

World Radio Day 2024

By [Candy Dempers](#), issued by [MediaHeads 360](#)

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Chapter 43 of the latest book I'm reading starts with: "He was jolted awake from chaotic dreams by the radio alarm next to his bed."



This is such a vivid line as I can see the small black box with large red numbers on the front. The radio probably has a thin wire that's either dangling behind the nightstand or positioned with a piece of Prestik for the clearest single. It would be plugged into the wall and for backup, a rectangular 9V battery would prevent the screen from flashing 00:00 in the event of a power failure. The clock radio a symbol of routine, habit, intimacy and time.

The routine, habit, intimacy and timing of radio exists beyond the box next to the bed in the modern age and as we acknowledge a century of radio informing, educating and entertaining, for World Radio Day 2024, let's turn up the volume and celebrate radio!

There are not many media forms that form part of modern-day media consumption that exist largely the way they did one hundred years ago. As a medium, radio has also been competing and under-perceived threat. Whether it be technological developments like cassettes, computers, CDs, Bluetooth or the internet, radio remains.

Radio is resilient, robust, and relevant. But why?

Intimacy

The nature of what radio is, makes it intimate. From next to your bed, inside your home, to the palm of your hand and in your car, radio is a user-focused medium, and the listener decides on the intensity of the engagement. From on in the background to listening loudly, radio is with you and present, but not intrusive. It makes the ideal companion from the kitchen to the car; you can decide how little or how much you'll engage with the radio. Remember late night study sessions with your favourite DJ where they'd take phone calls and faxes, well they're still doing it, just via WhatsApp and DMs!

Evolving

Radio used to be a box in the lounge or an item next to the bed, a physical thing. In remaining relevant, radio has

transcended from being a physical box to being an action. Radio is the action of audio and the impact it has on listeners. Radio is an audio meeting ground where music, speech, sounds, rhythm beats and words meet. I believe as a medium, radio exists in a variety of formats including FM, on-demand and online. As part of the evolution over the one hundred years of radio, it is no longer linear in approach, it is not only about what happens 'on-air' but what happens with the audience as they consume media in the day.

We speak your language

A picture that speaks a thousand words is a powerful visualisation, but is it as powerful as a single word that paints a thousand pictures? Every person listening gets to create their own experience and image. As a vehicle for information, radio continues to play a huge role in educating audiences. Singular messages are easily shared in multiple languages, quickly and with lower input costs than most other platforms. The ability to connect in one's mother tongue remains powerful and despite a plethora of technology, the basic premise of a conversation remains hugely powerful.

Technology

Radio remains relevant because it is a friend to the audience but also made friends with other technologies over-time. It's not an all-or-nothing medium and has evolved to exist where the audiences are. Because radio technology has remained constant for the listener over many years, the cost barrier to consume is low. Modern add-ons see solar power units play an important role where electricity is problematic, with the radio delivering much needed news and information.

Radio has also adapted to the call of technology and is equally comfortable as a WhatsApp voice note or an Instagram reel. Just last week I received a comedy skit done on a radio show after the State of the Nation Address. The radio show is broadcast in Cape Town, but I was consuming the content in Gauteng via a voice note. Radio transcends and radio creates community.

The future

Radio has given a voice to historical moments and has shaped the face of modern media, marketing and advertising. It has also asserted its role as a key source of news, information, education and entertainment, in good time and bad. The future holds a variety of options but unless the whole world goes silent and hearing is no longer a key sense, radio has a role. I believe in the future, as in the past, radio will compliment and amplify. Radio will remain a home for audio and listening irrespective if it be music or speech. The landscape will continue to evolve as will the robust and relevance of radio.

Conclusion

Radio isn't a selfish medium, in fact, quite the opposite. It is this ability to keep giving that has built its legacy over the last century and will shape its relevance in the next. As an industry, communities and individuals, let's take a 'time check' on 13 February and celebrate radio. Let's remember the moments, the voices, the places and the people who have created the memories. Let's continue to paint radio's picture, one word at a time.

ABOUT CANDY DEMPERS

Candy Dempers has loved all things media for twenty-three years. A sales and marketing specialist, her first love was radio and bringing brands and platforms together.

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