

# Transparent Horizons: Church History Department Publishing Today

**Presenters: Ryan Saltzgiver, Angela Hallstrom, and Spencer McBride**

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**Ryan Saltzgiver:** Hello, and welcome to our session today, entitled Transparent Horizons: Church History Department Publishing Efforts Today.

My name is Ryan Saltzgiver. I'm an historian with the Church History Department. My primary focus of research and publishing over the last several years has been on the archaeology of Latter-day Saint communities and the globalization of the Church as it's progressed throughout the world.

I currently lead the Global Histories Project, which I'll be talking about a little bit more in detail later. I have today with me. Angela Hallstrom from our Saints team and Spencer McBride from The Joseph Smith Papers. We'll introduce to you in just a moment. Since the beginning of The Joseph Smith Papers project nearly two decades ago, the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has undertaken a bold initiative to foster greater transparency about the Church's past.

In recent years, these efforts have led the CHD staff to explore new media, including online-first publications, podcasting, and narrative nonfiction to bring new insights and transparency to difficult topics.

Spencer McBride, who's with us today from The Joseph Smith Papers and The First Vision podcast, and Angela Hallstrom from Saints, and myself, Ryan Saltzgiver from Global Histories, will discuss efforts of both transparency and accessibility that the Church History Department has undertaken.

And we'll demonstrate how the Church History Department's use of innovative publishing strategies to tell new stories as well as familiar stories in fresh ways.

We'll start today by having Angela speak about the efforts of the Saints team in publishing the four volume narrative history of the Church.

After Angela is done, I'll take some time to talk about efforts that we've done to improve accessibility and to provide additional resources for saints and other interested readers of Church history content. After which Spencer McBride will speak for some time about The First Vision podcast and his efforts with The Joseph Smith Papers.

So I'll turn the time now to Angela after I give you a brief introduction to her. Angela Hallstrom works for the Church History Department as a writer and literary editor on the Saints project. Previously, she taught writing at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, BYU, and other institutions. She's an author of the novel "Bound on Earth," has served on the editorial boards of several periodicals, and edited a collection of short fiction by Latter-day Saint writers. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Hamline University in Minnesota. Did I say that correctly? Where she lived with her husband and children for 16 years before moving to her home state of Utah in 2019. And also Spencer McBride is an associate managing historian with the Church History Department and with The Joseph Smith Papers.

He's the creator and host of The First Vision: A Joseph Smith Papers Podcast. He earned his PhD in history from Louisiana State University in 2014 and is the author and editor of several books, including "Joseph Smith for President: the prophet, the assassins, and the fight for American religious freedom," which will be published by Oxford University Press in March of 2021. Let's turn the time now to Angela.

**Angela:** Well hello, I am glad to be here to be able to speak with all of you about Saints. I am excited to be able to talk about this project. So saints is a great project to be a part of. It's a narrative history of the Church that spans just about 200 years. So two volumes of this history have been published, and we are working on the next two. So there's some interesting stats about saints and its reach that I think shows how popular it's been. We've been very pleased with its response and how many readers we've been able to have.

Volume one was released on September 4, 2018. Volume two was released on February 12, 2020. It was printed in 14 languages and over 638,000 print copies have been sold.

Over 200 million chapter views have happened in either the Gospel Library app or online on our online channels. And over 63 million chapter listens have happened with our audio version of the book. So it has definitely reached a wide readership.

One of the most important aspects of Saints is we want it to be accessible. Most members of the Church reside outside of the United States, and because of this, we want to make sure that we are telling the stories of the saints who reside all over the globe.

We are finding, also, that our history is so much broader and more interesting to so many of our readers if we are keeping this kind of accessibility in mind—if we're thinking of bringing the stories of the Latter-day Saints to the Latter Day Saints who live around the world.

You'll see here on this slide, this is a picture of all of the different covers of the fourteen different versions of Saints that has been published. So there are 14 different languages here represented, and we know also that people are reading Saints in different languages. Thirty percent of the print copies of Saints have been sold in languages other than English, which is really satisfying to our team.

So I'm going to talk a little bit now in a little more detail about the narrative nonfiction style of Saints and why we have chosen to write Saints this way. I love this quote here by Robert McKee who is a famous narrative theorist. He says, "A culture cannot evolve without honest, powerful storytelling." And one of the things that I like about this quote is that it uses two words that are really important to the Saints team: honest is very important. We want to make sure that we have an accessible but also transparent history. We want to know our history. Sometimes the stories are inspiring and can help us to be able to strengthen our faith. Sometimes stories are a little bit more difficult, but they help us to provide a more nuanced view of our past. And I think, overall, that ends up strengthening members of the Church. So having these stories, being honest is really important to us.

Powerful storytelling is important as well, simply because we can have all the historical information you want there, but if people aren't interested—if they aren't compelled by the narrative or by the storytelling itself— then they're not going to read it. And we wanted to make sure that we had a very, very broad readership so that many members of the Church will be interested in learning this history, and we do that by melding history and literary technique to meet the needs of our audience.

Being a member of the Saints team, we we often talk about our audience and how important it is that what we're creating is meeting a very broad audience. We want to speak to people who are

young; we want to speak to people who are old; we want to speak to people who live around the globe.

We want this to be something that is accessible for people who know very little about Church history, but also for people who might know quite a bit about Church history but find they're learning something new or learning about this information in a new way.

I also think it's important to point out the difference between narrative nonfiction and historical fiction.

So when I first started working on this project, I'm a writer, and they brought me on the team because I know how to write narrative. And one of the really effective elements of Saints is that we have historians and writers working together on the team.

And I'm one of the writers that's been brought on. So people would say to me, "Oh, so are you writing something like "The Work and the Glory"? Which is a wonderful piece of historical fiction that many people are familiar with, but it is historical fiction.

Narrative nonfiction is different in a number of important ways. First of all, the characters are real people. We did not invent any name, any person. Every single person who appears in our pages really lived and really was a part of the event that we depict them to be a part of.

Every event that happens from large historical events to very small moments that might take place in someone's home, where two people are talking to each other, those are also historically verified. We get the dialogue, we only use dialogue if we have dialogue expressed in a letter or a journal. We don't put words in people's mouths.

And sometimes that can be very difficult as a writer because you might want to be able to create a scene that has a little bit more juice, but you can't because the sources don't necessarily allow it. We stay very close to our sources.

Any bit of setting, any sensory detail, anything that we include is something that is historically verifiable through reliable sources. So that's very important to us; whereas, if you're looking at historical fiction, they have the freedom to imagine all kinds of things. So they might put an actual historical actor in the narrative like you'd find in "The Work and the Glory," but then populate it with all sorts of things that aren't real. So we want the readers of Saints to know that everything that you'll find in its pages is based in reality.

So I'm showing this page just because I have found that some people are interested in the process of how we write narrative fiction for Saints. So you'll see here at the top of the screen, there is a short paragraph that is just a regular descriptive paragraph that you will find in Saints. And also I want to point out, this is a sample draft.

So when I was working on volume two of Saints, I was writing some of the scenes from the point of view of Emily Wells Grant, who was one of Heber J Grant's plural wives.

And how you're seeing it here on the screen is not how it was actually published in the end.

But it's a good way to show our process. So I'm not going to read this out loud, but you can take a look at it on the screen.

You can see after every sentence and sometimes after every phrase, there is a footnote.

Those footnotes are what our source checkers would look at to make sure that every detail that I have in that paragraph can be historically verifiable. So when I say that it's cold and muddy, I need to be able to have a source that supports that it was cold and muddy that afternoon. When I talked about how Emily's four-year-old daughter was fussy, that's because the sources show that she was fussy. Once it's finally published, you don't see all of these footnotes in this way.

And this particular excerpt went through a lot of different review cycles before it was actually published.

But it's just interesting to see the levels that we go to as writers on this project to make sure that everything is historically verifiable, but that it's also written in a way that is accessible and interesting—an accessible, interesting narrative for readers.

It's also important to us that we include diverse perspectives. You'll see here on this page, photographs of the number of different point of view characters that we used in Saints, volume two.

When I say point of view characters, I mean, this is the person whose eyes we are looking through when we are reading a particular scene.

Some of our point of view characters are children. You can see here with this photo of Susa Young, who then later became Susa Young Gates.

Some of our point of view characters are Church leaders like Wilford Woodruff, as you would expect in the Church history.

Church leaders are going to be important point of view characters, but we also have characters like Jane Manning James, who represent different races, ethnicities, different cultural backgrounds.

And we also want to make sure that we are showing the perspective of just average Latter-day Saints alongside Church leaders so that we can see a variety of experiences.

And we think, not only is this a way to tell our history that allows us to have a broader perspective but it's a way to tell our history that allows people whose voices, they have not seen their voices replicated in other media before. And they read Saints and they think, "Okay, this experience resonates with me. It looks like what happened to me or to, in this case, to my ancestors." So the Saints team is hard at work on both volume three and volume four, and it's probably eighteen months to two years between volumes. The current pandemic has kind of made things a little more difficult, but we are still working very hard and hoping to stay on that same track.

And we are really looking forward to our readers learning more about the international Church as the story expands throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

So I hope that that all of you have been able to experience at least some of Saints, and if you haven't, that this presentation might make you a little curious to know more. So I look forward to talking to any of you who might have questions at the end of this presentation, and I will turn the time over now to Ryan.

**Ryan:** Thank you, Angela, for that very helpful overview of Saints and that project. It's one that we, here at the Church History Department, are extremely excited about. We're really happy at the reactions that we've been getting, and the responses that so many readers have given to that project.

Today I'd like to talk a little bit about the things that we've done in addition to Saints to help members of the Church and other interested readers to have an opportunity to better understand the things that are in Saints. So as Angela has explained the narrative style that we've chosen for Saints is very much designed to allow you to stay in the point of view of a particular character or a person in a time and a place and things that are happening in their lives.

The one drawback as a history to that style of writing is that sometimes it doesn't allow us to give you the most context. It doesn't allow us to kind of step back and tell you some of the other things that are going on around the character or to explain some of the more difficult things that maybe have happened: events, places, things that people have done or said.

And so in order to help people to get a better sense of those types of things to be able to understand difficult topics and to share a little bit more historical nuance with them, we've created several products that are supposed to go hand in hand with Saints to help readers as they're reading to understand things from a little bit more in-depth historical perspective.

So some of those things that we've created are shown here. For example, the Church History Topics section, which I'll talk to you a little bit about here in just a moment, a church history video section, which gives you video clips and things like that, which I'll also show you, the global history projects, which is the project that I lead, and then some podcasts that we've done. And we've tried to explore multimedia by giving you things that are audio with the podcasts, things that are video with the videos that we've created, and also things that are more thoroughly historical to allow you to get a better sense of things. And so I'm just going to walk you through a couple of those things, just so that you're aware of them.

All of this is available, and I'll try to mention where this stuff is available. It's all available free; it's publicly available to you, and it's very, very easy to find. So let's start off first. I wanted to show you this. This is actually the Gospel Library app. This is the app that the Church uses for Scripture study, for other things. This is a free app that's available on Google Play and also via the app store on an iPhone. So here you can see actually a screenshot straight off of my iPhone, which shows you the Church's, the restoration in the Church history section of Gospel Library.

And I want to just show just really quickly, so Saints is available, the first two volumes there; you can click on those. I wanted to point out that these are also available in the audio books.

They're free through the app. You can also get them free through things like audible and other ebook providers, who will give you eBooks and the audio books for free. All of that is available and out there for you.

So some of the other things, as I mentioned, the Church History Topics section. So if you click on this section, this is where we've created a series of short, basically encyclopedic essays about the Church and its history, where we deal with some of the more difficult topics: some

things that have developed over time, things that maybe a reader who's not a member of the Church or hasn't been a member of the Church for very long might not be aware of, won't be quite able to grasp those concepts, but they'll be mentioned in Saints really quickly in passing: things like the development of baptisms for the dead, the Council of Fifty Nauvoo, Church disciplinary councils, the development of priesthood quorums, the founding meeting of the Church, what happened to the gold plates, slavery in early Utah. Difficult things like the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and, you know, race and the priesthood.

We talk also about the organizations of the Church. The Primary the Relief Society, the priesthood quorums—those types of things.

As of right now, we have a significant number of topics that are available.

So you can see here, this is just what is currently published, and it is a fairly exhaustive list for those first two books that have been released since volumes one and two.

It's going to be things like the manifesto on polygamy. There's biographical essays here about major Church leaders or people maybe you don't know.

For example, Jane Manning James or Jonathan Napela, who are both featured in that slide that Angela showed you just a moment ago. It's going to talk about places like Kirtland, Ohio, or events like Zion's camp, women's suffrage, those types of things. This is a very, very exhaustive, or not as exhaustive list, but a very, very comprehensive list. Very short essays; most of them range about 500 words, sometimes up to 1000 words, and each one of these is going to provide you not only with a historical overview of the topic but also it's going to give you links to Church published content that's going to give you more information about that item and then it's also going to give you links to the, or at least a bibliography of the most important sources on the subject, where scholars have actually invested some time and effort into talking about that thing.

So the next one that I wanted to talk to you about here is going to be the Church history videos section. So the Church history video section actually has two separate sections if you click on it. One is this one that we call Stories from Saints.

Now the Stories from Saints is a list or is a group of videos which are told in kind of a Ken Burns style, where the, you know, those documentary styles, where we're telling you a story about something that happened to a member of the Church in a particular time, in a particular place. Sometimes a group. So here we have this video, for example, about the freeze in Ghana. So



this is a period in the late 1980s, 1989 through the early 90s, When the government of Ghana made it illegal for Latter-day Saints to meet and worship together in their Church meeting houses. They could still hold meetings in their own homes, but they could not hold those meetings in the Church meeting houses. And so there's a video that tells you about that experience and what it was like to make their homes the sacrament hall. And so these follow, as you can see here, these follow very— On June 14, 1989, the government of Ghana banned LDS Church meetings and sent police to lock down meeting housings. For the next eighteen months, Church members were left to keep the Sabbath without being able to go to church.

The freeze actually taught me to know and to understand how important the Sabbath is to God's children and to His Church. At times we think things for granted.

So as you can see from those, these are very typical of a documentary style—the talking heads, the interspersing of action and photographs, and things like that to allow people to get a sense of the place, time, and the people.

And then, some, a little bit of dramatization here, where we're reenacting those things that have happened in the past. So that's one style of video that we have. And most of the Church, or the videos in that section of the Stories of Saints are from Saints follow this style. The other type of video, so click really quickly. Again, you get to there.

This one is called answers to Church history questions. So this is a place where we have made videos that are intended to allow people to get a better sense of difficult questions that they might have about something in Church history. And so in this case, what we have is two experts who are talking, or an expert and somebody who is representing the questions that people have.

These are based on our experience in talking to people about what difficult topics there are. So, for example, one of these right here is questions and answers about the Hawn's Mill Massacre. So let me just show you really quickly what this looks like. It's a conversation between Jenny Lund, who's the director of the Historic Sites Program for the Church, and Emily Utt, who is a curator in the Historic Sites Program. And they're discussing that event. So let me just quickly show you that. "Many Latter Day Saints have heard of the Hawn's Mill Massacre. But for those who haven't, what was it? Hawn's Mill Massacre was an attack on a group of Latter-day Saints who'd settled along a creek in Missouri in the 1830s, and in addition to the settlers who were there, a group of Latter-day Saints from Kirtland had also arrived there and were just camping there in tents. There were 17 men and boys." So as you can see from this one, these are a little bit more, I mean, they still have that production value. They've got the pictures, they've got the

the reenactments, and things like that. But this one actually takes the format more of a conversation with two people talking about a particular issue.

So there are several of those that are available to help people with these more difficult issues. And of course, more coming, just like the topics, to help people to better understand these types of things. So let's move to the next one. This is the one which I know the most about. This is the project that I lead— the Global Histories Project. So if you click on the Global Histories there in the app, what you will be brought to is this page here, which is a list of all of the currently available countries. Currently there are fifty that are available, with many more on their way between twenty and twenty-five, which are currently awaiting finalization and approvals, and then at least another twenty or twenty-five that should be finished by the end of the year. The goal is to eventually have about 110 of these that are available, and filling in other countries as we have the opportunity and as the history develops to the point where we can sufficiently fill this type of a historical treatment. Now this is a very, very, very short treatment of these histories. So if you click on any one of these, say, if you clicked on Brazil, what you would see is this page here, which is an overview of, or which is a table of contents of the content. So it has a couple of things. One is the overview. The overview gives you an executive summary, a little bit of a stylized map, and an opportunity to get to know what you would read if you—what you'll find more out about if you read that history.

That summarizes that very quickly for you. The next thing is that there are between one and five stories, which we call the Stories of Faith section. These are the ones we're most proud of.

These are stories told from the perspective of local Latter-day Saints in their time and in their place, and what their experience was like being a Latter-day Saint in that country. These are closer to kind of the Saints style. They're written in a way that's supposed to be very narrative, and very much from their perspective, and very diverse because it's these people from all of these places, but also this is an opportunity for us to share things that maybe you're not aware of that the average Latter-day Saint, who I think has a sense that the Church is global but isn't quite sure how that's happened. This is a way for them to understand that and then to better understand those members of the Church who are from those nations.

Which some of them, they've maybe never heard of or that they've heard very little about. This has been a wonderful opportunity for me and for the people who work on the project. We have spent countless hours reading and understanding the stories of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. Recently, I had an experience where I was contacting a good brother from the nation of Congo, the Republic of the Congo, and this is Brazzaville.

And this good brother and I had worked together back and forth; he was an early member there, and he was giving me photographs, and accounts, and things like that from other members and himself while they lived in Congo. And after we had worked back and forth, I actually found him on Facebook, we stalked him on Facebook, and I sent him a message. He responded; we ended up taking time to correspond back and forth about several issues and things that I needed from him that he wanted to know about the project. And one morning I woke up to a Facebook message that said this: "Brother Ryan! Good day! Thank you for your good work. I was thinking that, we were ignored by the Church. Let our Savior bless you. Thanks." This is really an opportunity for diverse perspectives, not only to be represented but for them to feel like they're seen.

Right now, it's very small. These, if they were printed, would be between four and eight pages. They have such power to allow people to feel represented to be represented in the media that the Church is publishing, and that's something I'm very, very proud of.

The last thing I wanted to talk to you very quickly about is The Saints Podcast but also some other podcasts that the Latter-day Saint Channel has done in conjunction with the Church History Department.

The Saints Podcast, actually, takes each individual chapter of each published volume of Saints, and they discuss that chapter with an expert. So it's a host, two hosts, actually—Ben Godfrey and Shalyn Back—who speak with multiple experts: members of the Saints team, people who have done work in the community as scholars, members of the communities that we're talking about. So, for example, one recent episode included Darren Parry, one of the leaders of the Shoshone nation talking about Sagwitch and the Shoshone people and their interactions with the Church.

We also have The Latter-day Saint Women Podcast, which usually, which often draws on Church history content to make more accessible the stories of women in the Church. All of these are available through the Latter-day Saint Channel online or through all major podcast distributors.

And with that, that is the ecosystem of things that we've created to help you better understand the history of the Church in conjunction with Saints. And I'll turn the time now to Spencer McBride to discuss his work on another podcast: The First Vision Podcast.

**Spencer McBride:** It's good to be with you. I'm Spencer McBride, the creator and host of The First Visions: A Joseph Smith Papers Podcast. And so in our presentation today, I'm going to

answer three questions: first, why did we make a Joseph Smith Papers podcast? Second, why did we choose and utilize the format that we did? And third, how is the podcast done? Has it been effective in our goals? So let's start at the beginning. Why a Joseph Smith Papers podcast? Podcasts aren't new, although they still seem relatively new. I remember as a senior in college in 2006-2007, I first learned of podcasts—the first time I'd even ever heard of them, ever listened to one, but they were very small. 2010-2011 we saw a boom in podcasting.

And then with NPR releasing podcast, such as Serial, we saw an even bigger boom. And so when we were considering a Joseph Smith Papers podcast, we were looking at podcasting statistics globally, but also in the United States. In the United States in 2018, 73 million Americans listened to at least one podcast every month.

And of those that listened to at least one podcast every month, the average was seven podcasts during that month. And so there's a large and devoted podcast listenership in the United States.

So that's one of the reasons we were attracted to the medium. And we also knew that we were coming into the bicentennial year of the first vision, and for many, in 2019 in October, when President Russell M. Nelson announced that 2020 would be a bicentennial year, this may have been the very first time that they even recognized that the bicentennial was coming up.

But to us history nerds, in our nerderies in our libraries, we'd been preparing for the bicentennial of the first vision for quite some time. And we wanted some way to commemorate but also to educate on the history of Joseph Smith's 1820 vision of deity, and we wanted to do it in an accessible way.

We wanted to synthesize all the recent and ongoing scholarship on Joseph Smith, on the First Vision, on New York, on the United States in this time period. And we wanted to make it accessible to as many people as possible because the primary audience for the Joseph Smith Papers is scholars; we prepare those documents for scholars. Amateur historians, Church members, they get a lot out of the Joseph Smith Papers, but first and foremost, we're writing for scholars. How can we take the discoveries of the Joseph Smith Papers and distill them in such a way that those who might be daunted by these reference books will now immerse themselves in the discoveries of this study of early Church history? And we thought that podcasting is one such way. And so then we had to ask the question, "What format?" The easiest, and it's not easy, but the most simple, straightforward, I-want-to-start-a-podcast easiest format is I'm the host. You're my guests. We talked for forty-five minutes, and we published the conversation.

I love those podcasts. I listened to dozens of those types of podcasts. But we looked at the statistics.

We looked at the listenership of a general audience that's not a specialized scholarly audience or niche fan audiences. We wanted to understand the general listener in the United States.

And of the top ten listened to podcasts in 2018, eight are this narrative nonfiction NPR style podcast. Think "This American Life," or "Dolly Parton's America," BBC's "13 Minutes to the Moon"—oh, that was a 2019 podcast. These narrative style podcasts made eight of the top ten podcasts in the United States. We felt that that was our way to go, but it's hard. It takes a lot more resources. We spent hundreds of hours to produce just under three hours of audio content.

But there's something about the nature of an audio documentary style that you can interview a bunch of scholars, transcribe their interviews, excerpt their interviews, write a narrative around their interviews, add music, sound editing. And you get a very polished final product with a high production, and we hoped that that would help us reach more people.

We also decided to take a different mode to publish. Podcasting is a relatively new field, a relatively new medium, yet somehow we have some hard and fast rules, probably too early in this medium's life. The idea that the episodes all need to be uniform in length and that you release them once a week or once a month or once a quarter. And I think that works for more serial programming. If it was an ongoing podcast that was going to go on indefinitely, yeah, it would make sense for uniform length of episodes; it makes sense for a more standard distribution or publication schedule, but we made the episodes as long as they needed to be and no longer.

We wanted people to want more; we wanted them to dive in more. We didn't want them to be bored or overburdened.

So most of our episodes are shorter than thirty minutes. Most average about twenty. And we made six of them.

And we published them all at once. So on day one, you could binge listen as a viewer with your favorite Netflix show.

Or you could listen leisurely one episode at a time. But we gave the listener that option. And for this podcast, I'm not saying it works for all podcasts, but for this style of podcast, it worked. And

so as we get into how did it go, I'm going to give you a little bit of the inside baseball, some of the insights stats. I set a goal.

It was my hope in my kind of wildest dreams that if this podcast was really successful, at the end of its first year, we would hit 100,000 downloads and streams.

And I'd be thrilled with that. I wrote it down. That was my goal.

And I came at that because our podcasts, in conjunction with Saints, have done really well. Over thirty-five episodes in the first season, and we had almost 900,000 downloads and shares. So it's fantastic. It's a good podcast, and it was really well received. And so my hope was that with just six episodes we could we could get a fraction of what the Saints podcast did.

And my expectations were blown out of the water. We were thrilled when in the first four months of 2020, The First Vision Podcast was downloaded or streamed 1.2 million times, and at its peak, it was on the iTunes top 100 charts at number 17 of all podcasts On iTunes, and this was exciting. It was exhilarating, and it exceeded all expectations we could have possibly had for this podcast.

But it seemed to confirm to us that there was this desire for alternative methods of information, of utilizing new media.

I love books. I'm a devotee of books. I am, if there was a fan club for printed ink on paper, I would be the president.

This isn't a matter of podcasts and new media or books. It's about new media podcasts and books and what these can do together. Because no matter how well we write some books and no matter how accessible we make that writing, there are still people who will not read them.

And nothing's going to change that as much as we might lament that. And so new media, in addition to the printed word, is a beautiful combination because we reach the people who love books, and we reach the people we would never reach if we had only printed books. And so this seemed to confirm, I hope, that there is a place for robust new media of relaying and distilling information through video and audio means.

But it also suggests that I think we're at a place with podcasting that social media was at a few years ago, where yes, someone can still sit at their kitchen table and create a podcast and get an audience—and people are getting that; there's a democratization of of new media.

But I think we're also at a place where people's expectations of their podcasts are rising. They want high production values. They want it to sound professional, even if it is just you at your kitchen table. They want it to sound good.

This requires resources, and so those institutions, those publishers that have some resources are able then to produce podcasts that meet this increasing demand of listeners.

In addition to those statistics of listenership I'm encouraged by some of the anecdotal response. And I'll just share one example: I was speaking to a group down in Arizona, and a man in that group told me that his father came—and this man was devout, he was very into scholarship. He studied the history of the Church closely and had for years, and his father had always been hesitant about Church history scholarship, especially if it wasn't published by the Church. He wouldn't pick up a monograph on Joseph Smith.

He was skeptical that such things might be harmful to his faith, and all of a sudden, he listened to this podcast and he came to his son and said, "Did you know that there were five different accounts of the first vision?" And his son goes, "Yeah." But the father just kept on going on and on, was excited about what he had learned from the podcast. All this information had been unavailable— had been available in books for quite some time, but the medium—the podcast, the audio documentary format reached people that we would not reach otherwise. And so podcasting is still young. Podcasting Church history is still relatively new.

I think we're just scratching the surface, and it's really exciting to see what is to come in the next few years. And I look forward to speaking with you, either in the question and answer or in emailed questions and comments, taking any questions you might have. And so with that, I think we'll wrap up this session, and we'll look forward to fielding your questions.