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9XM Talking: WHA Radio and the Wisconsin Idea

Randall Davidson

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These words crackled in the headphones of crystal sets around the country in 1921 as the University of Wisconsin radio station 9XM began its regular schedule of voice broadcasts. Randall Davidson provides the first comprehensive history of the University of Wisconsin radio station, WHA; affiliated state-owned station, WLBL; and the post-World War II FM stations that are the backbone of the network now known as Wisconsin Public Radio. *9XM Talking* describes how, with homemade equipment and ideas developed from scratch, 9XM endured many struggles and became a tangible example of "the Wisconsin Idea," bringing the educational riches of the university to all the state's residents. From the beginning, those involved with the radio station felt it should provide a service for the practical use of Wisconsin citizens.

The book's informative chapters cover the programs that allowed the medium of radio to benefit farmers and homemakers, to bring world-class educators into isolated rural schoolrooms, and to teach people all over Wisconsin everything from literature to history to touch-typing, long before anyone came up with the term "distance learning." Davidson concludes by discussing the claim that WHA has to the title "Oldest Station in the Nation." This groundbreaking book is based on archival materials dating back to the 1900s and includes dozens of historic photos and illustrations, many of which have never been published before.

Winner, Book Award of Merit for best Wisconsin history book, Wisconsin Historical Society

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