



## Press Release from Bournemouth University

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### **Online audio archive brings UK commercial radio history to life**

The UK's first online commercial radio sound archive has been launched preserving over 5,000 searchable recordings including the first hour of UK commercial radio in 1973, coverage of five UK general elections and the end of apartheid.

The LBC / Independent Radio News (IRN) Radio News Audio Archive is available online for researchers, lecturers and students at <http://radio.bufvc.ac.uk/lbc/>

The original LBC / IRN archive is housed at Bournemouth University (BU) and consists of 7,000 reel-to-reel tapes in a collection that runs from 1973 to the mid-1990s. Thanks to funding from JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) in excess of £760,000, the Centre for Broadcasting History based at BU has spent the last three years digitising some 4,000 hours worth of noteworthy LBC / IRN content from the original tapes.

Making that material available online has been the role of the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC) which has extensive experience in the online delivery of moving image and sound.

Users can now listen to these recordings via a website which combines access to the archive catalogue and digital audio files of reports filed by some of the UK's leading journalists including Jon Snow, Tim Marshall, Peter Spencer, the late Carol Barnes, Ben Brown, Martha Karney and Dickie Arbiter.

Amongst the 5,400 searchable recordings are a number of historic events covered by LBC/IRN including:

- The first hour of UK commercial radio including the first commercial radio news bulletin;
- Broadcasts of the Falklands War, the miners' strike and Northern Ireland;
- The live reporting of UK election results from five general elections, giving a unique sense of the political shaping of the country;
- News related to the whole of the Thatcher period of government;
- The whole of the *Decision Makers* series 1974-86: weekly 30-minute programmes of political and current affairs analysis which provide a unique insight into politics and its reportage within the UK at the time

- Significant material relating to the ending of apartheid in South Africa, including State President PW Botha's speech at the opening of the South African parliament in which he announced that the era of apartheid was over. There is also accompanying political and journalistic analysis of this event.

"This is the most important commercial radio archive in the UK and provides a unique audio history of the period," said Professor Sean Street, Project Director and Director of BU's Centre for Broadcasting History. "We are extremely grateful to the JISC without whom none of this have been possible.

"As well as turning previously inaccessible material into a web-based archive for all, this project places key material within a teaching and research environment where it can be exploited for future knowledge," Professor Street continued.

Paola Marchionni, JISC digitisation programme manager said: "I'm particularly proud of what this project has achieved and the many challenges it has overcome in curating and making accessible this material. Audio recordings are still relatively little used in research, teaching and learning. The JISC funding for this archive contributes to broadening the pool of resources available to researchers and students not only in media disciplines but also relevant to the study of society, history, politics and popular culture."

Jonathan Richards Programme Director of LBC 97.3 said, "It is only right that the UK's first commercial radio station has its proud history preserved in this fashion for future generations to learn from. The current staff of broadcasters and producers know they are building on the excellence of the past, and remain proud of the LBC's rich heritage. I wish to pay tribute to Professor Sean Street and his team at Bournemouth University for this invaluable resource."

Commercial radio in Britain was launched in October 1973 when IRN and its sister organisation, the LBC were granted their licences. A joint LBC / IRN archive of programmes and news items was established and this, together with its catalogue, constitutes the contents of the archive.

The LBC / IRN archive is the third of three audio collections of UK commercial radio digitised by BU and now available via the BUFVC website. The Independent Local Radio (ILR) Programme Sharing Archive also known as The Felicity Wells Memorial Collection of independent radio (1973-1990) and the Wessex Film and Sound Archive Commercial Radio Collection (1973-1990) comprise parts one and two.

All of the material dates from the period 1973-1992 when, according to Professor Street, the work produced represented a different ethos to the role commercial radio played, and subsequently, continues to play, in the UK.

"This was at a time before the Broadcasting Act of 1990 which brought significant change to the structure of British broadcasting," Professor Street recalls. "The change in commercial radio since this period is extraordinary. It is impossible for the young

student of radio, born since this time, to imagine that such independently funded radio could have existed. As a result, it is vitally important that these programmes be preserved, as part of the evolving history of post-war British broadcasting.”

“This archive forms an important part of the history of radio broadcasting since it provides an alternative source of radio journalism and news and current affairs broadcasts to the BBC’s own collection,” said Professor Street.

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) manages research and innovation programmes in the use of ICT in teaching, learning and research to build knowledge; develop services, infrastructure or applications; and provide guidance and leadership.

Professor Street continues “We are grateful to our partners, the British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC) who have associated the catalogue information and content, and on whose site our collections will be hosted for future generations of radio scholars and historians.”

#### **Notes to Editors:**

1. JISC - [www.jisc.ac.uk](http://www.jisc.ac.uk) - inspires UK colleges and universities in the innovative use of digital technologies, helping to maintain the UK’s position as a global leader in education and research.
2. The British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC) is a representative body which promotes the production, study and use of moving image, sound and related media in higher education and research. The Council is a related body of the Higher Education Funding Council for England ([HEFCE](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)) and receives part funding as grant via JISC.
3. The Centre for Broadcasting History Research, based in the Media School at Bournemouth University, was established in 2002 to stimulate an interest in the study of the history of broadcasting; create and develop partnerships with other organisations and institutions, both nationally, and internationally in shared areas of historical interest; work for the preservation of important at-risk archival collections and develop new approaches to the interrogation of existing resources through the application of innovative technologies.

**ENDS**

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