

Jefferson Public Radio

By Jeff LaLande

Owned by and operating from the campus of Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Jefferson Public Radio (JPR) serves one of the largest geographic areas of any public radio station in the United States (over 70,000 square miles). It broadcasts with a system of transmitters and translators extending from central Oregon's high desert to the Pacific Coast, and from Eugene, Oregon, to Mendocino, California.

Licensed as KSOR, the station first began operating in 1969, with a weak 10-watt signal beamed from what was then Southern Oregon College's Central Hall. Early broadcasts barely reached downtown Ashland, and most programs were the unpolished work of undergraduate students. In the mid-1970s, under director Ronald Kramer, KSOR began improving its programming quality and building a network of mountain-top translators to reach an audience throughout southwestern Oregon and northern-most California. Since the 1940s, this region has been known to residents as the "State of Jefferson," and the station took the name Jefferson Public Radio to reflect its service to the two-state listening area.

JPR has a paid staff of about twenty people, with a large number of active volunteers. Twice-a-year fund drives have increased Jefferson Public Radio's total donating membership to about 10,000 people in 2008.

JPR has become one of the key cultural icons of the region, binding together rural hamlets and regional centers such as Medford and Redding. The station provides a variety of musical programming, a community calendar of cultural events, nationally syndicated public-radio talk shows, as well as regional, national, and international news programming. JPR's daily live-broadcast program "The Jefferson Exchange," brings a wide variety of topics and guest interviews (including nationally known writers, artists, and political activists) to the region's listeners.

Sources

Jefferson Public Radio Listeners' Guild. www.ijpr.org.

Kramer, Ronald. Telecon interview.

The Oregon Encyclopedia

http://oregonhist-oep-dev.azurewebsites.net/articles/jefferson_public_radio/