

“Museum on Main Street
2008 National Planning Conferences
Sharing Best Practices

*Best Practices Model: **Marketing & Public Relations: Partnering with Public Broadcasting** (Specifically MS Humanities Council and Mississippi Public Broadcasting)*

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MoMS Tour(s) That You've Coordinated (exhibition and year): Between Fences (2005/6), New Harmonies (2007/8)

Relationship between MHC and MPB (public radio and TV in MS) goes back several decades and to the beginnings of both organizations in the early 1970's

Mutually beneficial relationship in that MPB constantly looking for homegrown events and programs to broadcast and MHC needing ways to offer its programs to the widest possible audience.

Relationship nurtured by the fact that our offices are literally next-door to one another. Also in the “early years” MHC had the financial capabilities to help support MPB TV and radio productions.

Majority of interaction related to public radio, primarily because of cost considerations, can't generally afford TV. Notable exception being televised broadcasts of MHC's annual Humanities Public Service Awards Banquets in previous years.

Size of radio audience: 150,000. Broadcasting statewide from 8 sites distributed across the state.

MHC pays for regular spots advertising MHC-sponsored events on Morning Edition and All Things Considered, both nationally syndicated radio programs.

Occasional MHC specials are also broadcast such as: Veterans Remember, a 4th of July radio special using oral history interviews and Civil Rights-related Oral History stories broadcast each Feb. on MS Moments as part of Black History Month activities.

MHC is currently talking with MPB about the possibility of a regular radio broadcast composed of studio interviews of Mississippians on a broad range of humanities related topics.

MPB also broadcasts “Mississippi Moments”, a 5 minute long radio program airing twice weekly. Audio material for this program comes via the Oral History Project at the University of Southern MS and is a cooperative endeavor among the MHC, MS Dept. of Archives and History, USM, NEH and the MS State legislature. (Many of these oral history interviews can be accessed at www.usm.edu/msoralhistory/). This program was initiated in 2006 and is partially funded via a NEH We the People grant.

This summer will mark the 10th anniversary of this oral history collaboration which has been funded through the MS State Legislature at as much as \$150,000 annually. Focuses include The Civil Rights Movement in MS, World War II Veterans, and most recently: Hurricane Katrina.

MS Moments is used to expose the listening audience to the depth and diversity of Mississippi's people and experiences and advertise our MoMS exhibits by featuring oral history interviews related to our exhibit topics.

Example: during our recent New Harmonies tour, one of the four bi-weekly broadcasts each month focused on a certain type of MS Roots music including not only Blues but also old time fiddle, Dixie land jazz, gospel and country.

MHC's annual budget for MPB broadcasts is currently approx. \$12,000 which includes our daily Morning Edition and All Things Considered tags and our narrator for MS Moments. In exchange, the MHC regularly receives more than \$100,000 in donated services including production and radio broadcast of our MS Moments program and any special projects such as last year's New Harmonies exhibit kick-off.

THE NEW HARMONIES EXHIBIT KICK-OFF PROJECT

The New Harmonies exhibit provided MHC with a fortunate opportunity to partner with MPB on a grandiose scale.

Made possible by congenial relationship between MHC and MPB staff, particularly Gene Edwards (former deputy director) and Bill Ellison, radio host for Grassroots, a weekly bluegrass show. (MPB radio regularly broadcasts roots music programs including Thacker Mountain Radio, Grassroots, Hwy 61 Blues and American Routes).

It was arranged for MPB to present a live radio broadcast of the opening event in Meridian (home of Jimmie Rodgers, "The Father of Country Music" and also David Ruffin of the Temptations). The show was timed to air during the Saturday night Grassroots slot and Grassroots host, Bill Ellison served as emcee and also performed with the evening's bluegrass band.

The event consisted of a 2 hr. long live music production featuring various roots music performers from around the state and served as the culmination of a day-long festival (Roots Music in the Plaza) sponsored by the Jimmie Rodgers Foundation. Throughout the course of the afternoon civic leaders from each of our exhibit venues gave short presentations to the "crowd". Thanks Mariam Keegan.

The program facilities, the grand opera house of the MSU Riley Center were provided free of charge as the Riley Center served as an exhibit co-sponsor, along with the Jimmie Rodgers Foundation.

Event sponsors included the MHC, Smithsonian Inst., MS Arts Commission, MSU Riley Center and Jimmie Rodgers Foundation, Meridian Community College and the City of Meridian

The event was also video taped by MPB, featured and listed in its monthly program guide and aired on public TV on Saturday evenings on six separate occasions to promote the exhibit as it traveled from site to site. This was an incredible advertising

boost for our local sites as well as providing a greatly heightened awareness of MHC, The Smithsonian and the MSU Riley Center.

MPB also produced an hour long DVD of the performance which was reproduced and widely distributed to supporters and other interested parties.

With the exception of producing multiple copies of the DVD for distribution by MHC, all of MPB's work was gratis and a portion was used as matching funds for the New Harmonies exhibit.