

January 2007

From Christine Ehrick: I am currently researching **women/gender and radio in Latin America (roughly 1930-1950)**. I am aware of some of the main monographs on women and radio in Europe and US by scholars like Kate Lacey, Michelle Hilmes, Susan Ware and the like, but I would be interested to know if listserv members had other recommendations. I am also interested in literature on gender and technology that might specifically address early and golden age radio. [Click here for responses.](#)

From Nina Lerman: I would be interested to hear, also, people's thoughts on how radio is or isn't like other technologies when we think about it in connection with gender (or race/ethnicity) -- communication technologies? household technologies? what Rachel Maines might call hedonistic technologies (can't be evaluated in terms of labor-saving rational economics etc)?

A couple of thoughts on reading: Susan J. Douglas has two books on radio you should look at if you haven't run across them, and if you haven't met her book *Where the Girls Are*, I expect you'll have fun with it even if it's mostly TV and post-war. Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom*, might also be helpful to think with.

From Sharon Irish: The following idea is not relevant to Latin America and is a novel, but a wonderful treatment of women and radio by a Canadian author, *Clara Callen* by Richard B. Wright.

From Bayla Singer: Nina's comments about economic rationality dragged this up from my backbrain ... radios were a very early "credit" purchase. They were relatively expensive as far as household equipment went, and vendors urged this "new" scheme whereby the buyer paid in many instalments.

At least in the US, early broadcast radio is more or less contemporaneous with a growing urge among women to "modernize" their kitchens, to purchase new stoves & iceboxes or refrigerators. The radio wasn't a kitchen item, but may perhaps have benefited from the general mindset.

From Kevin Borg: I recall hearing a fine paper at SHOT about two years ago (?) about Christian radio broadcasting in Latin America. I cannot find my old SHOT program at the moment, but it was a then recently completed dissertation and I expect it is in the pipeline toward publication by now. I do not recall the paper dealing with gender, but the manuscript might otherwise prove useful to your project. It described evangelical missions out of the US giving families Philco produced radio sets, often with the frequency fixed at the organization's broadcast. Does anyone recall this paper in any more detail?

Another WITH list lurker came up with the name: Tim Stoneman, Georgia Tech dissertation, 2006, "Capturing believers: American international radio, religion, and reception, 1931--1970." The paper I heard focused on Equador, but the diss abstract indicates Liberia as well. Should be helpful.

From Martha Trescott: I spent some time in Latin America in mission field work, mostly in connection with a women and water technology project I worked on at the University of Illinois engineering school back in the 1980s (a project that stemmed from my U. S. history of women in engineering) and also in connection with the dioceses of Davenport and Peoria, where I also served in Catholic campus ministry. While in Latin America, I continued my interviews with pioneering women in engineering, begun in the U. S. in the late 1970s. I interviewed women in technology, from professional engineers to women who maintained water systems in rural villages in Mexico and Belize and also had one interview with a Puerto Rican. I recall from talking to them and also from students in my classes in history of technology who were experts in short-wave radio that radio in Latin America got started, as I think broadcast radio generally did, from short-wave !! transmissions. The women and others who mentioned growing up with radio in Latin America referred to entertainment and broadcasts of music. Apparently, a station in Argentina is sometimes credited with the first popular broadcast of music anywhere, although it didn't reach many, in 1920. I think it broadcast one of the teatro nacional performances there. While Xavier Cugat broadcast his band performances in the U. S. in the golden age of radio, he nevertheless apparently got his start at the Teatro Nacional of Cuba as a violinist at a young age.

I'm sure you know all this, but your post led me to think of Cuba in the golden age of radio, when there was a lot of U. S. interest in Cuban music, bands, entertainment. So Cuban radio history might be of interest. I'm sure you're familiar with the Patepluma materials online and some good introductory histories by Don Moore there. One that mentioned a rare radio history archive in either Costa Rica or Nicaragua sounded really fascinating, if one could track that down and find the repository which now holds most of their material (and one hopes those materials, including some old equipment) have been saved). If you're interested or find out more about it, I would be truly interested.

I guess that, as in the U. S., political broadcasts were relatively late in coming in Latin America. So it would seem good to research the entertainment and musical side, including the archives of teatro nacionales in various countries, for the earliest history of broadcast radio in Latin America.