

What Is a Radio Station?

In the past, when radio broadcasters were limited to broadcasting on a single analog AM or FM frequency, the concept of a “station” was unambiguous to broadcasters, advertisers, and audience alike. This is no longer necessarily the case—in the age of digital broadcasting, the lines that used to separate facility, technology, location, and programming are blurring. As these lines have begun to disappear, the radio marketplace has become increasingly focused upon trending and maximizing **individual station performance**.

Based upon input from our customers, the Arbitron Radio Advisory Council, the Media Rating Council[®], advertisers, media buyers, consultants, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and other industry groups, Arbitron plans to begin reporting estimates for digital radio stations in services based upon PPM[™] data later this year.

The debut of digital radio station reporting will be a subject of great interest for Arbitron’s customers, the radio industry press, and the general marketplace alike, and is likely to intensify focus on individual station performance for both station and advertiser.

This document “What Is a Radio Station” is being published to ensure that when speaking to customers or when speaking amongst workgroups internally, the correct terminology is being used to describe for whom Arbitron publishes audience estimates and to ensure that all workgroups share a common understanding of the critical business concept of a “station.”

To better understand how Arbitron defines radio stations, we must start at the beginning and think about Arbitron’s syndicated service.

Arbitron now defines a “radio station” as:

- A government-licensed AM or FM station (as it always has)
- An HD Radio[®] (primary or multicast) station
- An Internet stream of a government-licensed station
- Potentially, satellite radio channels from XM[®] or SIRIUS[®]
- Potentially, stations that are not government-licensed

What Is the “Syndicated Service”?

The term “Syndicated Service” refers to the currency services provided by Arbitron; these services provide the local radio Metro data upon which the buying and selling of radio advertising is based. The syndicated services are generally considered by the marketplace to be Arbitron’s “primary” product line; examples of reports produced as a part of the syndicated services include Arbitron eBookSM, MaximiSer[®], the PPM Analysis ToolTM, ArbitrendsSM, and PPM WeekliesTM.

Inside of Arbitron, the term “syndicated” is also used to refer to the collection of policies, procedures, processes, and operations that support the regular production of syndicated service data. As such, the term carries with it the expectation that the data will exhibit the highest possible research quality.

Other products, reports, and studies prepared by Arbitron’s Custom Research or Multimedia Services organizations may be based upon syndicated service data or methodology, but are not considered a part of the syndicated service; as such, the business concept of a station may or may not apply to specific custom research customers or products.

Why Arbitron Reports Estimates for Radio Stations in the Syndicated Service

The primary customer base for Arbitron’s audience information has been broadcast AM and FM radio stations and radio advertising agencies. Over the decades, this focus upon the radio marketplace has guided the development of Arbitron’s methodology and is reflected in the services that Arbitron offers, each of which is tailor-made to fit the needs of a certain segment of the radio industry.

While the measurement of other media is expected to yield additional business opportunities, Arbitron’s primary customer base (for the immediate future) will continue to be radio stations and advertising agencies that purchase radio.

When it comes to radio audience research, one size truly does not fit all—research needs often vary greatly from customer to customer and from station to advertising agency. There are, however, some research needs that are common to all constituencies, the primary of which is that **Arbitron continue to report estimates for radio stations in the syndicated services.**

Therefore, it is important that all workgroups share a common understanding of the criteria by which Arbitron defines a radio station.

“Station” Has a Specific Definition

The term “station” is neither a term of art nor is it open to loose interpretation. On the contrary—Arbitron defines stations according to an objective set of criteria that reflects how the FCC defines a station. For a station’s listening to be included in and reported in Arbitron’s syndicated services, a radio station must:

- Be legally authorized (by the FCC or other appropriate government agency) to broadcast upon one specific channel of the AM or FM band within a specific geographic area, and
- Vocalize the station’s FCC-assigned call sign on-air at least once each broadcast hour, and
- Engage in systematic commercial or noncommercial broadcasting.

Stations that do not meet these criteria—for example, pirate radio stations, shortwave radio stations, and audio providers that stream nonbroadcast content exclusively via the Internet—are not eligible for reporting in Arbitron’s syndicated services.

Digital Stations Are Stations Too

In the radio industry, the term “digital station” is used to collectively refer to HD-primary stations, HD-multicast stations, and to the Internet streams of radio stations. As mentioned earlier, Arbitron plans to begin reporting estimates for these digital radio stations in services based upon PPM data starting later this year.

When digital radio reporting begins, digital stations that meet each of the station definition criteria will be eligible for reporting in Arbitron’s syndicated services. For HD-multicast stations, conformity to these criteria is required by the terms of the station’s licenses (the FCC has ruled that multicast stations are subject to the same rules as FM stations); while the FCC does not have jurisdiction to directly license Internet streams, the Internet streams of FCC-licensed radio stations that elect to conform to these guidelines are also eligible for reporting in Arbitron’s syndicated services.

How Digital Stations Are Identified in Arbitron's Systems and Reports

To enable the reporting of digital stations in our syndicated services, reference data for digital radio stations will be entered into Arbitron's radio station information files prior to the Summer 2008/July 2008 survey periods. To allow for the digital station data to be used by Arbitron's internal processing systems and external reporting applications, the digital station data will be formatted no differently than AM or FM station data. Arbitron has been developing policy, procedures, and systems to support the reporting of audience estimates for digital radio stations since 2002, with associates from a wide cross section of Arbitron workgroups contributing to the effort.

One key need that Arbitron heard repeatedly from customers during the development of digital radio reporting policy is the need for digital station estimates to be labeled uniquely and unambiguously so that both station and advertiser will be able—at a glance—to identify and trend performance of a broadcaster's analog broadcast station separately from the analog station's Internet stream or from the station's HD-multicast stations. To meet this need, Arbitron has developed a new set of Band ID labels with which report users will be able to identify stations in the data pages of a *Radio Market Report*/Arbitron eBook. These labels are based upon the familiar "4+2" calls-band suffix format, and include the following:

Band ID	Station	Example
AM	Analog AM station	WAAA-AM
FM	Analog FM station	WBBB-FM
HA	Digital AM station	WAAA-HA
HF	Digital FM station	WBBB-HF
IA	Internet stream of an AM station	WAAA-IA
IF	Internet stream of an FM station	WBBB-IF
F2, F3...F9	HD-multicast station	WBBB-F2, WBBB-F3
G2, G3...G9	The internet stream of an HD multicast station	WBBB-G2-WBBB-G3

In Arbitron's PPM Analysis Tool, digital stations will be identified with a 'reporting label' that combines the station's FCC-licensed call sign and a short description of the station, for example "WAAA-FM Stream" or "WAAA-FM HD2." When Arbitron begins reporting estimates for digital radio stations, a

station's PPM Analysis Tool reporting label will also be included in the station's information profile included in Arbitron eBook's information pages.

Total Line Reporting—It's All About Stations

It is easy to think of Total Line Reporting as the reporting of estimates for common programming aired over multiple stations, but it is actually something quite different. Total Line Reporting is an option available to 100% simulcasting radio stations to have estimates for the individual stations combined and reported via a single line in Arbitron's services. As Arbitron begins reporting estimates for digital stations, it is critical that this concept be preserved; effective in July 2008, Total Line Reporting will also be offered as a reporting option to digital radio stations that are 100% simulcast, including all programming and commercials, for all of the stations' broadcast hours.

Digital Radio and Arbitron's Diary Service

Clearly reported digital station listening has been included, in one form or another, in Persons Using Radio estimates published in diary-based services since 1999. However, Arbitron has not yet announced a timetable for when estimates for digital radio stations will be reported in syndicated services based solely upon diary data. Until that time, Arbitron will continue to analyze digital station listening reported in diaries and use this information to further expand and refine diary edit procedures. (Top-line information regarding the incidence level of digital radio listening reported in diary Metros is available to subscribers upon request from Syndicated Standards and Analysis.)

Flying Solo—Satellite Radio and Arbitron's Syndicated Services

Satellite radio channels also fall under the umbrella of digital radio stations. Arbitron has included satellite radio listening in Persons Using Radio estimates since the first satellite service signed on-air in 2001. As such, satellite radio channels are treated the same as any other station in Arbitron's databases, with individual channels entered into the station information database, and labeled with a unique 'alias' call sign (since the channel was not assigned a call sign by the FCC). At this time, Arbitron does not plan to report estimates for satellite radio channels in any syndicated reports based upon diary data.

Both satellite radio companies have not yet elected to encode for reporting in the PPM service; as such, satellite radio is not being measured in Arbitron's PPM service.

Audio Sources Not Eligible for Reporting in Syndicated Reports

In today's media marketplace, nonlicensed audio is available to consumers in nearly every public and private setting; many of these audio sources are (to some degree) supported by advertising or underwriting. As Arbitron's PPM encoding technology can be used to measure almost any form of audio, the measurement of nonradio sources such as retail or public space audio and Internet-only radio may present valuable business opportunities.

Efforts are underway to design a new suite of services, reports, and products to market to nonbroadcast audio providers. As work continues on these projects, it is important to restate and clarify that Arbitron does not intend to publish estimates for these nonradio sources in the local syndicated service.

Handle With Care—Commonly Misused Terms

A wide range of Arbitron associates have been, or are now, directly involved in the development of policy, procedures, and systems to enable digital radio station reporting. Over time, some workgroup-specific terms have been misunderstood to be a synonym for "station."

When using these words, it is important to remember that Arbitron's definition of a station does not align with the meaning of any of these terms. Following is a list of terms that should be used "with caution."

Platform or Vehicle are terms generally used to refer to the method by which a radio station's signal is distributed, for example, "over the air" or "via the Internet."

Call Letters or Call Sign is the four-character alphabetic identifier used by the FCC to identify broadcast radio and television stations. In Arbitron's databases, a call sign is but one of the many attributes that contribute to a station's identity.

CBET Code or Station Code or Code are terms that may be used to refer to the unique station identifier that is inserted to a radio station's signal by Arbitron's encoding equipment.

Content refers to that which is broadcast on a station. Depending on context, the term may be used to describe either programming, or commercials, or the sum total of a station's broadcast.

Entity is a term that is used differently by different Arbitron workgroups. 'Entity' may refer to a single radio station, a Total Line Reporting combo, a cluster of stations, a broadcast group, a corporate or business entity, and/or a party that enters an encoding agreement with Arbitron. The term is also used by some of Arbitron's internal databases as a label used to organize related data. None of these uses, however, align with Arbitron's definition of a radio station. (In workgroups not involved with Arbitron's syndicated services, the term is also used to describe audio providers other than radio stations that may be encoded.)

Feed, Chain, Track. A model of audio engineering upon which some of Arbitron's PPM operations software is built. None of these technical concepts, however, align with Arbitron's definition of a radio station.

Parent and Child or Primary and Associate. Technical terms used to describe the nature of the relationship between specific data in complex databases. While these relationships are essential to how Arbitron manages our data 'behind the scenes,' use these terms with caution as they imply business or technical relationships between radio stations that may not exist in the tangible world.

Primary and Partner Stations. Terms used specifically to identify the nature of stations involved in a Total Line Reporting relationship. The 'primary' station's call sign is the label under which estimates for the combo will be reported. These terms are not intended to be used in any context other than that of Total Line Reporting.

Terrestrial. According to Webster's, "of or relating to the earth." In the radio industry, this term is sometimes used as a noun to refer to the group of all AM and FM stations.

Crediting Reporting Digital Radio in Arbitron's Syndicated Services

The table below summarizes Arbitron's crediting and reporting policy for digital radio stations in both the diary and PPM services.

Station Type	Definition	+2 Band ID	DIARY: Included in PUR?	DIARY: Station Estimates Reported?	PPM: Included in PUMM	PPM: Station Estimates Reported?
HD-primary station	HD1 "The digital version of an analog station"	WAAA-HF WAAA-HA	YES	YES. Credit is assigned to the station and is included in the estimates published for the analog station.	YES	YES
HD-multicast stations	HD2, HD3, HD4 "The stations between the stations"	WAAA-F2 WAAA-F3 WAAA-F4	YES	NO. Credit is assigned to the individual station, but estimates for the station are not reported.	YES	YES
Internet stream of an AM station	Internet AM	WAAA-IA	YES	YES, if the AM station and Internet stream requested TLR. If the stations did not request TLR, then estimates are not reported for the Internet station.	YES	YES. Station will be reported separately if TLR is not requested.
Internet Stream of an FM station	Internet FM	WAAA-IF	YES	YES, if the FM station and Internet stream requested TLR. If the stations did not request TLR, then estimates are not reported for the Internet station.	YES	YES. Station will be reported separately if TLR is not requested.
Internet stream of an HD-multicast station	Internet multicast	WAAA-G2 WAAA-G3	YES	NO. Credit is assigned to the Internet station, but estimates for the station are not reported.	YES	YES. Station will be reported separately if TLR is not requested.
Internet-only radio	Streamed audio that is not broadcast in any form Ex: Pandora.com	N/A	NO	NO	NO	NO
Satellite radio	A channel broadcast by either XM or SIRIUS	CAAA-SA	YES	NO. Credit is assigned to the satellite channel, but estimates for the station are not reported.	NO*	NO*
Internet stream of a satellite radio channel	Satellite radio delivered via Internet	CAAA-IS	YES	NO	NO*	NO*
Non-licensed radio	Pirate radio stations, shortwave radio, subcarriers	N/A	NO	NO	NO	NO

Effective for the Summer 2008 Diary survey and the July 2008 PPM report period.

*At the time of this writing, neither satellite radio service has elected to encode its channels.

For Additional Information— PPM Methodology

Contact information follows should you have any questions or need any additional information regarding the criterion by which Arbitron defines a station, or the crediting and reporting of digital radio stations in Arbitron's PPM methodology:

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