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Division Director/State Librarian

March 29, 2010

RADIO READING SERVICE INFORMATION SHEET

The Utah State Library's Radio Reading Service will cease operation on April 21, 2010. Due to difficult economic times and continued reductions in the State of Utah's budget, the Utah State Library can no longer support this service. The Library was required to take a one-time cut from the current budget year and an additional 5% on-going cut from the 2011 fiscal year budget.

The number of listeners tuning into the Radio Reading Service broadcast has declined substantially over the past few years. When a survey was conducted in 2006, 1,023 active patrons were signed up for the radio reading service. From May 2009 to February 2010, 226 patrons cancelled their participation. Currently, there are 844 patrons with radio receivers, and based on statistics from a 2009 survey, 21% indicated they no longer listen and utilize this service.

This survey included the question, "*Do you currently listen to the radio reading service using the radio provided by the library?*" From the 92 (14%) of those who responded: 30 (36%) tuned in daily; 26 (31%) listened on a weekly basis; 10 (12%) listened on a monthly basis; and 17 (21%) did not listen and are returning their radios.



DONNA JONES MORRIS
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For the past two years the special services librarian, who supervises the radio service, has changed the programming to a 24/7 broadcast; made program changes from the recommendation of the members of the Library's Consumer Advisory Committee; and added programs using third party sources (e.g. National Public Radio) to meet programming criteria requested by the listening audience.

The program most listened to has been the LDS Church News. In May of 2009, Radio Reading Service staff became aware, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started a HD radio station, and was broadcasting the Church News. In checking State Library reports, it was discovered, the drop in the number of Radio Reading Service listeners corresponded to the start of this new station.

The Radio Reading Service faces significant disadvantages. Because state agencies operate 10 hour days, Monday through Thursday, broadcasts of the Church News on Monday is late news considering newspapers are delivered to the general public on Saturday. In addition, the State Library's Radio Reading Service cannot reach all patrons in the State who qualify for this service. The program is broadcast via radio waves, which requires a special radio receiver.

Because the signal does not carry into areas within mountain ranges, the service is limited to patrons along the Wasatch Front, from Ogden to Provo.

Attempts were made to web stream the broadcast, however issues involving technology and copyright law, hindered the completion of this project.

The last day the Radio Reading Service will provide programming is April 21, 2010. If you have questions please contact Donna Jones Morris, Director, Utah State Library.