



2021

Local Content and Service Report to the Community



"The commitment to learning is one of the things I like most about public media."

- Community member

GBH exists to engage, illuminate and inspire. Our vision is to be a leader in public media that strengthens, includes and serves our diverse community, fostering growth and empowering individuals.



For everyone, 2021 was a year of challenges and constant adjustment, with continued recalibration and reassessment of priorities and focus. Through free multiplatform content, events and comprehensive education and curriculum resources, GBH empowered audiences with information and resources to enrich their lives and communities.

GBH delivered compelling news, events, experiences, stories and information to audiences wherever they consume content. GBH's local television channels include GBH 2, GBH 44 and GBH Kids. With a newsroom headquartered in Boston, GBH reaches across New England with GBH 89.7, Boston's Local NPR; CRB Classical 99.5; CAI, the Cape and Islands NPR station; and New England Public Media in western Massachusetts. From Boston to the Berkshires, from Worcester to the Cape and Islands, GBH is dedicated to connecting the Commonwealth.

GBH provided essential news and information to thousands of community members about the pandemic, racial inequities and issues that were central in local elections. When concert venues were closed, we connected arts lovers with music by opening our recording studios to local artists who could stream their performances. We delivered free online resources for remote learning across the Commonwealth and provided audiences with engaging and educational content through more than 300 virtual events about news, history, arts, science and children's media.



GBH in 2021

As the Greater Boston community continued to fight against COVID-19 and reckon with racial injustice, GBH broadened our perspectives and collaborations. 2021 was an opportunity to enhance the ways we make media and engage with our communities. In four key areas – journalism, science, children’s media and education and history, arts and culture – we provided relevant, engaging and inspiring resources for our community.

We deepened our commitment to take concrete actions to address issues of racial injustice within our organization and in the community and continued to produce our virtual forum series *The State of Race*. This ongoing series of community conversations examining race and inequality in Massachusetts is hosted by Dan Lothian, executive producer of *The World*. It is implemented in partnership with *The Boston Globe*, the NAACP Boston Branch and GBH WORLD. Panelists from the Greater Boston area discussed topics such as inequity in the education and housing sectors, police reform and voter suppression.



GBH News' Adam Reilly hosts new politics program.
Meredith Nierman

Journalism: Transforming GBH News

Whether it was GBH News' distinctive in-depth coverage of Boston's historic mayoral race or timely virtual forums on COVID-19 or racial injustice, GBH delivered the details and bigger picture. With live and streamed news reporting, digital series, events and podcasts, GBH News provided trusted content wherever our audiences were seeking news, analysis, context and unbiased reporting. 2021 was GBH News' best year on 89.7 since 2018, reaching growing audiences across every time period and in every age group. *Boston Public Radio* had its most successful year since 2017, and both morning drive and evening drive audiences grew by more than 20% over 2020.

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Chemist Raychelle Burks from the NOVA film, *Picture a Scientist*. Courtesy NOVA

Science: More Important than Ever

More than any other time, science is front and center in our lives. GBH draws on the expert staff that produces NOVA, the most popular primetime science series on American television, to reach out to our communities with information and opportunities for scientific learning and discovery.

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Mother and daughter participate in 2Gen Labs.
Courtesy GBH

Children’s Media & Education: Providing Free, Accessible Educational Resources

Learning isn’t confined to the four walls of a classroom or even to a school building. It can occur anywhere. GBH is the community’s go-to resource for free, readily available digital resources, which GBH makes available through PBS LearningMedia. GBH continued to enhance these resources, curating standards-aligned videos, interactives and lesson plans, ensuring that high quality content is available to learners everywhere. Massachusetts educators continued to turn to PBS LearningMedia in 2021 for resources and support. After seeing record-breaking traffic in 2020, the site was used by more than half a million Massachusetts users in 2021, roughly a 93% increase compared to pre-pandemic year of 2019.

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Jennifer Koh performed at GBH. Christina Walker

History, Arts and Culture: Providing Cultural Entertainment and Inspiration

Producing and presenting arts programming is a critical part of our mission – connecting communities and audiences through free, accessible offerings featuring dance, music, theater, painting and more. GBH’s commitment to developing new, innovative ways to connect audiences to history, arts and culture deepened during the pandemic – at a time when our audiences needed it the most.

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GBH News Grows, Diversifies

At a time when many newsrooms are shrinking, GBH is investing in even more coverage of our community. In 2021, as the GBH newsroom staff continued to grow, we focused on covering the city's and state's diverse communities and bringing diverse voices into our stories across all platforms. News coverage was hyper-local, with live and streamed coverage, regular call-in programs giving audiences direct access to lawmakers, digital series, events and podcasts. Community-oriented activities include the following:

- GBH concluded the yearlong reporting project [COVID and the Classroom](#) with [Class of COVID](#), a 30-minute retrospective. The newsroom also marked the pandemic anniversary with [A Year Apart: How COVID Changed Us](#), a full day of special programming across radio, television, digital and social media platforms.
- [Election 2021: Boston's Race into History](#) provided complete coverage of the historic mayoral race with a new television program, a newsletter, virtual events and in-depth, curated digital content.
- New episodes of the political insider podcast "The Scrum" and special segments of [Under the Radar With Callie Crossley](#), [Boston Public Radio](#), [Basic Black](#) and [Greater Boston](#) provided comprehensive coverage of city and state politics.
- Arts and culture coverage broadened with the addition of a writer and producer who produce digital content about the Boston-based music, arts and culture scene.
- In collaboration with Boston-based [The Bay State Banner](#), GBH launched a three-part series about Boston's history with racism with a look at the issue today and what the future may hold. Reporters investigated what the mayoral race means for Black residents who have left the city and checked in with people who grew up during the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools amid the busing crisis.



Boston's Race into History. Courtesy GBH

- GBH News kept voters informed about mayoral races in Lawrence, Somerville and Lynn as well as the races for the five open seats on the Boston City Council.
- [Unseen: The Boy Victims of the Sex Trade, a GBH News investigative series](#), uncovered the growing evidence that thousands of boys and young men are victims of commercial sexual exploitation – far more than previously understood.
- Deriving content from our listeners, [The Curiosity Desk](#), Edgar B. Herwick III's long-running radio segment answering questions from the community, evolved to become a regular weekly video feature distributed on YouTube, Instagram, the web and radio, reaching a much larger audience.

"The news is presented in a calm, balanced, fact-based manner. I trust GBH news."

- Community member

Deepening our Science Understanding

GBH's science series, NOVA, plays a key role locally and nationally in demystifying the scientific and technological concepts that shape and define our lives, our planet and our universe. Science educators across the country rely on NOVA for resources used in the classroom as well as in museums, libraries and after-school programs.

- NOVA strategically taps the Greater Boston area's unmatched science resources, drawing on experts and featuring scientists in its films. [Picture a Scientist](#), which examines systemic gender and racial biases in the sciences through personal stories and hard data, told the story of Nancy Hopkins, a biologist at MIT, who worked tirelessly to promote equality of opportunity for women in academia. The story of Jane Willinbring's experiences battling sexism and harassment at Boston University is also spotlighted.
- NOVA's first youth program, [NOVA Science Studio](#), was recently recognized with the Innovation in Education Award by the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). First piloted in Boston during the 2018-2019 academic year, it was created to teach and engage young people in science communication, digital media literacy and video production. Offered to high school students across the country in 2021, including students in the 826 Boston program, the program seeks to build students' skills in telling engaging stories about science through short-form videos and create a platform to amplify the voices of young people who have been traditionally underrepresented in science communication.



Courtesy NOVA Science Studio

"GBH is filling a lot of holes, offering programming that others aren't."

- Community member

Responding, Including and Representing

Working with communities and educators and understanding their needs and context is at the heart of GBH Education's work to create quality media resources. We work to ensure that our materials respond to and represent diverse peoples and perspectives. Everything GBH Education produces is informed by extensive research – our own and independent studies. Whenever possible we engage our local Boston communities in focus groups, pilot tests and program implementation.



Youth Stand Up logo, Courtesy GBH

- [2Gen Labs](#), a GBH Education research and development pilot program to learn more about how to address parents' educational needs in order to boost student learning, made significant progress. Focusing on immigrant students and their caregivers, the initiative uses a participatory design process, applying the feedback and expertise of families and educators from historically excluded communities to create interactive graphic novels centered on culturally responsive science practices.
- With many states, including Massachusetts, mandating that civic action programs be included in civics education, GBH developed [Youth Stand Up](#). During development, GBH surveyed teachers and conducted surveys and focus groups with youth across Massachusetts. With that feedback, GBH refined its civic education program for grades 7–9, by using TikTok-style videos to explain complex topics and expanding the resources students could use as they research, plan and advocate for a social change that is important to them.
- GBH launched the 12th season of [High School Quiz Show](#), which gives high school students across Massachusetts the chance to engage in academic competition, and produced it remotely due to the pandemic.
- *High School Quiz Show* and [Search It Up!](#), a digital series focused on healthy screen time skills, were recognized for their commitment to impactful youth media.

"It was very helpful as a parent to see children of color as characters and have Spanish-language dialogue incorporated in the programming."

- Community member

Reimagining Performance and Art

GBH continued to produce entertaining and illuminating cultural content, overcoming the production and access hurdles of COVID-19. During a time when cultural venues were still closed due to the pandemic, GBH collaborated with music, art and drama venues to create ways to connect the community to the arts.

- GBH invited a diverse lineup of more than 70 musicians – from jazz to Baroque to opera – to perform in the GBH Fraser Performance Studio and Calderwood Studio. GBH also invited JazzBoston to livestream its JazzNOW series from our studios, and Boston Baroque moved its entire 2021-22 season to our Calderwood Studio, which was streamed live online.
- *A Celtic Sojourn* continued to bring its popular events to audiences virtually, helping support local performance venues. A limited number of performances were held at Emerson College’s Cutler Majestic Theater in Boston and Rockport’s Shalin Liu Performance Center.
- [Open Studio with Jared Bowen](#) each week visited the sets, studios and stages of both known and new artists in Greater Boston and New England, sharing art with audiences who otherwise would not be able to experience it.
- In 2021, GBH offered more than 300 virtual events to provide opportunities for engagement in diverse perspectives. Dozens of authors joined GBH’s virtual Beyond the Page Book Club, allowing participants to ask questions and discuss books. With its broad range of fiction and nonfiction, the club has attracted more than 1,000 readers to join the club’s Facebook page. The series is offered in partnership with local bookstores to help support local businesses.



Brooklyn Rider performs at GBH Calderwood Studio
Celebrity Series of Boston

***“I have been listening
[to CRB Classical 99.5]
since high school, 1972!
It is a part of my
Massachusetts life!”***

- Community member



Together with our communities and audiences GBH created opportunities to experience fresh perspectives, greater insight and closer bonds as Americans and as citizens of the Commonwealth.

“GBH is simply the air that we breathe.”

– Community member



Boston's Mayor Michelle Wu. Courtesy of the Wu campaign

A 30-by-45 foot LED screen alongside GBH Studios on the Mass Turnpike signals the spirit and content of public media for thousands of passersby each week. The digital mural mirrors the vibrancy of our region: images reflecting events and issues in our community and nation are displayed, drawing attention to the cultural richness of Boston and New England and to what's on the minds of those in the neighborhoods we serve.