Selected Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Books


In the 1920s, the popularity of the radio was heightened by various forms of entertainment including many of the radio dramas contained in this collection. Dramas by Orson Welles, Stephen Vincent Benét, Langston Hughes, and others, touched upon a variety of subjects from Columbus Day, to war, to the plight of the Negro in order to appeal to their audience. This collection was an example of the entertainment that helped radio gain popularity.


Roosevelt’s ‘fireside chats,’ which were often delivered to live audiences besides being broadcast, were an effective, direct communication to American citizens that discussed his domestic and foreign policies in the face of the Depression and the Second World War. His addresses explained government policies and shed light on the country’s situation, helping Americans understand the trying era. Editors Buhite and Levy give in-depth background surrounding each broadcast, helping us to understand their historical context.


Carmichael, a close friend of President Roosevelt’s, collected his columns which were published in newspapers in Georgia and New York on subjects varying from taxes and tariffs to natural resources and waterpower. The fact that the entire book contains less than two dozen columns from only two limited geographical regions illustrates the inaccessibility and small audience that a newspaper has in relation to the radio.

This series for young children glorifies radio through its tale of several young boys and their radio adventures. The series is an example of the radio’s appeal to the children of the 1920’s who then grew up to be the young voting citizens who heard Roosevelt’s broadcasts, helping them understand his policies during his presidency.


Eliot was involved in the construction of the Social Security Act and his account of his work showed us how government workers felt toward the New Deal. This was helpful, in that it described the minds behind it, and showed us what some people initially thought of Roosevelt’s New Deal before he started using the radio to help people understand the New Deal.


As Radio Director of 1944 Democratic Convention, Reinsch witnessed several of Roosevelt’s press conferences and radio addresses, and he lived through several subsequent presidencies, which gave him an interesting perspective on the publicity of presidents. In his book, Reinsch shows the change from radio presidents to the first political use of the television in the 1950s. This source showed us the progression and changes in presidential-media relations after Roosevelt’s time.

**Government Legislation**


The U.S. government acknowledged the rising use of radio and sought to help organize it by passing the Radio Act of 1912. The Act regulated frequencies by assigning channels and times to separate stations. This legislation took a critical step in organizing radio broadcast, which enabled small stations to form soon after, leading the way to radio as a form of mass communication.

After experimentation with broadcasting techniques and radio’s immense popularity in the early 1920s, the Radio Act of 1927 addressed free speech for broadcasters and established the Federal Radio Commission. The FRC helped administer licenses to stations and regulate the airwaves in America. Also, the Act formally recognized broadcasters’ right to free speech over the airwaves. The radio legislation and organization of the 1920’s were Herbert Hoover’s main contribution to radio. Although he preferred the newspapers as a president, he was the man behind the legal development of the radio.


In 1934, Roosevelt called for further regulation of radio broadcasting and commercial stations, and desired a united department for broadcasting regulations. This Act established the Federal Communications Commission, which further regulated licenses and frequencies.

**Interviews**

Durkin, Helen. Personal Interview. 6085 Sunview Place, Ferndale, Washington. March 29, 2005

Durken and her family experienced first-hand the hardships of the Great Depression and listened to Roosevelt’s radio addresses. While originally Republican and anti-Roosevelt, Durken still supported many of Roosevelt’s New Deal policies and the actions he took to stem the Depression. Though not an avid radio listener, Durken provided insight on public opinion towards politics in the 1930s; many people supported Roosevelt because he actually took action to fix the Depression.


As a teenager in the 1930s, Jensen loved to read the newspaper and enjoyed listening to the family radio. In reference to Roosevelt, Jensen felt that his communications were nearly as important as the New Deal itself. The time spent talking about his new programs not only gathered public support, but also helped lift Americans from their psychological “Depression”.

Monroe is an amateur radio operator who got his license in 1942, at the age of 14. We heard about Mr. Monroe through our local amateur radio club, of which he is a member. His memories and historical knowledge were extremely valuable to our project, as he had experienced first hand what we can only read about. He told us about listening to radio comedians and dramas as a child, and about hearing Roosevelt’s fireside chats with his family.

Parkinson, Joann. Personal interview. 6461 Sundance Lane, Everson, WA. January 2, 2005.

Joann Parkinson had many warm memories of listening to the radio with her family. Although she does not remember any of the Fireside Chats specifically, she told us how everyone had a radio, and how many people listened to Mr. Roosevelt. She described for us her feeling of joy when she got her own radio. Her experiences illustrated the role of the radio as a primary means for entertainment. She recalled that every Saturday night, she sat with her family and listened to music on the radio.

Stone, Dick. Personal Interview. 6488 Church Road, Ferndale, Washington. April 1, 2005.

Stone lived in a strictly Republican family in Washington and delivered newspapers for much of his youth. With his father controlling the radio dial, Stone’s impression was that the newspapers were a more influential medium than the radio. This opinion starkly contrasted with much of our research, showing us that newspapers maintained a powerful role in the media despite radio competition. However, despite their staunch Republican background, Stone and his family still tuned in to Roosevelt’s chats on occasion.


Mr. Winter was kind enough to lend us the facilities at the radio museum for interviewing purposes and some of his time for a personal interview. As the curator of the radio museum, Winter knows a good deal about early radios and the early use of radio for entertainment and was also able to tell us firsthand about America’s transition from radio to television, which was helpful in our analysis of later presidential use of the broadcast media.
Periodicals


In the 1932 presidential campaigning, about $5 million dollars were spent on radio time by various candidates. This massive expenditure on one medium demonstrates the significance of radio communications in political campaigns and the increased dependence on its widespread impact.


In this article, Chancellor Wolcott points out the propaganda possibilities of radio. The huge audience, which is easily swayed, he points out, could be exploited. This is an example of press opposition to the advent of the radio, including the newspapers' overwhelming opposition to the radio speaker President Roosevelt.


In this article, William Butler, Chairman of the Republican National Committee explains President Coolidge's plans to campaign from the White House by means of the radio instead of campaigning in person. This political broadcasting shows the advantages of the radio over "taking the stump" to reach a large audience, as well as the developing presidential dependence on radio communications.


This scientific article discusses Roosevelt's techniques for gaining support through calculated radio addresses. It helped us understand the changes in both the listener and the broadcaster from the days when radio was a novel hobby to its 1930's industry status that allowed Roosevelt to use it to influence the American public.


This article discusses the advances of the radio industry in 1934. Its specific statistics for 1934 and forecasts for 1935 helped us keep track of the continuing growth of radio in the United States and the industry's outlook for the future despite trying times. It also had useful information about the advances made in radio technology over the past year including more precise tuning dials and amplifiers that were more efficient.

Columnist Orrin Dunlap Jr. writes about the centrality of the radio in the home as a source of entertainment and news in his column. His depiction of each member of his large family in separate rooms, all listening to different programs, reveals the importance of the radio in everyday life. The widespread use of the radio shows how presidential communications on the radio were able to make such a huge impact.


George sums up in his article the radio communications of each department of the government. Many departments and administrations had their own radio programs. Interestingly, the department that broadcast over radio the most- the Department of Agriculture- was also the field in which the New Deal was most successful. This article shows that Roosevelt’s extensive use of the radio extended to many other government departments as well.


Nevada Senator Pittman defined his inflation program and its benefits on a radio broadcast. The fact that a political broadcast was discussed in a distinguished newspaper reflects politicians’ preference to communicate on the radio over issuing press announcements.


This article analyzes eleven presidential candidates and prominent campaigners, including Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, and Calvin Coolidge, and their effectiveness on the radio. For instance, Hoover’s voice was said to be heavy, revealed strain, and it implied a general dislike of talking. The description of the skills and weaknesses required for radio addresses gave us insight as to why each president made the impact they did through radio communications.


The American Newspaper Publishers Association adopted a resolution limiting radio bulletins to thirty words and required radio advertisements in newspapers to be paid for, as opposed to previously free program advertisements. These limitations show the extent to which the public had begun to rely on the radio for news and entertainment instead of newspapers.

Senator Dill is quoted in this article concerning the effect of the bill on the general public, saying that it “protects the public against a monopoly of radio broadcasting.” The article shows exactly how the Radio Act benefits the public and the radio industry. For example, Hugo Gersbach, the president of WRNY, said, “The new law will stimulate sales” by helping the public regain confidence in the organization of the airwaves. This information helped us to see how the Radio Act helped the spread of radio by regulating the airwaves.


This article explains the Radio Act of 1927 and reflects public concern over the bill. It explains minutely the legal and public aspects of what will happen once the bill is put into action. For example, every licensed station, mostly consisting of amateurs, must renew their licenses at once.


This edition of Radio News contained several great examples of advertisements for radios and for jobs in the radio field. One advertisement for a short-wave radio set proclaims “Now you can get the whole wide world!” An advertisement for radio jobs lures potentials with the phrase “RADIO is BOOMING.” These ads reflect the radio industry’s new growth in the 1920’s which made possible widespread public understanding of Roosevelt’s communications in the 1930’s.


This particular page of Radio News was devoted to an advertisement trying to get people to join the radio industry by showing the salaries of several different radio related jobs, and stating boldly, “RADIO NEEDS YOU! ... and YOU Need Radio!” This shows the attempts of the growing radio industry to attract new employees, to allow it to grow even more. Advertisements such as this are partially responsible for the extent of radio use by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency, which provided him with a practical medium to reach an entire nation.


In the mid-Jazz Age, radio had begun to play a large role in popular culture, pushing formerly used wireless telegraphy to the wayside. The article depicts people, “absorbed in tampering with their own private sets and adjusting them.” which shows the immense popularity of radio during the mid-1920s.

Mr. Rogers reflects the general opinion of President Roosevelt’s first Fireside Chat in this edition of his daily column. He explains one reason Roosevelt’s communications were understandable and accessible, saying “his message was not only a great comfort to the people, but it pointed a lesson to all radio announcers and public speakers what to do with a big vocabulary- leave it at home in the dictionary.”

Rogers, Will. “Mr. Rogers Adds to the Praise of President’s Speech.” *New York Times*. 9 May 1933.

In this column, Will Rogers comments on the president’s speech on May 8, 1933. This particular article was helpful because of Rogers’ commentary on Roosevelt’s use of analogies to help Americans understand his policies. For example, Roosevelt commonly compared things to baseball- an extremely popular sport at the time of his presidency.


This brief article helped us understand Roosevelt’s reasons for using the radio to communicate his programs to America, rather than using the press or making speeches; the radio was the “simplest and most effective medium for reaching the people.”


The perfection of a smaller receiver for use in military airplanes shows both the radio’s versatility and the important role that military forces played in the technical development of the radio. Military innovations frequently spread into popular culture and commercial radio.


During his presidency, Hoover was reluctant to utilize the radio as is shown by his decision to make twenty-two speeches from auditorium and railway car platforms. The article juxtaposed the revolutionary advantages of radio campaigning and Hoover’s stubborn attitude towards change. Hoover’s limited radio use tells us that he ineffectively used the radio to communicate to the nation.

Inspector of the Federal Radio Commission’s field operations office Arthur Batcheller, stated that approximately one thousand new amateur operators were added in the New York district alone for the year of 1932. New users were not only young men and women, but also lawyers, doctors, clergymen, dentists, and businessmen, which shows the extensive use of radio communication among a large variety of professions and ages. This increased use during Roosevelt’s presidency reinforced his ability to reach a vast audience.

Videodiscs


The videodisc encyclopedia at the Ferndale High School Library contains many ‘articles’ relating to our project. Through this encyclopedia, we saw actual footage without outside commentary of Roosevelt’s speeches, Amos’ n’ Andy, and other people we had researched, some of which we used in our video.

Secondary Sources

Books


This book explained the expansion and development of radio, as influenced by things like the 1924 Democratic Convention and the comedians Amos ‘n’ Andy. It also talked about the relationship between businesses and the radio.


The comparison of the radio usage and techniques of the presidents from Harding to Roosevelt in this source allowed us to better understand why Roosevelt was able to have such a great impact on America’s understanding through his radio communications.

Roosevelt revolutionized presidential press relations by hiring a press secretary and establishing regular press conferences. This revolution was another critical element in his presidential communications because it monopolized much of the media of the day and it reached an extended audience. This source also detailed the history of the press and its role in politics since the founding of America.


As a product of a television-based generation, Douglas’ venture into the history of broadcasting revealed radio’s roots in the 19th century, beginning with the telegraph and the search for ‘wireless’ telegraphs. The technological breakthroughs of Marconi and the rise in social popularity eventually led to the use of radio in the Navy and the involvement of the government in station licensing legislation. This detailed history showed the key factors that resulted in the practical application of the radio during the pre-Roosevelt era.


Because of immense criticism from many republicans, left-wingers, and ardent anti-Communists, as illustrated in this book, Roosevelt had to circumvent newspapers and communicate directly to the people. The radio allowed him to execute his plans and create public understanding free of opposition.


In the 1930s, radio continued to advance by leaps and bounds, as described in this book. Smaller, more transportable radios and car radios succeeded in spreading the medium to new areas of life while programs and advertising fine-tuned their communicating techniques. Authors Jacobson and Wolff also analyze political interaction with the radio before and during Roosevelt’s presidency.

A section in this book, written by Dr. George Raynor Thompson, discusses the influence of World War I and the Signal Corps on the development of wireless communications, including the shift from Morse code by mean of spark transmitters to the transmission of human voice through the inventions of De Forest. Military necessities inspired standardized radio tubes, better amplification methods, and the master-oscillator power amplifier circuit, all which allowed for more stable receivers that performed better and increased the abilities of the transmitters. This history showed us the effects of the military on the radio, which permitted its availability to the public in the 1920s.


McChesney provides a commercial history of the radio as well as its dependence on Federal regulation and legislation for economic survival. The Radio acts of 1912 and 1927 were both crucial statutes, decreeing the organization of the Federal Radio Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, which regulated licensing and broadcast wavelengths. This showed the interactions between government policies and the rise of radio usage.


McLuhan is most famous for the coining of the phrase, ‘The Medium is the Message,’ which looks past the specific message sent through a medium to the overall influence that technology and media have on the human mind. He defines media as any form of connection with the natural world, including light as a ‘medium without a message,’ and he states that media is just a technological extension of ourselves. His speculations allowed us to gain theoretical perspective on communication’s relationship with the human psyche.


This book gave us necessary information for comparing Roosevelt’s use of radio to his use of the press to speak to the American people. It also detailed Roosevelt’s adverse relationship with the press. This was important because Roosevelt was able to win the support of the public for his New Deal, despite press opposition. The hostility of the newspapers towards the New Deal is one reason that Roosevelt turned to radio to tell people about the New Deal.

The objective analysis of Roosevelt’s public image and his means of projecting that image was vital to our research. This book explained his use of the radio and press to alter and control his public image. He was so effective that most Americans did not even realize that he was confined to a wheelchair. It also contained an interesting section about Roosevelt’s uncommon appeal to both the North and the South, which aided the overall popularity of the New Deal.


Essays from various historians and authors about the evolution and effects of different media are combined in this book to give a precise picture of the relationship of the media and society. Author Melvin Fleur focuses on the effect the Depression and the World Wars had on media accessibility and popularity. Together, these essays show the critical role that mass media, especially the radio, play in uniting social attitudes.


Franklin Roosevelt maintained expanded and friendly press relations throughout his presidency, despite the newspapers’ criticism of him. This book shows another facet of Roosevelt’s media skills which he used to complement his radio addresses. It also discusses his use of public opinion polling, which helped us understand how he kept in touch with the public’s will and frame of mind.

**Television Programs**


This documentary gave us an insight into FDR’s personal life which was valuable in understanding his ability to communicate with the people of America. The excellent footage of Roosevelt’s programs was also valuable, including clips of men working in the Civilian Conservation Corps.
Videos


This PBS video analyzes the communication techniques of two leaders: Roosevelt and Hitler. Both men used the media to bring about dramatic changes in their respective countries, though for radically different reasons. This video provided premium footage of Roosevelt's speeches, especially his Fireside Chats.


From this source, we obtained excellent video footage of Roosevelt before his presidency, including when he served in the Navy and as Governor. Although this video only covered Roosevelt's life before his presidency, it still provided us with an in-depth view at his life and his personal history of radio use.


KPFA was one of the earliest radio broadcasting companies in America and an important landmark in the development of commercial broadcasts. Its history shows the struggles of early broadcasting, the so-called Radio Golden Age, and the influence of television. From this video, we saw the evolution of commercial radio and got an idea of how radio began to take hold in American society. We also obtained valuable footage of Americans listening to the radios in their homes and workplaces, as well as other video clips.


This video showed various radio personalities such as The Lone Ranger, Will Rogers, Bing Crosby, and Edward R. Murrow. It delved into many of the social aspects of radio and the effects the radio had on the entertainment industry.


In the early years of radio, it appeared to many as a miraculous invention. This video explored the early use of radio in America, including experimentation and the first small-range home-based stations. It also explained radio's role in the first World War and illustrated the limited communicating capabilities of station before the 1920s.

We used this video to further understand how presidents after Roosevelt used the television to communicate and Roosevelt’s influence on them. Reagan, for example, idolized Roosevelt and imitated his communication techniques. The video showed the relationship between a politician’s broadcast image and their success in politics. We also used footage of later presidents from this video in our documentary in order to show the political transition to the television.


The Great Depression of the 1930s was a long, hard decade for America and for Americans. This video shows the trials of the American people during that time and up to WWII, as well as Roosevelt’s role in the Depression. We used clips of people during the Depression, New Deal organizations, and Roosevelt’s addresses from this video.