

What Does That Mean? A Glossary of NPR Lingo

ACTUALITY - a portion of an interview to be used in a piece*. Also referred to as "acts"

ADAPTER - a device that changes, or adapts one kind of connector* into another

AFM (American Federation of Musicians) - A national union of musicians that NPR works with on issues pertaining to recording performances and interviews featured on NPR's news and cultural programs.

AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) - A trade union for reporters, editors, producers, on-air talent and program hosts. AFTRA represents NPR on-air production and editorial employees in contract negotiations (normally held every three years). If hired in a capacity covered by an AFTRA contract, the employee must join AFTRA. NPR technicians and engineers are not in AFTRA.

AMBIENCE - the environment in which an event takes place. It is often recorded afterwards to provide audio that can be faded in prior to and coming out of the event to ease transitions*. Also referred to as "ambi"

AQH (Average Quarter Hour) - AQH is the estimated average number of persons listening to a station during any 15-minute period. This estimate, expressed in hundreds, is shown for the Metro, Total Survey Area and Designated Market Area in Arbitron radio market reports.

ARBITRON - A for-profit research firm involved in radio audience measurement.

A-REP (Authorized Representative) - A manager or director at a member station (usually the general manager) who is the designated contact for all NPR-related issues. The A-REP has been duly designated by the Licensee as its representative to act, represent, and vote in all matters relating to NPR.

ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) - An organization that licenses the performance of published nondramatic musical works of its member artists. NPR member stations are licensed to broadcast music in the ASCAP repertoire through an agreement between NPR and ASCAP.

ATC - acronym for the NPR program *All Things Considered*

AUDIBLE SPECTRUM - the range of sound that can be heard. Sounds are given an identification based on the number of times they vibrate per second, a scale referred to as Hertz. The range of audibility differs between species. Typical human hearing is considered to span from a low of about 50 hertz (abbreviated Hz) to a high of about 16,000 Hertz (kHz, or kiloHertz). A dog, for example, can easily hear 20kHz.

AUDIGRAPHICS - An analysis of programming and audience data prepared by David

Giovanoni and Audience Research Analysis.

BACKTIME - A calculation of when to start a second piece of audio (often deadrolled*) so that it posts* properly

BANDWIDTH - The range of frequencies contained in the audio being used.
ex: a CD contains frequency response from 20hz* to 20kHz*. A telephone contains frequencies between 100Hz* and 3kHz*.

BILLBOARD - A prerecorded introduction usually including theme music and information about the upcoming show

BLEEBLE - A *Morning Edition*-centric term for 30 seconds of music that transitions between top of the hour newscast and program

BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.) - Like ASCAP, BMI represents composers and publishers of nondramatic musical works. Through an agreement between NPR and BMI, NPR member stations are licensed to broadcast musical works in BMI's repertoire.

BRIGHT -Audio with a lot of treble content. "Make it brighter" would be a request to increase the presence*; "It's too bright" would be a request to remove some presence

BUTTON -Originally a guaranteed 30 seconds of music for stations to talk over; now simply a segment of music between pieces*. Also called a zipper*.

BUZZ - A steady-pitched addition to a recording that sounds like bees (generally undesirable, even in non-audio circumstances. Often caused by an incomplete connection (connectors not pushed in all the way, a bad cable)

CHIPPER - A *Talk of the Nation*-centric term for the 29- second piece of music that follows the top of hour newscast

CLOSED CIRCUIT FEED- Also called an "interconnect." A feed that is transmitted to stations but is not intended for local broadcast. Closed circuit feeds are often used as a means of informing stations about new programs and membership and are sometimes produced as a teleconference where station staff can listen to the satellite feed and call the NPR studio with comments.

COLD - quiet, or low-level* audio

CONNECTOR - a plug or jack that allows equipment to be easily connected and disconnected

CONTRIBUTING STATION - An interconnected public radio station that pays a reduced D/I fee while giving up some benefits of Participating Station status. See also INTERCONNECTED STATION, PARTICIPATING STATION, D/I FEE .

COSMETIC ENDING - removal of ums, uhs, stutters, false starts

CPB (Corporation for Public Broadcasting) - A private, nonprofit organization established by the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act to provide an intermediary between Congress and the public radio and television stations. Congress funds CPB in a three-year advance funding cycle, and CPB distributes those funds to nonprofit television and radio organizations and independent producers according to criteria contained in the Public Broadcasting Act.

CROSSFADE - an action or command that causes the current audio to decrease in volume whilst another audio is simultaneously increased. The final result is uninterrupted sound.

CSG (Community Service Grant) - A monetary grant of federal funds provided by CPB to public radio stations for basic station operations.

CUME - The estimated number of different persons listening to a radio station for at least five minutes during a particular daypart.

CUTTING TAPE - performed with a razorblade, a splicing block and splicing tape. One section of audio is selected and physically cut just before it begins and again just after it ends, then connected to another section of audio or to leader tape.

DACS [Direct Access Communications System] - The main method of electronic hard copy message delivery to public radio stations via satellite. DACS messages can be sent by program sources, public radio stations and entities, and NPR staff.

DALET - the name of a company that manufactures DAWs*

DAB [Digital Audio Broadcasting]- DAB is an emerging technology for broadcasting digitally modulated radio signals that deliver compact disc-quality sound free of interference and noise to radio listeners. DAB transmits audio information as a series of digital bits in a way similar to telephone digital modems, fax machines and computers

DAT [Digital Audio Tape] RECORDERS - A recording technology that transcribes an audio signal into binary code information. It avoids spurious noise such as the tape hiss of analog recorders.

DAW [Digital Audio Workstation] - A stand-alone product or host computer that uses customized software applications to process audio content for multimedia production. Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) employ specialized digital signal processing, high quality digital converters (A/D & D/A) and flexible audio interfacing in addition to the microprocessor, keyboard, random access memory (RAM) and video monitor commonly associated with a computer.

DAYPART - A time period for which audience estimates may be reported in Arbitron radio market reports.

DEADROLL - An action or command to start a reproducer in play but with the volume turned off. At a specific time, the audio is faded in.

DEMODULATOR - Sometimes called a "demod." A piece of equipment used by a satellite downlink to receive an individual audio or data channel. Some demods, called "fixed" or "fixed-tuned" demods, can receive only one channel. Some demods, called "limited-agility demods", can receive some, but not all of the channels on a transponder (one channel at a time). Other demods, called "fully-agile" demods, can receive all of the channels on a transponder (one channel at a time). A separate demodulator is required for each channel that must be received simultaneously. There is no limit on the number of demodulators that may exist at a downlink.

DESIGNATED MARKET AREA (DMA) - The DMA is the geographic market design that defines each radio market exclusive of others. Every county or split county in the US is assigned to one DMA.

D/I AGREEMENT - See SATELLITE INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT.

D/I COMMITTEE - Distribution/Interconnection Committee. The committee of the NPR Board of Directors responsible for recommending rates and policy and for overseeing the operation of the public radio satellite interconnection system.

D/I FEE - Stations that are interconnected in the public radio system must pay a Distribution/Interconnection fee, which reflects their share of the costs of operating and maintaining the interconnection system. This fee is not related to membership status and is not included in any dues assessments. See also SATELLITE INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT, INTERCONNECTED STATION.

DBS [Digital Broadcast Satellite] - DBS is high power broadcast satellite service mainly intended for delivery of video programming directly to the home. DBS-R refers to direct broadcast satellite - radio wherein DBS is used for broadcast of audio programming. Direct-to-home (DTH) is a more contemporary generic describing both of these services.

DISTORTION - a harsh, fuzzy or crackling addition to the audio that occurs when the volume of the audio being played back or recorded is too loud for the device or recording medium

DISTRIBUTION - The process of delivering programming to public radio stations. This used to be accomplished by a combination of a nationwide telephone network accompanied by tape duplication and mailing. Since 1979 the majority of public radio distribution has been by satellite.

DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT - A contract between a program supplier and NPR Distribution. Along with an initial registration fee, this allows the supplier to distribute programming on the

public radio satellite system. By signing the Agreement, the program supplier accepts full legal responsibility for the programs it distributes, indemnifies NPR and any interconnected stations that air any of the programs, and accepts responsibility for obtaining liability insurance as well as rights and clearances as necessary.

DOWNLINK - An earth terminal capable of receiving signals from the public radio satellite. Every participating station in the public radio satellite system has a downlink. Some also have uplinks.

DOWNLINK SERVICES CHANNEL (DSC) - The satellite data channel used by the SOSS for delivering DACS messages, schedule records, time synchronization signals, and other control information to uplinks and downlinks.

EDIT - To review and approve a piece with the reporter; to physically cut audio tape to remove unwanted material or assemble elements*

EDITING TAPE -Involves "cutting tape*" and removing unwanted statements or sounds

ELEMENTS -The components of a piece*

EQUALIZING - Changing the sound of audio by adding (amplifying) or reducing (attenuating) specific frequencies in the audible spectrum*

FADE -The action or command that causes the audio to decrease in volume

FADEUP -The action or command that causes the audio to increase in volume

FEEDING CUTS -This is an instruction you might give a tech - "I'm going to feed you my cuts", meaning you are going to play your tape through whatever connection you are using (ISDN; fiber; Minidisc with connected headphones held against the mouthpiece of a telephone)

FOOTPRINT - The geographic area where the signal from a particular satellite can be received. The footprint of the satellite NPR uses covers all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

GATHER SOUND - A phrase describing recording activity outside of NPR, generally performed in the field - either interviews or ambience*

"HIT IT" - a command to a tech to push "play" on a machine

HOT - loud, or high-level* audio

HUMMM - a steady low tone generated either acoustically or electronically (generally undesirable)

INCUE - the first words of an actuality

INTERCONNECT - See "Closed Circuit Feed."

INTERCONNECTED STATION - A public radio station or other public telecommunications entity that owns or controls a distinct point of interconnection to the public radio satellite system. Interconnected stations are required to sign a contract, called the Satellite Interconnection Agreement, and share in the cost of operating and maintaining the public radio satellite system by paying an annual fee known as the D/I fee. Not all interconnected stations are NPR member stations. See also CONTRIBUTING STATION, PARTICIPATING STATION, D/I FEE.

ISDN - Integrated Switched Digital Network. Full bandwidth* transmission of audio over existing telephone lines. This technology requires special equipment at both the sending and receiving locations.

JACK -a connector* that has a plug* pushed into it

KILL - A decision not to run a piece or spot already filed by a reporter. The decision may engender a "kill fee," a payment for a filed but unused piece.

"KILL IT" - a command to a tech to push "stop" on a machine

LAZY PHONER - a telephone interview conducted through NPR but not from inside NPR. The reporter calls the RC or the studio from the field (or their livingroom) and is put through the console; the guest is contacted by the tech and also put through the board, and the interview is recorded

LEADER TAPE - paper or plastic (usually white or yellow) non-recordable tape used to give visual distinction to multiple cuts on a single reel

LEVEL - the volume at which audio delivered. "Cold levels" would be a bad thing. "Levels are way too hot" would be a bad thing. "Levels are hot" is often good thing.

LIBRARY ID # - The number assigned to a program for cataloging purposes. The number is simply the date the program was first fed. For example, the program ID # for ALL THINGS CONSIDERED on Thursday, September 27, 1990, is 900927 (YYMMDD, where YY = year, MM = month, and DD = date).

LINE - an ATC*-centric term referring to the statement "You're listening to All Things Considered"

LINE LEVEL - a high level* audio signal

LH [LISTENER HOUR] - a measure of total listening to a program. Arithmetically, it is the program's average quarter hours times its weekly hours on the air. Another way to calculate listener hours is: to multiply the program's come by the average time spent listening.

LOG - A list of programs that have already aired. A schedule shows things as they are intended to happen; a log shows things as they actually happened.

LOW POWER FM - A newly proposed service of low or micro-power, frequency modulated (FM) radio stations. The FCC has a Notice Of Proposed Rule Making pending (Mass Media Docket No. 99-25), that would create two classes of low power radio service at 1000-watt and 100-watt power output levels, and the FCC is seeking comment on a third class of so-called "microradio" stations ranging in power output levels of 1 to 10 watts.

MAKEGOOD - An extra feed of a program scheduled by Distribution due to a technical or operational failure by the satellite system in delivering the primary feed to the stations. See also PREFEED.

ME - acronym for the NPR program Morning Edition.

METRO (Metro Survey Area) - A geographic area where the population is specified by a central city together with the surrounding county or counties in which it is located. The primary reporting area for local radio used by Arbitron.

MIC LEVEL - A low level* audio signal

MIXING - Combining audio from more than one source: multiple tape machines, tape machine and CD player, multiple CDs and tape machines, etc. . .

MULT BOX - a metal box with multiple outputs of a single audio source (one microphone connected to twenty jacks so that twenty people can record that microphone)

NOTE: a mult box may be mic level or line level - make sure to plug into the appropriate jack on your recorder!

NFFS (Nonfederal Financial Support) - Revenue generated by a radio station, excluding all federal funding and grants. This monetary figure usually includes listener contributions, underwriting grants, community support and support from institutional, regional or state licensees.

NIPPER - The nickname for the official NPR audio signature, "This is NPR, National Public Radio."

NPPAG (National Programming and Production Acquisition Grant) - A grant provided by CPB to public radio stations to be used only for purchasing national programming or national program production or the Distribution/Interconnection fee.

NPR SATELLITE SERVICES - The unit of NPR Distribution that markets excess capacity on the public radio satellite system to nonpublic radio users. The revenue earned from this activity helps reduce the operating costs of the system for public radio.

NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) - An agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the NTIA advises the President on communications and information policy and operates the Public Telecommunications Facilities Program (see PTFP).

OFF MIC - the source of the audio is not in good proximity to the microphone (the sound is distant or muffled)

OPENS - similar to a billboard*, a preview of the upcoming show

OPERATIONS SCHEDULE (also called OPSKED) - A satellite schedule transmitted by DACS listing an individual day's programs and their start and end times. It is posted on the DACS one to two days ahead of time. See also TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE.

OUTCUE - the last words of an actuality

PARTICIPATING STATION - An interconnected public radio station that enjoys the full rights and privileges of participation in the public radio satellite system. See also CONTRIBUTING STATION.

PIECE - the sum of the parts of a report

PINWHEEL - term for when a reporter who has just completed a piece introduces the next piece.

PITCH BREAK CHANNEL - A separate, parallel feed of an NPR News program, offered to stations by NPR's On-Air Fundraising Partnership during coordinated fundraising weeks.

PLOSIVES - low frequency distortion* caused by powerful "p" and "b" sounds that overload the microphone

PLUG - a connector* that pushes into a jack*

POST - a statement, downbeat, or moment of importance or relevance in the interview, music, or ambience that is timed so that it comes into prominence just as the important moment begins.

PRC (Public Radio Conference) - The major annual gathering of radio personnel focusing on station management, development, production and programming. The first PRC was in 1971, sponsored by NPR and CPB. Today, the PRC is managed for the system by NPR's Member and Program Services Division.

PREFEED - A feed of a program that precedes the program's release date (date that stations may begin using the program on-air). See also MAKEGOOD.

PRESENCE - clarity; treble, or high-frequency content of audio

PROGRAM ID # - The identification and reference number for an NPR program, assigned by the Distribution Department when the program is scheduled to feed.

PRSS (Public Radio Satellite System) - A term that encompasses system uplinks, station downlinks, STC, the Washington uplink, ground segment, and the public radio satellite transponders.

PTFP (Public Telecommunications Facilities Program) - A grant-making program of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). It is the main source of funding for broadcast equipment purchased by public TV and radio stations.

PUR (Persons Using Radio) - An Arbitron measurement of the total number of persons using radio at any given time.

RFI [Radio Frequency Interference] - unwanted stray radio communications, or electromagnetic fields that cause hummm*

R/O - Receive-only. Refers to any satellite earth terminal with only downlink capabilities.

ROLLOVER - The repetition of a show previously recorded live to accommodate for different time zones. For example, MORNING EDITION is broadcast live from 5:00 - 7:00 a.m. ET, then rolled over from 7:00 - 9:00 a.m.ET and from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. ET.

ROOM TONE - the ambient* sound in a room caused by the hum of machinery (air conditioners, motors in another room, typewriters, cash registers) conversation; footsteps; any constant background sound

RRC (Radio Research Consortium) - The Radio Research Consortium acts as a broker, on behalf of its member stations, to purchase, interpret, and analyze Arbitron audience data.

R/T - Receive and transmit. Refers to a satellite earth terminal that has both uplink and downlink capabilities.

RUNDOWN - Information on the nature of pieces within a show, including the reporters' names, and the order and time which they appear in the program. Rundowns are used for on-air promotion, aligning programs with local broadcast reports, and promotion. Rundowns are created by producers and staff and usually distributed by the DACS.

SDARS [Satellite Digital Audio Radio Service] - SDARS is a new satellite-delivered digital radio service that will broadcast audio programming directly to home or mobile (auto or portable) radio receivers. XM Satellite Radio and Sirius Radio Inc. are the two licensed proponents of SDARS in the United States. WorldSpace Corporation is proposing a similar service for use countries outside the United States.

SATELLITE INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT - The contract between NPR and a public radio station that defines the rights and obligations under which a station is provided service through the public radio satellite system. All stations acquiring programming via the public radio transponder are required to sign this agreement and pay an annual D/I fee which represents a share of the cost of operating and maintaining the system. See also D/I FEE, INTERCONNECT.

SIBILANCE - sharp, exaggerated "ess" sounds caused by natural speaking tone or by adding too much treble equalization*

SIMMONS - A research firm involved in the measurement of product usage and media usage.

SOSS (Satellite Operating Support System) - SOSS refers to the integrated collection of equipment, computer software and data that makes operation of the public radio satellite system possible for distributors and interconnected stations. The SOSS consists of the DACS, Audio Recording Automation (ARA), Uplink Remote Control (URC) and Distribution's scheduling and billing subsystems.

SONIC SOLUTIONS - a manufacturer of DAWs

SOUND BED - a recording of ambience* which is played while another tape containing different audio is simultaneously played, giving the illusion the prominent audio took place in the environment of the ambience.

SPLICE - the joint between two pieces of audio tape

SPLICING TAPE - thin plastic film with adhesive on one side for joining two pieces of audio tape together

STINGER - a short (less than 5 seconds) segment of music to separate pieces*

STREAMING - Streaming sound is sound on the web that is played in realtime or near realtime. Support for streaming sound may require a plug-in player or come with the browser.

SYSTEM TECHNICAL CENTER (STC) - The coordination and monitoring facility for the public radio distribution system. Located at NPR's headquarters, the STC is responsible for supervising all satellite channels of the public radio system and all public radio uplink program traffic, delivery of data services provided over the Downlink Services Channel, and operating the Washington uplink.

SYSTEM UPLINK - An uplink terminal capable of sending a signal to the public radio satellite. A station must sign an Origination Terminal Operator's Agreement with NPR Distribution.

TAPE HISS - background "white noise", or a sound like rain - always present on analog

recordings, but usually masked by high level* of audio recorded on the tape. If there is insufficient audio level, the volume of the reproduction must be increased, thereby revealing this "tape hiss" that was previously inaudible.

TENSION - structuring a piece so that interest is maximized, ex: opposing opinions back to back

TRACKS - the narration, or reporter's component of a "piece**"

TRANSITION - 1) sound - changing from one location to another through cross-fading or a moment of silence
2) content - using writing to smoothly weave copy* and audio* together

TRANSLATOR - A low-powered, localized transmitter that automatically picks up the signal of a parent station and retransmits the amplified signal on a different channel. Translators are used to extend a station's signal beyond its primary broadcast range, often in areas of the country where reception is limited.

TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE - A satellite schedule transmitted by DACS showing a one-week period of time. The Transmission Schedule lists programs, their start and end times, and other program-related information. It is sent to stations one week ahead of time. See also OPERATIONS SCHEDULE.

TSR (Total Station Revenue) - The dollar amount NPR uses to calculate a member station's dues. TSR is composed of a station's previous FY NFFS plus the current FY CSG and NPPAG.

UPLINK - A satellite earth terminal capable of transmitting signals to the satellite as well as receiving from it. Also known as an O/T, for "origination terminal," or an R/T terminal, for "receive/transmit terminal." See also DOWNLINK.

UPLINK REMOTE CONTROL (URC) - A system for controlling remote uplinks from the STC in Washington. URC allows STC to turn an uplink on and off, tune modulators, switch audio sources, and start tape machines as well as receive current hardware status and special cues from the uplink equipment.

VALS - is a system for understanding consumers that categorizes consumers into eight major groups, the members of which generally think and act alike: Actualizers, Fulfilleds, Achievers, Experiencers, Believers, Strivers, Makers, and Strugglers. The majority of public radio listeners are comprised of Actualizers and Fulfilleds. Actualizers are defined as successful, sophisticated active, take-charge people. Purchases often reflect cultivated tastes for relatively upscale, niche-oriented products. Fulfilleds are defined as mature, satisfied, comfortable, and reflective. They favor durability, functionality, and value in products.

WEBCASTING - used to describe the ability to use the Web to deliver live or delayed text, images, and sound broadcasts.

ZIPPER - A portion of an NPR news magazine (usually 29 seconds) when music is played so that stations have the opportunity to announce information, including station identification, local news, weather or traffic.