

Why do a Radio Show?

Sustainability is as vague as vague can be. It is an overused and often misapplied term. In the grocery store or really any commercial setting we are inundated by claims about the sustainability of different products. To understand the impacts of our choices we have to go far out of our everyday routines. Sustainability is a smart thing to choose, but how do we choose which dish soap is sustainable and which is not? Can something be more sustainable than another thing? What does it mean to be unsustainable? What happens when things collapse? Will it hurt? Questions are at the heart of the discussion. Anyone who's tells you definitively what sustainability means is either a time traveler, selling something, or both. A radio show is the perfect place to parse this subject ad infinitum. If you want to do something for the good of the planet and your fellow beings, as hard and as frustrating as it is, there is still a world of things to be done just by listening, asking questions, and talking.

What did I do?

The first episode of the show aired the first week of the spring semester. The show then aired once a week until week nine, when scheduling problems moved in. At the writing of this poster the tenth show is done and there are four more shows planned and scheduled. It is hoped another student will continue producing the show in Fall 2012, but even if no one picks it up the show will be there and can always be picked up at a later date.

There were several lessons learned while producing the show. The main lesson was that productive value is a function of experience plus the time put into preproduction planning and editing. The show was a disaster several times from a production perspective. There were times when I froze up mid question, and times when I gaffed the mixing board. All in all I am proud of the mistakes I've made. How else could I have learned?



Podcasts for each episode can be found on the web at kxua.uark.edu, search the site for "sustainability"

Sustainability Show #1

Dr. Edmund Harriss, UA Math Dept.
Direction and inspiration for the show

Sustainability Show #2

Dr. Steve Boss, UA Geology Dept.
Human environmental impacts.

Sustainability Show #3

John Sampier, NACA director
Waste water treatment

Sustainability Show #4

Dr. Robert Brubaker, UA History Dept.
What does Collapse feel like?

Sustainability Show #5

Sarah Dayringer, Policy expert
Rio+20 UN conference

Sustainability Show #6

Dan Coody, former mayor
Sustainable building

Sustainability Show #7

Gary Kahanak, energy auditor
Home energy efficiency

Sustainability Show #8

Dr. Edmund Harriss, UA Math Faculty
Current state of the literature

Sustainability Show #9

Dan Dean, Architect, Farmer, and Activist
Dan Dean Did His Thing

Sustainability Show #10

Dr. Andrew Braham, UA Civil Engineering
Sustainability and Transportation

How was this project relative to the university wide conversation about sustainability?

This project addressed all four major areas of sustainability studies as outlined by the sustainability minor here at the University of Arkansas. The show was produced from a generalist point of view and as such we dipped into the built environment with Dr. Braham, Dan Coody, and Gary Kahanak, into the managed environment with John Sampiers and Sarah Dayringer, into the economic with Sarah Dayringer, and into the environmental with Dr. Boss, Dr. Alverson, and Dr. Smith, and into the social with Dr. Brubaker, Sarah Dayringer, and Dan Coody.

The project was effective and all my goals were met, that being said my biggest goal was just to show up and do it. Radio is, like all public media, an invitation to vulnerability. Losing your train of thought while broadcasting live is a different experience from doing the same in a private conversation. Offending your guest goes from a small bump in the conversation to a public humiliation. I wanted to earn my spurs for this seemingly perilous experience. Whether or not the show was an effective medium for advocating for sustainability or impacting others in any way is up for discussion.

The biology series was another small segment that was produced on the sustainability show. Only two segments were produced. The series asked the question: what can Biologist teach us about design. It turns out that enthusiasm for the natural world is what they have to teach us. In the first Segment Dr. Andy Alverson shared his love of diatoms and enumerated some of the amazing facts surrounding this ubiquitous, obscure, and highly important branch of the tree of life. Dr Smith shared the story of the reintroduction of the black bear to the Ozarks.