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Public Radio Content Conference, 2017
Washington, DC

The Public Radio Program Directors Association (PRPD) released the findings of the Millennial Research Project (MRP) at this year's PRPD Content Conference in Washington, DC. The PRPD conducted the project with Jacobs Media, the noted media, technology and consumer research firm.

Jody Evans, PRPD President, summed up the project's mission and goals this way, "The world is not lacking in Millennial-focused research. As the professional service bureau for public radio's content community, we did see a lack of research that addressed our members' specific needs and interests. PRPD has a decades-long history of providing public radio content makers with original, actionable, forward-thinking research. Our partners at Jacobs have delivered another strong addition to public radio's knowledge base. It's important to note that this was a broadly-supported project and could not have happened without financial investment from over a dozen leading public radio stations."

Fred Jacobs, President of Jacobs Media, noted the MRP is a unique ethnographic look at a key segment of the audience: "We immersed ourselves into the lives of a dozen Millennial public radio listeners. We spent a full day with each of them, from the time they woke up, through their workday, and back at home, observing their media and lifestyle activities. This project speaks volumes about media, journalism, politics, and the perceptions of Millennials. Public radio plays an important role, but it's essential to understand how these listeners are similar and how they are different from the traditional audience."

PRPD and Jacobs Media designed the MRP with three principal goals

- Develop knowledge and insight into the attitudes, awareness, and

- expectations of the Millennial generation regarding public radio, the news media in general, and media and content distribution. □
- Provide public radio stations with the insights to help develop a system-wide Millennial strategy. □
 - Build foundational knowledge about Millennials' attitudes about public radio to be utilized in future phases of this project. □

The project was built on a combination of one-on-one interviews and ethnographic encounters with an ethnically diverse cross section of the American public. The MRP was in the field from August, 2016-February, 2017. The research subjects were spread over ten different markets (St Louis, Phoenix, Austin, New York City, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Grand Rapids and Charlotte.)

The key findings include:

- There is no Millennial archetype – As with all groups, facile generalizations are dangerous and the study found that to be no less the case for this massive cohort. The study unveiled important views on technology, civic engagement, media expectations and consumption and social coherence.
- Public radio is loved but expectations are high – MRP participants are consuming a great deal of public radio and value the current aesthetic, but are also looking for a more direct and incisive style of journalism.
- News access declines during the day and they're OK with bite-sized packages – In the smartphone-dominated lives of these participants, the leading edge of news consumption shifts to social media as the day progresses and, with it, a willingness to track the key stories in smaller packages.
- Podcasts are important and will grow in importance – media choice, variety and control are central themes in this cohort's lives so it is to be expected that podcasts are a highly attractive option.
- Public radio that is diverse and locally rooted is highly valued – MRP participants, and Millennials, in general, are an extremely diverse, locally engaged group and expect the same from their public radio station.

The MRP unearthed many other key findings that add nuance and clarity to the

interests, appetites, needs and expectations of the Millennial media consumer. PRPD will be releasing the findings during the 2017 PRPD Content Conference and will be working with its member stations to internalize, integrate and apply the findings.

The MRP was designed, funded and executed as a collaborative effort between PRPD and fifteen leading public radio stations. The list includes:

- KJZZ
- KNOW
- KPCC
- KPLU
- KUT
- KWMU
- Michigan Radio
- New Hampshire Public Radio
- Vermont Public Radio
- WBEZ
- WBUR
- WGBH
- Wisconsin Public Radio
- WLRN
- WNYC