

**SYMPOSIUM: SOUND RECOGNITION OF HISTORICAL  
VISIBILITY: THE RADIO PRESERVATION TASK FORCE OF THE  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS—THOUGHTS & PERSPECTIVES**

**Commerce and Culture: Histories of Radio  
Sponsorship Yet to Be Written**

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*Research into the roles, perspectives, and strategies of specific radio-era sponsors could provide new insights into the history of radio and American culture. I provide a brief overview of major tobacco, food, soap, and automobile sponsors and discuss the challenges of researching the role of corporations in American cultural history. With the aim of encouraging more scholarship, I suggest that analyzing radio sponsors could produce work on a variety of topics of broad interest, from the cultural history of cigarettes, promoted on dozens of tobacco-sponsored programs, to the representation of gender through sound on the Betty Crocker radio shows (1924–53).*

David Rieff (2016) argues that popular memory of historical events tends to reshape the past in order to fit the concerns of the present. Historical scholarship should resist such mythologizing; however, the focus of scholarly analysis varies also with scholarly trends. Since scholars are human beings who live in a social world, their work also tends to reflect the concerns of the present. These can, to be sure, inspire and illuminate, but they can also distort. In broadcast history, for example, Michele Hilmes (1990) reminds us that some scholars, “projecting the decisive role played by today’s network programming departments backward onto radio, neglect the true originators” (p. 81) of most broadcast programming: the sponsors and their advertising agencies. Although the commercialization of American broadcasting has been the subject of many excellent broadcast histories (e.g., Doerksen, 2005; Douglas, 1987; Russo, 2010; Smulyan, 1994), specific explorations of the actual role of sponsors would improve our understanding of that process.

Sponsorship, in broadcasting, is where commerce and culture intersect. Businesses sought to sell goods by meeting the demands of audiences seeking

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entertainment. Today, this sort of thing is called “branded entertainment,” “branded content,” or “content marketing”; it has lately begun to attract advertisers seeking the attention of audiences able to evade interrupting commercials. Despite its original and recurring importance, however, some scholars have been eager to dismiss sponsorship. Commercial forces are often assumed to be corrupt, or to suppress the production of culture, or if they are not, simply glossed over as passive underwriting (Cowen, 1998; Potter, 1954). Cultural legitimation, or the elevation of the status of a commercial cultural form, has often depended on the suppression of its overtly commercial elements (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 134). What little tends to be remembered about the role of sponsors during the 1930s through the 1950s are stories of sponsors suppressing art and truth to fulfill narrow commercial goals (e.g., Barnouw, 1978, p. 50). However, I do not think we can understand our culture if we continue to dismiss commercialism as an alien force rather than an integral element, not only of broadcasting, but of most of our popular cultural forms, from vaudeville to movies (Hilmes, 1997, p. 18). Commercialism, rather than suppressing the popular, is sometimes the best means for spreading it (Doerksen, 2005, p. x). And, in broadcasting, commercialism (or advertising) bears a symbiotic relation to its medium, just as recording technology does to music: each is an “essential component” of the other (Livingston, 2011).

In my recent book, *A Word from Our Sponsor: Admen, Advertising, and the Golden Age of Radio* (Meyers, 2014), I analyze how specific advertising agencies functioned as program production companies for their clients, the radio sponsors. The wide variety of companies and agencies involved in producing radio programming resulted in multifarious genres, derived in part from a multiplicity of strategies for pleasing audiences and resonating with contemporary cultural forms. Through a careful examination of archival materials, I show how each advertising agency applied its own notions of effective advertising strategies to the programs it produced. Blackett-Sample-Hummert (B-S-H) employed repetitive, product-centered “hard-sell” strategies in dozens of serials (e.g., *Ma Perkins*, *Stella Dallas*, *Just Plain Bill*). Their serials’ portentous repetitiousness, often mocked by cultural critics, was actually an intentional advertising strategy based on assumptions that audiences needed repetition of both the narrative and the product name. Young & Rubicam (Y&R), on the other hand, was a “soft-sell” agency that focused on entertaining audiences rather than annoying them with product information. In order to disarm audiences resistant to advertising, Y&R went so far as to satirize hard-sell radio advertising during the programs of comedians Fred Allen and Jack Benny (Meyers, 2014, p. 167). Batten Barton Durstine & Osborn (BBDO) specialized in “institutional” or corporate image advertising. BBDO helped polish the images of embattled corporations such as Du Pont and United States Steel with programs designed to educate the public and deflect regulatory scrutiny: the historical docudrama *Cavalcade of America* (1935–53) and the dramatic anthology *Theatre Guild on the Air* (1945–53). J. Walter Thompson (JWT) mastered the celebrity association strategy on radio. Believing that stars were the most efficient means for attracting

audiences, JWT featured guest stars from Hollywood on *Lux Radio Theatre* (1934–55) and a variety of musical and comedy guest stars on *Kraft Music Hall* (1933–49).

As these examples should indicate, the interactions among commercial imperatives and cultural forms were no matter of mere suppression or corruption or passive underwriting of culture by commerce. When the goals of commerce conflicted with those of culture, as they often did, sponsors as well as artists were as likely to be internally conflicted as externally combative. In *A Word from Our Sponsor* I just begin to explicate some of the key dynamics operating in the commercial culture of sponsored radio programming, focusing only on advertising agencies, a single set of institutional actors in commercial radio. The multifarious dynamics of radio sponsors themselves deserve more scholarly attention than they have so far received. What follows are suggestions for further research.<sup>1</sup>

A large and fascinating topic is the role of tobacco companies as sponsors of broadcast programming. Tobacco companies were some of the most active and consistent radio sponsors up through the 1950s. While some print and television tobacco advertising has been carefully analyzed by a variety of scholars (e.g., Marchand, 1985; Pollay, 1991; Samuel, 2001), the strategies, impact, and meanings of tobacco broadcast advertising and programming during the *radio* era—a key time period for the expansion of cigarette use—have not been as thoroughly analyzed. One of the most significant tobacco sponsors on radio was American Tobacco, which collaborated with Lord & Thomas, then one of the top ad agencies headed by one of the most important theorists of hard-sell advertising, Albert Lasker (Cruikshank & Schultz, 2010). American Tobacco's top brand was then Lucky Strike cigarettes, which sponsored multiple popular music programs, for example, *The Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra* (aka *The Lucky Strike Hour* and *The Lucky Strike Program*) (1928–34); *Your Hit Parade* (1935–53); *Kay Kyser's Kollege of Music Knowledge* (1938–44); and *All Time Hit Parade* (1943–44). Lucky Strike also sponsored news and quiz programs (for example, *Your News Parade* [1937–38] and *Information Please* [1940–43]) and, most famously, *The Jack Benny Program* (1944–55). American Tobacco's other cigarette brand, Pall Mall, sponsored *Believe It or Not* (1944), *People in the News* (1937–38), and *The Eddy Duchin Show* (1938–39). Until his death in 1946, American Tobacco was led by one of the most colorful of all corporate titans, George Washington Hill. Hill's domineering personality, memorably satirized in *The Hucksters* novel (1946) and film (1947), came to represent the obnoxious radio sponsor. The apocryphal story that he demanded that a network chief dance to popular tunes perfectly exemplifies a common understanding of the relative power of advertiser and network in the period (Paley, 1979, p. 84). Hill's basic strategy was to use radio as a hard sell advertising medium, designed to capture and keep audience attention through popular music (American Tobacco Company, 1938). His tremendous impact on radio ought to be further investigated and more thoroughly analyzed.

Other tobacco companies were similarly invested in radio. The Liggett & Myers' brand Chesterfield was a major radio sponsor of music (*Music That Satisfies* [1931–

33], *The Chesterfield Show* [1934–38], *Chesterfield Time* [1937], *Chesterfield Presents* [1937–39], *The Bing Crosby Chesterfield Show* [1949–52]); comedy (*The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* [1938–39], *The Bob Hope Show* [1950–52], *The Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis Show* [1952–53]); and drama (*Dragnet* [1949–51, 1952–55]; *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons* [1951–52]; *Gunsmoke* [1954–57]). Chesterfield was also one of Arthur Godfrey's main sponsors from 1946 to 1953. A 1952 Chesterfield commercial by Godfrey, in which he insisted that cigarettes did no harm, became the basis for later litigation against tobacco companies (Cox, 2008, p. 189). Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, two of the top entertainers in music, broadcasting, stage, and film, were also closely associated with the brand. Analyzing these companies' shaping and use of these celebrity images would surely be worthwhile.

The Lorillard Company sponsored programs through its brand Old Gold. *The Old Gold Hour*, first broadcast in 1928, appeared in various iterations (*The Old Gold Program* [1934], *The New Old Gold Show* [1943–44]), and Old Gold sponsored many other music programs featuring top band leaders, including Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Fred Waring, Frank Sinatra, Paul Whiteman, and Jimmy Durante. Camel, an R. J. Reynolds brand, sponsored *Camel Pleasure Hour* (1930–31), *Camel Quarter-Hour* (1931–32), *Camel Caravan* (1939, 1940–41, 1942–43, 1946–54), *Camel Comedy Caravan* (1942–45), as well as variety shows hosted by Eddie Cantor, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and comedies such as *The Abbott and Costello Show* (1942–47) and *The Jimmy Durante Show* (1948–50). Philip Morris, another major tobacco company, sponsored a variety of programs including quiz shows (*What's My Name?* [1938–39]), drama anthologies (*Philip Morris Playhouse* [1939–44, 1948–49, 1951–53], *Author's Playhouse* [1942–43]), variety shows (*The Milton Berle Show* [1947–48], *The Rudy Vallee Show* [1946–47], *Kate Smith Sings* [1948–49], *The Eddie Cantor Show* [1951–52]), and proto-reality programs such as *This is Your Life* (1948–50) and *Queen for a Day* (ca. 1950–57). A prominent adman, Milton Biow, apparently came up with the idea to pay a hotel bellboy to shout "Paging Philip Morris!" throughout a hotel lobby as a gimmick to promote the brand (normally, bellboys paged guests to receive telegrams or telephone calls) (Cox, 2008, p. 210). The two bellboys who alternately played the part on radio became famous, embodying the brand in an *audio* form that deserves far more analysis. This partial list of a few of the programs sponsored by tobacco companies should demonstrate that the tobacco industry's impact on commercial radio programming was extensive.

The commercialization of news on the radio is an important topic, usually analyzed from the standpoint of journalism and its standards (e.g., Horten, 2002; Socolow, 2010). News was a particularly difficult genre for sponsors because they generally sought to associate their brands with positive, uplifting, and entertaining programming. Too many advertisers were loath to juxtapose their commercial message with stories of murder and mayhem. Broadcasting, they assumed, created stronger media effects than print, where such adjacencies had always existed.

Hence, while entertainment news was commonly sponsored, fewer “hard” news programs received sponsorship until the advent of World War II (Charnley, 1948). *Time* magazine, aiming to cross promote its own journalism, actually began its newsreel, *The March of Time*, on radio in 1931 before turning it into the more famous filmed newsreel beginning in 1935. When *Time* executives decided in 1933 that the radio program was too expensive to carry alone, they sought new sponsors for the program, such as Wrigley’s Spearmint Gum and Remington-Rand, which had the ad agency BBDO oversee production (“Remington Rand Marches on,” 1934). The newsreel format, perhaps closer in style to propaganda films than later television journalism, should be studied not just as a visual media form but as an audio form as well. Other news sponsors include Goodyear, which sponsored *Goodyear Farm Radio News* (1938–39); Pure Oil sponsored *H. V. Kaltenborn* (1940–55); Serutan laxative sponsored *News for the Americas* (1941–45), *Monday Morning Headlines* (1944–46), and *William L. Shirer* (1945–47); Campbell Soup sponsored *Edward R. Murrow and the News* (1947–50); and General Motors’ Chevrolet branded the news in *Chevrolet Spotlights the News* (1954–58). It may be interesting to investigate the history of radio news sponsorship of the 1930s through the 1950s in order to better understand 1950s television news sponsorship and 1960s television documentary sponsorship.

While there has been excellent scholarship on music programming (e.g., Doerksen, 2005; Goodman, 2011) and music used for advertising, such as jingles (Taylor, 2012), the specific role of sponsors in selecting music programming for radio deserves more attention. Music sponsors tended to belong to one of two categories: those who sought to elevate audience tastes by sponsoring classical music programs (e.g., Texaco and *Metropolitan Opera* [1940–2004]; *Ford Sunday Evening Hour* [1934–42, 1945–46]; Firestone Tire and Rubber Co.’s *The Voice of Firestone* [1928–57]), and those who sought to cater to what they perceived to be popular tastes by providing the latest popular music (e.g., Lucky Strike’s *Your Hit Parade* [1935–53] and Coca-Cola’s many music programs, including *Coca-Cola Top Notchers* [1930–32], *The Coca-Cola Hour* [1938–40, 1948–49], and *The Coke Club* [1943–44, 1945–47, 1950–51]). Comparing and contrasting the various advertising strategies of such sponsors could help explain how the dynamics of cultural hierarchies played out on radio. Why did some sponsors view radio as an educational medium, ideal for “cultural uplift,” while other sponsors and their agencies believed in the power of popular culture to burnish their brands?

Some of the largest and most important consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies were also the largest and most important radio sponsors: Procter & Gamble, Lever Brothers, Colgate-Palmolive, General Foods, General Mills, Standard Brands, Kraft, and Bristol-Myers. Each sponsored a plethora of radio programs to advertise a variety of their brands, and each could easily fill a book-length study of its programming strategies. Procter & Gamble (P&G), today the single largest advertiser by spending, is simply the most significant corporation in broadcast history. P&G pioneered in brand “extensions” by developing multiple soap brands designed to

appeal to a variety of market segments, such as Ivory, Dreft, Oxydol, Tide, Crisco, Duz, Chipso, Drene, Ivory Snow, Lava, Joy, Cheer, and Camay. As is commonly known, the term “soap operas” originated in reference to the soap-making sponsors of most daytime radio serials. Of the 87 radio series P&G sponsored, 44 were serials or “soaps” such as *Ma Perkins* (1933–56), *The Gibson Family* (1934–35), *Vic and Sade* (1934–44), *Pepper Young’s Family* (1936–57), *The Guiding Light* (1937–41, 1947–56), *Life Can Be Beautiful* (1938–54), *The Right to Happiness* (1939–56), and *Backstage Wife* (1951–55). But P&G also sponsored dramas, comedies, and variety programs, including *Dreft Star Playhouse* (1943–45), *Perry Mason* (1943–55), *Rudy Vallee* (1944–46), *The Life of Riley* (1945–50), and *The Goldbergs* (1937–45). Although many P&G radio serials have been studied as programs (e.g., Hilmes, 1997; Loviglio, 2005; Stedman, 1977), the roles of P&G and its collaborating ad agencies as producers of key programs deserve more attention especially since P&G continued to sponsor programs on television until 2010.

P&G’s competitor Lever Brothers also manufactured many soap brands, including Lux, Rinso, and Lifebuoy, as well as food products such as Spry and Lipton tea. Hilmes (1990) points out that “an examination of the rivalry between the soap giants, Lever Brothers and Procter and Gamble, may reward the serious scholar far more than a study of the rivalry between the two major networks” (p. 88). Lever Brothers sponsored not only anthology dramas such as *Lux Radio Theatre* (1934–55) (see Hilmes, 1990, for an excellent analysis) but also comedies such as *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* (1941–45), *The Amos ‘n’ Andy Show* (1943–50), *The Bob Hope Show* (1944–48), and *My Friend Irma* (1947–51). Lever Brothers also was a key sponsor of *Arthur Godfrey’s Talent Scouts* (1947–56). The Lipton tea commercials during *Inner Sanctum Mysteries* episodes (1944–46) are a particularly amusing instance of an advertiser’s failure to achieve a perfect integration between program and commercial: the mood of horror is repeatedly undermined by the chirpy lady talking about tea. Another major soap maker, Colgate-Palmolive, was an early radio sponsor of music and variety shows such as *The Palmolive Hour* (1927–31) and *The Palmolive Beauty Box Theater* (1934–37); the true-crime drama *Gangbusters* (1936–39); the serials *Myrt and Marge* (1938–42) and *Clara, Lu ‘n’ Em* (1931–35); the comedies *Our Miss Brooks* (1948–54) and *Blondie* (1944–49); the game shows *Strike It Rich* (1950–57) and *Can You Top This?* (1942–48); the entertainment news program *Louella Parsons* (1953–54); and the sports program, *Colgate Sports Newsreel* (1939–51).

General Foods was the second largest radio sponsor behind P&G. A corporation that rapidly expanded in the 1920s through acquisitions of multiple food brands, during the radio era its brands included Jell-O gelatin, Postum and Sanka hot drinks, Birds Eye vegetables, Minute tapioca, Calumet baking powder, Log Cabin syrup, Best Foods mayonnaise, Grape Nuts cereal, and Maxwell House coffee. General Foods, like P&G, employed several ad agencies simultaneously, such as Benton & Bowles and Y&R, to manage its radio programs. General Foods invested heavily in serials such as *Portia Faces Life* (1940–51), *The Second Mrs. Burton* (1946–54),

*Young Doctor Malone* (1939–45), and *When a Girl Marries* (1941–52). Musical variety shows included *Maxwell House Show Boat* (1932–37) and *The Kate Smith Show* (1937–47). Comedies included *The Jell-O Program with Jack Benny* (1934–44), *The Aldrich Family* (1939–51), Lucille Ball's *My Favorite Husband* (1948–51), *Father Knows Best* (1949–54), and *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* (1937–38). General Foods also sponsored the adventure program *The Adventures of Admiral Byrd* (1933–35), the true crime drama *Gangbusters* (1949–54), and the daytime talk show host, *Mary Margaret McBride* (1937–39).

General Mills, a cereal and flour company, has brands such as Wheaties, Gold Medal Flour, Bisquick, Kix, and Cheerios. From 1924 to 1932 General Mills owned the Minneapolis radio station WCCO and in 1924 began broadcasting a program hosted by a fictional brand icon, *Betty Crocker Cooking School of the Air*; Betty Crocker programs remained on radio until 1953. General Mills' executives worked closely with Irna Phillips, one of the most important daytime serial producers, on programs such as *Today's Children* (1943–50), *The Guiding Light* (1942–46), and *Woman in White* (1944–48) (Irna Phillips Papers; Seiter, 1988). In fact, for a while the term "soap opera" was rivaled by its punning counterpart, "cereal dramas" (Stedman, 1977, p. 247), in part because General Mills sponsored about twenty serials. Music programs included *The Wheaties Quartet* (1929–30) and *The Hymns of All Churches* (1936–47). Children's programs included *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy* (1933–51) and *The Lone Ranger* (1942–56).

Standard Brands manufactured Fleischmann's yeast, Chase & Sanborn coffee, Royal baking powder, Tenderleaf tea, and Royal pudding. Standard Brands sponsored the serial *One Man's Family* (1935–49), the comedy-variety show *The Fred Allen Show* (1945–47), and the musical program *Ozzie Nelson and His Orchestra* (1937–38). Working with JWT, which specialized in celebrity association, Standard Brands invested heavily in variety shows featuring top stars such as Rudy Vallee (*The Fleischmann Hour* [1929–36], *The Royal Gelatin Hour* [1936–39]); Eddie Cantor (*The Chase & Sanborn Hour* [1931–34]); Joe Penner and Ozzie Nelson (*The Baker's Broadcast* [1933–35]); and Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy (*The Chase & Sanborn Hour* [1937–48]).

It should be obvious even from this incomplete list that some programs were passed from sponsor to sponsor. Untangling the multiple strands of influence and control is challenging, especially when so much program production was actually overseen by advertising agencies that were never credited on air and can be hard to identify. Although a primary broadcast advertising goal was "sponsor identification," which was based on an assumption that broadcast advertising's efficacy resided in the ability of audiences to identify a program with an advertiser, the rotation of programs among sponsors clearly indicates that some advertisers knew that audiences tuned into programs, rather than brands, and so believed that underwriting an already popular program (and inserting commercial announcements and brand integrations) would by itself be effective. An interesting study might be made of the process by which a particular program or star handled the problem of

sponsorship turnover. For example, song-and-dance star Eddie Cantor was sponsored by so many different advertisers (Ipana toothpaste, Camel cigarettes, Chase & Sanborn coffee, Eversharp pens, Pebecco toothpaste, Texaco gasoline, and Pabst Blue Ribbon beer) that some advertisers, fearing his identification with any single brand was compromised, became reluctant to join the crowd (Hughes, 1939).

It would also be interesting to compare and contrast companies in direct competition with each other on radio (Hilmes, 1990, p. 88). For example, automakers Ford and General Motors each sponsored a number of programs: how did they differentiate themselves from each other? Ford sponsored a variety of formats, from variety shows to comedies to anthology dramas: *Ford Sunday Evening Hour* (1934–42, 1945–46), *The Fred Waring Orchestra and Chorus* (1934–36), *The Ford Show* featuring Dinah Shore (1946–47), *The Ford Theater* (1947–49), and *The Fred Allen Program* (1947–49). Did Ford-branded programs fit a consistent corporate image or not? General Motors, on the other hand, marketed itself through brand extensions, providing a brand for every type of auto buyer (Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Chevrolet, Cadillac) and so likewise branded its programming: *The Buick Revelers* (1931–32), *The Oldsmobile Program* (1933–34), *The Chevrolet Program* with Jack Benny (1933–34), *The Buick Program* (1933–34), *The Cadillac Symphony Orchestra* (1933–35), *The Pontiac Program* (1934–35), and *The Chevrolet Show* (1935–37).

The field of media studies is often divided and defined by technology or format (film, television, or radio) but the media industries themselves have never maintained strict borders. As should be obvious, many of these sponsored radio programs were also “franchises”—characters, stars, and stories appeared in other media (film, television, comic strips, novels) and functioned as elements of elaborate merchandising plans for toys, games, and clothing (Johnson, 2013). Some such branded programs, such as *The Lone Ranger*, became iconographic (Santo, 2015). As more scholars analyze these “franchises” across media, we need to ensure that *radio* is included in those analyses. The General Mills’ advertising icon, Betty Crocker, has been studied in print and television media (Marling, 1994; Parkin, 2006) but little notice has been given the Betty Crocker radio programs that began in 1924—an audio media form that surely was an important foundation of the brand image.

In contrast to the CPG companies, a significant number of radio sponsors were “institutional” advertisers: that is, they sponsored radio programs not to sell specific products such as cereal or soap but to communicate with the public, burnish their corporate image, supply educational and uplifting programming to the masses, and serve the “public interest” as part of a corporate liberal strategy for, depending on your point of view, stabilization or containment. Although there has been excellent work on institutional advertisers up through the 1940s (Marchand, 1998) and on 1950s television (McCarthy, 2010), and one excellent study about 1930s radio (Goodman, 2011), there is still much about radio institutional advertisers that has gone largely unnoticed. The transition to television and the subsequent struggle over

program control was in part also a struggle between institutional and product advertising in broadcasting: the institutional advertisers wanted to continue sponsoring classical music and anthology dramas with serious themes to prove their commitment to the public good, while the networks and CPG companies sought to reshape broadcasting into a more efficient, adaptable platform for marketing specific products. The rise of textually separate, interrupting commercials allowed CPG companies to spread their advertising across many programs and time slots and reach a wider variety of audiences, thus building television into a far more efficient advertising medium than radio had ever been.

Although today we think of the “golden age” of radio as the 1930s and 1940s, national commercial network radio continued through the 1950s and 1960s: the story of this long decline remains to be told in detail (Rothenbuhler & McCourt, 2002). And this decline was both a cause and consequence of changing sponsorship patterns. For example, Standard Brands left radio in 1949, yet Procter & Gamble stayed on radio until at least 1955, and Kellogg until 1960 (according to Cox, 2008). Contemporaneous commentary about the decline of network radio shows that many companies, sponsors, producers, broadcasters, and artists simply disbelieved the decline was inevitable, however much it may seem so in hindsight.

The greatest challenge for researchers in this area is access to primary documents. Historian Roland Marchand (1990) argues that corporate archives may provide rich material for cultural and media historians. The Society of American Archivists has compiled a list of corporate archives, some of which are accessible to researchers (Society of American Archivists, 1997); however, many corporate records have been destroyed or are unavailable. As an alternative to actual corporate records, sometimes other documents are useful, such as a company’s house organs (internal newsletters) and public relations materials that may provide insight into corporate strategies and activities. Sometimes the information about a corporation is not found in that corporation’s archive but in *other* records. For example, the J. Walter Thompson records at the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History at Duke University have extensive documentation of their work for a variety of clients, including Kraft, Kodak, Standard Brands, Lever Brothers, Scott Paper, and others. A researcher unable to gain access to the Kraft corporate archives may find extraordinarily detailed information about Kraft’s advertising and programming in the JWT records at Duke instead.

Some companies and individual executives have donated materials to public archives. Archives with extensive materials about commercial broadcasting, sponsors, and advertising agencies include the Wisconsin Historical Society; the Hagley Museum and Library; the John H. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising and Marketing History, Duke University; Library of American Broadcasting at University of Maryland, College Park; the Smithsonian Institution; the Library of Congress; the New York Public Library; the American Radio Archives at the Thousand Oaks Library Foundation; and the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming. Sometimes it can be worthwhile to track down individuals’ collections. For example, William Benton’s papers at

the University of Chicago provide detailed insight into the Benton & Bowles' 1930s radio work for clients such as General Foods, while the Benton & Bowles papers at Duke University include more information about later decades.

Even more accessible to scholars than physical archives are the "Truth Tobacco Industry Documents," an online depository of millions of documents from the tobacco companies and their advertising agencies that were produced for various tobacco litigation suits. These documents, directly accessible in PDF form, make up a treasure trove for historians interested in how and why tobacco was advertised over the decades. Other key resources are contemporaneous trade publications, some of which are digitally available on public online sites such as the Internet Archive, the Media History Digital Library, and the American Radio History site. Radio researchers might find useful documentation of sponsors and their programming strategies in trades such as *Advertising Agency*, *Advertising & Selling*, *Broadcast Advertising*, *Broadcast Merchandising*, *Broadcasting*, *Printers' Ink*, *Radio Broadcast*, *Radio Digest*, *Radio Showmanship*, *Sales Management*, *Tide*, and *Variety*. Although each publication reflects a particular editorial standpoint, as any news source would, researchers can find information about topics for which there are no archival sources. Private collections and Old Time Radio (OTR) organizations should not be overlooked: documentation and resources from members of the OTR community can be rich sources of information from which scholars can launch new research. In short, the direct evidence we might want is not always to be found, but with patience and creativity we can reconstruct it from available sources.

I hope this very brief overview convinces a few readers that the role of sponsors in the development of commercial radio is a rich field yet to be fully plowed. In the course of my own research into the history of national network commercial radio, I have repeatedly encountered intriguing topics, stories, and characters that I have not had the opportunity to investigate but seem to be relevant, interesting, and useful. While the role of radio sponsors is not, by any means, the only understudied area of radio history, if a few take it up and the field expands, I believe everyone interested in the history of media would benefit.

## Note

1. In the following, I rely extensively on the lists of sponsors and programs and dates that were compiled by Jim Cox (2008). Please note that all dates next to program titles indicate *only* the years of sponsorship by the specified sponsor, not the complete airdates. Some programs had different sponsors during different seasons.

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