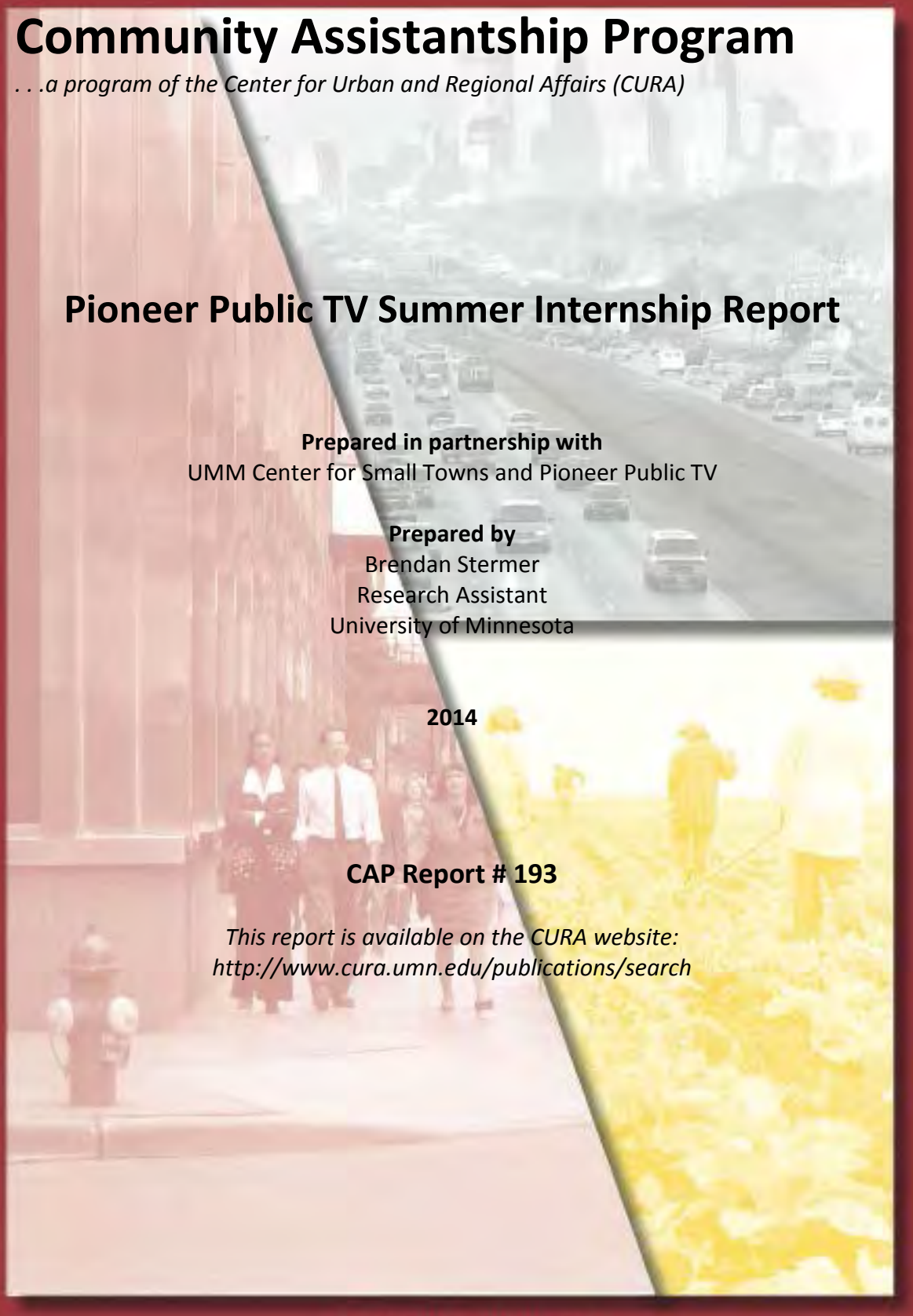
View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy

Community Assistantship Program

. . .a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)



Pioneer Public TV Summer Internship Report

Prepared in partnership with
UMM Center for Small Towns and Pioneer Public TV

Prepared by
Brendan Stermer
Research Assistant
University of Minnesota

2014

CAP Report # 193

This report is available on the CURA website:
http://www.cura.umn.edu/publications/search

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)
University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

The Community Assistantship Program (CAP) is a cross-college, cross-campus University of Minnesota initiative coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). Funds for CAP were generously provided by the McKnight Foundation and the Blandin Foundation.

This is a publication of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), which connects the resources of the University of Minnesota with the interests and needs of urban communities and the region for the benefit of all. CURA pursues its urban and regional mission by facilitating and supporting connections between state and local governments, neighborhoods, and nonprofit organizations, and relevant resources at the University, including faculty and students from appropriate campuses, colleges, centers or departments. The content of this report is the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by the Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program, CURA or the University of Minnesota

© 2014 by The Regents of the University of Minnesota.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution---NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA. Any reproduction, distribution, or derivative use of this work under this license must be accompanied by the following attribution: "© The Regents of the University of Minnesota. Reproduced with permission of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)." Any derivative use must also be licensed under the same terms. For permissions beyond the scope of this license, contact the CURA editor.

This publication may be available in alternate formats upon request.

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)
University of Minnesota 330 HHH Center
301—19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Phone: (612) 625-1551
E-mail: cura@umn.edu
Web site: http://www.cura.umn.edu

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

August 13, 2014

Brendan Stermer
Center for Small Towns
Pioneer Public TV Summer Internship
Final Report

1. Project Goals and Basic Information

The power of any history is its ability to unite a country, social class, organization, etc., behind a shared narrative. The story of Pioneer Public TV, as I have written it, is a testament to the power of small rural communities coming together for a common dream. As Pioneer looks ahead to an uncertain future for public broadcasting, and develops plans for big investments in the station's Appleton facilities, a compelling narrative detailing the station's origins and growth will be a useful tool for uniting the staff and viewer base behind shared values and stories. As an intern at Pioneer through the UMM Center for Small Towns, my goal has been to research, preserve, and record the history of the station in a way that can be made easily accessible to the station's viewer base and will be helpful for the producers of the upcoming documentary in honor of the station's 50th anniversary.

This internship was funded with a grant from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). I worked an average of 40 hours per week from May 16 to August 13, under the supervision of Pioneer Communications Coordinator Patrick Moore.

2. Project Description and Results

My first task was to organize several boxes of archival material into a coherent system that can be accessed later by videographers, editors, and producers. I sifted through countless old ads, articles, and internal documents for several weeks, reading and categorizing things that seemed important, and setting aside things that seemed expendable. Whenever I read about something in the archives that seemed especially important, I added the date and description to a "Pioneer History Timeline" on Microsoft Word. Soon enough, the timeline had grown to over twenty pages, and I began consulting with long-serving employees to identify misinformation and add events that I had missed.

The system that I eventually developed for the organization of archival materials is located in two large boxes labeled, "Pioneer Print Archives" and "Pioneer Photo Archives". Within these boxes, the various documents have been categorized by decade and placed into several large manila folders. Within these manila folders, the archives have been further separated into categories such as "Ads", "Internal Docs", "Articles", etc.

I have identified several "production quality" photos from the larger pool of photo archives that I organized and categorized. Physical copies of the production quality photos can be located in the photo archives in small manila

envelopes labeled accordingly. Also, using a scanner, I created digital copies of the production quality photos so that they can be used in the upcoming documentary as Ken Burns-style b-roll footage.

Once I was finished creating the archive system, I revisited important documents and made edits to the timeline in order to solidify my understanding of the narrative outline of the station's history. Finally, I read through the minutes of every meeting of the Pioneer Board of Directors since its inception in 1959, adding interesting excerpts to the timeline as I went. I then completed a variety of tasks which could be helpful to the producers of the upcoming documentary: (1) I added a column to the timeline with information about the visual resources that could accompany each event, (2) I compiled a list of people who should be interviewed about their role in the station, and contact information for those people, (3) I wrote a list of proposed questions for an interview with Ansel Doll, General Manager of Pioneer from 1979 to 2000, and (4) I compiled a list of every person who has ever served on the Pioneer Board of Directors and the years they served.

Once my archival research was complete, I began to put it to use in a way that is accessible to the general public. First, I made several edits and corrections to the Pioneer Wikipedia page and rewrote the sections entitled "History" and "Local programming". Second, I began writing an eBook (electronic book) called "A Short History of Pioneer Public TV", which will eventually be distributed to members as a pamphlet and will be available as a free download on pioneer.org. Once my manuscript was complete, I used a digital authoring application to format the text and add photos, headlines, pull-quotes, and other stylistic enhancements. The finished eBook is eighteen pages long and will soon be available to the general public in a variety of formats.

3. Additional Projects

In addition to the history project, I also edited four promotional YouTube videos for Pioneer over the course of my internship, which led to a combined 1,300 online views. I was able to learn a great deal about video production by working with Pioneer Executive Producer Dana Johnson and Videographer/Editor Kristopher Gieske on several occasions throughout the summer.

4. Things I Learned

a) This was my first experience working in an office setting, so I gained a better understanding of all the different people it takes to run a business like Pioneer. I also learned about how to navigate the complicated politics and relationships that exist in any workplace.

b) I learned about the role of producers in creating videos, and the creative relationship between the producers and editors.

c) "A Short History of Pioneer Public TV" is the longest project I have written and the first history I have written. I now have a better understanding of how historical research is conducted and how historical data can be

manipulated in order to promote a desired narrative. I also have a greater appreciation for the amount of work that goes into any piece of non-fiction.

5. Ideas for Pioneer

a) "Postcards" could have a much stronger online presence. It could be marketed as not only a television program, but also the go-to source for regional arts and culture content on the web. Nothing would have to change about how the program is produced for TV, but I think there should be changes to how it is distributed on the web. Treat each segment as a separate piece of content and write an short news article (two to six paragraphs, journalistic voice, quotes from the segment, who-what-where-when) to accompany each segment. This is the strategy Minnesota Public Radio has used to increase exposure for its radio stories on the internet. When you provide the online consumer with two ways of interacting with content (in Pioneer's case: text or video), then they are more likely to take notice and return again in the future for a quick read or view. Also, this would allow you to increase web traffic for pioneer.org if it was marketed as "the go-to place for regional arts and culture content on the web".

b) Pioneer.org could add some feature to its homepage that encourages visitors to give their email address. One possibility would be a large clickable button somewhere on the page that said "Sign up for our newsletter!"

c) Pioneer needs to interact more with young people in our viewing area, both online and through broadcast. One possibility would be an online video contest for people in our viewing area. People would submit digital shorts and the best submissions would be broadcast in a late night slot. Sort of like what TPT is doing. In order for this to work, Pioneer needs to lessen its concern for whether or not a video is "broadcast quality". Young people don't care if a video is a little rough around the edges. They care about how funny or entertaining or bizarre the video is. Also, the "Postcards" online marketing idea outlined above could help increase web traffic from young people in our region.