakout hits such as 2014's *Serial* (with nearly 40 million downloads) and *This American Life* have demonstrated to both programmers and advertisers the potential for podcasting to emerge as a commercially viable media industry (O'Connell, 2015). According to a recent nationwide survey by Edison Research (2019), an estimated 90 million listeners reported having listened to a podcast in the previous month. Despite the medium's homespun, DIY roots, this dramatic expansion of the podcast audience and interest from legacy media has begun to transform it "from a do-it-yourself, amateur niche medium into a commercial mass

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medium” (Bonini, 2015, p. 27).

This AoIR 2020 panel aims to explore the transitions currently underway in podcasting. Specifically, each of the papers on this panel address in some way the process of formalization, or the process by which “media systems become progressively more rationalized, consolidated and financially transparent” (Lobato & Thomas, 2015, p. 27). Formalization is not a monolithic process, but rather one that is responsive to existing institutional, regulatory, and cultural structures. It is also historically contingent. The first paper by Tiziano Bonini, entitled “Podcasting as a cultural form between old and new media” utilizes a historical lens to link the current trajectory of the medium’s development to the development and domestication of radio in the 1920s as well as the rise of online streaming services in the 21st Century. In particular, this paper situates podcasting in the context of these earlier technologies, arguing that the medium is best understood as a complex interplay between networks of market actors.

The second paper by Dario Llinares reframes the formalization debate by pulling the discussion away from the confining binaries of utopian or dystopian narratives. Instead, this paper situates podcasting within a much broader context by leveraging Don Idhe’s phenomenological philosophy of technology to “speculate on a potential future of reified oral/aural meditation.” This paper considers the nature of the medium itself as a unique “techno-sonic experience”. Here, podcasting is not considered as a medium being shaped by the formalization efforts of institutions or legacy forms of media. Instead, podcasting emerges as a transformational technology that promises a new era of sound integration.

The complex interplay of actors in podcasting is explored in more detail by papers 3 and 4. In the third paper, entitled “Formalising the informal: BBC commissions and the shape of podcasts,” Richard Berry explores the powerful role of the BBC in providing an institutional and creative framework for podcasting production via its BBC Sounds online radio platform. Through the efforts of this venerable public service broadcaster to reach new audiences by developing podcast content specific to this platform, this paper argues that the medium’s amateur and informal ethos stands to be re-shaped. The fourth paper by Patricia Aufderheide et. al., entitled “Protecting public podcasting: Are U.S. news, public affairs, and learning podcasts at risk?”, takes a macro-level view of the formalization process, focusing on podcasts within the U.S. context. Nothing that the most popular podcasts in the U.S. are either learning or information-oriented, Aufderheide and her co-authors argue that the podcast ecosystem fulfills an important public service function. The introduction of platform services like Spotify as power players in podcast distribution, coupled with the rise of advertising as a means of monetization, presents new risks for perpetuation of the medium as an aural public service resource.

Finally, the fifth paper by John Sullivan expands the arguments surrounding podcast formalization by exploring the introduction of market information regimes within the medium. Specifically, this paper explores the development of audience metrics for podcasting, beginning in the mid-2000’s. This paper makes clear that powerful industry players such as Apple and the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) are quickly standardizing the measurement of podcast audiences. These standards create a more

transparent market for advertisers, but in so doing they also shift the focus away from the unique nature of podcast content and move it toward notions of audience size. This has the potential to move the medium further away from its amateur roots.

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PODCASTING AS A CULTURAL FORM BETWEEN OLD AND NEW MEDIA

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Radio and emerging podcasting studies in recent years have often argued about the status of podcasting, without ever reaching an agreement. Radio scholars find in podcasting a form of remediation of radio, while those who approach podcasting from other disciplines or from digital media studies tend to enhance the disruptive aspects of podcasting as a new media.

In this paper I would like to propose a way out of this debate, a sort of third way, in which I will draw from the cultural history of broadcasting, the political economy of communication and cultural studies to analyze the existing continuities and differences between radio and podcasting. Comparing the early years of broadcasting with the early stage of podcasting, I will try to show that podcasting has re-mediated some aspects of the history, economy and aesthetics of radio, but it also represents something completely different from it. Contemporary phenomena as the platformisation of podcasting (Sullivan 2019) and the commodification of its audiences through intense datafication will be analysed through the lenses of historical inquiry, making comparisons with the commodification of broadcasting (Sterne et al. 2008).

I will argue that platformisation represents for podcasting what commercialization represented for broadcasting after the approval of the Radio Act of 1927: another cycle of commodification of the means of communication and of the audiences. Another similarity with the early stage of broadcasting is the transnationality of podcasting. Unlike the contemporary radio broadcasters' ecosystem, still strongly linked to national borders, the emerging podcasting ecosystem is transnational, like the early short-wave radio broadcasters: freed by the material burden of antennas, podcasting crosses national borders and flows freely online, but transnational flows of podcasting objects (audio and radio series) mostly originate from few countries. Podcasting transnationality brings with itself questions of cultural imperialism and content diversity, since American born podcasts are the most listened to in almost all European countries (EBU 2017).

In addition to similarities with radio history, podcasting shares common roots with other media. As Lobato noted while studying audiovisual streaming technologies, “Netflix is a hybrid technology that remediates a range of earlier media technologies in different aspects of its operation, and this mix of association is constantly changing” (2018: 43). Similarly, podcasting is a hybrid technology that remediates not only radio but a whole range of earlier media technologies in different aspects.

In this paper I will try to account for the mixed nature of podcasting’s cultural form (Williams 1974): podcasting should not be intended solely as a media object (the podcast episode) nor as a distribution technology (the rss format, the podcast networks or the podcast streaming platforms), but as a new, hybrid, cultural form, that draws not only from radio, but also from theatre, performing arts, design and internet culture. This cultural form has as a distinctive feature on-demand listening, the opposite of the audiovisual flow, which according to Williams (1974) represented the distinctive feature of broadcasting.

Of course, radio is the medium from which podcasting draws the most: I will argue that the process of remediation of radio occurs at three different levels: 1) production; 2) radio 'texts' (genres and formats) distribution and 3) audience reception. Podcasting has re-mediated previous forms of radio production (including some economic models), previous radio genres and previous forms of radio listening, but has also drawn on other media and other arts.

The aim of the paper is not to respond to the debate on the status of podcasting, as boring as the debate on the sex of angels. Rather, this reflection on the nature of podcasting is intended to be used as an example to contribute to a greater understanding of the relationship between old and new media and to demonstrate how the adoption and domestication of each new medium is forcibly shaped by the history of the media that arrived before him, the political economy of the media and the cultural environment in which this medium grows up. I will show how podcasting cannot be understood as a stable ecosystem but it should be better understood as an evolving network of different clusters of actors (producers, listeners, platforms, distribution technologies and internet infrastructures) competing each other. The network of actors that shaped the early stages of podcasting in 2004 has completely changed and today podcasting means for many people something very different from 2004. Independent producers and amateur podcasters still exist but are losing visibility in favour of new commercial actors. Competing visions of podcasting have emerged: an emergent platform-based ecosystem, driven by subscriptions or advertising is increasingly replacing independent podcasting ecosystem, not platformised and still running on rss feed. The case of podcasting will be used as a thinking tool to understand the unstable nature of every media in society, or, as Christina Dunbar Esther put it, “the flexibility of technology over time” (2014: 129).

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PODTOPIAN DREAMS: SOUND TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION FUTURES

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Competing utopian and dystopian discourses regarding the effects of digital technology and the internet on societal and human interaction, have become increasingly vociferous and polarised. Initial fervour as to a radical progressive technological transformation, improving everything from politics, climate, communication and democracy, has been replaced by a much more sceptical outlook prevalent in academia, popular culture and even the tech industry itself. We have still barely begun to come to terms with the dimensions of our cyber-infused lives, both in regards to the epistemological assumptions regarding mediated information (how do we know what we know) but increasingly in terms of a reshaped ontology of the human experience (the very nature of our being). The dichotomous narratives underpinning analyses of the digital transformation are manifold: living in an increasingly networked society is leading to greater levels of understanding, empathy and global common cause, or results in exclusory groupings and confrontational tribalism; the democratisation of information allows the bypassing of traditional gatekeepers, autonomy of media consumption and a growth in the marketplace of ideas, or has loosened sense of the provenance and veracity of information sources, a crisis of objective knowledge and expertise replaced by subjective opinion; technological interconnections in and across the public and private spheres create fluid systems of experience, more efficient, flexible and productive lives, or an era of ultra-surveillance, metrification of the self, and an epidemic of alienation and anxiety.

Podcasting is a fascinating medium to consider in this context. Since its inception in the mid 2000s, its first wave of interest which led to pronouncements of a transformation in audio media communication and onto the well-documented mainstream cross-over in the mid-2010s, a unique techno-industrial-cultural development has driven narratives of utopianism. Apple's iTunes infrastructure and RSS distribution for example facilitated an independent production ethos, an ethics of communitarian value (Markman 2012) and exemplified the best of participatory culture (Deuze 2007) and proussage (Leadbeater and Miller 2004). Podcasting's adoption by enthusiasts with niche sensibilities and a DIY ethos, has been correlated with a renaissance in sound creativity unencumbered by broadcast rules, censorship or a preconceived adherence to the traditional aesthetics of

radio. That podcasting's expansion also relied on the interrelationship between non-podcast specific technologies, (such as the emergence and ubiquity of the iPhone and the application of experience, and social media as key to podcast discovery), has led to implicit element of technological determinism within academic and popular discourse.

Within podcast studies literature however, the implied technological underpinning is often summarily subsumed into narratives of socio-cultural effects that are related to the medium's production, distribution and/or exhibition. Spatial and temporary flexibility, democratic distribution, producer and consumer autonomy, breaking of boundaries of form and content related to 'old' media, are just some of the criteria of analysis but a few. Podcasting is also often perceived as less susceptible to the negative effects associated with internet culture: the superficiality and venality of social media, shortening of attention spans, physical and cognitive impacts of screen usage. Discourses of utopianism linked to podcasting include its framing as part of the open source ethos (Heeremans 2019), alignment with the ideal of public service media while challenging both commercialised and traditional public service structures (Jarret 2009). In terms of audience response, claims for podcasting are wide-ranging. An ardent sense of cult fandom has been associated with the medium along with the notion that podcasts exude a unique intimacy of listening experience (Spinelli & Dann 2019) and there has even been allusions to holistic even mindful effects, exemplified in terms such as the 'podcast hug' coined on Irish musician Blindboy on his self-titled show (see Llinares 2019).

Potential negative aspects of podcasting have largely been focused on technological and industrial developments that may transform the next phase of podcasting's evolution. Sullivan highlights the "platform consolidation" (Sullivan 2019) as having the potential negative consequence for the independence, open source philosophy and user autonomy seen by many as essential to the DNA of the medium. With corporate expansion into podcasting the exacerbation of the medium's discovery problem (Pham 2013) along with potential economic ringfencing creating a two-tier hierarchy, are other concerns that have been highlighted.

What has been examined less, and what this paper begins to address, is where podcasting sits in the broader concerns with regard to the technological transformation of everyday life: How might podcast listening to affect the perception and utilisation information in diverse media fields? Does the discourse of intimacy exacerbate the echo-chamber effect? How might podcasting's adoption as a journalistic tool reflect contradictory media ethics? Does podcasting exacerbate eurocentrism and the English as a default global language? Has there been a greater diversity of voices that its open access framework might imply? How might the current phase of 'formalisation' bring podcasting into line with more traditional broadcast structures, and should scholars and independent producers be resisting this?

I will argue that podcasting has, up until this point, been shaped discursively into primarily utopian narratives because of its idiosyncratic technological underpinning, formal liminality between the ideals 'old' and 'new' media, a perception that the medium engenders an amalgamation between individual and collective practice, and a sense that podcasting technologies have instigated a reengagement with the potentials of

sound mediation. To explore this further, I will consider podcasting as marking the beginning of a transformational era in the integration of sound within our everyday experience. Drawing upon some of the seminal texts in the burgeoning field of Podcast Studies, I contextualise podcasting's development within the determinist constructionist dichotomy that underpins the philosophy of technology. I then go on to discuss how this feeds into discursive speculations in academia and the popular press with regards to a future of human-technology-world interaction in which sound technologies reorient our embodied human experience.

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FORMALISING THE INFORMAL: BBC COMMISSIONS AND THE SHAPE OF PODCASTS

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As a medium podcasting can trace its origins back to open-source pioneers who advocated a different form of media (Berry, 2006) one that was open, democratic and that bypassed traditional media gatekeepers. Early podcasts were unstructured, unformatted and driven by amateurs, or at least by those adopting roles of an amateur status. Like other media the origins of podcasting were grounded in sphere of the amateur, where semi-professional equipment was deployed and where software was developed by those with little or no experience (Benson, 2019). Equally, the producers in this space often had no prior experience of audio production. Between they founded a medium. Their behaviours as indicative of those outlined by McLuhan and Fiore (1967) in the 'Medium is the Massage' when discussing the status of the amateur. They note (as others have) that creators often bring their experience of old media to new media, however this may not be a professional response but an institutional one, whereas amateurism is 'anti-environmental' and where the amateur can "afford to lose" (ibid). Early podcasters were able to break conventions because they status as amateurs conferred not only the freedom to do so but also because they lacked the conditioning of the institution. We can call this the 'informality of podcasting.'

As Dann and Spinelli (2019) outline the nature of the medium in the 21st Century as (whilst challenged by new gatekeepers) has been capable of producing new forms of content and new opportunities for creatives. As the authors note "The simplified aesthetic of podcasting allows productions to be made cheaply, rapidly, and without specialist knowledge" (208). This suggests that even where productions are devised by those with prior experience in media production, a deliberately informal approach is taken. The experiences of podcasters suggest that the un-regulated nature of podcasting afforded them the ability to create content in their own way (Berry, 2018, 24-28) without the institutional brakes outlines above by McLuhan and Fiore. In the wake of the podcast Serial, the medium expanded and saw the arrival of corporate producers, in an ear labelled by Bonini (2015) as the 'Second Age of Podcasting' where different forms of the medium began to emerge. However, podcasts retained the core values of

independence, intimacy and informality. Jarrett has suggested that one aspect of podcasting is how “the social roles of consumer and producer are being performed in a de-institutionalised broadcasting context.” (2009, 119). But what happens when they work passes into an institutional broadcast context?

In 2008 the BBC reframed their online radio platform, rebranding it BBC Sounds and giving it a new remit to produce “podcasts which engage existing podcast listeners who don’t consume BBC output and podcasts which convert new people to the joys of podcasts” (BBC Commissioning). Within this framework the BBC has also posited a guide to the nature of the medium and created a series of briefs that connect to the institutional goal outlined above. It is into the context that this paper will explore the tensions between this sense of informality, where podcasters outline their own framework and one where conventions begin to emerge; however helpfully they might be framed. If we return to the earlier idea of the amateur, we can connect our current experience to that of previous media as they transitioned from the amateur to the professional (Wu, 2010).

This paper draws upon these contexts and frameworks and considers whether the structures offered here by the BBC and the wider shifts outlined by Sullivan (2019) as other corporate gatekeepers begin to stake out the podcast space, will change this sense of the informal. The documents published above by the BBC, along with other processes from that form part of a paradigm referred to as ‘toll podcasting’ by Bonini (2015) that add layers of structure and formality to a previously un-structured and informal medium.

This paper draws upon the growing field of podcast studies, leveraging an analysis of documentation, insights from professionals, and examples of content that will show the connection to the past. I argue that the sense of informality contributes to podcast aesthetics, even when that content is made within the confines of a corporate body. Indeed, for the BBC this informality has appeal to the younger they are seeking to reach at the current time; but by institutionalising these conventions does this disconnect the practices of podcasting from the sense of amateur outlined by McLuhan above? Or has informality become a trope within podcasts, wherever they might land in the Long Tail?

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PROTECTING PUBLIC PODCASTING: ARE U.S. NEWS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND LEARNING PODCASTS AT RISK?

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Introduction

We argue that a U.S.-based podcasting ecology can usefully be defined as public media, and that this ecology is at risk from the growth of advertising and platformization, although the networked structure and journalistic and public broadcasting traditions provide some immunity. We also believe that this concept can enrich the study of public media, which historically has focused on state-subsidized broadcasting.

The Podcasting Business

Podcasting, while still a small portion of media business, has grown dramatically in the last few years). Scholar John L. Sullivan (2018) calls this a moment of formalization, bringing consolidation, rationalization, and greater financial transparency. The financially viable podcasts, as Heeremans (2018) notes, have the backing of large media institutions. More than half of podcast listeners routinely listen to news/current events, and more than a third listen to educational programs (Westwood One, 2018).

The top 20 podcasts in the U.S., as defined by Podtrac in 2019, demonstrate this. Thirteen could be characterized as public purpose: Three news programs (*The Daily, Up First, NPR Politics Podcast*), two topical economics programs (*Freakonomics, Planet Money*), two science programs (*Hidden Brain, RadioLab*), two mini-lectures/discussions on general knowledge (*Stuff You Should Know, TED Radio Hour*), one business program (, one storytelling about public issues and social values (*This American Life*), one comedy show about the news (*Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!*), and one interview program on public issues and the arts (*Fresh Air*).

Public podcasting as a concept

First, consider the dominance and leadership of U.S. public broadcasting entities in U.S. podcasting. Of the top 20, 11 are produced by public broadcasting entities (including *Freakonomics*, an independently produced program whose success depends on relationships with public broadcasting entities). Public broadcasting entities, both stations and producer/distributor networks such as American Public Media (APM), National Public Radio (NPR), and Public Radio Exchange/Public Radio International (PRX/PRI), have taken leadership in investing in the form. NPR has developed reliable metrics from its Remote Audio Data analytics technology, and PRX/PRI has developed dynamic ad insertion technology. They have developed aggregators that offer both discovery and consumption: NPR has NPR One, and Radiotopia, a nonprofit that works within the orbit of public broadcasting, has Radio Public. They have invested financially in platform building; NPR and related public broadcasting entities have purchased Pocket Casts. These top-rated shows have myriad siblings and cousins further down the chart of popularity.

Second, consider the public service function of the podcasts in this mini-ecology. It has been argued that public service media (traditionally public broadcasting) functions as a space in what is sometimes called the pseudo-public sphere (Blumler, 1992), a zone in which media enacts and models behaviors of civil discourse. It has been described as a service of the “microdynamics of democracy” (Dahlgren, 2006, p. 282) by engaging viewers with important issues and providing them information to fuel informed conversation. This concept draws from a notion of publicness particular to the American tradition of pragmatism (Dewey, 1927), although it invokes the language of the more familiar Habermasian arguments about the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992; Gripsrud & Eide, 2010; Habermas, Crossley, & Roberts, 2004). For Dewey, a public shares in common the effects of both corporate and government actions; it constitutes itself in addressing them by communicating with others similarly affected in its own defense (Dewey, 1927; Westbrook, 1991). Communication becomes action. Given that definition, podcasts outside public broadcasting also sometimes function as public media.

Third, in interim results of research, we found some congruence between the concerns of Americans, as defined in monthly Gallup polling (Gallup, 2019), and topics covered in public media podcasts. Our presentation will discuss these results in more detail.

Threats and opportunities

Although our completed paper will include a more extensive economic analysis, here we point to potential threats to this public podcasting ecology. In the short run, even in the relatively decentralized environment, the growth of advertiser interest in podcasting leads both to an expansion of financially viable podcasts and to productions that tilt more toward the entertaining, sensational, or shocking than the informative. Comedy podcasts accounted for 18% of the medium's ad sales in the first three months of 2019, research firm Magellan (2019) reports. That was followed by News & Politics (15.9%), Society & Culture (14.2%), Sports & Recreation (10.6%), Business (8.1%), Health (7.4%), and Science & Medicine (3.2%), with other categories collecting 22.5% (Magellan, 2019).

In the medium term, platformization bodes a sea change in media in general, and to podcasting in particular. This is signaled by the aggressive moves into the podcasting landscape by Spotify and Luminary. The nature of this threat is well identified in scholarly literature. Not only Sullivan (2019), but also Nieborg and Poell (2018), warned generally of the "platformization of cultural production," with large companies increasingly controlling the terms of access for cultural producers and, ultimately, consumers.

In public podcasting, the dangers of advertising derailing mission have been signaled repeatedly, but platformization remains virtually undiscussed, as we learned from a review of current trade literature within public podcasting and from interviews with nine executives.

Conclusion

Public podcasting can draw on rich cultural traditions in journalism and public broadcasting, and on economic resources from the public ecology itself, but awareness of the changing environments and its threats to decentralized business models will be important for survival.

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MARKET INFORMATION REGIMES IN PODCASTING: FORMALIZATION AND AUDIENCE METRICS

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Podcasting has thrived since its creation in 2004 as a bastion for homegrown, amateur media production. Over the past ten years, however, entrepreneurs and legacy media companies have rapidly expanded their interests in podcasting, bringing with them professional standards and the logics of capital. The arrival of podcasting into the cultural mainstream has attracted the attention of major corporations and advertisers. Advertisers have not jumped into podcasting with blind faith in the commercial potential of the medium, however. Rather, they have insisted upon reliable audience metrics to protect their clients and investments. Until recently, however, there were no standardized measurements of audience exposure, nor was there validation of metrics provided by a third-party (such as Nielsen or Arbitron in broadcast radio). Podcasting has witnessed a spirited and sometimes contentious debate among different players within podcasting about which metrics should become the standard, or whether there is any prospect for standardization. These debates underscore the contested dynamics of industry formalization.

Formalization in Podcasting

The podcasting landscape has been reshaped in the past several years by acquisitions and mergers among players in the industry. Major platform services like Spotify, Stitcher, Google, and Apple have all made moves to more closely bind consumers to their proprietary services, threatening the open architecture of distribution via RSS (Sullivan, 2019). The platformization and industry consolidation is fueling what scholars call *formalization*. Formalization describes the process by which “media systems become progressively more rationalized, consolidated and financially transparent” (Lobato & Thomas, 2015, p. 27). An example of the type of formalization taking place of the medium can be seen in audio giant Spotify’s recent acquisitions of podcasting production company Gimlet, podcast host Anchor.fm (Hu, 2019), and its 2020 acquisition of the sports podcast network The Ringer (Robertson & Scheiber, 2020).

Trade conventions like Podcast Movement have also emerged as key socialization venues for instilling the values of entrepreneurship into podcast production (Sullivan, 2018).

Emerging Market Regimes in Podcasting

The recent introduction of standardized audience metric promises to accelerate the formalization of podcasting. I argue in this paper that the development of audience metrics for podcasting represents the emergence of a *market information regime*. A market information regime, as conceptualized by Anand and Peterson (2000, p. 271), is comprised of “regularly updated information about market activity provided by an independent supplier, presented in a predictable format with consistent frequency, and available to all interested parties at a nominal cost.” These regimes are socially-constructed mechanisms that allow for players within a marketplace to gauge competition, benchmark their own performance, set goals, and engage in marketplace surveillance. As Kosterich and Napoli (2016, p. 255) note, the information that these market regimes provide to media creators and companies “becomes fundamental to how marketplace participants perceive the dynamics of their market, and thus affects organizational strategy and decision making. They are, essentially, the agreed upon lens through which marketplace participants perceive their world.” Legacy media such as broadcast television and radio have firmly established market information regimes that stretch back for decades in the form of audience ratings (Buzzard, 2015; Webster et al., 2014), although the introduction of social media analytics (D’heer & Verdegem, 2015; Kosterich & Napoli, 2016) and online distribution via streaming platforms (Alexander, 2016; Steinberg, 2017) have begun to disrupt the status quo.

I trace the development of market information regimes in podcasting by first outlining the contested audience metrics in the mid-2000s. Beginning as early as 2005, prominent podcast hosting companies competed for podcasters (their customers) by offering information about the number of downloads for each audio file – or episode – that was hosted on their servers. The “download per episode” (DPE) number became something of an industry standard for measuring audience size, though podcast hosts developed their own proprietary means for measuring this number. Spotify’s entry into podcasting as a major streaming platform further complicated podcast audience measurement by introducing new means of accessing podcast content via streaming or “progressive downloading.”

The second stage in the formalization of podcast metrics was brought about in part by Apple, which began to offer anonymized download metrics to individual podcasters for free in 2017 (Kafka, 2017). Apple’s move to provide download stats was significant due to Apple’s central role as one of oldest and largest podcast distributors. The download statistics offered by Apple gave podcasters a glimpse into their audience, though it was limited to listeners accessing their podcasts on Apple devices or via the Apple Podcasts API. At the same time, key market players in podcasting formed a technical working group under the auspices of the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) to create the podcast measurement guidelines (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2017). With the IAB agreeing

to “certify” podcast hosting companies for compliance with these guidelines, the stage was set for a full formalization of podcast consumption metrics.

In the conclusion, I argue that the emergence of a market information regime for podcasting serves to streamline the formalization of the medium along the lines of legacy media such as broadcast television and radio. The shift toward standardized metrics may also further professionalize the medium, moving it further away from its roots in amateur content.

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