

A CASE STUDY OF NPR MUSIC

Elizabeth K. Brixey

Dr. George Kennedy, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this May 2011 case study was to look at NPR Music: to find out what it was, how it worked and what it valued. At that time, it was succeeding as an innovation within a traditional news organization, as a digital space for audience interaction around music celebration and discovery, and as an Internet-age model for covering music.

Using diffusion of innovation theory and the single-case study method, five overarching observations were made: that creation of NPR Music and creativity within it come in a context of NPR's history of music presentation and its future in the Internet age; that music coverage and digital storytelling necessarily intertwine; that breathing room within the larger organization plus the passion of the music team results in steady productivity; that extending the conversation with audiences is a priority; and that staffers are first and foremost music advocates.

NPR Music points the way for established news media to take something for which they have been known and expand it in a fresh way within their organizations. It serves as a model for in-depth, multi-platform coverage of any topic that would be made richer by the "click here" experience. It shows how news organizations can encourage audience investment because users can interact with the curating team and with one another around particular areas of coverage. It also shows how audiences can have a voice in the creative process, the product, and ensuing conversations.