

Constant radio replays ruin new tunes



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I was driving home from school, doing my best to avoid an accident, something that could be very possible with my easily distracted peers behind the wheel. It had been a good day. I didn't do anything to publicly embarrass myself, and for the first time in what felt like eons I actually had no homework to stress over tonight. I thought I'd celebrate this rare occasion with some hopping tunes. To my dismay, as I turned the radio on I was met with the all too familiar chorus of Daniel Powter's "Bad Day." I inwardly groaned and changed the station, restoring my peace of mind. This joy was short-lived, however, as the new station began to play the song several minutes later. My frustration levels began to rise. This song has already taken over American Idol, and now it's on the radio 24/7. To think there was a time when this song didn't immediately repulse me. That time seems so long ago now as I heard it yet again moments later. I decided that it would be best for me, as well as the other people on the road if I just turned the radio off before I upset myself too much. How sickly ironic is it that "Bad Day" could ruin my perfect one? Have you ever had a similar experience to mine? Do you end up bitterly resenting a song the radio has butchered to death that you once loved to secretly sing and dance to in your room with a hairbrush microphone? There's a whole array of songs that have reached overplayed status. How about any single Kelly Clarkson ever released? I have her "Breakaway" album and can only stomach to listen to half of it. Natasha Bedingfield's "Unwritten" was everywhere at one point and now it seems that her new single "Pocket Full of Sunshine" will meet the same overplayed fate. It annoys me because I bought that song off iTunes when I first heard it. Now it feels like a wasted dollar, seeing that I listen to it more on the radio than I do on my iPod. Why does the radio insist on torturing me like this? Over the past 10 days I have been taking note to what song is playing when I turn on the radio. I heard 30 songs more than once, and 11 of those songs were played at least five times. This is just me seeing what's playing at random intervals so think how many times these songs must be played in total. The

winner of the week was Daughtry's "What About Now." I heard it 13 times in 10 days. There was even an incident where it was playing on two different radio stations at the same time. His latest power ballad was just as painful as all his other songs. If you think about it, an overplayed song is kind of like a relationship gone sour. After too much of the same it gets tedious and tiresome. Just imagine it. Girl meets boy. Girl finds a rocking song to jam out to. Girl and boy are all lovey-dovey with each other. Girl listens to her new favorite tune over and over. As time progresses, girl starts to find boy annoying. The song starts to seem monotonous to girl.

She realizes that all the things she used to think were so endearing about boy are really not all that cute. Suddenly his quirky little snort laugh isn't all that adorable. The song has lost most of its charm. The bubble gum pop chorus that once entranced her is now old and wearisome. Girl tries her best to make a clean break from boy, but he just won't go away. Boy achieves stalker-like tenacity. Girl tries to avoid the song that now makes her want to pull her hair out every time she hears it, but it's inescapable. In the end girl files restraining order against boy and decides maybe it would just be better to stick to listening to her iPod.



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Teen voters need education, not entitlement



ASYIA GOVER
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Although few of us are old enough for the real deal, elections aren't exactly a new concept to teenagers. We're familiar with the periodic popularity contests disguising themselves as student government, prom royalty and other elections that sweep schools every year. Those, fortunately, are much less serious than the elections that only the eldest of teenagers are permitted to participate in: the elections held to determine America's politicians.

While it's perfectly acceptable for the prom queen to be elected based on her stunning good looks, and it's just fine to vote for her based on such features, real political elections should be a different thing entirely. Too often, choices are made for this country's future by teenagers who "don't like that guy" or "think this dude is cool," rather than teenagers who "disagree with that one's policies" or "trusts this one to cut back on spending." Most newly registered voters, or those of voting age who choose not to register, assume that--being only one of several million--their vote won't mean anything to the actual outcome. It's this thinking that keeps teens tuned out from the political world, the real world, or the world outside of America. Believing they can't make a difference, they choose not to care, and consequently choose not to be informed.

The scoop on last night's episode of Gossip Girl takes priority over the supposedly irrelevant presidential candidate's stance on education, and the average apathetic teenage voter never gets the information they need to make a prudent decision. After being pressured to register, teens still often seem to not understand that voting is not only a right, but a responsibility, and it is also the responsibility of an American citizen to know what is happening in our country and who our choices are for politicians. They might watch a debate, listen to a speech, attend a rally or even more horrifying, none of the above, and then decide that they know enough to pick someone that they can trust to do good things for our country. They proudly proclaim their choice for president, governor, etc. without really knowing what exactly they voted for.

Though there are those who argue that the voting age should be raised, lowered, whatever: it's evident that no matter when you allow kids to vote, they're going to make uninformed decisions. Since it's entirely impossible to ensure that information falls into the lap of every eligible teenager, regardless of age, it would be ridiculous to assume that just because kids are registering, they know what they're doing and what they're going to do.

A better alternative to prevent the input of those who might not be making the effort to actually learn about their choice would be to test voters on their knowledge of both past and current events, just to make sure they're paying attention. Just as immigrants hoping to be citizens in the good ol' U.S. of A. must take a citizenship test, citizens hoping to be voters should be mandated to take a similar test. The solution to the problem of uninformed voting is not to change the age at which kids feel they should maybe try to watch the news every so often, but to make sure anyone who wants to vote is going to know what they're voting for.

Thanksgiving has a history richer than turkey gravy



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You hold your fork high above the pumpkin pie, eyes glazed with delirium. You contemplate its perfect orange surface, unbroken but by that ethereal castle of whipped cream. Was ever a plane so smooth and liquid deep? Was ever a height so airy and beautiful? Okay, knock it off! Before you indulge your passion, stop for a moment. Have you considered the holiday which occasions you are feasting?

Thanksgiving is often called an American tradition. But call it what we will, the modern incarnation of this holiday isn't about thankfulness. We may look forward to clearance, decor, and the ubiquitous pie, but not to giving thanks. After all, who to give thanks to? The government? Mother Earth? And why give thanks? Thanksgiving must just be an outdated misnomer from a bygone day. The highly imaginative new "Turkey Day" seems a far more accurate title for our modern food fest.

But where did the name come from in the first place? Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving at all? We know the legendary story of the Puritans in Massachusetts, gathering in a thanks-giving

feast together with their Native American Allies. It is lesser known that Thanksgiving wasn't instituted as an official United States holiday until the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln, the man responsible for the first national Thanksgiving, had specific intentions for his new holiday. The words of his Thanksgiving proclamation, October 3, 1863, make clear his purpose: "I do therefore invite my fellow citizens... to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

Take a look at the date on that quotation. 1863 - the year of the Battle of Gettysburg, a slaughter, which alone claimed a total of around 45,000 American casualties. Abraham Lincoln recognized that trials, whether they be a bloody civil war or an unstable economy, only reveal the extent of our blessings. Even the most devastating circumstances were unable to dissuade him from his faith in the goodness of God, and his gratefulness to his "beneficent Father." Honest Abe looked at the host of American privileges and realized thanks were in order. His words point us to the "Giver of all good gifts" - God alone. Thus the authentic Thanksgiving tradition is one of gratefulness, remembering the goodness of God over the past year, acknowledging God's role in every free-

dom and blessing we enjoy. Turkey day, on the other hand, is about empty secular consumerism. Whether to call your celebration Thanksgiving, or Turkey Day, is really a question of Christianity versus Materialism. So go ahead, eat your pie. Cheer your team. Squeeze this holiday for everything you can get out of it, but don't pretend to celebrate Thanksgiving. If you're going to reject the Christian reason for the holiday, don't hang on to the name. Call it Turkey Day. If, by chance, the Christian Thanksgiving appeals to you, if you begin to see Turkey day and its accompanying worldview for the meaningless things they are, then come. Join the ranks of the American founders, and of Lincoln. A genuine celebration of Thanksgiving starts with a change of loyalty and perhaps more importantly a change of heart.



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Move over, pandas: newspapers are the new endangered species



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Every so often the dire prediction looms that newspapers will soon write their own obituaries. Granted, today's world is more technologically advanced than ever before with the internet, iPods, Blackberries, e-mails, and texting. And, since CD's gave way to iPods, does not it follow that printed newspapers will soon go the way of the Dodo Bird? Not necessarily.

The demise of the newspaper has been predicted before -- at the introduction of the telegraph, radio and television. In each case, the medium survived, becoming stronger from the challenge.

The Spokesman-Review's 125-year existence demonstrates its "staying power" in the face of these previous inventions. Everyone has an opinion on newspaper readership. Conservatives think newspapers are too liberal; liberals think newspapers are too conservative. Go figure.

People who do not read newspapers turn inward, isolating themselves from broader views. Some choose to obtain news only from sources -- like talk radio -- that tell them what they

want to hear instead of both sides of a story.

Others turn to websites that only promote their viewpoint, never realizing that those sites get much of their news from newspapers. Where would that material come from if newspapers ceased to exist? Those who "don't have time to read a newspaper" never realize how little they really know of what is going on in their neighborhood, city or the world.

Were newspapers to disappear, ignorance would grow, and a new breed of totally uninformed people would emerge who isolate and restrict their knowledge of what is really going on around them.

Recently, the Spokesman-Review downsized its newsroom staff by over 25 people. This is not unique. All over America, newspapers are reducing staff.

Similar reductions have occurred at The Seattle Times, where 191 positions were eliminated -- 131 through layoffs and 60 through a hiring freeze. Metropolitan newspapers throughout the country are struggling with declining classified ad revenues and shrinking circulation, problems driven at least in part by competition from the Internet.

Overall, 59 percent of 260 newspapers participating in a Pew Research Center study on "The Changing Newsroom" have recently reduced staff. They claim that as Au-

gust, 2008 "more than 6,300 employees at the 100 largest newspapers have lost jobs through buyouts or layoffs in the past year." And yet, this is not a phenomenon solely affecting newspapers.

Every type of business in the U.S. is currently undergoing staff reductions of one sort or another due to the economy -- but that does not mean that cars will not be built, planes will not fly, or large hotel chains will shut down. It is strictly a policy of "business as usual" in order to keep the doors open and the business operating. Newspapers are no exception.

Advertising revenues are really at the heart of this matter as newspapers rely heavily on the money generated by advertisers. Newspapers are starting to work with online advertisers themselves in order to compete with mediums offering free classified ads, such as "eBay" and "Craigslist." Newspapers like The Spokesman-Review are attempting to use the Internet by becoming newsmedia agencies and using a wide range of digital and print platforms to deliver the news.

In his 2004 book The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age, journalism professor Philip Meyer predicts that the final newspaper will be delivered in 2043. Maybe so, or maybe the technology by which news is delivered is all that will change.

Look at Amazon's reading invention -- the "Kindle." This wireless reading device has replaced the Sony "Reader" in its field and now offers, in addition to 185,000 book titles, numerous top U.S. newspapers including The New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post, and top magazines including TIME, Atlantic Monthly and Forbes.

In addition, one can also read top international newspapers from France, Germany and Ireland such as Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine and The Irish Times--all auto-delivered wirelessly. The downside? One can purchase a lot of newspapers with the "Kindle's" \$359 price tag, not to mention the subscription fees.

While "news bites" can be devoured from the Internet when rushed, that experience will never be as satisfying as spending one's Sunday mornings next to a warm fire, coffee in hand while doing the crossword puzzle, brooding over sports, or just perusing each section page by page.

Reading news on the Web does not offer the same stress free "warm, fuzzy" experience that holding a newspaper provides. So, until the cost of the newest technology comes way down -- newspapers as we know them -- are here to stay at least for today.