

# MIZZOU

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## KOMU then and now

### Robot cameras now roam the set

Story by Dale Smith



*When KOMU-TV was new in 1954, it produced programs including Ladies Fare, a Monday-Friday offering that included cooking segments. The station's tradition for educating journalists continues with students including Maurico Bush, left, and David Earl. Photo at left courtesy of University Archives, C:0/3/8 Box 2. 2011; photo at right by Rachel Coward*

Mizzou was on the leading edge of journalism education in January 1954, when KOMU-TV officially hit the mid-Missouri airwaves. The only station in the region for its first few years, [KOMU](#) broadcast programs from four networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, DuMont) and produced original programs, says Rod Gelatt, professor emeritus of journalism.

When Gelatt arrived in 1963 and took over as news director, several of KOMU's programs were strictly educational. That legitimized the station's mission early on because other broadcasters feared competition for advertising dollars, he says. For instance, the station aired *Of Interest to Women*, a homemaking show hosted by Esther Griswold, and *Twilight of the Sioux*, a show about Native Americans hosted by English Professor John Neihardt.

But in news circles nationwide, KOMU was (and still is) best known for educating broadcast journalists using the Missouri Method. It's a trial-by-fire approach that sends students into the community to do what professionals do — gather news and report it to the public every day on deadline.

The technology has changed radically. “We started writing stories in the days of typewriters,” Gelatt says. “You’d roll five sheets of paper into the typewriter with carbon paper between each sheet. The editor would correct it, and you’d read a marked-up copy on the air, sometimes even reading notes written in the margin.” Now students compose on computers, editors make changes, and “the talent” reads from Teleprompters while ensconced in colorful news sets. Even the enormous old studio cameras and their operators have been replaced by robot cameras manipulated from a control room.

“These days,” Gelatt says, “several universities have TV stations or can link up with a local station so students can do some newscast preparation.” But KOMU is the only university-owned commercial network affiliate. “Our students get an uncommon professional experience. When they graduate and seek employment, they’ve already had two years of work in a network affiliate newsroom. It’s darned close to unique.”




Check out the slide show below of historic J-School photos. [Back to Sound Bytes](#)

*[Adobe Flash](#) version 8, or higher, and [Java Script](#) are required to view the slide show for this feature story.*

**Share your comments with Mizzou magazine at [Mizzou@missouri.edu](mailto:Mizzou@missouri.edu).**

*Note: If published, feedback may be edited for length, style and clarity.*

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| E-mail: [Mizzou@missouri.edu](mailto:Mizzou@missouri.edu)

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