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WMUA Records

1947-2022 (*Bulk:* 1985-2014)
9 boxes (4.5 linear ft.)
Call no.: RG 045/30 W6



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WMUA is UMass' student/community run non-commercial FM radio station. In continuous operation since 1948, initially as an AM station, it serves the campus and surrounding communities in the Pioneer Valley and can be heard from the Connecticut to the Vermont border. The records of WMUA document the history of a particularly long-lived organization at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and reflect changes on campus as well as the wider culture. Beginning in 1948, as students were first establishing the station, WMUA has been a constant presence on campus, weathering budget cuts, leadership upheavals and the rise and fall of radio as a dominant medium.

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Background on WMUA

WMUA (Massachusetts University in Amherst) was formed in 1948 following the merger of its predecessors WMSC (Mass State College, 640 AM, carrier-current) and WFDM (Fort Devens Massachusetts). WFDM was a station formed by students taking courses at Fort Devens, in Ayer, MA which was a satellite campus of Massachusetts State College (UMass' name at the time). During the summer of 1948, students Wayne Langill, William Berguson, and Fred Carlson, under the supervision of Engineering professor W. W. Smith and Audio Visual Aids Department advisor Ray Wyman, built the station using a combination of new and used equipment brought over from WFDM. The first broadcast was in early November of 1948 followed by intermittent broadcasts and tests. A ribbon cutting and official dedication was held on November 21, 1948 at Memorial Hall with President Van Meter presiding. The event was the first to be broadcast via transmitter as opposed to telephone lines. The first "special program" was a Christmas show on December 16, 1948 featuring a "direct line" to Santa Claus who was interviewed by two station announcers. Letters were read to Santa by local children. The event was part of a one-day campaign to raise funds for Christmas baskets for needy families in the area.

Due to the size of the space in South College, offices were located first at Draper then Memorial Hall. Initial programming consisted of sporting events, folk and classical music, news, quiz shows, live campus concert recordings, and live drama. The station broadcast from 3pm to 11pm Monday-Thursday and 3pm to 12am Friday-Sunday. In 1950, women began participating in station programming by volunteering to run programming while the all male staff were away for a weekend holiday. In 1952, due to overcrowding on the AM band, the Federal Communications Commission allowed WMUA to switch to the FM band at the 91.1 MHz frequency at 10 watts of power, which expanded the listening radius to 25 miles. In 1955 the station had 37 members who broadcast a total of 47 hours of content per week. Each show had an announcer and engineer. By 1963 the station was broadcasting 93 hours with 70 members. WMUA expanded to 1,000 watts in 1973 after receiving approval from the FCC. In 1956, due to excess money left over from a low construction bid, the station moved from the fifth floor of South College to the Marston Hall basement. The new location had two studios, a reception area, a record library, and an office. One of the studios had an electric organ and piano.

Programming has varied and has generally reflected trends on college radio at a particular time. A popular feature in the early 1960s was to broadcast classical music for 24 hours straight during finals to aid with studying. Other interesting programming features included: election reports, background music for horticulture shows, music for inter-dorm dances during freshman week, speeches from campus officials and Student Senate, and speeches of nationally known figures like Werner von Braun and Robert Frost. In the mid 1960s, many of the DJs emulated the banter and antics of top 40 pop/rock radio DJs of the day, by incorporating sound effects, saccharine jingles, and echo-drenched voice-overs into their shows. Popular top 40 pop, rock, and rhythm and blues acts like The Byrds, The Box Tops, The Buckingham, The Lovin' Spoonful, The Cowsills, Wilson Pickett, The Blues Magoos, Stevie Wonder, Simon and Garfunkel and others performed on campus and would often record station IDs and do interviews with DJs. As youth culture evolved from the pop to the psychedelic era between 1966-1970, the station became more experimental by playing "album cuts", long songs, and mixing genres; evolving into more of a freeform station.

The social, cultural, and political upheavals of the late 1960s had a significant impact on the programming, membership and mission of the station. Following the establishment of the New Africa House in 1970, a Black cultural hub, the Black Mass Communications Project (BMCP), was established. BMCP was a Registered Student Organization (RSO), which eventually demanded access to WMUA's facilities. BMCP trained potential African American DJs, and helped them get their broadcast license. BMCP often came into conflict with WMUA leadership while trying to claim airtime for their members. Many BMCP members felt that WMUA leadership excluded African American DJs. Some BMCP and WMUA alumni have noted incidents of physical and verbal confrontations. BMCP occupied their own space in the Student Union where they would hold meetings and store records. BMCP shows would have their own separate promotion and WMUA programming guides would occasionally specify shows as being part of BMCP.

Alongside significant budget cuts from the Student Government Association, by the late 1980s BMCP's hours were greatly reduced from approximately 60 hours in 1983 to 23 in 1988. A decade later in 1998, BMCP was no longer producing shows at the station and had instead become a more event-focused organization.

Block, or genre-based, programming was instituted at some point in the station's history in part to create avenues for more diversity on the air. Blocks were created for Jazz, Blues, and World as well as Rock, "Urban", Eclectic, Experimental, Polka, Public Affairs and others.

In 1984 the station moved from Marston Hall into the basement of the Campus Center, where it remained until December of 2020. During construction of the new facility, the station broadcast from WSYL, the Sylvan area radio station. The move was driven by a feeling that the Marston Hall location was too isolated and the station would benefit from being located near the Daily Collegian offices, which were also moved into the basement of the Campus Center. The administration also wanted to concentrate "non-academic activity" outside of academic buildings. In December of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the studio moved to the bottom floor of the newly renovated Student Union. The new location is even more visible to students, since the master control room (MCR) window faces a high traffic area in the Student Union. During the pandemic, the station broadcast only pre-recorded programs and automation with a few exceptions for sports coverage; one being the UMass Hockey Team's "Frozen Four" championship in April of 2021.

Community, or non-student-produced shows, became more of a fixture on the station beginning in the 1980s. Community members were first described, in WMUA's 1965 constitution, as "associate members" who held a valid University of Massachusetts I.D (this was separate from UMass undergraduates who were considered "active members"). In 1977, membership had shifted to include anyone who had gone to three consecutive station meetings. By 1993 community members could elect a representative to the executive board and by 1998, community members were a separate recognized membership group. They remained a fairly stable third of the station's members from the late 1980s to 2010s.

The presence of community members at the station began to drive station connection with off-campus listeners. Due to their longevity, community ties, and interest in local affairs and events, community DJs very often developed long-term relationships with their listeners and expanded the reach of the station beyond college students. Many shows ran for years, sometimes decades. Students were typically on air for 1-3 years, would not DJ over the summer, and sometimes programmed shows with narrower appeal. Community members hosted annual events such as the Polkathon fundraiser (a multi-hour weekend marathon of polka music), which raised tens of thousands of dollars for the station over the years, or the Magic Triangle Jazz Series, established in 1990 by Glenn Siegel. Fundraising was necessary to supplement funding from the Student Government Association and the University and allowed the station to buy and maintain equipment and invest in new transmitters and other big ticket items. The station also collaborated with local venues to co-host concerts and events.

There are countless shows and DJs that are remembered fondly by longtime Western Mass residents; too many to list here, and lists are always subjective. However, the following represent a small sampling of shows that were on for many years and had significant community appeal: Ken Mosakowski's Focus, Judy O'Brien and Johanna Halbeisen's annual Turkey Baster Special, Fern Spierer's Oblivion Express, Glenn Siegel's Jazz in Silhouette, Ellen Miller-Mack's Blame it On the Blues, Country, Blues, and Bluegrass, Katie Wright's Rhythm and Blues Revue, Rev. Pearson's Glory Road Gospel Show, Billy Belina's Polka Bandstand, Daria Fisk's UpFront, Undercurrents and many, many others.

Significant changes came to the station in 2016 following tensions between student leadership and community members over the transfer of Glenn Siegel, longtime Station Adviser/DJ and the removal of long-time community host of Martian Gardens, Max Shea following student complaints. This prompted the University to hire a consultant to conduct an external review of the station. The consultant recommended that the station focus more on student programming/training and either reducing community hours in half or eliminating them completely. The University chose to limit community hours to 24 hours per week. This, along with the removal of Shea and Siegel, prompted many longtime community DJs to leave in protest. Polka music, a popular fixture of the station, was reduced from 12 to 4 hours, prompting a petition with over 2,700 signatures to bring back the full 12 hours. The effort was unsuccessful. Besides the exodus of many longtime community members, an additional casualty of the crisis was the cessation of annual fundraisers. Without these annual fundraisers the station has been forced to manage a more austere annual budget.

The station has witnessed many technological changes from its beginnings in the 1950s to today as the industry shifted from tapes and records to CDs, files and streaming. The station established a website, wmua.org, in 1999, where it could be heard worldwide. In 2004, the transmitter on the roof of the Emily Dickinson Dormitory was replaced with a new transmitter on a monopole adjacent to the Orchard Hill observatory at 96 feet higher. However, one constant of the past 30+ years has been the presence of Dan Ferreria, a broadcast engineer who joined the station in 1989. Following a stint at WFCR, the local NPR affiliate, as a Board Operator for Morning Edition, he applied and was hired as the Chief Engineer at WMUA. Ferreria worked closely with Richard Strycharz who took care of the transmitter site and oriented him to the station infrastructure. Ferreria has been responsible for maintaining all the equipment in the station and training students on the use of more complicated technologies such as remotes, field recording, telephone and microwave feeds.

Management roles within the station have evolved over time. While Station Manager, Program Director, News Director, Music Director and Sports Director have remained a constant; Visual Media Director, Women's Affairs Director, Third World Affairs Director, Music Archivist and Block Captains are all positions created by the station throughout its history. Both the Women's Affairs and the Third World Affairs Director were instituted by 1977 and could only be elected or removed by station members of those affiliate groups. Both continued into the 2000s, with the Third World Affairs Director changing titles to the ALANA (African, Latino/a, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American) Affairs Director.

Between 1990 and 2022, WMUA sponsored an annual jazz concert series called the Magic Triangle Jazz Series under the direction of former Advisor/ jazz DJ Glenn Siegel. The program, which averaged 10 shows each year, performed throughout the five colleges and Pioneer Valley. The series has featured cutting edge jazz players alongside legends. A small sampling of performers includes: Sam Rivers, Yuseef Lateef, Cecil Taylor, William Parker, Hamid Drake, Ray Barretto, Anthony Braxton, Jeff Parker, and many others.

News and sports programming has been nominated for and won numerous awards from the Intercollegiate Broadcast System (IBS) College Radio and the Associated Press. The Sports Department has presented the station with some of its most technological challenges since games are often called from remote locations throughout the U.S. The student broadcasters must be adept at running the remote equipment, planning multiple home and away games, and traveling. The WMUA Sports Department is also one of the only college stations to feature women's sports such as field hockey and basketball.

Notable alumni of WMUA includes: [Audie Cornish](#) (news) journalist with NPR, CNN; [David Strader](#) (sports) NHL commentator; [Aaron Schachter](#), WGBH/BBC "The World" host and producer; [Mike Corey](#) NBC/ESPN sports; [Tom Haynes](#), Anchor, Fox5/Atlanta; [Marc Bertrand](#), WBZ-FM - the Sports Hub, Boston; Patrick Borelli (sports) comedy writer for The Tonight Show; [Steve Berkowitz](#) worked for Sony/Legacy.

Scope of collection

The records of WMUA document the history of a particularly long-lived organization at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and reflect the changing culture of the campus. In addition to some administrative and financial records, the collection includes a number of promotional materials, newsclippings, photographs and recordings that reflect the history of the organization. Also noteworthy is a history of WMUA written in 1963 to commemorate its 15th anniversary as well as several oral histories with station alum from different eras. There are also press clippings, ephemera, press releases and recordings from the acclaimed Magic Triangle Jazz Series. Additionally, there are hundreds of analog and digital recordings of shows that span three decades of the station's history, with the bulk from 1987-2012. A separate, growing, [inventory of the recordings](#) is also available which includes descriptions, dates, and formats of the recordings.

Series descriptions

[Series 1: Administrative](#)

1950-2014
0.8 linear feet

WMUA's administrative files contain constitutions, year end reports, and information on the studio's technology. They provide an overarching look at the organization's structure over time. There are also some financial records that include a selection of budgets and underwriting information. There is also some correspondence, control room notices, and general body meeting notes. There are manuals on the general operations of the station and detail specific leadership positions throughout the late 1990s and 2000s. There are also instructional documents on leadership which may be useful for understanding how campus leaders were attempting to train themselves.

[Series 2: Promotional](#)

1955-2012
0.4 linear feet

WMUA members created an extensive amount of promotional material for use around campus and the Pioneer Valley. This series includes program guides and schedules and promotional materials for on and off campus events that the station was involved with. Program guides illustrate and document the shifting musical interests of the student body over time as well as longstanding community shows. Concerts and annual fund-raising event fliers document the local music scene in Western Mass. The many press releases include packets sent to DJs by record labels, as well as press materials for the Magic Jazz Triangle Series and Solos and Duos series.

[Series 3: Press Clippings](#)

1949-2014
0.3 linear feet

This series contains articles published about WMUA by University and regional press from 1949 to 2014. Of note is a UMass Daily Collegian column called Topics From the Tower that documents the early days of the station. There is a folder from 1989 that documents the end of pirate radio in the residential areas, as well as a number of news clippings about the annual Polkathon fundraiser.

[Series 4: Show and Event Recordings](#)

1979-2022
2.8 linear feet

WMUA's show and event series documents the variety of programming created by the station as well as oral histories of station members. The series contains a number of recordings ranging from a video recording of the station's 50th anniversary event to the first news broadcast recorded at the renovated Student Union. The 400+ recordings include multiple formats, with a significant number coming from Katie's Rhythm and Blues Revue and Sing about it. The recordings also include oral history interviews with station alumni and studio leadership including faculty advisor Glenn Siegel and longtime studio engineer Dan Ferreira. The series contains around 80 recordings of the acclaimed Magic Triangle Jazz Series and Solos and Duos Series as well as interviews with artists by different WMUA radio shows. These interviews frequently were a part of a 90 minute radio show, and the shows were often recorded in their entirety.

For the inventory to this series, please see [this spreadsheet](#)

[Series 5: Photographs](#)

1955-2012
0.1 linear feet

Primarily taken within the 1990s and early 2000s, the photograph series documents daily life at the station, providing a changing image of the station throughout its time at the Campus Center. This collection contains photos, Polaroids, and film negatives of students, the station, and community members as well as faculty advisers. Of particular interest are the images of the studio under construction in the Campus Center, and a advertisement from the 1950s for a WMUA show, Revolving Bandstand. The photographs are organized by subject.

Inventory

Series 1: Administrative and Financial

1950-2014

.8 linear feet

Chart statistics and WMUA top song picks

1996

Box 1: 1

Constitutions and by-laws

ca.1960-1987

Box 1: 2

Control room notices

ca.1955,1995

Box 1: 3

Correspondence, listeners

ca.1983-1986

Box 1: 4

Correspondence, Magic Triangle series 1

1989-2006

Box 1: 5

Correspondence, other

ca.1995-2006

Box 1: 6

Creative writing

ca.1956,1996

Box 1: 7

Daily Station logs-music and technology logs

ca.1980-2002

Box 1: 8

DJ training

ca.1985, 2005

Box 1: 9

Duties, responsibilities and rewards of faculty advisor to WMUA

1967 Dec. 8

Box 1: 10
Emergency alert system operational plan
1997 Jan.
Box 1: 11
End of year evaluation
1983-1993
Box 1: 12
FCC license and permits
1972-1992
Box 1: 13
Financial records-budgets, year end reports, and purchase orders
1984-2002
Box 1: 14
Finance: underwriting
ca.2001
Box 1: 15
General body meeting: notes
2011 Sep 12
Box 1: 16
Magic triangle jazz series, administrative
ca.1980-1995, 2005
Box 1: 17
Manual: 2014 annual fund drive
2014
Box 2: 1
Manual: dept director
1997-2003
Box 2: 2
Manuals:general
ca.1998-2006
Box 2: 3
Manuals: the general manager's manual
ca.2005-2006
Box 2: 4
Manuals: policies and procedures
ca.1997
Box 2: 5
Manual: RSO policies and procedures
2005-2006
Box 2: 6
MCR layout and equipment
ca.1992-2005
Box 2: 7
Membership cards: Joseph Larson
1951-1956
Box 9
Microphone lapel pin of Frank E. Spear, class of 1958
1951-1956
Box 9
Multicultural training
1989-1994
Box 2: 8
Officers
ca.1960, 1990-1994
Box 2: 9
Planning documents: Goals, meetings, programs, structure
ca. 1955,1972,1994,2001
Box 2: 10
Polkathon: Schedules,pledge gifts
1996-2006
Box 2: 11
Radio Policy Committee: Correspondence
1954,1955,1956-1958
Box 2: 12
Technology: Transmitter logs and layout
1986
Box 2: 13
Series 2: Promotional Material
1955-2012
.4 linear feet
Awards: Valley Advocate and Intercollegiate Broadcast System
1992-2014
Box 3: 1
Blues press releases, posters, flyers, and autographs
2000-2009
Box 3: 2
Bumper stickers
ca.1997-2010
Box 9
Button
ca.2000
Box 9
Concerts, sales, and other events: poster and flyers
1982-2016
Box 3: 3
Event posters: WMUA, Magic Triangle Jazz Series
1996-2013
Map case 9: 9
Fine Arts Center: publications
1996-2002
Box 3: 4
Fundraising: Scott Bacherman fund flyers
ca.2010
Box 3: 5
Grand opening:Invitation
1949 Oct.
Box 3: 6
Invitation to the formal dedication of WMUA
1952 Nov 8
Box 3: 7
Index: clippings
1952
Box 3: 8

Jazz: press release, flyers, and posters
ca.2005
Box 3: 9
Jazz Shares promotional material and clippings
2012-2013
Box 3: 10
Joke survey
ca.1950
Box 3: 11
Magic triangle 15th Anniversary postcards
2004
Box 3: 12
Magic triangle flyers, posters, and handouts
1999-2004
Box 3: 13
Magic Triangle: Flyers and posters
ca.2000-2008
Box 3: 14
Magic Triangle Jazz Series: press releases
1990-2008
Box 3: 15
Magnet
ca.1995
Box 9
The New England Collegiate Radio Conference:program
1982 April 17-18
Box 3: 16
Newsletter: Off the Air
2002-2005
Box 4: 1
Newsletters: WMUA News and the Bulletin
ca.1949-1956
Box 4: 2
Program guides and schedules
1950-1967
Box 4: 3
Program guides and schedules
1973
Box 4: 4
Program guides and schedules
1980-1989
Box 4: 5
Program guides and schedules
1990-1999
Box 4: 6
Program guides and schedules
2000-2014
Box 4: 7
Solos and Duos: Press releases and promo material
2002-2007
Box 4: 8
Sponsored WMUA community events: flyers, handouts, and program guides
1997-2011
Box 4: 9
Stickers
ca.1995, 2008
Box 4: 10
Survey of the student body
1953
Box 4: 11
W.C. Handy Awards results and voting slips
1997-2005
Box 4: 12
World: press releases, flyers, posters
2007-2009
Box 4: 13
Series 3: News Clippings
1955-2012
.3 linear feet
Alumni clippings
ca.2000-2012
Box 5: 1
Magic Triangle Jazz Series: Previews and reviews
1990-1999
Box 5: 2
Magic Triangle Jazz Series:Previews and reviews
2000-2006
Box 5: 3
Pirate radio stations: Clippings
1987-1988
Box 5: 4
Polkathon:Press clippings
ca.1995-2005
Box 5: 5
Radio and related: Clippings
1990-2002
Box 5: 6
Solos and Duos: Previews and reviews
2002-2007
Box 5: 7
Topics from the Tower
1949-1950
Box 5: 8
WMUA clippings
1949-1960
Box 5: 9
WMUA clippings
1970-1999
Box 5: 10
WMUA clippings
2000-2014
Box 5: 11
WMUA clippings

2000-2014
Map case 9: 9
Series 5: Photographs
1955-2012
.1 linear feet
Construction of the new studio in the Campus Center
1984
Box 5: 12
Revolving Bandstand advertisement: Film negative
ca.1955
Box 5: 13
Student leadership
2012
Box 5: 14
Studio
ca.1985
Box 5: 15
Studio DJs and officers
ca.2002
Box 5: 16
Studio: Film negatives
ca.1990
Box 5: 17
WMUA offices and students at work
1990 Nov.
Box 5: 18
WMUA Leadership
ca.2007
Box 5: 19
WMUA members and staff / UMass Amherst staff
ca.1982-2000
Box 5: 20

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of WMUA and Glenn Seigel, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2019, 2021.

Processing Information

Processed by Talia Heisey, 2022.

Related Material

SCUA also houses the tape library of the Black Mass Communication Project (BMCP), which contains an inventory.

- [Black Mass Communication Project](#) (RG 045/30 B4).

Bibliography

Cappadona, Marie. Robare, Virginia. Stanton, Nancy, History of WMUA 1948-1963

Language:

English

Copyright and Use ([More information](#))

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Search terms

Subjects

- AM broadcasting
- College radio stations--Massachusetts--Amherst (Mass.)
- Counterculture
- FM broadcasting
- Public affairs radio programs
- Radio and the Arts
- Radio in popular culture
- Student activities--Massachusetts--Amherst (Mass.)
- University of Massachusetts Amherst

Contributors

- WMUA (Radio station : Amherst, Mass.) [main entry]

Genres and formats

- Audiocassettes
- Audiotapes
- Compact discs
- Correspondence
- DVDs
- Digital file audio formats
- Digital file formats
- Financial records
- Fliers (printed matter)
- Logs (records)
- MP3
- Manuals (instructional materials)
- Moving images
- Notes (documents)
- Open reel audiotapes

- Oral histories (literary works)
- Posters
- Radio programs
- Schedules (time plans)
- Sound recordings
- VHS
- WAVE (format)

Link to similar SCUA collections

- [Folk music](#)
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