

Chapter (2) Television and Radio The Announcer for the Electronic Media The term announcer" refers to one who communicates over the public airwaves, as on radio–television–broadcasts– channels–or–by–electronic audio amplification, auditorium, stadium, arena, or theaters. as in an Think of the spectrum of newsworthy events that reach us daily through modern media. Radio, television, and the Internet reach vast audiences scattered over thousandthe miles, and all possess instantaneousness. Radio made of possible for the first time history to describe events to millions as they occurred. As far back as the 1920s, radio presented "real time" communication and, because it was a "blind" medium, listeners could only receive news reports, interviews, and other communications from announcers Television added pictures and experiences, bringing audiences into theaters, concert halls, SuperBowls and World Series, and jazz and rock concerts, taking them to faraway places, and giving them a visual sense that they are right there, participating in the televised program. You're the play–by–play announcer for a semipro baseball team, and you must pronounce such "American" names as Buchignani, Gutierrez, Yturri, Sockolow, Watanabe, Engebrect, and MacLeod. You've been assigned to interview a Nobel Prize winner in astrophysics, and you must obtain basic information about the field as well as biographical data on the winner–and do so under extreme time limitations. You're narrating a documentary and must analyze the intent and content of the program to determine the mood; rhythm; structure; and interrelationship of sound, picture, and script. You're a DJ, and you're on duty when word is received of the unexpected death of a great American (a politician, an entertainer, or a scientist). Until the news department can take over, you must ad–lib the breaking news appropriately. It's obvious that no one type of course will completely educate you as an announcer. In addition to academic CRYSTAL A DIAMOND MUD studies, and an internship at a television or radio station, you may benefit from becoming a member of one or more organizations open to students. Through such organizations, you may attend meetings and conventions and receive news and information over the Internet. You also may make connections that may some day pay off. Join broadcast– related organizations such as College Students in Broadcasting, National Association of Broadcasters, Alliance for Women in Media, Association for Women in Communications, International Radio and Television Society, Alpha Epsilon Rho, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, National Association of Black Journalists, Society of Professional Journalists, and Society of Environmental Journalists. Students with a broadcast journalism emphasis may become members of the Radio–Television Journalism division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Membership in the student category of the Radio and Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) is also available to you. The Broadcast Education Association, which holds yearly conventions, is open to student participation. The Announcer's Responsibility Before committing yourself to a career as an announcer, you should recognize that, along with the undeniable privileges and rewards that come to people working in this field, there are several areas of responsibility as well. First is the obligation all performers owe their audiences: to be informative, objective, fair, accurate, and entertaining. Announcers who are sloppy, unprepared, or just plain boring usually get what they deserve–two weeks' notice. There are, as you undoubtedly know, announcers who work hard and possess talent, but who at the same time pollute the public air, chiefly on radio and television talk and interview bubws. A number of radio and television performers are willing to say al– most anything,

however outrageous or hurtful to others, in order to attract and hold an audience. In our free society such announcers are protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution; the only protection the audience has resides in the integrity of each announcer. Most departments of broadcasting offer courses in ethics and social responsibility. Grounding in this subject, together with serious consideration of the effects of mass communication, should be understood as vitally important to your development as a public communicator. Social responsibility goes beyond the normal obligation of performer to audience. Nearly all announcers, whether they realize it or not, have influence because of their visibility and prestige. Years ago, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton perceived and described what they called the status-conferral function of the mass media. In essence, they said the general public attaches prestige to people who appear in the mass media, and that the average person is more readily influenced by prestigious people than by equals. The public's reasoning is circular: "If you really matter, you will be at the focus of attention, and if you are at the focus of mass attention, then you must really matter." Assuming that you're majoring in "electronic communication" (or whatever term is used at your school), you should consider enrolling in one or more minor programs that focus on specific area(s) of announcing you intend to practice, such as history, political science, urban studies, literature, sociology, economics, acting, journalism, sports history, and meteorology. If you're serious about an announcing career, your education must have breadth, so maintain a positive attitude about required general education courses—even if they seem unrelated to your career goals, they will add to a storehouse of knowledge that you'll visit many times over the years. Expand your ability to pronounce names and words in French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Whether you become a specialist in news, sports, voice-overs, or interviewing, your ability to pronounce names and words in languages other than English will be of great importance. The Spanish language is of increasing importance with the growing Latino population nationwide. The field of Spanish broadcasting continues to expand in many states, including Texas, Florida, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Consider taking Spanish classes, because if you are bilingual, you can double your announcing opportunities. Many general education courses, including English composition, are required for a liberal arts degree. You may want to go beyond minimum English requirements by choosing from such offerings as creative writing and dramatic writing. But, as you work to improve your skills in writing traditional English, be aware that there's another writing challenge that is unlikely to be met by English instructors: learning to write for the ear and the eye. While it may be obvious, it must be emphasized that, unlike stories written for news-papers and magazines, radio scripts are written to be heard, and television scripts to be seen and heard. It's important to remember always that your scripts will never be seen or read by your audience. Scripts are blueprints to be turned into sights and sounds by interpreters. To write well for the electronic media, you need to cultivate the ability to conceive and then encode your visions into words and sentences. So a different kind of writing from that used for print is demanded. For television, you must use words that enhance and clarify what's shown on the screen. For radio and Internet streaming, you should practice putting together words that create pictures in the minds of listeners. Clear writing for the electronic media is a necessity, not because your audience is simple-minded, but because sentences received by our ears are processed differently from those received by our eyes. Take advantage of every opportunity to write

scripts and then experience them when they're turned into productions. Aside from attending scriptwriting classes, look for opportunities to write for production classes and community-access cable outlets. Computers are central to video-editing systems, character generators, word processors, graphics systems, scheduling and billing systems, and data-retrieval systems. Most DJs work with a console and a computer to record intros and back-announcements of music played. They work air shifts and from time to time go "live," but much of their work is saved in a digital file and inserted into the running schedule of the station for play during holidays, weekends, or days off. For more information on this, see Chapter 11, days Announcing."CRYSTA DIAMON Plan your coursework to obtain a broad background in the liberal arts and sciences.