

The accelerating growth in membership practice 1950 - 2015

1950-1975

1975-1985

1996-2005

2006-2015

Membership practices of local stations are dominated by tactics that were developed in the 1980s and 1990s. 'Even the two most-promising growth areas — sustainer programs and major-gift fundraising — began to take root at least 20 or more years ago.'

Crowdfunding: A Kickstarter campaign raises \$590,807 for a special Planet Money reporting project in May 2013.

Canvassing: Rocky Mountain PBS adopts this practice in 2011, and its early success prompts more major-market stations to join the effort. Canvassing is now the second-largest member-acquisition tool in PTV.

Mobile Giving: Three stations — WXPN, KQED and Twin Cities PTV — experiment with text-giving programs in 2009-10. All report disappointing results.

Email and E-renewals: The 1999 launch of Public Interactive provides a web-based platform for online contributions and email communications with station supporters.

Online Pledge: After a "Cyber Monday" campaign by WAMU-FM raises \$227,000 from 3,500 online pledges in October 1999, more stations adopt the new fundraising practice.

Major and Planned Giving: Major national organizations and affinity groups begin providing training in major-gift fundraising in the 1990s. To spread the practice more widely, CPB launches its major-giving initiative in 2004. Major gifts to pubcasters increase by more than \$100 million annually from 1997-2012.

Sustainers: Sustainer-gift programs first appear in the late 1980s. WGBH creates a sustainer category in its membership program in 1994. Interest in the approach explodes after Minnesota Public Radio expands the practice in 2007. Monthly giving programs become the most important membership innovation of the decade.

Telemarketing: Stations begin to use telemarketing in the mid-1980s; WGBH raises more than \$1 million via telemarketing by 1989. This fundraising activity continues to be effective with lapsed donors.

Database Development: In 1978, Allegiance becomes the first vendor developing systems specifically for pubcasting clients. The field expands to include Blackbaud, whose Raiser's Edge was aimed at a wide range of nonprofits, in 1982; Memsys in 1984; Team Approach in 1996; and Access International Enterprise in 2001.

Acquisition Mail: Alan Sack introduces direct-mail fundraising at WGBH in the early 1960s, and the station serves as a launching pad for direct-mail research in pubTV.

Auctions: KQED produces the first pubTV auction in 1955. The practice spreads over the next two decades but declines as more development managers recognize that net revenues from the labor-intensive fundraisers are too low.

Direct Mail Renewals: Renewal mailings begin as one- or two-piece reminders of a donor's expiring program-guide subscription. By the mid-1990s, renewal practices are informed by direct-marketing research and evolve into seven-piece series. Public radio stations begin adopting these renewal practices in the late '90s with assistance from Development Exchange Inc.

Pledge Drives: Pacifica's KPFA-FM introduces on-air pledge campaigns in 1949, and the practice spreads among pubcasting stations. In 1975, pubTV mounts its first nationally coordinated campaign, Festival 75, which features specialized pledge programs. The genre expands to include programs featuring self-help "gurus" such as Leo Buscaglia and blockbuster performance specials, including *The Three Tenors* and *Riverdance*. As public TV's national membership peaks at 5 million donors in 1995, system leaders begin questioning the long-term effects of "transactional pledging." Radio stations, which pledge around their regularly scheduled programs, steadily build their membership base through the audience growth generated from wider adoption of the NPR news/talk format. By 2013, public radio achieves near-parity with pubTV's national donor pool of 3.07 million members.

Chart information compiled by Mark Fuerst

This graphic has been revised to reflect the correct year of KQED's first on-air auction.