

News and Community Affairs Manual

Overview

We do not want to duplicate news reports of other radio stations; we have neither their resources nor their obligation to commercial interests. Our job is to approach news and community affairs from a different perspective than that of commercial radio.

CFUV's mandate is to provide an alternative to other radio stations in Victoria. This means that we should avoid duplication both in terms of content and method of presentation.

We do not avoid major stories, but we need to look for a different angle and present the story in a detailed, intelligent manner. It is important to provide balanced and informed programming. Present more than one interview, facilitate discussions, seek out new resources of information and try working with a team.

There are many topics that fall out of fashion in the mainstream media. We want to pay attention to these issues, which means emphasizing quality and having an open mind. It can also mean following up on a story everybody else forgot about.

You must do your research and have facts to back up anything that you say on-air. You shouldn't allow your guest to make unchallenged claims. Your responsibility as an interviewer is to allow your guest to speak and to ask them the hard questions.

After completing on-air training, volunteers interested in doing a community affairs program, or contributing to one, require newsroom production training. Schedule a training with the Community Affairs and News Director.

Putting a Show Together

A community affairs show is primarily made up of interviews. Depending on the style you could have one or more interviews, a short documentary or long news piece. The interview(s) could be live in-studio, over the phone or pre-recorded. Have the lengths of your pre-recorded pieces on hand so you can time-out any live segments of the show. Use the traffic items (show promos, PSA's, weather) to create breaks between interviews and segments. It's helpful to write a script for a show that uses multiple elements. Listen to existing community affairs programs on CFUV and on other stations to get a feel for this type of show.

Interviewing:

Develop your questions in advance and base them on research you do into the topic. Knowing more about the topic and the person you are interviewing will allow you to ask deeper, more meaningful questions. Often the most overlooked question in traditional news reporting is "Why?" Due to time restraints and deadlines, many reporters do not get the opportunity to investigate the motivations and reasons behind the story. Be respectful, but don't be afraid to ask bold questions.

Keep your guest focused. In conversation it's easy to get sidetracked, but try to bring your guest back to the topic on hand. The easiest way to do this is to ask your next question.

Framing the interview:

By the time you have your interview subject in the studio, you will have done some research on the topic and developed your questions. Before you launch into the interview though, it's important to give the listener some basic facts so the interview is meaningful for listeners. Briefly outlining the 5 Ws: Who, where, what, why and when is usually enough. The person you are interviewing will have more in-depth information. Introduce the person, state their title and the organization they represent, if it applies. If the organization is not well known and you aren't asking the person to explain the organization, it is helpful to give a line

about what they do. Then you can briefly outline the issue and give any background information that might be referenced, but not covered in the interview itself. This framing can be recorded as part of the interview, or you can do it live before you broadcast the self-contained interview piece.

Once you've framed your interview, try not to spend a lot of time discussing things that have already been covered. You are looking for new information that the listener might not know about yet. Near the end of the interview, ask "what's next for you/this project/your group?"

Mini-Documentary and self-contained stories

Sometimes there is more to a story than a simple interview. The use of sound and narration can help create a more vivid, informative piece for the listener. In this case, gathering natural sound, interviewing multiple people and writing a script are all part of the process and when you put them together you can create a richer story. You can use the multi-track function in Audition to layer narration and actualities over natural sound and music.

Try listening to a podcast with high production values like This American Life, Radiolab or Planet Money to get an idea of how to tell a story with sound.

Pointers:

- Keep a file of audio highlights of your show (interesting/good interviews and mini docs) and have them with you in case a guest is a no-show or you need to fill time.
- "Re-set" the interview for your listeners by pausing in longer interviews to tell your audience "I'm speaking with so-and-so today about" This ensures people just tuning in know who and what the interview involves. The re-set is also a good spot to re-focus your interview if you get off track or if you want to change subjects.
- Do not narrate your activities in the booth. For example: don't say "I'm going to read a PSA now." Or, "the computer isn't working properly." This

detracts from the show. Listeners tune in to hear the interesting content you will deliver and usually won't notice small technical issues that occur.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR NEWSGATHERING

Excerpted from the RTNDA, Canadian Press, CBC and Associated Press websites.

Accuracy & Corrections

We want to inform the public in an accurate, comprehensive and fair manner about events and issues of importance that are not typically covered in mainstream media.

We are impartial when handling any news affecting parties or matters in controversy. Give fair representation to all sides at issue.

We must make significant efforts to reach anyone who may be portrayed in a negative way in our stories, and we must give them a reasonable amount of time to get back to us before we present the story. What is "reasonable" may depend on the urgency and competitiveness of the story. If we don't reach the parties involved, we must explain in the story what efforts were made to do so.

Consult with the News Director or Program Director in the event of an error. Errors will be quickly acknowledged and publicly corrected.

Authenticity

News and information will be presented without distortion. Interviews may be edited provided that the meaning is not changed or misrepresented. Audio actualities must always tell the truth. This means we do not alter or manipulate the content of a clip or longer interview in any way, either by using it out of context or editing it to make it sound like he or she said something other than what was said.

Stick to the facts without editorial opinion or comment. On-air volunteers who wish to express their personal opinions are limited to five minutes maximum. Editorials and commentary will be clearly identified as such. Personal beliefs and

biases must be identified as opinion and not presented as a facts related to the topic being discussed. Stating that a section of a broadcast is an editorial opinion does not protect the individual or station from libel or slander charges.

On-air Volunteers will not present news that is rehearsed or re-enacted. Accurate backgrounding and authoritative interpretation are essential to the listeners' understanding of complicated issues.

Investigate fully before transmitting any story or identifying any individual in a story where there is the slightest reason for doubt. When in doubt leave it out.

Equality

We report factors such as gender, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability only when they are relevant.

Parties in controversy, whether in politics or law or otherwise, receive fair consideration. Statements issued by conflicting interests merit equal prominence, whether combined in a single story or used at separate times.

Independence & Integrity

Resist pressure to change or alter the news.

We will not pay subjects or sources that have a vested interest in a story. We will not accept financial compensation from those who seek to influence news coverage. On-air volunteers do not misrepresent themselves to get a story or interview. They always identify themselves as journalists.

We do not give out interview questions to the interviewee before the interview. Giving a communications person or the interview subject an idea of the areas the interview will cover is good practice, but do not pre-write your questions and submit them in advance.

Decency and Conduct

We treat people who are subjects and sources with decency. We strive to conduct ourselves in a courteous and considerate manner, newsgathering as unobtrusively as possible. They will strive to prevent their presence from distorting the character or importance of news.

Sources

On-air volunteers will make every effort to attribute news on the record. Refer to the Community Affairs and News Director and Program Director in any other case.

Privacy

On-air volunteers will not infringe on anyone's privacy in the interest of creating a radio piece. We respect the dignity, privacy and wellbeing of everyone with whom we deal. We do not use clandestine newsgathering techniques.

Intellectual Property

Plagiarism is unacceptable. We strive to honour the intellectual property of others, including video and audio materials.

On-air volunteers do not play music, news, or other audio from YouTube. Nor do they use other people's work and present it as their own. Reading a written passage from a publication or book on-air is limited to a few lines due to copyright restrictions and the on-air volunteer must acknowledge the source.

Fair Trial

In reporting matters that are or may be before the courts, on-air volunteers will ensure that their reporting does not interfere with the rights of an individual to a fair trial.

This means on-air volunteers do not refer to people standing trial as guilty of what they are accused of until a verdict is reached — regardless of personal opinion. Do not broadcast anything that passes judgment on an accused or that could hinder a fair trial unless it has been admitted in court as evidence.

Covering Violent Situations

Reporting on criminal activities such as hostage takings, prison uprisings or terrorist acts will be done in a fashion that does not knowingly endanger lives, offer comfort and support or provide vital information to the perpetrator(s). Broadcasters will contact neither victims nor perpetrators of a criminal activity during the course of the event for the purpose of conducting an interview that would interfere with a peaceful resolution.

LEGAL

Telephone conversations/interviews

The CRTC Radio Regulations state: “no licensee shall broadcast any telephone interview or telephone conversation, or any part thereof, with any person unless the person’s oral or written consent to the interview or conversation is obtained before the broadcast. The only exception is when the person telephoned the station for the purpose of participating in a broadcast.”

This applies to pre-recorded interviews. After your interview subject calls in, turn on your recorder and ask something along the lines of: “Is it alright with you if I record this interview for the purpose of broadcasting it?” It’s important to record you asking the question and the interviewee agreeing to the recording for broadcast. It’s good to get in the habit of asking the question, even when it seems silly. DO NOT BROADCAST this part of the recording, but keep it for your records with the unedited audio file.

Community Affairs programs can invite listeners to call-in under certain circumstances. Please refer to CFUV’s Phone-In Policy for more details.

Defamation

Defamation includes *slander* (ordinary conversation) and *libel* (published or broadcast).

Libel is the broadcast or publication of a false and damaging statement. Defamation is a statement that tends to lower a person in the opinion of others, or exposes the person to hatred, contempt, or ridicule. Defamation is also a statement that injures another's reputation in a way that affects that person's livelihood — work, trade or profession — or financial credit.

Truth is a complete defense against a libel suit. A true statement of fact is not vulnerable even if it is damaging, but the one who publishes a damaging statement is responsible for proving the truth of the statement, and that is often extremely difficult. In some cases it may be impossible. It's not up to the plaintiff to prove the statement is false.

Defamation Checklist

(From *The Journalist's Legal Guide*)

The following areas should be considered before a story is published or broadcast:

1. Is there “defamatory matter?” Expressly or by implication, does this story contain any of the following:
 - **Insults or slurs?**
 - Statements or suggestions of criminal, illegal, immoral or improper behaviour or practices?
 - Statements about someone's financial status?
 - Statements about someone's health?
 - Critical statements relating to a person's profession, business, product or trade?
 - Statements that might adversely affect the reputation of a person or entity in the eyes of ordinary people?
 - Statements that would deter ordinary people from associating or dealing with that individual or entity?

If so, chances are there is defamatory material in the story. But this doesn't mean it can't be published. Please continue through the checklist.

2. Does the defamatory matter refer to someone directly or indirectly? Regardless as to whether an individual or entity (group, association or corporation) is named, is it possible that even one person might think the defamatory matter refers to a specific person, entity or its members? If so, this story probably has the basic elements to attract a defamation action. This doesn't mean the story must be dropped or changed. Chances are there's either a defence or a way to re-write the story to avoid defaming an individual. **Talk to the Community Affairs and News Director or Program Director.**
3. Is a defence available?
- (a) Is there proof of the defamatory statements, such as:
- Documents?
 - A witness with first-hand knowledge who is willing to appear in court on your behalf?
 - One or two extra sources of corroboration?
 - Detailed notes from key interviews?
 - Tape recordings of key statements?

The more of the above you have, the better your chances of relying on the truth defence (justification).

(b) Was the defamatory matter derived from:

- (i) open proceedings of Parliament, a legislature, a government committee, a municipal council meeting, a public meeting or a judicial or quasi-judicial hearing?
- (ii) an official report or news release of a government or judicial/quasi-judicial body?

If so, a defence of qualified or absolute privilege may exist.

- (c) Is the defamatory matter an honest, non-malicious expression of someone's "opinion" and is it based on provable facts concerning a matter of public interest?

If so, there may be a defence of fair comment.

4. Common areas of legal concern include:

- Pre-trial court documents or exhibits not dealt with in open court
- Wording of criminal charges
- Sensationalism distorting the true situation
- Satire or humour that goes too far, perhaps suggesting immoral or illegal behaviour
- Presence of malice (for example, reckless or careless reporting)
- Subjective comments in court reports

If you are ever in doubt about whether or not you should air something, **talk to the Community Affairs and News Director or Program Director.**

From CP Style Guide 15th ed.

Keep in mind:

1. Carelessness and bad judgement on legal questions can ruin people's lives. Every journalist must weigh this responsibility when working.
2. It is dangerous to [broadcast] statements that damage a person's reputation or livelihood unless the statements are provably true or unless the law clearly provides a special exemption.
3. It is particularly dangerous to suggest criminal conduct unless it has been proved in the courts.
4. Every person charged and before the courts is entitled to be presumed innocent and to receive a fair trial. It is forbidden to publish or broadcast anything that passes judgment on an accused or that could hinder a fair

trial unless it has been admitted in court as evidence. (Of course, the courts judgment is publishable.)

5. Juveniles involved with the law — accused, witnesses or victims — must not be identified, even indirectly, without legal advice.
6. Keep your notes, audio tapes and related documents for three months. It's expected that notification of any legal action would be given by that time. Keep your audio files, including unedited interviews, in your folder in the newsroom production files on the newsroom computer. It's a good idea to keep a back-up USB stick to store your audio.

Election campaigns and political advertising

CFUV's coverage of elections is governed by specific guidelines that include equity of time given to political parties and candidates, election results and campaign advertising.

(CRTC Guidelines)

Keeping voters informed during election campaigns

During an election campaign, broadcasters play an important role in informing Canadians about the issues, political parties and candidates involved. The CRTC ensures that broadcasters serve the Canadian public during elections, so that citizens can make informed choices on election day.

Equitable on-air time during a campaign

Broadcasters in Canada are required to cover elections, and they must give *all candidates, parties and issues equitable treatment*. Equitable doesn't mean equal — it means that all candidates and parties get some air time to share their ideas on issues with the public. Equitable treatment applies to the paid and free election coverage:

Campaign news coverage and public affairs

During an election campaign, broadcasters must ensure that they're informing their audiences about the main issues and the positions of all candidates and parties on those issues in a reasonable manner.

Political debates during election campaigns

Debate programs don't have to include all parties or candidates. However, broadcasters need to ensure that, in general, they're informing their audiences on the positions of candidates and parties on the main issues in a reasonable manner.

On-air personalities as candidates

On-air personalities are people who are seen or heard on radio, TV or community programming channels. Even if the person's voice is only heard as a commercial announcer, that person is still considered to be an on-air personality.

If an on-air personality becomes a candidate in a political election, his/her on-air duties must stop: as soon as his/her candidacy is announced OR once the election is officially called, whichever is later

In these cases, on-air personalities who become candidates must go off the air. On-air personalities enjoy unique public exposure, and broadcasters aren't able to offer other candidates similar on-air opportunities.

Circulars for broadcasters during federal and provincial elections

When the writ is dropped for a federal or provincial election, the CRTC issues a circular to all regulated broadcasters. The circular reminds broadcasters of their duties during an election campaign.