

**MacLennan, Anne, York Univeristy. “Interrogating the Archive: Everyday Early Canadian Radio”**

Canadian radio developed privately and independently in the 1920s. In 1928 the Aird Commission’s report recommended a strong, exclusive role for a national, public radio system. The report provided the catalyst for the five commissions that investigated radio during the 1930s. Thus the standard for the investigation of Canadian radio naturally rested on a strong foundation of policy documents, two broadcasting acts and all the commission reports in the course of a decade. The archival collections and historical investigations of early radio quite justifiably rely on these sources and investigate this period concerned with the creation of an official role for a national network.

This work interrogates the initial use of the archival collections to discover radio’s everyday role in Canadian lives rather than maintaining the focus on the official. Radio by its very nature is an aural medium, not lending itself to the production of the traditional paper documents that form the basis of many archival collections. Early radio broadcasters valued the immediacy of radio. Live shows were valued over taped show, so shows were rarely taped. Those deemed to be of lasting historical significance such as a Christmas address by the King would be taped but the everyday world of radio disappeared quite literally into or “over the air”. To discover the everyday, in my own research I conducted a content analysis of the newspaper listings of radio programs, read radio columns and followed up with interviews of remaining audience members. This has followed full circle to a re-interrogation of the archives. Armed with a wider knowledge of the everyday radio a new look at the aspects of radio unrelated to policy provide the basis for a new examination of everyday radio contrary to the standard organization of radio archival material.

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