

## The Application of Documentary Techniques in Radio and Television News Features (Postprint)

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### Abstract

Documentary-style radio and television news feature programs refer to television news feature programs wherein radio and television news personnel utilize cameras and other tools to track target populations, authentically reproducing numerous scenes from news events occurring in real life, employing real and visible scenes to stimulate audience contemplation, thereby enabling viewers to formulate their own judgments regarding news events. Within such programs, documentary-style follow-up news reporting constitutes the majority of program duration, as audiences can only render objective assessments of entire news events after viewing sufficiently authentic follow-up footage. Consequently, the critical element in documentary-style radio and television news feature programs lies in the process of news fact acquisition. Nevertheless, concerning the current status of documentary-style news feature programs, numerous issues persist. This paper presents a relatively detailed exposition of the characteristics, existing problems, and recommendations pertaining to documentary-style news feature programs.

### Full Text

#### Application of Documentary Techniques in Radio and Television News Features

**Abstract:** Documentary radio and television news feature programs refer to productions in which journalists use cameras and other tools to track target subjects, authentically recreating extensive scenes of news events as they unfold in real life. By presenting visible, genuine footage, these programs stimulate audience reflection and enable viewers to form their own judgments about news events. In such programs, documentary-style tracking reports occupy the majority of airtime, as audiences require sufficient authentic footage to make objective evaluations of the entire news event. Consequently, the critical element in documentary radio and television news features lies in the process of news gathering.

However, current documentary news programs still face numerous challenges. This paper provides a detailed examination of the characteristics, existing problems, and recommendations for documentary news feature programs.

**Keywords:** news features; documentary style; characteristics; problems and recommendations

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## 1. The Process and Characteristics of Documentary TV News Feature Program Planning

Contemporary television producers increasingly recognize the need to “minimize subjective consciousness and conquer audiences with facts.” This emphasis on authentically documenting social events and objectively reflecting real-life conditions underscores the value of genuine recording. News feature programs are particularly time-sensitive, making it essential to standardize the footage-to-airtime ratio to improve both efficiency and quality.

### 1.1 Using Facts to Express Creative Intent

Documentary news differs from other news formats by primarily presenting and disseminating ideas through the process of tracking and broadcasting factual events. Rather than directly asserting positions, documentary radio and television news features typically adopt an indirect approach: first presenting extensive facts to the audience, then exploring and analyzing the causes and trends of news events, and finally drawing conclusions that either praise or criticize, thereby making the creator’s intent self-evident. This characteristic requires planners to use factual processes to convey ideas and creative vision.

Documentary news features demonstrate factual recording through two key aspects: acquiring typical materials and interviewing pivotal figures. Typical materials refer to news facts and footage that are illustrative and representative, helping audiences avoid making judgments based on ambiguous content. Such materials can achieve maximum impact with minimal footage. In some cases, even when only audio can be captured due to on-site limitations, the sound itself may prove crucially illustrative and typical, thereby strengthening the news 传播 effect. The second aspect involves interviewing key figures. Third-person narration enhances persuasive power and deepens audience understanding far more effectively than first-person assertions.

### **1.2 Standardizing the Footage-to-Airtime Ratio to Improve Efficiency and Quality**

The footage-to-airtime ratio represents the greatest constraint in documentary television news production, reflecting not only the technical proficiency of the production team but also their time management philosophy and commitment to quality. Standardizing this ratio enhances overall staff competence, encompassing camera control, on-site management, and overall program command. Without quantitative discipline in the footage ratio, qualitative excellence in news features cannot be achieved. Therefore, every producer and journalist must maintain constant awareness of time efficiency during filming and interviewing, thereby improving both productivity and program quality.

### **1.3 Emphasizing Background Analysis and Commentary**

While documentary news features are characterized by “letting facts speak for themselves,” practical reporting faces numerous constraints. Simple description of news processes only reveals surface phenomena. Therefore, incorporating background reporting enables audiences to better understand program content and significantly enhances viewer engagement.

News background—which may take the form of brief narrative scenes or statements from those involved—makes events more comprehensible and authentic, substantially increasing the information density of documentary news. Background provides context about environmental factors, objective conditions, and causes, giving audiences a comprehensive understanding of the entire event while offering reasonable inferences and evidence that deepen comprehension.

However, background alone does not fulfill the primary purpose of documentary news, which is to stimulate attention and reflection. Concluding analysis and commentary serve this function by summarizing key issues and prompting deeper thought. Therefore, we must emphasize both background introduction and concluding analysis.

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## **2. Principles and Key Considerations in Planning Documentary TV News Features**

### **2.1 Theme and Content**

The first challenge in program planning is determining content and theme. Selecting an appropriate theme means half the battle is won. Theme selection establishes the program’s direction and tone. For instance, when producing a documentary feature on “new rural construction,” planning must begin from this foundation to capture new concepts and phenomena that embody both rural character and contemporary spirit, thereby creating influential documentary news features.

## 2.2 Form of Expression

After determining the theme, an appropriate form must be chosen to showcase the program's characteristics. Attracting audiences requires innovative television language. Creativity involves not merely isolated ideas but their combination and expansion during program conception. Only when creativity emerges from cultural accumulation, life experience, and intellectual exchange can it produce distinctive forms that refresh audiences and leave lasting impressions.

## 2.3 Broadcast Timing

All planning ultimately aims for broadcast and good ratings, making time slot selection crucial. Appropriate timing significantly improves viewership, as audience composition varies by time period. Broadcasting children's programs at midnight would yield poor results simply because the target audience would be asleep. Therefore, selecting suitable broadcast times plays a decisive role in program success.

## 2.4 Audience Targeting

Audience targeting involves identifying a program's viewership. In the past, producers hoped to create programs that appealed to all demographics, but every program type has a specific audience. Recognizing this reality is essential for planners. When planning, producers must consider the trend of media fragmentation, clearly identify target audiences, understand their viewing psychology, cultural level, and needs. Only through comprehensive analysis and positioning of both program and audience can planners work effectively.

## 2.5 Cost Investment

Regardless of how creative or well-planned a program may be, comprehensive cost accounting is necessary. Reckless spending without regard to cost inevitably leads to painful lessons. Therefore, before production begins, input-output ratios should be estimated based on considerations of both social and economic benefits to ensure rational investment.

Documentary TV news feature program planning involves numerous aspects. Only when every detail is carefully considered can programs achieve good results. By conscientiously following these guidelines, planners can improve efficiency, enhance production quality, and ultimately increase ratings.

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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