

# Working Sundays: Unpaid Cultural Labor and Community Radio in Pittsburgh

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A volunteer-run South Asian music program aired on Pittsburgh public radio every Sunday evening for over four decades. By the hosts' account, it brought in listeners and donors, consistently exceeded fundraising targets and provided a needed social service to the community. Given the show's significance, it is striking that when it ended in 2018, the station that broadcast it held no preserved recordings and no institutional documentation of any kind.

*Music from India* aired on WDUQ as a two-hour program featuring Hindi film songs from the 1940s through 1980s, Urdu ghazals, and Hindustani classical music.<sup>1</sup> Its primary host, Harish Saluja, an Indian migrant and engineer who moved to Pittsburgh in 1971, emphasized Hindustani classical and regional repertoires while co-host Dr. Vijay Bahl, a Nairobi-born physician, highlighted film music and a conversational curatorial style. The show maintained a deliberately secular framing, even as Pittsburgh's South Asian community organizations became increasingly fractured over time along regional and religious lines. In a city with almost no South Asian cultural infrastructure at the time, both the hosts and listeners used those two Sunday evening hours to make a fragile, recurring space for South Asian community formation.

This article argues that WDUQ have depended for four decades on unpaid and underpaid South Asian cultural labor, and while the asset built on that labor was sold in 2011 for

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<sup>1</sup> WDUQ became WESA 90.5 in 2011 when the station's license was transferred from Duquesne University to Essential Public Media (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2011). Because the events examined here took place primarily under the WDUQ name, I use WDUQ throughout. The oral history interviews drawn on in this article were conducted in Pittsburgh in October 2025, audio-recorded, and are retained by the author. The methodological orientation toward named individual collaborators is informed by Stock's (2001) call for an "ethnomusicology of the individual" that works through written records, memories, and second- and third-hand reports.

approximately \$6 million in realized value (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2011; Kalson 2011), its host institution built no infrastructure to preserve what the labor produced. Through the program, Harish and Vijay accrued public standing, and the diasporic community they served received something more valuable than money. That being said, the institution offered the work itself neither stewardship nor archival care; an asymmetry whose ethical stakes I investigate in this article. Drawing on oral history interviews with the show's hosts and listeners, archival materials from the University of Pittsburgh's Finney Music Library, and theoretical work by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), Shannon Garland (2022), and David Hesmondhalgh (2010), I trace how this asymmetry operated across four decades and came into view through the 2011 transaction.

## ORIGINS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

*Music from India* began around 1972 as a half-hour block on WDUQ, Pittsburgh's Duquesne University-affiliated NPR station.<sup>2</sup> At the time, the city had no Indian restaurants or temples, and only one commercial node, Bombay Emporium in Oakland, which sold spices and records. The station maintained a category it called "ethnic programming," which referred to shows produced within specific immigrant communities and intended for those communities' listeners. At WDUQ's behest, the India Association of Pittsburgh sent out an urgent call for someone who knew Indian music well enough to host the slot. Harish, characterized by the community as a connoisseur and amateur music enthusiast who talked about recordings constantly, was the name that came back (interview, Harish Saluja, October 17, 2025). He was also a plausible choice because he had already spent years building a personal LP collection, buying albums in New York and Toronto, where they were more readily available.

Once Harish was identified as the host, WDUQ's call became a demand for consistent weekly labor. He agreed, dating his first broadcast to June 1972 or 1973, and appeared alone every Sunday until 1985 when Dr. Vijay Bahl joined as co-host. Raised in Nairobi, Vijay had been grown up in Nairobi immersed in Hindi film music through Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's all-Indian division, where he listened from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. as a child, hidden under blankets past bedtime with a transistor radio (interview, Vijay Bahl, October 10, 2025). Together, the two hosts curated the Sunday evening program across alternating weeks. Harish organized the music he played on the air by shifts in mood and feeling rather than geography or language, while Vijay was more interested in the lyrical content of *filmi* songs. The program also absorbed Vijay's leisure time, a point he illustrated by recalling that when friends asked why he would not play golf with them, he replied: "My golf is this show" (interview, Vijay Bahl, October 10, 2025). Vijay offered the exchange to show how fully the program subsumed his recreational life, just as Harish's collecting had absorbed his savings. Listeners such as the

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<sup>2</sup> The station maintained several half-hour ethnic programming slots — shows produced by and for specific immigrant communities — before *Music from India* expanded beyond that initial format. None of those other slots' content is documented in WDUQ's surviving institutional records.

Luthras describe building their Sunday evenings, and parts of the week that followed, around the broadcast.

## DOMESTIC LABOR AS LISTENING INFRASTRUCTURE

For listeners JK and Dolly Luthra, life in Pittsburgh in 1975 involved limited access to Indian music, South Asian community life, and regular contact with home. Upon arrival, they spent months searching for Indian music and found only Harish's Sunday broadcast. The city had very few South Asian residents, and international calls to India remained too expensive to serve as a regular connection to family, language, and everyday cultural life.<sup>3</sup> South Asian cultural infrastructure was only beginning to form. The Sri Venkateswara Temple was established that same year (SV Temple Association 2021) as the first major South Asian cultural institution in the city. Before its construction, the earliest infrastructure consisted of informal gatherings and a small Hindu shrine in the basement of an Indian businessman's shop in Squirrel Hill, where children took classical dance classes and said blessings before practice (Hedlin 2022). In that setting, the Luthras built Sunday evenings around the only regular source of Indian music they had found. Dolly recalled that "everything had to stop" when the broadcast came on, a response that helps explain the intensity of her later dedication to the program.

Dolly described the hour as one she actively protected when she told her family, "From 7 to 8, please do not disturb me. So, I will listen to my songs" (interview, JK and Dolly Luthra, October 3, 2025). With children then one and two years old, she carved out that hour deliberately, enforcing a quiet zone and recording each episode on 90-minute cassettes labeled "SFR: Songs from Radio" with dates and years. Across the decades, Dolly estimates accumulating over a thousand tapes, though this figure should be read as an informed recollection rather than a precise count. On weekday mornings, after JK left for work, the recordings returned to the household through cooking and laundry: "I used to sing very well the whole day. Work also used to go on" (interview, JK and Dolly Luthra, October 3, 2025). JK recalled the intensity of this practice, saying, "One thing was very unusual. You were so particular about recording. If you were invited to dinner somewhere, to somebody's house..." Dolly interrupted, "I used to cancel it. I used to take my tape recorder with me once or twice." Both used the word *janoon*, a passion bordering on obsession, to describe this dedication (interview, JK and Dolly Luthra, October 3, 2025).

Whether Dolly experienced this work as pleasure or obsession is, in David Hesmondhalgh's (2010, 276) terms, beside the question of whether it generated value the institution captured. Drawing on feminist critiques of unpaid household labor, Hesmondhalgh argues that the voluntariness or subjective enjoyment of domestic cultural work is irrelevant to

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<sup>3</sup> Dolly recalls rates of \$2.80 per minute for calls to India. She did not date the rate precisely; international rates were higher in the mid-1970s and declined through the early 1980s, as a 1982 *New York Times* report documents (New York Times 1982). Adjusted for inflation, \$2.80 per minute corresponds to roughly \$9 to \$17 in 2026 dollars, depending on whether the rate dated from the Luthras' 1975 arrival or the early 1980s. Either way, the cost placed routine calls to family beyond regular use.

whether institutional beneficiaries extract value from it. When one group of people performs onerous cultural work without financial recompense, and when the institutional beneficiaries build no mechanism of recognition, the arrangement reproduces inequality regardless of the worker's experience of the work. Dolly's recording practice was the gendered household management through which the program acquired its weekday afterlife. I contend that to call this practice volunteering is to reproduce the same disappearance her cassettes ultimately suffered, especially when the term is extended to a parent's organization of the household's relationship to the broadcast.

Before that disappearance, however, Dolly's recordings circulated beyond the household and helped turn private listening into a shared musical practice. At monthly gatherings, about ten Indian families met to sing together, share cassettes, and trade songs they had caught from the broadcast. JK recalled these gatherings as an effort to hold onto a shared musical world across distance from India. Vijay participated in similar gatherings in the 1970s before joining the show, singing Hindi film songs a cappella at house parties. Later, families used karaoke tracks purchased at Bombay Emporium (O'Driscoll 2003). Listeners drew on *Music from India* when choosing what to sing at these gatherings, carrying the broadcast into an amateur performance culture. The recording and gathering practices that sustained that culture also helped produce the audience loyalty that WDUQ could later convert into pledge drive revenue.

## CULTURAL CAPITAL AND THE CONVERSION PROBLEM

Harish and Vijay's work on *Music from India* generated forms of capital within Pittsburgh's diasporic and arts communities that were not reducible to money. Over four decades on the air, both became visible figures whose authority extended beyond the broadcast itself. Harish gave a TEDx talk (Saluja 2013), received feature coverage on the show's 45th anniversary (Fair 2017; Lyons 2017), and is now associated with the named "Harish Saluja Collection" at the University of Pittsburgh's Finney Music Library (University of Pittsburgh 2025).<sup>4</sup> Vijay built his standing within regional South Asian networks. Their tacit knowledge, curated record collections, and fluency across South Asian musical traditions became forms of social and cultural prestige that wages do not fully capture.

Conceding these returns leaves the asymmetry intact because the returns did not give hosts or listeners the power to carry the program into the archive. I use Garland's (2022) account of Brazilian independent music scenes to frame this problem. In those scenes, performers move between cachet, named cultural value, and cachê, monetary payment. Garland calls the gap between them a "requirement of commodification," a chronic incommensurability produced by the wage form's inability to represent the full sociality of cultural labor. In *Music from India*, Harish and Vijay could carry cachet into public standing, and Pittsburgh's South Asian listeners

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<sup>4</sup> Harish's public self-presentation is itself worth noting. In interviews and public appearances, he tends to narrate *Music from India* as a labor of cultural devotion and personal vocation rather than as work performed for an institution (see, e.g., Edward 2019). His framing exemplifies the euphemization (Bourdieu 1986, 242) that runs through both hosts' accounts of the program.

sustained the broadcast through listening, recording, singing, and gathering. WDUQ alone held the institutional power to preserve those traces beyond personal memory and private collection. When it created no archive for what their labor produced, the program's future record remained dependent on the very people whose work the institution had already failed to preserve.

WDUQ depended on specialized cultural knowledge it did not itself cultivate or transfer. The station did not have staff who could select and sequence the Hindi film songs, ghazals, and other recordings that listeners heard as "songs from home," or who had the community trust to keep diaspora listeners tuned in across decades. Harish and Vijay supplied that capacity through what Pierre Bourdieu (1986) calls embodied cultural capital, the tacit knowledge accumulated through lifelong immersion, along with curatorial taste and fluency across South Asian musical traditions that the institution lacked.<sup>5</sup> Because embodied capital "declines and dies with its bearer" (Bourdieu 1986, 245), WDUQ's reliance on Harish and Vijay required some structure for transfer if the program was to outlast them. The station built no such structure, leaving the program dependent on the continued presence of the two hosts who carried it.

The hosts' embodied knowledge had a material base in their personal record collections. Harish described the cost frankly when told me, "I [was] doing so much work, also spending my own money." His collection alone reached 708 documented items. Vijay built a personal archive estimated to include every Hindi film soundtrack from 1949 through 1989.<sup>6</sup> WDUQ's programming ran on collections the hosts had assembled and paid for themselves. Harish's autonomy over the show rested on what Bourdieu calls objectified cultural capital, cultural goods through which knowledge takes material form. In this case, those objects also functioned as the station's programming infrastructure. WDUQ turned self-funded collections into broadcast value, while the costs of acquiring and maintaining them remained with the hosts.

WDUQ measured that value most visibly during pledge drives. As both Harish and Vijay recalled in separate interviews, WDUQ's administrators set fundraising targets during those drives, including \$2,000 in one instance, and *Music from India* consistently exceeded them. The call volume was heavy enough that the station assigned extra phone volunteers. WDUQ responded to that fundraising performance by expanding the show from thirty minutes to one hour, then ninety minutes, then two full hours. The station also retained Indian music while other shows produced by immigrant communities were dropped (interview, Vijay Bahl, October 10, 2025; interview, Harish Saluja, October 17, 2025). Rather than being compensated for his work, Vijay was required to take on additional unpaid labor, learning to operate the radio console and then working alone in the studio for two hours each week after the producer left. The institutionalized cultural capital was concentrated with Duquesne University and WDUQ, including the broadcast license, the fundraising apparatus, and the membership infrastructure that

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<sup>5</sup> Easton's (2017) study of freeform radio DJs at a Chicago public station examined the same institutional arrangement: unpaid volunteers with personal record collections sustaining a station's programming. The vocabulary of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital used in this section follows her operationalization of Bourdieu's three forms for the specific case of radio curation.

<sup>6</sup> Vijay's preferred listening environment was domestic and immersive, centered on large stereophonic speakers with extensions in the finished basement "so that the music was ringing throughout the house." He valued vinyl over cassettes or digital audio, reflecting a sonic aesthetic centered on spatial resonance.

converted listener loyalty into pledge revenue. The hosts converted embodied and objectified capital into fundraising value for an institution that gave them a platform and community prestige. The platform was WDUQ's return as well as the limit of its reciprocity.

In interviews with me and in public accounts of the program, Harish and Vijay framed the work through joy and devotion, which made the exchange meaningful without making it reciprocal. Vijay described the studio as a transcendent escape when he said, "then I would be there in heaven for two hours. Nobody else around, just the insulated studio, earphones, and music playing. My God, that was heaven" (interview, Vijay Bahl, October 10, 2025). Harish invoked *Naad Brahma*, the Sanskrit concept that sound is divine essence, and spoke of broadcasting as "giving love" (interview, Harish Saluja, October 17, 2025). Their joy was real and the devotion sincere, but that language also shaped how the economics of the exchange could be perceived. Bourdieu describes conversion labor as tending toward "euphemization" (1986, 242), a reframing that disguises the economic dimension of the exchange. He calls the broader mechanism "misrecognition," in which participants deny the economic stakes of their exchange in good faith, allowing asymmetry to persist without cynicism on either side (Bourdieu 1986, 242). The hosts' devotional language was a genuine response to work the wage form could not adequately represent, which is the incommensurability Garland identifies. WDUQ's failure was its willingness to let that incommensurability substitute for reciprocal obligation. When work is narrated as love and heaven, questions about compensation and benefit can be made to feel petty or ungrateful. That devotional framing made noncompensation easier to normalize, and WDUQ benefited from that normalization. The same absence of institutional reciprocity extended to documentation.

## ARCHIVAL ABSENCE AND UNEQUAL PRESERVATION

Unequal preservation began with the textual records WDUQ did not keep, since playlists, sequencing logs, host schedules, and program notes could have allowed *Music from India* to survive in partial, reconstructable form after recordings disappeared. Those records would not have replaced Dolly's cassettes, but they would have preserved song titles, dates, sequences, host rotation, requests, dedications, and the curatorial decisions that gave each broadcast its shape. I read the missing logs as the central loss because they sever the link between the broadcasts as lived events and the broadcasts as something later scholars, listeners, or families could reconstruct. With logs intact, Dolly's tapes would not have remained the only place where those Sunday broadcasts survived. Even after the cassettes were discarded, the songs, memories, and associations attached to them could have been reconstructed in textual form rather than disappearing with the magnetized ribbon that once held their sound.

The missing textual record was permitted by the regulatory floor under which WDUQ operated. FCC regulations require broadcast stations to maintain technical station logs for two years (47 CFR § 73.1840) and to file quarterly lists in their Public Inspection File (47 CFR § 73.3527(e)(8)) identifying significant community issues the station addressed and the programs it

aired in response. These rules require a station to log its technical operations and to record, in broad terms, which community issues have been addressed in its programming. They do not require stations to preserve program content, playlists, sequencing notes, host schedules, listener requests, or air checks. The law allowed WDUQ to meet its compliance obligations while leaving undocumented the precise cultural work through which *Music from India* served its listeners.

The ethical problem lies in the distance between that compliance floor and the public interest obligation attached to WDUQ's noncommercial license. The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 declares that it is "in the public interest to encourage the development of programming that involves creative risks and that addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities" (47 U.S.C. § 396[a][6]). That statutory language was given editorial form in the founding mission Bill Siemering wrote for NPR, which charged public radio with serving audiences commercial broadcasting had ignored (Siemering 2021). WDUQ held its license under that commitment. For four decades, it served underserved audiences by relying on community members willing to do that work for free, and it converted their listenership into pledge drive revenue. Yet it built no archival mandate, documentary protocol, or internal practice that treated *Music from India* as work worth preserving. A station can satisfy record keeping rules and still leave a community program without the evidence needed for public memory. In this case, WDUQ met minimum compliance while treating the cultural record of a public interest program as optional. The pattern is not unique to WDUQ: scholarship on public radio has documented how stations marginalize the same minority publics that the mandate specifies, even while invoking service to them (Chávez 2021).

Harish's LPs survived because they were physical, countable, and legible to a university library as a collection. His LP collection now sits in fifteen boxes at Pitt's Finney Music Library. Of the 708 items in the collection, 680 have been fully processed as of December 2025 (University of Pittsburgh 2025). The largest genre cluster is Hindi film soundtracks and compilations, roughly 22 percent, followed by Hindustani classical and raga recordings, 16 percent, and Urdu ghazal albums, 7 percent. Fewer than 2 percent of processed items show any Carnatic or South Indian content, a ratio that reflects both Harish's personal taste and the commercial networks through which diasporic consumers in the LP era acquired South Asian music.<sup>7</sup> The collection preserves Harish's acquisition history. It cannot recreate what he chose on a given Sunday, how he sequenced songs for listeners, or how requests, memory, and mood shaped a broadcast. One pathway to preservation ran through a host whose physical collection could be named, boxed, processed, and housed by a research library. The radio program built from those LPs is now lost without the textual records WDUQ never kept.

Dolly's cassettes followed a different path because they held broadcast memory in a format no institution had claimed and no family could be expected to keep forever. They carried the program from Sunday evenings into weekday cooking, laundry, singing, and gatherings with

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<sup>7</sup> Album packaging skews English even when the sung content is Hindi, Urdu, or Punjabi, indexing an educated middle-class market that moved between languages.

friends trying to feel closer to the home they had left behind, even as that home was remade through memory and distance. “Gradually... anyway... we discarded them,” Dolly told me while pouring *masala chai* into a cup, her voice dropping as her gaze settled somewhere past the room (interview, JK and Dolly Luthra, October 3, 2025). JK described the decision as “downsizing” in preparation for aging and death, “the least amount of stuff we can leave for the children when we pass.” Later Dolly added, quietly, “I wish we had kept them, but you cannot go back” (interview, JK and Dolly Luthra, October 3, 2025). JK and Dolly were left to make a family decision about materials that had carried far more than family use. The tapes held traces of the life they had built around the broadcast, in kitchens, in routines, and in gatherings where music helped friends inhabit a shared distance from India. When they were discarded, a private archive of diasporic listening disappeared with them because no institution had made a place for it while it still existed.

A thousand labeled cassettes went into the trash. Harish’s LPs sit in a university library. The difference lay less in the value of the cultural work than in the forms institutions were prepared to recognize, receive, and name. WDUQ’s failure to document the program left preservation to private memory, family endurance, and the uneven archival legibility of physical collections. The station’s broadcast asset could be priced and sold; the labor that gave that asset its value had already been left without a durable record.

## THE 2011 SALE

The 2011 sale put that asymmetry into the form of a contract. In Bourdieu’s terms, it marks a final conversion problem: social and cultural capital had accumulated around the station for four decades, but only Duquesne controlled the institutional form through which accumulated value could become economic capital. In January 2011, Duquesne University’s board of directors agreed to sell WDUQ’s license. The sale closed in September. Essential Public Media, a joint venture of Pittsburgh’s other public radio station, WYEP-FM 91.3, and the nonprofit Public Media Co., took ownership, and the call letters changed to WESA FM (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2011).<sup>8</sup> Under the terms of the deal, Duquesne received \$4,004,500 in cash, a \$500,000 seller financing note, \$1 million in underwriting credit over ten years, and at least \$500,000 in internships over the next decade, roughly \$6 million in realized value (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2011). By the time of the sale, WDUQ carried audience loyalty, pledge drive reliability, and a reputation for serving Pittsburgh communities, all built over four decades by volunteer hosts and listeners. Every dollar of that realized value accrued to Duquesne, and none of the people whose work had helped produce it had standing in the transaction.

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<sup>8</sup> The corporate identity of the successor entity changed again after the events described here. Effective January 1, 2016, Essential Public Media, Inc. merged into its parent company, Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting Corporation, which also operates WYEP 91.3 FM; the boards of the two organizations were combined as part of the merger (WESA n.d.). References in this article to the 2011 transaction name Essential Public Media as the buyer of record at that time.

One clause in the agreement shows that reliance on uncompensated labor remained available to the successor arrangement rather than being corrected by it. The contract specified that “if EPM cannot secure funding for paid internships, the jobs will be unpaid” (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2011). The clause did not concern *Music from India* directly, but preserved uncompensated labor as an acceptable operating possibility at the moment of institutional transition. WDUQ had long depended on work that could be named service, devotion, training, or opportunity instead of compensation. In the sale agreement, that logic entered the written design of what came next.

The public debate around the sale made some losses visible while leaving immigrant community programming outside the frame. Local coverage registered the loss of jazz programming with intensity. Sally Kalson’s June 2011 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* column documents the public debate, in which jazz fans were furious, Jazz Lives in Pittsburgh filed an FCC complaint about the format change, and WDUQ employees organized as Pittsburgh Public Media to make their own bid for the station before being outbid and rejected (Kalson 2011). Seven DUQ staffers were hired by Essential Public Media, and four on air volunteers were retained “as well” (Kalson 2011). Their retention treated volunteer presence as continuity without making volunteer labor part of the transaction’s ethical accounting. Even Kalson, writing in defense of the sale, acknowledged the ownership premise when she wrote that “WDUQ-FM has done a pretty good job of marketing itself over the years as ‘your’ public radio station.... Of course, the ownership angle was always a fundraising tactic. The public did not own the station; Duquesne University did” (Kalson 2011). The most prominent pro sale voice in the city’s paper of record acknowledged that the public ownership language WDUQ had used to raise contributions for decades had been marketing.

The silences in that public conversation show which publics counted at the station’s pivotal institutional moment. In the 2011 local coverage I have examined, the sale was framed chiefly as a fight over jazz, news, ownership, and format. *Music from India* was not mentioned, nor the other immigrant community programs that used to air on WDUQ in the past. The federal mandate to address unserved and underserved audiences entered the debate only obliquely, through questions about how to fund the news and talk format that would replace jazz. The audiences that mandate names did not appear as audiences whose programming counted when the station’s future was being negotiated in public.

When *Music from India* ended after forty-six years on the air, the earlier failures of documentation and governance shaped what could be known, consulted, and publicly reckoned with.<sup>9</sup> The successor entity had inherited a program with no playlist archive, no stable record of host rotation, no institutional account of listener participation, and no formal structure through which contributors or community members could speak into the meaning of its end. A station that had built no playlists for four decades had little to consult on the way out. A station that had built no durable recognition or governance structure around the program had no mechanism for

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<sup>9</sup> WESA suspended its relationship with Harish Saluja in 2018 following sexual harassment allegations (O’Driscoll 2018). *Music from India* ended that year. An exploration of this fact, while extremely important, is beyond the scope of this article.

bringing hosts, listeners, and community participants into an account of what had ended. The program closed the way it had run: with the institution holding the license and the labor holding nothing it could leave behind.

## STEWARDSHIP AND THE PATH FORWARD

*Music from India* exposes the failure a responsible preservation model would have to correct: a station could claim public interest service through South Asian volunteer labor, convert that service into pledge revenue and institutional value, and keep no record from which the program could later be reconstructed. A responsible model should attach the first duty of documentation to the license holder, since the license holder broadcasts the program, claims the public interest service, controls the station infrastructure, and retains the institutional value that service helps produce. For community produced public interest programming, that duty should include program titles, host schedules, playlists or sequencing logs, listener requests when available, and basic descriptions of the communities served. These records would supplement audio archives and allow partial reconstruction when recordings are lost, discarded, or never made.

This case study shows why the legal bar has to rise.<sup>10</sup> FCC logging rules captured technical compliance while leaving cultural survival outside the frame. WDUQ's administrators drew on South Asian hosts and listeners for music, knowledge, trust, routines, requests, and pledge support, yet kept no durable record of the cultural world those practices produced. The memories of a community nourished and sustained by that labor remain in indelible traces throughout Pittsburgh and beyond. The tragedy is that these forms of cultural reproduction are hardest to substantiate after institutions fail to document them.

Universities, libraries, and community organizations can help preserve these materials, but they cannot repair the problem if stations create no first record. Pitt holds Harish's collection because he took personal initiative and because a research library could receive physical records as a named collection, but Dolly's cassettes had no such pathway. A model built only on external partnerships would leave preservation dependent on proximity, chance, and institutional taste. Stations should keep basic documentation from the start, give copies to hosts and community partners, and create shared protocols for description, access, digitization, and long-term care. Audio materials need digitization before they deteriorate. Textual records need preservation because they keep broadcasts reconstructable when sound disappears.

Archival survival tells us less about cultural significance than about access to forms institutions know how to preserve. Labor leaves traces in memory, routine, attachment, and community practice, but those traces become fragile when institutions refuse to accept them as

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<sup>10</sup> This argument arrives at a moment when both the funding model and the diversity commitments of U.S. public media are under strain. Federal support for public broadcasting has become increasingly precarious (KCUR 2025; UPR 2025), and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's approach to diversity reporting has itself been contested (Current 2024). The case for documenting community cultural labor is therefore also a case made against the grain of present institutional pressures, which push stations toward retrenchment rather than expanded stewardship. On what a genuine institutional commitment to diversity in public media would require, see Kobayashi (2022).

evidence. When Music from India ended in 2018, a station that had broadcast it for forty-six years held no recording and no record of it, and that absence was a choice the institution made every week it declined to document the program. The work should have survived with the same seriousness as the license, the pledge revenue, and the station asset it helped sustain.

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