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**Subject:** Iowa Public Radio on right track (Gazette Editorial0  
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FYI – thanks to Regent Evans for bringing this editorial to our attention.

Sheila

## THE GAZETTE'S EDITORIAL

### Iowa Public Radio on right track

Iowa Public Radio must be doing something right.

Since the consolidation of the state's public stations from three distinctive **university**-based operations began four years ago:

.Listenership is up 22 percent.

.Membership (including donors) is up 7 per cent.

.Revenue from donors has increased 9 percent.

.IPR is three-fourths of the way to becoming self-supporting (no tax money) thanks to the increase in donor support and some targeted budget cuts.

Congratulations are in order. That's not to say everything IPR officials have done is popular. Indeed, we voiced concerns about the loss of unique local programming when "Live from Prairie Lights" out of Iowa City was canceled last November. We worried it was a sign that such local programming would disappear.

Well, yes, some of those programs are gone and are missed. But the trade-offs better serve a statewide audience.

More smaller communities, such as Ottumwa, are on the list of station markets.

The reporting staff has been beefed up, including a Cedar Rapids reporter, and there's more local and statewide news.

With an office in Des Moines, there's better coverage of state government and talk shows from the capital.

The 14 member stations can share programming because of upgraded technology. In fact, sharing of locally produced news and music programming is still above the national average for public radio, according to IPR CEO Mary Grace Herrington.

Challenges remain.

.Western Iowa still doesn't have the coverage reach the rest of the state enjoys.

.How to measure the importance of each **university**'s "flavor" to still be represented in the programming and how best to do that.

.The goal of becoming self-supporting by 2011 won't be an easy one.

That means replacing about \$1.6 million in a \$6.4 million budget.

Reaching that goal would not only be a feather in IPR's cap, it would be less of a burden on the three universities. Iowa, Iowa State and Northern Iowa, which fill that funding gap, already are dealing with substantial budget cuts and will undoubtedly incur more because state tax revenues are off sharply because of the national recession.

Even if you don't agree with all the changes in Iowa Public Radio, more Iowans are being served.

Keep sending in your suggestions. And if you want IPR to stick around for a long time, be willing to pony up a few bucks.

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