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*Thank you for your letter and for dedicating a poem to me this morning on **The Road Home**. I am originally from Calgary but have been living in Buenos Aires for almost two years—where I listen regularly... I was traveling through Patagonia ... and of course there is Internet globally and I was able to listen to CKUA.*

**Maraya**—  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

*I just recently retired to Thailand ... no more Alberta winters—smile ... but it is wonderful to listen to the best radio station on line and remind me of the beautiful long summer nights in Alberta.*

**Bob**—Karat, Thailand

Over 80 years ago, in 1927, public radio station CKUA was launched in Alberta as the first educational broadcaster in Canada. In 1995, the station's website went live, and shortly afterward CKUA marked another milestone by becoming the first Canadian radio station to stream its signal.

"The Internet was in its infancy, relatively speaking, back then," notes current General Manager Ken Regan.

When first launched, www.ckua.com was focused on accredited online teaching. It was closely associated with Athabasca University, and IT talent from the school was involved in the site's creation.

Like many listeners, Dan Webb was passionate about CKUA and believed it needed a strong web presence. The Athabasca University

BY BARBARA JONES

Another first  
for CKUA radio

employee volunteered his time and provided the technical expertise to keep the station on the leading edge nationally.

That degree of passion reflects from the station's on-air talent to its listeners and back again. CKUA.org extends the Edmonton station's reach to additional loyal listeners far beyond Alberta's broadcasting borders. The site averages between 120,000 and 150,000 unique visitors each month.

The last time the on-air station was measured by BBM it achieved a weekly cume of approximately 170,000, with most of that audience found in Alberta.

CKUA has uncovered an international audience for its "music expert" format, an audience ready to donate funds to support the station's mandate.

Celtic—jazz—poetry—fusion—obscure instrumental... the CKUA staff is known globally for presenting well-informed programming about all types of music, beyond the confines of mainstream radio.

Over two-thirds of the station's annual budget, about \$3 million, is raised through voluntary listener donations. The station runs two on-air fund raising campaigns each year, each lasting 10 days. Listeners can donate online 24/7, a convenient and successful website function. Online contributions represent about 50% of total voluntary listener donations each year.

Regan notes that much of what CKUA is doing online is not unique but reflective of the way the world, and audiences, are changing. "Even though we work in a so-called radio station, it is not about radio or television anymore," he said. "We have to stop thinking of ourselves as radio broadcasters. We are content producers and distributors.

"The internet has changed the rules of the game. Now we have to genuinely think about graphical interfaces and design and video and audio... all of these other elements the public just expects."



Strategically keeping on top of listener expectations, the station plans to overhaul the design and technical structure of CKUA.org before year end.

"If all we do is continue to stream audio and not think or do something about the other elements, people are just not going to bother." Regan adds, "We want to try our best to keep pace with public expectations."

The station's passionate listeners ask regularly about the music they hear broadcast or streamed online. Today they can review online playlists but are unable to purchase the music through the site. To address this demand, CKUA is setting up an affiliate agreement with an online music company.

"The principle is to allow users, to the greatest extent possible, to be able to use the CKUA website as a portal by which they can access great music," Regan said.

The revamped site will likely include a robust content archive, and videos of musician interviews from each of CKUA's programming genres.

The station would like to do more podcasting of its music programming (it currently podcasts news and information shows), but copyright legislation and regulations make that type of service difficult.

Taking a page from Webby-award winning NPR.org, the future CKUA.org may feature original online programming, web-only articles, expanded stories, video slide shows, artist micro-sites, and social networking tools.

It all costs money and requires expertise, much of which, Regan admits, the station doesn't have in-house. However, he's quick to point out that the station enjoys the luxury of a unique global listenership that's supportive, passionate and poised to help them achieve CKUA's online product and programming objectives.

"As long as we articulate to our audience we need to do this, and here is what it will mean to you, they will pull out their credit cards," he predicts.

Hello, Thailand?  
Argentina?

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