

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Le Plus ça Change: We look at a time of crisis in public broadcasting, then and now. Also, the Ipswitch mashup.

Tony Kahn:

Hi, everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston with a little bit of broadcasting history. About ten years ago, I did a piece for public radio about all the latest crises that were then rocking the world of public broadcasting. Public television at the time was going through turbulent personnel changes; public radio was up against a very unfriendly Congress that was accusing it of being too liberal and they wanted to take all of its funding away. And in search of new audiences and new contributors, favorite old shows, and old hosts, and old personalities were being dumped, and reshaped, and recycled faster than you could say, "Jane Fonda." In fact, speaking of Jane Fonda, she was around then too, going through the latest in her endless series of career transformations – from sex symbol to antiwar activist, to successful exercise guru, to girlfriend of Ted Turner at CNN.

Well! Guess what? They're all back. Even Jane Fonda, who's now on a book tour, since her divorce from Ted Turner. In fact, just to prove that the more things change, the more they stay the same, we thought we'd turn the clock back today and play that piece for you again. So, here, without a single topical reference removed, from the WGBH *Morning Stories* vaults, is today's offering: *The Death of PBS*.

[Door to vault shuts with loud echo]

Tony Kahn [play role of the "new owner of PBS"]:

Geeze! What a mess! Couldn't they at least have cleaned up?]

Assistant:

Well, we had to move out fast, Chief. Anyway, you bought it all, remember? Public Broadcasting, lock, stock, and barrel. Cash on the line.

Tony Kahn:

Well, let's see what we can use. What do they got?

[sound of creaky door opening]

Assistant:

Tape Library Number One: *Thirty Years of Cultural Programming*. Some of the greatest moments in drama, music, and art. [classical music]

Tony Kahn:

Anything with Madonna in it?

Assistant:

Madonna, let's see. We got Mendelssohn, Mozart, Michelangelo, nope! Just The Madonna -

Tony Kahn:

Okay. Call Blockbuster Video; see if they want all this extra tape for makin' dubs.

Assistant:

Check. Library Two: Documentaries, historical series, interviews with the world's most exciting thinkers and leaders.

Tony Kahn:

Hmm. Anything about their sex life?

Assistant:

You kidding? Most of it's not even in color!

Tony Kahn:

Ah, well. See if MTV wants it. They, they like to throw that newsreel stuff into their rock videos.

Assistant:

Oh, yeah, good idea. And, this is the science section. Cosmos, history of the universe, the human brain -

Tony Kahn:

Umm hmm. Any animal pictures? They sell.

Assistant:

Let's see, they got the *National Geographic* specials -

Tony Kahn:

Ah!

Assistant:

Nova, *Life on Earth* -

Tony Kahn:

Oh. . . ! Okay, okay! Look, sell the cutesy stuff, the koalas, all the pandas, the

baby deer, to Toys R Us. Then ships the shots where they eat each other to Time-Life, for those mail-order predator videos – [conniving laugh]

Assistant:

Good idea.

[Voice of the Cookie Monster in background: Water! Water!]

Tony Kahn:

What's that? [Water! Water!]

Assistant:

Children's programming. Not much left. Just a few characters that never got merchandising deals.

Cookie Monster:

Cookie! Cookie!

Tony Kahn:

I know him! He's been teaching my two kids to read!

Assistant:

Geeze. Couldn't even get a cereal named after him.

Tony Kahn:

Oh, pathetic.

Assistant:

Hey, why not keep him as a pet? The kids'll love it.

Cookie Monster:

Cookie?

Assistant:

I don't know. He could be a Communist. See if Sea World wants him for fish food.

Cookie Monster:

No! [door slams shut on him]

Tony Kahn:

So, we done?

Assistant:

We still got three more floors. Captioning for the deaf, educational outreach to universities and communities, and all of public radio.

Tony Kahn:

Oh, man. Look, I got the [Newt] Gingriches coming for dinner. See what you can get on the furniture and the ferns, and – [crashing noise] Oh, get, get rid of all these books! – No wonder they lost touch with reality!

Assistant:

Hey! Maybe we can rent the rest as office space!

Tony Kahn:

Oohh – call Turner Broadcasting; see if they're interested.

Assistant:

I don't know. Ted's got plenty of room already.

Tony Kahn:

No, no. Not him. Jane. I've heard she's looking for a new exercise studio.

Assistant:

Oh – great idea!

Tony Kahn:

The Death of PBS. Today's Morning Story from WGBH in Boston. A look-back into history. You know, now that I think about it, Gary, the, there is a difference. And that difference is, is podcasting. This is – we didn't have anything like that back then. This is a whole new market, with a whole new set of voices, and potentially a whole new set of ideas for how to do shows. And that is like fresh blood for public broadcasting! It's like, you can put the "public" back in "public broadcasting."

Gary Mott:

Sure. I mean, it's, it's clear that you don't have to be a star to be a podcaster.

Tony Kahn:

You don't even have to be competent! [both laugh] As we try to prove every single week! It's sort of the sharing of enthusiasm. I mean, it began as a community of people who didn't really care how many other people were listening to them as long as they shared their enthusiasm for something.

Gary Mott:

This is truly the public getting involved in the process.

Tony Kahn:

I think podcasting – at least I hope, is making us in, in public broadcasting think about how we do things and whether we should be loosening up our forms. Take the way we credit funders, for instance. Most public broadcasting, that's done in a very formal, institutional kind of way. But when you think about it, aren't funders people too? Don't they have voices? Don't they have ideas and passions to share? Like Alex Neihaus, for instance, one of the executives at Ipswitch? I mean, isn't, isn't he human? Is there anything keeping him from saying – nay – singing why he thinks supporting podcasting is a great idea?

[Music]

Alex Neihaus:

Hey, what is this podcasting? I thought maybe the Martians had finally landed. [echo: Finally landed.] They need to be fed!

Other voice in background:

Transmitters? We don't need no stinkin' transmitters!

Voice of Adam Curry {one of the founders of podcasting}:

Hey everybody.

Alex Neihaus:

I was addicted. Addicted. Addicted. When something is very right, it gets inside your head.

Female voice:

You should listen to this. This concerns you.

Alex Neihaus:

That's a good thing, isn't it?

[Music under following narrative]

[Way [inaudible] – okay.]

Alex Neihaus:

I think I stumbled onto podcasting in a Google search for something else. It just came out of the iPod and went into my ears, and I laughed so hard I fell down. I fell on the ground. It's been a long time since media has caused strong reactions in people. Usually inside your head. I was addicted.

Adam Curry:

My TV, my music, my pictures, my videos.

Alex Neihaus:

You have to be nuts. Right?

Another unidentified voice:

Bye-bye. . . Okay.

Tony Kahn:

Okay. So that's Alex Neihaus, with Ipswitch, our sponsor. Gettin' down and takin' it to the street on behalf of WGBH's *Morning Stories* podcast every Friday, right Gar?

Gary Mott:

<wgbh.org/morningstories> is our website, if you want to find out more about what we're all about. And I must say, Tony -

Tony Kahn:

Yes. If you must [laughs]

Gary Mott:

- that Ipswitch claims no responsibility for this mashup. This is purely a production of WGBH *Morning Stories*.

Tony Kahn:

And that's what makes them leaders in file transfer software! [both laugh heartily]

Gary Mott:

They, they don't stoop to our level, believe me.

Tony Kahn:

That's right. But they're kind enough to be associated with us. So thanks, guys. And we'll see you next Friday.

[Music]

Alex Neihaus:

I was addicted. My TV, my music, my pictures, my video. You have to be nuts, right? Bye-bye.

Okay.

[Music fades]

[End of Recording]

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