

Sund Ideas

prss

Look for us at PRPD

PRSS representatives will be at the Public Radio Program Directors' Conference September 21–24, 2005, in St. Louis, Missouri. Please visit the PRSS booth to get updates on the PRSS ContentDepot and to see demonstrations of the portal.

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PRSS® ContentDepot® Update

You may not have heard much about the PRSS® ContentDepot® lately, but work on the new public radio distribution system is still progressing.

ENCO basic automation systems have been shipped to the more than 100 stations that were eligible for a system. Producers of more than 75 programs are now regularly uploading files into the ContentDepot Catalog in mp2 format. Those file-based programs are available for station download in the event of missed feeds. NPR's fall fundraising programs will be available to stations via the Catalog.

The ContentDepot is currently in system testing. All features and functions of the ContentDepot are being rigorously tested for proper function, reliability, and the ability to handle real-world levels of traffic and program delivery. System tests are conducted by the system integrator that built the ContentDepot software and interfaces—with oversight by NPR Distribution.

To exit system testing and move into the next phase of ContentDepot deployment, exacting test results must be met. While we feel like we are nearing completion of this testing phase, it is difficult to predict when that will happen, because the criteria are based on specific performance standards rather than an artificial deadline.

Once system testing is concluded, the ContentDepot will pass into yet another phase of testing during which NPR Distribution staff will take over the operation and management of the tests. That acceptance testing phase is scheduled to last at least 30 days.

NPR Distribution is committed to making sure the new system meets the rigorous performance requirements of public radio. Although progress continues, we caution that the timetable for full rollout must remain somewhat tentative until we reach the end of system testing, and successfully complete fully integrated acceptance testing. Once these milestones are achieved, we can proceed with shipping the new receivers and decoders and prepare to commence dual operations.

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ContentDepot® Up Close: Scheduling and Subscribing to Multi-Hour Programs in the ContentDepot

Several live programs distributed through the PRSS are transmitted in multiple hour blocks—yet stations only air some of the hours. Examples include *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, which stream over multiple hours and include rollovers to accommodate stations in different time zones or with different air schedules. Similarly, stations may select to air only portions of the 24-hour streaming services such as *Classical 24*, *BBC World News*, and *Beethoven Satellite Network (BSN)*.

The ContentDepot provides tools for program distributors and stations to handle these multi-hour programs in time-based blocks that we call “increments”. Increments break up multiple hour programs into discrete units that can be subscribed to by stations. The primary benefits of increments are that they allow stations only to subscribe to the portions of the programs that they actually air, so station audio outputs are not tied up by programming hours that are not used. Additionally, program usage reports accurately report which hours the stations take.

It is up to program distributors to decide the level of granularity that works best for their content and to balance those needs with the way stations will use the programs. Increments can cover any span of time—one or two-hour blocks for example. It is not recommended that increments be smaller than a half hour.

Why increments?

In the ContentDepot, stations must subscribe to programming. Subscription is the mechanism to tune the station’s decoders to the appropriate stream at the appropriate time and identifies for the distributor that the station is taking that program (or part of a program).

Keep in mind that many programs in the ContentDepot are pre-recorded and will be delivered to subscribing stations as files, so only programs that must be aired in real time will be delivered as live streams.

Using the example of a 24-hour service booked as a single program, subscribing to the 24-hour long program would tie up a station decoder port for the full 24 hours. This is not practical for stations that only air selected hours of that programming throughout the day. The solution is for distributors to break up the program into multiple, time-based programs (increments) that can be individually or collectively subscribed to by stations.

Benefits for distributors

The key benefit that increments provide is the efficient use of station decoders. However, there are also tangible benefits to distributors in controlling and monitoring the usage of these programs. By offering programs as increments, a distributor can maintain authorized subscriber lists for each increment if there is a need to control usage at that level. As noted above, usage data will now be available on a more granular level, so distributors can identify which stations are subscribing to various portions of the program.

ContentDepot ingest fees will not be applied to increments of a single program, so there is no pricing penalty to distributors for incrementing programs.

Implications for distributors

Each increment of a program will be created and managed in the ContentDepot portal as a discrete program in order for stations to subscribe. For example, a 24-hour stream broken into one-hour increments would appear in the portal as 24 discrete programs. If station usage patterns suggest that separate weekday and weekend versions would be necessary, the weekend version would add another 24 programs totaling 48 different program options for stations to select from. NPR Distribution plans for the initial program pages for each of these increments to be transferred from the current ContentDepot Catalog, but the distributor will need to go into the ContentDepot and individually submit metadata for each increment and its episodes.

Since each increment can have its own unique station subscriber list, rundowns will need to be produced at the same granular level and associated with the appropriate increment and episode for automatic distribution to the subscribed stations.

NPR Distribution will be contacting distributors with programs that are candidates to be handled in increments. If you think your program would benefit by being submitted in increments or have any other questions, please contact your Public Radio Services Account Representative for further information.

Implications for stations

Stations will need to subscribe to program increments for the hours they wish to receive the programs. If the station schedule differs from the time blocks the producer has designated, a station may need to subscribe to multiple increments to compile the programming hours needed. In some cases, depending on how a distributor sets up the increments, a station may have to subscribe to more programming hours than it requires. Setting

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New Service: Supplemental Audio Channel Distribution

As HD Radio continues to gain momentum, the full capabilities of digital broadcasting are being exploited to expand services available to the public. One such capability, supplemental audio channel broadcasting or multicasting, provides the ability to simultaneously broadcast multiple channels using existing spectrum. This technology is especially suited to public radio as it gives stations the opportunity to broadcast different formats concurrently, thereby serving more listeners with differing interests.

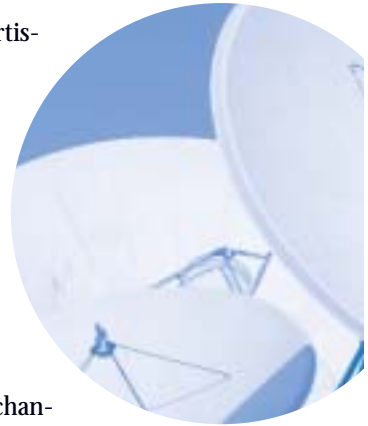
As supplemental audio streams are introduced into the public radio system, broadcasters will seek additional programming. To support this new demand for programming, NPR Distribution is introducing a new service offering: Supplemental Audio Channel Distribution. The offering includes distribution and uplink service for programming aired on supplemental audio channels. The rate for this service is a special introductory rate that will be reviewed by the NPR Board of Directors every year for a six-year period. This rate is subject to increase upon review, based on evaluation of the penetration of digital radio receivers in use by consumers and on potential changing economics of PRSS transponder costs.

The full time Supplemental Audio Channel service is available for the sole purpose of delivering programming restricted to use on HD Radio supplemental audio channels. Live Internet streaming that replicates this service on the air will be allowed. No insertions are permitted in these 24-hour streams. Until the PRSS ContentDepot fully launches, supplemental audio channels will use existing PRSS distribution

methods. Program associated data (PAD) for digital radio text displays and cueing will not be available on these channels until the full ContentDepot launch.

Additional conditions for use of the Supplemental Audio Channel service include:

1. Programs must be free of advertising and be available for use by public radio stations or other public telecommunications entities
2. Programs must be scheduled by the PRSS and will receive all standard public radio scheduling, transmission, and support services.
3. The contracting entity for the channel cannot resell or make excess channel time available to others.
4. A credit check and approval of the requesting entity will be required prior to issuance of a contract.
5. Commitments for Supplemental Audio Channel service must be made by written agreement for a minimum period of one year and a maximum period of two years.
6. Supplemental Audio Channels can be used for either mono or stereo program transmission. Mono service is set at 75 percent of the full rate for the channel.



More information about Supplemental Audio Channels is available at www.prss.org.

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up a subscription is a one-time activity after which programming will continue to be sent automatically, unless some later adjustment is required by a change in the station schedule.

Stations with complicated air schedules may decide to purchase additional decoders to make sure adequate audio

outputs are available to manage live streams. For more information on purchasing additional decoder units, please contact PRSS Business Affairs at 202.513.2618. The current price for a decoder (two audio outputs) is \$1,685 each.

StoryCorps Promos and Pieces Available in the PRSS Content Exchange

Since October 2003, Americans have been contributing their personal histories and stories as part of the groundbreaking oral history project, StoryCorps. Conceived by Dave Isay and his nonprofit documentary company, Sound Portraits Productions, StoryCorps pieces have been broadcast on partner public radio stations and some have been broadcast nationally on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*.

Two soundproof booths in New York City and two mobile StoryCorps booths traveling the country are enabling people to record broadcast-quality interviews. Interviews are also

added to the StoryCorps Archive, housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Since May, selected StoryCorps promos, half hour specials, and pieces have been available for station on-air promotion via the StoryCorps Content Exchange as part of the PRSS ContentDepot Catalog. The StoryCorps exchange is open to all PRSS stations, and pieces can be downloaded over the Internet and used when StoryCorps visits. For more information on how to access the StoryCorps exchange, please contact Public Radio Services at 202.513.2600.

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