Crosley Reado

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Anonymous Donor

In 1939, both Crosley and RCA introduced innovative products aimed at bringing printed newspapers into homes via radio broadcasts—an early form of a radio fax machine. Crosley's version, The Reado, housed in a wooden cabinet, featured a mechanism that slowly unrolled a special paper while a metal arm with a sharp point burned holes through it to form images and text using carbon-coated paper.

Despite the clever concept, neither Crosley's nor RCA's product gained popularity. The Reado's high cost—around $80, compared to a newspaper's nickel price—and the awkward handling of its long, narrow paper were significant drawbacks.

Crosley's station in Cincinnati transmitted the nightly news for The Reado, while RCA partnered with select large-city stations for its version. However, most American households were not within range of these broadcasting stations.

The Reado functioned solely as a printer, requiring connection to a conventional AM receiver for signal amplification. Crosley offered a compatible radio, while other setups typically needed a technician to install a switch for switching between regular radio and Reado signals.

Production of civilian radios ceased after Pearl Harbor as manufacturers focused on military equipment, limiting The Reado’s availability to just two years. Due to low sales, surviving units are rare and highly valued today, including the one owned by the Museum, which was acquired for its collection.