



# FEEDBACK

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## November 2009 (Vol. 50, No. 6)

Feedback is an electronic journal scheduled for posting six times a year at [www.beaweb.org](http://www.beaweb.org) by the Broadcast Education Association. As an electronic journal, Feedback publishes (1) articles or essays—especially those of pedagogical value—on any aspect of electronic media; (2) responsive essays—especially industry analysis and those reacting to issues and concerns raised by previous Feedback articles and essays; (3) scholarly papers; (4) reviews of books, video, audio, film and web resources and other instructional materials; and (5) official announcements of the BEA and news from BEA Districts and Interest Divisions. Feedback is editor-reviewed journal.

All communication regarding business, membership questions, information about past issues of Feedback and changes of address should be sent to the Executive Director, 1771 N. Street NW, Washington D.C. 20036.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. Submit an electronic version of the complete manuscript with references and charts in Microsoft Word along with graphs, audio/video and other graphic attachments to the editor. Retain a hard copy for reference.
2. Please double-space the manuscript. Use the 5th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) style manual.
3. Articles are limited to 3,000 words or less, and essays to 1,500 words or less.
4. All authors must provide the following information: name, employer, professional rank and/or title, complete mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, email address, and whether the writing has been presented at a prior venue.
5. If editorial suggestions are made and the author(s) agree to the changes, such changes should be submitted by email as a Microsoft Word document to the editor.
6. The editor will acknowledge receipt of documents within 48 hours and provide a response within four weeks.

### REVIEW GUIDELINES

1. Potential instructional materials that can be reviewed include books, computer software, CD-ROMs, guides, manuals, video program, audio programs and Web sites.
2. Reviews may be submitted by email as a Microsoft Word document to the editor.
3. Reviews must be 350-500 words in length.
4. The review must provide a full APA citation of the reviewed work.
5. The review must provide the reviewer's name, employer, professional rank and/or title, email address and complete mailing address.

### SUBMISSION DEADLINES

*Feedback* is scheduled, depending on submissions and additional material, to be posted on the BEA Web site the first day of January, March, May, July, September and November. To be considered, submissions should be submitted 60 days prior to posting date for that issue.

Please email submissions to Joe Misiewicz at [jmisiewicz@bsu.edu](mailto:jmisiewicz@bsu.edu). If needed: Joe Misiewicz, *Feedback* Editor, Department of Telecommunications, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, USA.

*Feedback* receives support from Ball State University's College of Communication, Information and Media.

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## FEEDBACK FAREWELL

What a fun run! Under official rules it was not a marathon...maybe not even a mini-marathon, but serving as Editor of Feedback has been a learning experience.

An editor has to learn tact and politeness when rejecting articles. An editor has to learn moderation when congratulating authors on acceptance of material so as not to make them think the material should be converted into a series or a book. An editor has to face technological challenges and decide what elements of “high tech” add to meaning and which detract.

Having been Feedback’s editor during the print to web only transition was quite eye-opening. Initially there was the outcry of “I want a printed copy!” The next waves of emails were asking “How can I print my article?” Eventually the written material was enhanced thru various links/graphics/charts and numerous resources allowing those wanting to pursue additional information the chance to do so rather easily.

Please note this editorship has not been a solo flight. I was one of three co-pilots. The entire transformation to digital was the design, creativity, ingenuity and hard work of Mr. Scott Davis. He took on the challenge while finishing his Master’s degree and has been at the side of the aging editor for the duration. He has guided the digital transformation and will stay on to take the Journal of Media Education (JoME) to the next level. The other key co-pilot was Kerri Misiewicz. My spouse is a wonderful editor. She uncovered a variety of improvements in both presentation and writing and did so smoothly so as not to ruffle any academic “feathers”.

There were numerous other professionals who scanned and commented on materials. The famous “too many to mention” line is used in this regard.

Finally, what I meant by learning experience is simply having access to so many bright minds. The submissions accepted always presented a new method or approach to teaching. The submissions gave me insights about international travel and teaching. The submissions were “mind-opening” to technology and to studies that had practical applications.

What I will miss is the bi-monthly opportunity to gain insights, learn and share various emails of encouragement to a wide-variety of authors. To the handful I promised a certain issue of publication and did not deliver, kindly remember I am into my 60’s. To all who submitted and accepted the layout of Scott and the edits of Kerri my thanks for the effort you put into your material. Such material has enhanced media education and for that I am happy.

Joe Misiewicz, Editor  
Feedback

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

1. Potential instructional materials that can be reviewed include books, computer software, CD-ROMs, guides, manuals, web pages, video programs, and audio programs.
2. Reviews should be e-mailed to [David.Byland@okbu.edu](mailto:David.Byland@okbu.edu)
3. Reviews must be 250-500 words in length.
4. The review must provide a full APA citation of the reviewed work.
5. The review must provide the reviewer's name, institution, and e-mail address.
6. The review should follow the guidelines below:
  - Title including complete bibliographic citation for the work (i.e., title in full, author, place, publisher, date of publication, edition statement, pages, special features (maps, color plates, etc.), price, and ISBN.
  - One paragraph identifying the thesis, and whether the author achieves the stated purpose of the book.
  - One or two paragraphs summarizing the book.
  - One paragraph on the book's strengths.
  - One paragraph on the book's weaknesses.
  - Issues to consider when reviewing the text:
    - Read the whole book and any ancillary materials (CD/DVD, websites, etc)
    - What is the book's focus?
    - Does the book accomplish the stated purpose?
    - Is the book a contribution to the field or discipline?
    - Does the book relate to a current debate or trend in the field and if so, how?
    - What is the theoretical lineage or school of thought out of which the book rises?
    - Is the book well written?
    - What are the book's terms and are they defined?
    - How accurate is the information (e.g., the footnotes, bibliography, dates)?
    - Are the illustrations/ancillary materials helpful? If there are no illustrations/ancillary materials, should there have been?
    - What courses would this book be appropriate for?
    - How does the book compare to other books in the field?

(These guidelines adapted from Writing the Academic Book Review by Wendy Belcher, [www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli\\_bookreviewguidelines.pdf](http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli_bookreviewguidelines.pdf))

## WEBSITE REVIEW GUIDELINES

While there are many websites designed by and for educators, there are almost no reviews of those sites available. In order for our readers to make effective use of these resources, JoME invites reviews of websites based on the criteria below.

1. Reviews should be e-mailed to [David.Byland@okbu.edu](mailto:David.Byland@okbu.edu)
2. Reviews must be 250-500 words in length.
3. The review must provide a full APA citation of the reviewed work.
4. The review must provide the reviewer's name, institution, and e-mail address.
5. The reviewer should follow the criteria below:
  - Title including complete bibliographic citation for the work (including "http address")
  - One paragraph identifying the purpose of the site, and whether the site achieves that purpose.
  - One or two paragraphs summarizing the site.
  - One paragraph on the site's strengths.
  - One paragraph on the site's weaknesses.
  - Issues to consider when reviewing the text:
  - Look at the entire site, following all links.
  - Is the site easily navigated?
  - Do you immediately get a sense of what the site is all about?
  - Are the graphics appropriate to the subject of the site?
  - Are there graphics that seem superfluous or unnecessary?
  - Does the technology work - Java, scripts, movies, etc. or are you required to load a program or do something in order to use the site?
  - Is the layout cramped and 'too full' or is it aesthetically pleasing?
  - Are the areas of content clearly defined?
  - Is the content what you expected/needed?
  - Can the content be used in the classroom?
  - What courses would this site be appropriate for?
  - How does the site compare to other electronic resources?

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# CASE STUDY: INTEGRATING ONLINE COLLABORATIVE TOOLS INTO TELEVISION PRODUCTION COURSEWORK

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*This work has not been  
presented for publica-  
tion at any venue previ-  
ously.*

## INTRODUCTION

There can be little argument that the proliferation of new technology has fundamentally changed how media can be produced and learned. Beyond the adoption of updated equipment and software, however, radical changes are not yet evident in the structure of television courses. However, there are several recently introduced tools that promise to impact the way television and film courses are conducted; these tools address several key issues with the production and review of team projects. After researching the available tools extensively, I integrated several programs into an advanced television production course for the purposes of improving group collaboration and providing more beneficial project feedback.

## COLLABORATION IN MEDIA PRODUCTION

Group-based projects have long been integral to television production courses, as a reflection of the fact that collaborative projects are the dominant mode of production in the media industry. Group projects in this medium are more challenging compared to other disciplines due to a greater dependency on collective cognition and more complicated because team members have varying levels of responsibility and functional expertise (Saferstein, 1992, p.63).

Group meetings to discuss projects are not merely a way to assert control over the process but, in fact, a vital component of the final production itself. Project meetings are not a means to debate fully formed alternatives (as it may be in other disciplines), but a device used to create the shared concept of the production. It is through these collaborative exchanges that team members construct the project; the process must therefore accommodate the need for collective cognition, fluid decision-making, and the completion of project tasks (Saferstein, 1992, p.77).

Many of the recent innovations in collaborative resources focus on online teamwork; thus additional exploration was warranted to determine the risks and benefits of online groups, including

distance-learning applications. Pure online collaboration is in many ways fraught with hazards not as prevalent in traditional group dynamics. Students can quickly develop feelings of isolation and need increased instructor support during key learning periods (Hasler-Waters & Napier, 2002, p.350). A hybrid collaborative model that incorporates both online use and in-person interaction sidesteps many of these issues, using the online component as a supplementary resource.

Meanwhile, the research suggests that the use of both asynchronous communication (e-mail, message boards, etc.) and synchronous communication (instant messenger, chat, etc.) allows for the optimal mix of capabilities to address students' needs. E-mail and message boards allow for more thoughtful reflection and in-depth analysis, while instant messengers (and other synchronous tools) are excellent tools for quick communication and brainstorming (Maushak & Ou, 2007, p.162).

This is also true with the implementation of such tools in professional media production teams, that often utilize geographically dispersed members. Asynchronous tools are preferred when submitting a project for approval for example, when multiple viewings and specific feedback will be provided. Real-time tools are more appropriate meanwhile for taking the place of face-to-face meetings and for discussion of production elements (Baker, Geirland, Fisher & Chandler, 1999, p.330).

## **REMOTE COLLABORATION TOOLS HIT THE MAINSTREAM**

There has been a recent dramatic increase in the availability of tools with online features, making remote collaboration on media projects viable for academia and low-budget media professionals. These innovations expand upon the base resources traditionally available, that include emailed attachments, message boards and forums, and instant messaging software.

Ubiquitous consumer-focused chat and social networking tools (e.g. YouTube; Yahoo! Messenger) provide some of the most readily accessible tools for project sharing, offering a convenient means for sharing video information. The disadvantages of these tools however are also extensive, as they are not naturally suited for detailed feedback. Where consumer-focused tools show more promise though is in improving workflow, project transparency, and group communication during preproduction and post-production planning. The Google suite of applications (Google Groups, Docs, Calendar) allow for more efficient document sharing, resource/equipment scheduling, and collaboration. Google Docs, for example, allows for real-time document sharing, multiple editors, and chat applications – sidestepping many of the pitfalls of e-mailed attachments and large teams. All documents can be easily stored online, easily accessed, and edited by all members of the group (and instructors). This resource sharing also benefits postproduction in that footage logs and transcripts can be developed and viewed jointly.

These tools possess great promise to improve both student interaction and project visibility to the instructor, but they do little to rectify issues that complicate the feedback process for television instructors.

## **INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK IN MEDIA PRODUCTION COURSES**

The ability of media production instructors to provide timely and detailed feedback has traditionally been frustrated by the complexities of the process. Instructors are usually limited to providing feedback of works-in-progress in-person, either on a

monitor or at an editing station. This is problematic in two ways—the ability to provide feedback is dependent upon the professor being physically available when the students are working, and the feedback that is given is spontaneous, with no opportunity for the instructor to reflect upon the work, watch it multiple times, and provide a holistic analysis that addresses more than the immediately obvious technical flaws. Thus, students may not receive substantive feedback until it is too late to integrate it into the final project.



Still image from student project on Review Basics. Fall 2008

Finished projects are often taken home by the instructor for multiple viewings but then feedback is provided via notes or comments that are often difficult to align back to a specific moment in the project. Many instructors often resort to using time-code markers in their feedback, or recording audio feedback to be played while viewing the project. Certainly an opportunity exists to optimize this process, both for the students and for the instructors.

Seemingly, new software available (such as ReviewBasics, SyncVue, Octopz, and others) provides such an improvement in the feedback process. By allowing for remote asynchronous viewing of projects, it allows for instructors to view works-in-progress when their schedule permits and provide feedback quickly enough so students can integrate it into their projects. Furthermore, it allows for remarks to be made at a frame-level, ensuring the feedback is specific enough to be immediately understandable.

## METHODOLOGY / COURSE DESIGN

With the intent of improving both the quality of my students' projects and the helpfulness of my feedback, I redesigned my fall 2008 advanced television production course to integrate several of these production tools. The course revisions impacted projects that account for 60 percent of the course grade, encompassing four conceptual group exercises, two full group projects, and an individual editing project. For the group projects, all group members receive the same project grade.

I integrated several online tools into the mandatory specifications of the projects – Google Groups, Google Documents, and ReviewBasics. At the beginning of the semester, I created a Google group for the class that became the location for all project materials that had previously been submitted in hard copy. All project proposals, scripts, storyboards, production notes, etc. that had previously been housed in loose-leaf binders were now to be stored and edited online. Google Documents were to be

used in the creation of these materials for ease of editing and access. Similarly, projects and exercises that were previously submitted on DVD were required to be uploaded to ReviewBasics for feedback. Additional intermediate submissions were also added on the larger-scale projects to ensure the student groups had at least one opportunity for feedback before turning in their polished projects. Previously these intermediate submissions were not practical due to the lag time between class sessions.

## COLLABORATIVE TOOLS IN ACTION

These course changes were not executed without a fair amount of forethought. All of the tools were evaluated by multiple members of the staff in advance and it was determined the programs were relatively intuitive to learn and value-adding. Additionally, staff experimented with different settings to determine the most efficient means for uploading videos – these findings were then formalized into a tutorial that was available to students prior to the start of the semester. Similarly, I created the Google group as well as several template pages weeks prior to the start of the class. This ensured the students had access to the group, to each other, and to specific examples they could use as outlines for their work. This planning was essential to minimizing technical difficulties later on in the semester. Even with extensive preparation, there were substantial technical issues with ReviewBasics throughout the semester that frustrated some students; those situations would have been much more common without some level of troubleshooting before the semester.

Despite the handful of students with periodic problems with ReviewBasics, the value of the tool became clear when I began grading the assignments and giving feedback. Rather than limiting comments to generalities that apply to the project overall, or spending hours providing detailed feedback that was time-code specific (knowing that few students will take the time to review that feedback in context), I was able to quickly evaluate the projects in a meaningful way. I could provide students with specific, actionable, and timely feedback to help them improve both their technical editing and their visual storytelling skills.

Perhaps more importantly, I was able to provide guidance during the period of time when the students could still impact the quality of their projects. I was no longer



Screen capture of a Google Group student online production book, a web page that contains links to all project resources. Fall 2008

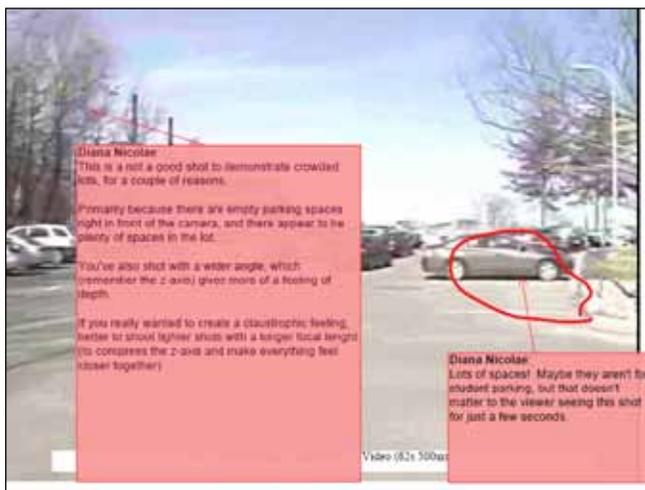
reliant on the weekly class period, or an overlap of students' schedules with my office hours, in order to see works-in-progress. By actually having the time to integrate my feedback into the project (in some cases, multiple rounds of feedback), the quality of the final projects was improved and the students were better-versed in the concepts and techniques that underpinned by criticism.

As the semester progressed towards group-oriented projects, the

Google tools were introduced and were quickly integrated into almost all aspects of the groups' projects. To illustrate, the tools were used as following for the production of a PSA: Each student created a PSA proposal using Google Docs, and linked to their proposal within the Google Group for the rest of the class to view and vote on. After tabulating results, I announced the winning proposals and team assignments on Google Groups and linked them to a template online production book they could use to get preproduction started. The teams then began creating their preproduction materials and linking them to a created page for their project. Thus, team members (and the instructor) could quickly determine progress by scanning a webpage to see the script, location surveys, interview preparations, lighting plan, shooting calendar, equipment checkout list, crew contact list, etc. Moreover, teams could quickly update these documents and work in parallel to capture the most accurate information. Later on in post-production, the same page was then used for posting footage logs, interview transcripts, and the edit decision list (EDL).

I found the use of these online production manuals to be exceedingly helpful in keeping the groups on track and in keeping me informed of the teams' progress between the weekly class sessions. The process by which the teams completed their work became much more transparent, making it clear if there was one individual doing all of the team's work, or if one team habitually procrastinated all of their preproduction work until hastily updating their online page just before the class. Beyond that though, I noticed substantial improvement in the thoroughness of most preproduction plans – demonstrating that it was actually used as a tool for their project rather than a by-rote assignment.

As alluded to above, though, there were also many difficulties encountered in the implementation of these collaborative tools; most notably were the continued difficulties of some students in uploading projects to ReviewBasics. This can be partially attributed to the lack of incremental funds available for the revised course; students



Still image from student project on Review Basics. Fall 2008

were authorized for the free accounts ReviewBasics offers, which are limited to 25 megabytes in size. User error (incorrect compression, overfilled accounts, etc) can be blamed for a sizeable proportion of the technical issues. Beyond that though, there were server errors that could never be replicated and that could never be adequately explained or resolved by technical support. This often meant that students spent inordinate amounts of time trying to upload their projects for feedback.

Additionally, not all desired learning outcomes were achieved. While Google Groups did address many of the administrative aspects of collaboration, it did not become the community I sought to develop. Students were still myopically focused on their own projects, and showed little interest in helping other teams develop. Additionally, the Google Group was the primary resource for posting documents and project materials, but critical discussions about the projects were still held offline and not publicly. This ties back in to the use of ReviewBasics as well, which was conceived as a way to encourage peer feedback on projects as well as instructor evaluation. While it proved to be an excellent tool for providing detailed instructor feedback, students were no less reticent about critiquing each others' works than they are in person.

## **STUDENTS FEEDBACK ON THE COLLABORATIVE TOOLS**

The students, despite the numerous technical difficulties outlined above, were fairly unanimous in their approval of the course changes. The standardized university course evaluation offers some clues into their perspective. When probed about the helpfulness of instructor comments, qualitative feedback was positive – “Yes, the comments on our rough cuts push us further with our projects,” or “Feedback is excellent. Able to point out numerous aspects of my projects I never would have accounted for or noticed” are representative examples.

At an overall level, ratings for the course were well above norms. This increase is largely driven by a few key measures that can be correlated with the online tools and resources – teacher responsiveness, productivity of the class sessions, helpfulness of feedback, value of the assignments, and overall ratings of the course and instructor. Clearly the use of the online collaborative tools was appreciated by the students, and added to the perceived value of the course.

I also administered a supplemental survey to gauge student reactions to the specific software that was introduced and to assess its usefulness. Overwhelmingly, the students endorsed the Google tools.

Google received strong ratings for ease of use and ease of collaboration; over 93 percent of the students surveyed rated that Google Groups and Google Docs made collaborating easier. This is driven by the fact that more than two-thirds of the students were familiar with the tools prior to the start of the course and demonstrates the usefulness of adopting technology that students are already using for other purposes. There is practically no learning curve for the students, allowing for relatively painless integration into the course. Comments like the verbatims below are typical of the survey responses received when students were probed as to the advantages of the software:

- *Google groups and docs are good for collaboration. Everything is online and you don't need to meet in person to be on the same page.*
- *It was easier for everybody to stay on top of various documents needed for projects. Nobody could say they weren't informed.*

- *The group's ability to instantly edit a document once it was shared with the group. It also allowed for instant access to a document where ever Internet access was available. Both proved to make pre-production and logging of footage smooth and easy.*

The most commonly stated disadvantage of Google Groups/Docs, meanwhile, was “Nothing.” Unfortunately, the same universal acclaim cannot be found for ReviewBasics, largely driven by the technical issues experienced by several students throughout the semester. When probed about the disadvantages of the software all of the responses reflect the sentiment found in the comments below:

- *Very bad website. Hardly worked, interface hard to use. But feedback options were good*
- *ReviewBasics was easy once you know what you're doing, but it was very annoying. Uploading larger projects was VERY difficult. I didn't like using that program at all. It was very time consuming and unreliable.*
- *Site crashed all the time oh my god.*
- *The technical problems. The site was always down or crashing, making it frustrating and hard to make deadlines sometimes. The fact that you can only upload 25MB was also a problem.*

Interestingly, though, the students were able to see past the technical issues to appreciate the potential of software like ReviewBasics to deliver more meaningful feedback. This is reflected by the fact that nearly 75 percent of the students surveyed indicated the feedback received was more detailed and more useful. Comments about the advantages of ReviewBasics are also telling:

- *Comments were a big help so you can see exactly where the mistake was made.*
- *I liked the detailed comments.*
- *Allowing the project to be critiqued, by not only the professor, but also the students.*
- *The program allowed for very detailed feedback, especially on the part of the professor. By being able to view it as many times as you wanted, better and more detailed feedback was given, in turn helping us students to tweak and better our projects.*

## **PLANNED REVISIONS / FUTURE CHANGES**

I plan to integrate the Google tools into all production courses but with a greater emphasis on peer review and cross-team participation. The role of ReviewBasics in the courses is less clear, as technical issues diluted the value of the software. I will continue to use it in subsequent semesters, but will likely switch if new software becomes available that can fully deliver on the promise of online feedback tools

While course revisions can be a proposition fraught with risk, online collaborative tools seemingly offer great potential to improve group projects with little downside. Student involvement in often-neglected administrative tasks can be markedly improved, and the opportunity remains to drive greater student engagement through peer feedback and honest critique. Properly implemented changes require forethought and proper technical planning, but can make a positive impact on course satisfaction and project quality.

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## ETHICS AND THEME IN SCREEN STORY STRUCTURE

A BEA Panel  
Presentation by  
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I believe you simply cannot teach the nuts and bolts of screenwriting without also teaching ethics at the same time. An ethical inquiry is woven into the very nature of screenplays. Every well-written script is about something, and offers the investigation of a moral question presented to the audience in the form of a theme.

By definition, the word ethics refers to the specific moral choices made by an individual in his or her relationships with other people. The whole point of telling stories is to investigate these choices. And it's a big part of the reason we all love movies so much.

I maintain that wrestling with ethical concepts is a natural part of the day-to-day working life of a screenwriter. And I believe this becomes very apparent as we help our students work to master the concepts of screen story structure.

Human beings seek meaning in all things. We cannot help it. It has been hardwired into our brains since the days when we lived in forests and savannahs and jungles and needed to interpret the meaning of every sound, scent, or movement instantly. That is how we avoided becoming lunch. For a hundred thousand years of human development it often meant the difference between life and death, and therefore assessing meaning became a part of our very DNA.

Our need to interpret significance is so strong that if we cannot figure out a meaning for something quickly, we will invent one. Witness ghost stories and séances. Personally, I have always marveled that both the single greatest strength and the single greatest weakness of the human mind have always been one and the same. We are driven to discover the meaning in everything, even if we sometimes make that meaning up.

A great screenplay reaches us by revealing universal, ethical truths about the human condition. And I would argue that every movie made has a meaning whether the screenwriter and filmmaker intend it to or not.

I meet resistance to this idea from some students. They will say something like, "There are tons of movies that simply want to entertain people; only want to give us cheap laughs or thrills. They don't mean anything!" My rejoinder is that even films just out to make a quick buck off another youth culture fad like, say, *Cheech and Chong's Up In Smoke*, (1977) or *The*

*Pineapple Express*, (2008), to somebody somewhere such movies become a justification to believe that habitual drug use is harmless good fun with no long-term consequences. Supposedly innocent “party-hearty” druggie movies have, in fact, done a lot of damage to a lot of lives with a thematic message they thoughtlessly portray, just so studios can make some fast green.

Screenwriters have a responsibility to their audiences simply because meaning will be interpreted from a screen story whether a writer intends it or not. The early James Bond films just want to offer some popcorn thrills, sure. Nevertheless, a theme exists in each one: good always triumphs over evil. From shallow genres come shallow themes but we must note that a theme does exist even in a Bond movie.

It is up to all screenwriters to control positively what our scripts mean. I have been troubled in recent years by a seemingly endless parade of nihilistic “life sucks” movies cranked out in Hollywood, such as *Seven* (1995), *American Beauty* (1999), and *The Dark Knight* (2008). I also see this trend in about two out of three student films produced. For years Hollywood moguls have told writers they only want to buy “edgy” stories. They see edgy as hip and happening. I think their version of edgy just means cynical and despairing. Hollywood often advertises hopelessness. We must fight such thinking in our classrooms because that is a flat out ethical lie about the truth of life.

Ethics are conveyed as theme in film stories, and to control theme we must teach our students where theme resides in a script. Theme is located within the psychological makeup of the hero. Hopefully, who the hero is on the inside, the way they deal with life and understand life, will grow throughout the story. By the end of a good screenplay, the worldview of the hero should be quite different than what it was at the beginning.

The hero’s inner emotional journey—be they man, woman, or animated ogre—is a passage of personal discovery called the Character Growth Arc. A writer speaks to the audience about the ethics of living a good life through a lesson the hero learns about himself or herself in this growth arc. Many students live in terror of the term Character Growth Arc. It sounds so complicated, so mind twisting...but in truth, it’s not at all. Theme in a screenplay needs to be simple and clear, and that means the growth arc should be kept simple and clear. Theme and growth need to focus on only one single ethical issue per screen story.

Here is how I tell my students to do it. First, place an emotional wound in your hero’s past. A specific trauma so painful it caused the hero to build a shield around himself to protect his feelings from more trauma, so he will never have to feel such pain again. This is the emotionally isolated hero we meet in Act One.

Then in Act Two, add three specific scenes. One in the first half of Act Two, one at the midpoint, and one in the second half of Act Two. In these scenes, the hero will progressively

EXPRESS, BATTLE, and OVERCOME the destructive influence of her emotional shield on her life. These scenes must involve physical conflict and dramatic action; they cannot be passive. The hero must demonstrate through behavior how she expresses, battles, and overcomes that inner conflict caused by her shield of isolation. Character growth is usually complete by the end of Act Two so that the newly transformed hero is now ready to face the antagonist as an evolved, self-aware person who is at last prepared to triumph in Act Three.

Here are three examples.

**In *SHREK*:**

Shrek has been rejected by everyone all his life and told he is a hideous ogre. This is his wound. So for protection, he has built himself a shield, a life of isolation in the swamp where he can scare people away before they get close enough to hurt him emotionally again. In Act Two Shrek falls in love and his journey to bring a princess back to Lord Farquaad teaches him he must open up his heart and trust others, even at the risk of emotional pain.

**THE THEME OF *SHREK* IS:** In order to find connection and meaning in life, you must open your true heart and accept that pain, too, is an inevitable part of a fulfilling life.

**In *COLLATERAL*:**

As a boy, sweet cowardly cab driver Max (Jamie Foxx) was taught by his mother to fear the world. This was his wound. Now as an adult, Max has worked for 12 years as a driver in someone else's cab while dreaming his life away about starting his own limousine business, Island Limos. This is the shield behind which Max hides his fear of taking action. He thinks he will not be ready to launch his business until the business plan is absolutely perfect which, of course, it will never be. Then one night Max is kidnapped by a hit man, Vincent, and Max is forced to grow up quickly. He must overcome his cowardice now or his usual fear and caution will get him killed this time. Ultimately, Max learns that only the courage to take action gives a person a fighting chance in life to survive and achieve.

**THE THEME OF *COLLATERAL* IS:** In order to pursue your dreams and create a fulfilling life, you must find the courage to accept risk and take bold action. There are no guarantees...but if you do not try, dreams will surely never come true.

Sometimes theme can be expressed as an implied dramatic question, especially in the story form of tragedy, where the hero is ultimately destroyed because he *cannot* grow and change. *Citizen Kane* is a cautionary moral tale, as all tragedies are. In the opening scene of *Kane* an unspoken question is posed: how can a man who possesses absolutely everything money can buy end up dying alone?

**So, In *CITIZEN KANE*:**

A young country boy, Charlie, is taken away from his mother to be raised by a rich but insensitive businessman. This is the hero's wound and it is symbolized by his sled, Rosebud, which stands as a memory of the loving childhood taken away from him. Through the unfolding story we learn that all his life long, Charlie Kane wanted to be loved by other people. But as his friend Leland says of Kane, "Charlie never gave himself away. He never gave anything away. He just left you a tip." Charlie wanted love but he gave nothing of his true self in return, and so Charles Foster Kane dies alone in his opulent mansion.

**THE THEME OF *CITIZEN KANE* IS:** In order to receive love, you must first give love away freely to others.

As revealed in the themes and Character Growth Arcs of well-written screenplays, ethical meaning is a big reason why we enjoy movies so much. Providing an honest theme in each screen story is the responsibility of good screenwriters and a key component of what we must teach our student writers about the story structure bones that serve as the foundation of top-notch scripts.

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*Eric Edson is an associate professor in the Department of Cinema and Television Arts at Cal State University, Northridge, and head of the graduate screenwriting program there. He is also a career screenwriter with six produced feature films and many episodic television credits. He most recently co-wrote *PASSION'S WEB* for Lifetime TV, and he co-wrote and co-executive produced the CBS TV movie *LETHAL VOWS*, starring John Ritter and Marg Helgenberger. Other films include *THE ROSE AND THE JACKAL* starring Christopher Reeve, *THE SOGGY BOTTOM GANG*, starring Don Johnson, and *DIVING IN* starring Kristy Swanson. Eric holds a MFA degree in*

*Playwriting from UCLA, and a MFA in Film Directing from The American Film Institute. He is a recipient of The Samuel Goldwyn Award, the National Story Award, and the BEA Media Arts Festival, Best of Festival Award.*

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# TWEETY TWITTERS. DO YOU? BROADCAST FACULTY AT KENT STATE HELP LEAD ANALOG COLLEAGUES INTO DIGITAL WORLD

**Fred Endres**  
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Professor Jan Leach has an exceptional resume: editor of the *Akron Beacon Journal*; managing editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*; city editor of the *Arizona Republic*; ethics fellow at the Poynter Institute; and a master's degree in journalism. But, this past spring and summer the assistant professor in the [School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#) at [Kent State University](#) was back in the classroom . . . as a student.

She was learning how to think and tell stories with a multi-platform mindset. She was discovering how to shoot and edit video, capture and edit audio, and produce multimedia packages for the Web; things she did not have to do in her professional newspaper career. And, she wasn't alone.

More than 20 faculty members at Kent State with solid experience in newspapers, public relations, and photography went to camp to learn new mindsets and skill sets to help them better teach their students and prepare them for the ever-changing, online workplace. "I think it's important for faculty to stay on top of technology used in our industry, to be able to incorporate new media and technology into our classes, and to understand the differences in storytelling in different media," Leach says.

The dilemma for Kent State's journalism program, shared by scores of universities nationally, is that most faculty worked in their professions when newspapers and television ruled the mass media roost. That was before serious digitization of the industry—before online aggregators, blogs, tweets, VJs and Soundslides. It wasn't that long ago.

## BEING ANALOG IN A DIGITAL WORLD

But, the news industry changed, some would argue deteriorated, so rapidly that many journalism programs were composed primarily of faculty trained in an analog world trying to prepare students for careers in a digital world.

The issue became how do journalism schools bring print

faculty up to speed to understand, teach, and evaluate multimedia? Not just faculty who worked in print media but also those involved with print media such as public relations and advertising, e.g.

To help remedy the problem at Kent State, faculty went to camp for the multimedia-challenged. And most of the camp counselors were members of our broadcast faculty. Here's what we did, how we did it, and how it worked.

## UPGRADING FACULTY SKILLS

Journalism Mass Communications (JMC) director, Jeff Fruit, has been an early and consistent advocate of faculty members upgrading and expanding their skill sets. "Our students have to know new mindsets and skill sets," he says. "We had been trying for several years to find a way for our faculty

to get ahead of students, or at least catch up with them. They needed to refresh and enhance the tools and thinking they brought to the classroom." The road to enhancement finally began early in the spring 2009 semester. A faculty development project



JMC faculty members (from left) Teresa Hernandez, Jacquie Marino and Gene Shelton grab video and audio as children learn about worms and environmental sustainability.



JMC faculty Ann Schierhorn, Bill Sledzik, and Max Grubb, interview the owner of a local restaurant. Broadcast faculty member Dave Smeltzer (with earphones) oversees their fieldwork.

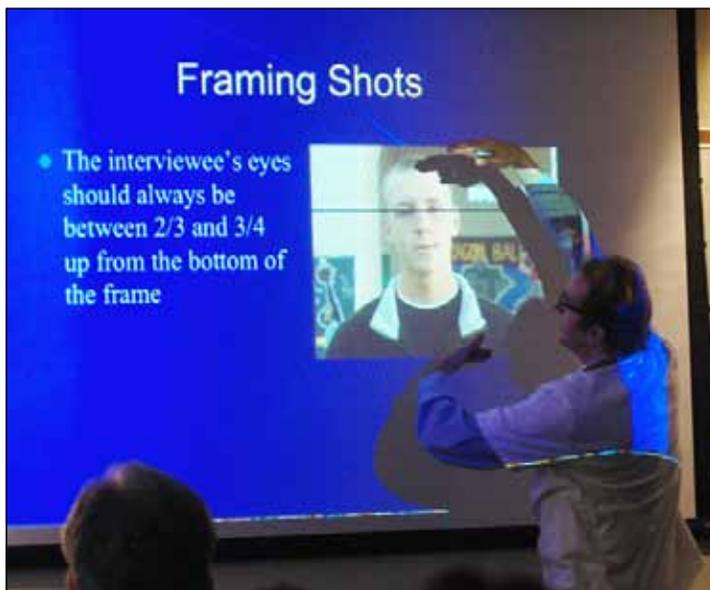
called Camp Tweety was initiated. The tagline was “Tweety Twitters. Do you?” and the search was on for campers to learn about multimedia. And, did we ever find them.

JMC got a late start setting up the logistics of Camp Tweety (day, time, a room with properly equipped computers) so only seven; 90-minute camp sessions were scheduled. Campers met Friday mornings before regularly scheduled faculty meetings and attended sessions on the multimedia/multiplatform mindset, video, audio, still photography, web design, and slideshows.

Camp Tweety could have spent a lot of money and hired outside consultants to run the sessions but the decision was made to utilize in-house expertise, our broadcast and photo faculty members. Audio sessions were taught by Dave Smeltzer and Ben Whaley; video was taught by Gary Hanson and Karl Idsvoog; still photography was taught by Teresa Hernandez and Sue Zake; Web design was taught by Joe Murray; and audio slideshows were taught by Endres, a former print journalist turned multimedia hybrid.

## A WAITING LIST

Kent JMC has 31 full time tenure track and non-tenure track faculty members. Twenty-one of



Professor Dave Smeltzer demonstrates how to set up a shot at Kent State's multimedia boot camp for JMC faculty.



Broadcast professor Gary Hanson demonstrates a Canon GL-2 to faculty members Jan Leach, Michele Ewing and Karen Kastner.

them signed up for one or more of the training sessions. Ten attended five or more of the sessions. Faculty members gave Camp Tweety rave reviews overall and got into the camp spirit, joking about camp food, snipe hunts, mosquitoes, and bunkmates.



Fred Endres, professor of online journalism at Kent State, explains what's ahead during the week for the faculty campers.

The education they got, though, was largely theoretical. While we wanted to have time to introduce them to equipment, practical applications, and software in each subject area, the 90-minute time frames resulted in sessions that allowed campers to hold a Canon Z930, receive some basic shooting tips, capture a couple minutes of video, and watch a demonstration of how a story might be put together in Final Cut Pro.

The seven sessions gave us a good start, but both counselors and campers quickly realized we needed to do more. We had given them some knowledge and eased some of their apprehensions about multimedia tools, but it wasn't enough to take into the classroom. We needed something more intense and intensive.

## **WELCOME TO TWEETY TWO**

JMC director Fruit provided the money, in a time of shrinking financial resources, to pay four faculty members to run a one-week training camp for faculty. Because we wanted to work in small teams and to have a low counselor to camper ratio, we limited camp enrollment to 12. There were only two weeks available in the lab that was needed, and one of those included Memorial Day, so Tweety Two took place mid-May 2009, the week after final exams. If camp had been scheduled during a different week, there were five other faculty members who would have attended.

The summer camp was scheduled Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Camp counselors (Hanson, Smeltzer, Murray, and Endres) put in numerous hours discussing outcomes, organization, and tasks. Hanson took the lead in developing the format, patterned after Poynter's do-and-review workshops.

Four teams were created and one counselor generally worked with one team, although counselors served as resources for all teams. The teams were given this assignment: create a multimedia website highlighting interesting people or groups in the community. The catch phrase for the project and the sites was "People You Should Know."

To save time, teams were formed and assignments were given prior to the start of camp. When camp began Monday morning, teams were in place and story topics had been approved; they included primary school teacher who uses worms to teach environmental sustainability; a wine store owner who built a community of connoisseurs out of customers; a group of retired women who repair vintage dresses for the university

[Fashion Museum](#), and; a family-run restaurant specializing on Mediterranean food.

Each team had to produce a Web video, an audio slideshow, four separate but related still photos, a narrative introduction to their story, and explanation of their story. Instructors created Web templates for the teams to use, so all they had to do was fill the holes.

## 9-1 BECOMES 8-5

Teams were exhausted by noon Friday—deadline time. The envisioned 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. schedule quickly turned into an 8 to 5 gig with many equipment and software issues and a few brain belches. But by noon on Friday their assignments were completed and their efforts were high quality. Representatives from the school, the college, and the provost's office joined in a showing and review [of all projects](#).

Jan Leach thinks she got a good education. "I learned there is so much more to story-telling and so many different ways to communicate ideas than ink-on-paper, which is my background," she says. "It was good to have the spring sessions for introduction, but summer camp was invaluable because it expanded on the topics, taught real skills, and put us on deadline with assignments."

And she was spot-on about the additive nature of the two camp sessions. One was theoretical, imparted some basic information, and allayed some fears of the unknown. The second placed them in harm's way. It gave them intensive instruction and put them in the field with cameras and microphones and live subjects. It made them think about alternative methods of telling stories and it made them scramble to solve problems that arose during the capturing and editing processes.

## SO, HOW DID WE DO?

Here's what worked:

The format: Says Gary Hanson: "The format contributed significantly to the success of Camp Tweety because it gave the faculty participants a familiar venue in which to work. It allowed for easy story selection. Each team had a sense of buy-in from the beginning because they got to choose their topics. The format lent itself to finding video stories, audio stories, and photographs around the central theme."

One plus one: In addition, we liked the additive nature of the Spring Theoretical-Summer Practical format. The former never would have been enough, and the latter wouldn't have worked as well without the former. However, if you can only do one, do the one week hands-on segment, but leave lots of time for show-and-tell with equipment and print up lots of cheat sheets or do not forget lists for when campers venture into the field.

Colleagues as counselors: At Kent State, anyway, this was a real positive. Leach says she was able to ask for help without being embarrassed. "This was the nice part of being with colleagues who were generous with their time and expertise," she says. And Hanson agrees. "The collegial aspect of Camp Tweety was one of its real strengths. The faculty did trust the instructors." He advises, though, "it depends completely on the level of trust that existed long before the camp started."

Street Cred: The faculty members will need more work, but they have real, deadline experience now with field and lab work. They can make better assignments, appreciate

students' problems, and evaluate projects effectively because they have been there and done that.

Here's what we might tweak if we did it again:

**The time allotment:** Although we spent a lot of time planning the week, we severely underestimated the amount of time the camp would take for faculty and instructors. We ended up starting an hour earlier each day, and many campers and most of the instructors were still working on projects in late afternoon or early evening. If we did this again, we would go 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at a minimum. This is especially true if you cannot have the initial, introductory sessions that we had during the previous semester.

**Equipment:** Hand in hand was the issue of training on equipment and software. A compressed period of time allows you a quick lab lesson and a trial and error field experience. However, if you do not keep shooting video or working with Final Cut, what you learned will quickly fade away. To that extent, we scheduled some refresher sessions for the fall along with a new session or two on creating multimedia projects for specific courses and using social media. In other words, we are planning a Tweety Three, though appreciably scaled back.

How important of an issue is it for journalism schools to get their faculty up to digital speed? Here's what Kent JMC's Jeff Fruit says:

"It's serious only if faculty or school administrators aren't willing to invest the time and resources to keep abreast or ahead of emerging market practices. We have, across our faculty, expertise in all the key areas, so for us it has been more a matter of sharing that expertise with colleagues and building the knowledge base. Faculty need to invest the time, and schools need to invest the resources to provide faculty with quality training."

*Fred Endres is professor and Web Editor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kent State University. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland and worked for 12 years on newspapers and magazines. He wrote, "We Built It, This (Converged) Newsroom of Dreams. So Who Showed Up?" in the [September 2008](#) issue of Feedback.*

## THE CAMP SCHEDULE

Pre-Camp: Teams were created, assignment given, and story topics approved

Monday

9 – Welcome, goals, organization and schedule.

9:30-10 – Teams talk to entire group and describe their stories and how they plan to approach them

10-noon – Teams meet to assign project tasks and line up interviews, fieldwork.

Noon-1 p.m. – lunch

1-2:30 – Review session (from spring sessions) on video cameras, setting up and framing shots, acquiring B-roll, doing interviews.

Tuesday

8-8:30 – Team/group review of Monday and events for the day

8:30-2 (longer in some cases) – field shooting/interviews  
2-3 – Review on audio recorders (USB and Marantz), mics, natural sound, and interviews

Wednesday

8-8:30 – Team/group review of Tuesday and events for the day  
8:30-1 (longer in some cases) – more fieldwork: reshoot video, capture audio, and shoot stills  
1-2:30 – review session on using Soundslides to create audio slideshow\*  
1-2:30 – review session on editing with Final Cut\*  
1-2:30 – review session on editing with Audacity\*  
\*Each team designated one person to work with that phase of the project

Thursday

8 a.m.-4 p.m. – Production day, video/audio editing, writing Web copy/captions/summaries

Friday

9-11 – Last minute production work, uploading projects to Web templates  
11-12:30 p.m. – Web sites go “live”; teams show their projects, review of camp, champagne celebration that it’s over

## **WHAT A “PRINT” PERSON LEARNED AT CAMP:**

Here are five things Prof. Jan Leach, a former newspaper editor, says she learned at camp:

1. You need to learn to think about multiple ways of storytelling.
2. Multimedia editing is much more complicated and time-consuming than word editing or selecting photos and type for the front page.
3. You need to plan ahead, everything from research to checking lights and equipment.
4. You need to have a Plan B in case someone doesn’t show up or it rains or there is sudden construction noise in the background.
5. You probably should triple the amount of time you think you need for editing/producing the finished product, at least at first.

## **ON THE WEB**

The Camp Site, home of each team’s page.

<http://www.folioweb.org/tfaculty/CT/>

Brief interview on how Camp Tweety got started.

<http://vimeo.com/4346877>

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# HYBRID DIGITAL RADIO STATIONS: A GUIDE FROM START-UP TO LAUNCH

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## INTRODUCTION

Contrary to popular belief, the letters “HD” in HD radio do not stand for high-definition; they actually stand for *hybrid digital*, referring to a radio broadcast signal that transmits in both digital and analog signals (Keith, 2007). Overall, this work describes, in detail, all the steps necessary to create and manage an HD radio station. This how-to manual is a comprehensive guide from the creation to the continuing maintenance of an emerging radio technology.

As assistant operations manager (AOM) responsible for the School of Broadcast and Cinematic Arts’ secondary HD station at Central Michigan University, it was my duty to start, maintain, and manage the overall operations of the station. The general duties of my position included station imaging, managing day-to-day functions, and motivating undergraduate employees volunteering for the station.

As AOM, I created the station identity and determined format(s). Currently, the new station is running three formats; indie, hip-hop, and heavy metal and broadcasting in three, eight hour blocks daily, playing music that would not be heard in most markets. Aside from HD2’s three main genres, specialty shows are also being created to explore specific sub-genres within the format. This helps to expand listeners’ tastes and help target individuals who may not listen to radio because they do not like the more popular genres.

## HD BACKGROUND

There are a total of 1,606 stations broadcasting 2,416 HD channels nationwide (HDRadio.com, 2008). Presently in Michigan, only 57 HD stations exist (HDRadio.com, 2008). Already, more than 810 secondary stations have been introduced as a result of the HD conversion. According to iBiquity, HD Radio makes FM signals sound similar to CD quality and AM signals similar to FM quality (HDRadio.com, 2008). “Unlike high-definition television, where the transition to digital technology costs a station millions of dollars, upgrading the world of

radio is much less expensive” (HDRadio.com, 2008).

According to Viars & Graves (2008), “it costs radio stations around \$75,000 to convert to digital,” (p. 2). Also unlike television, consumers have the choice to participate in the upgrade or not. However, “consumer awareness of the HD technology is much higher for television than it is for radio” (Bridge Ratings, 2007). In another survey by Bridge Ratings (2007), only one percent of consumers said they would buy an HD radio in the next two months.

The remaining pages explore creating and operating an HD radio station, application and themes for managing employees, and assessment of overall effectiveness.

## **SECTION 1: TECHNICAL PLANNING, STAFF PROMOTION AND START-UP**

When starting an HD2 radio station, several initial steps must be carried out before any volunteers or employees are hired. This period has been dubbed the pre-planning phase. During this phase, initial planning and development are addressed, as well as finding and training volunteers, identifying the target audience, and examining station imaging.

The first step in pre-planning is determining the overall format(s) of the station. The best way to determine the specific format(s) is to examine the playlists of the HD1 station. Generally, an HD2 station will play a format(s) different than its HD1 counterpart. It is also helpful to do an audit of genres played in your market to determine your playlist based on the type of music lacking in the area.

Doing so will help set your station apart from other ones in your surrounding market.

After selecting the format(s), decide whom the specified genre(s) is targeting. This area should determine who the primary demographic is. If available, utilize local psychographic and demographic information to supplement your research.

Here is a checklist of questions to ask during the initial pre-planning phase:

- What music should you play? Why?
- Who is this music targeting? Why?
- Why are people going to want to listen?
- What would set this station apart from other stations?
- Is the music genre(s) readily available?
- Where is the music going to come from?
- If multiple formats are chosen, how will they be rotated? Why?

While multiple formats are not taboo on an HD2 station, when using them you must determine the best scheduling rotation to ensure a larger audience. Several factors must be examined when choosing a rotation schedule. The most important is using the target demographic information that has already been gathered. Determine when each specific demographic is more likely to listen and plan around that timeframe. You must also make a judgment on the style of music and the appropriate daypart that it may be played in. Ultimately it is the station’s responsibility to figure out when each genre will have the largest saturation with particular demographics at specified times.

Whether or not you have selected multiple or single-format playlists, station imaging

should be examined and executed. From my experience, station imaging can be broken down into three simple steps. The first step is to determine the station's name. In most cases, the name should be similar, or related, to the HD1 name in order to allow for cross promotion of the two stations. Most of the time, HD1 and HD2 stations are viewed as a single entity not two separate stations. By choosing an appropriate name for the HD2 station, there should be no question that it is tied to the HD1 station. One way to determine a station name is by compiling a short list of the best possible choices. Once you have narrowed them down to three or four good ones, put the names to a vote by station personnel. Based on my experience, this particular method proved useful in determining the name of WMHW's HD2 station.

Once the vote has been tallied and you have settled on the station's name, the second step is creating a slogan. The slogan should refer to the general theme of the station. If the choice is made to implement multiple formats, the slogan should be flexible enough to work with all selected formats. For example, a more extreme slogan such as "HD2-music so heavy it will melt your face" would be satisfactory for a heavy metal format, but not appropriate for a smooth jazz format. The slogan should also be short, catchy, and to the point—something that will stick in listeners' minds. Make a list of possible slogans then vote within the station to find the best one.

After the station name and slogan have been determined, the third step is to begin thinking about production imaging. This is the primary factor (besides the music genres and jock performance) that determines how the station will sound to listeners. During this initial production phase, sweepers, liners, station identifications, and music promos will need to be produced. If running a multiple-format station, each genre will need its own imaging. However, at this point, a staff will have to be amassed in order to help with the remaining creative process.

## **USING VOLUNTEERS**

When searching for volunteers there are several criteria to consider. Here is a checklist to ensure all of the criteria are met;

- How many positions need to be filled?
- Of these positions, what percentage is management based and what percentage are strictly volunteers?
- Where are the volunteers going to come from?
- How can you get them to volunteer?
- How can you get the word out about the open positions?

After determining proper volunteer criteria, decide how to attract these potential volunteers. Begin by designing fliers and using word-of-mouth to recruit people. When designing the fliers, make certain they are eye catching, short, and to the point. Include contact information along with a brief description of the positions to be filled, where to obtain an applications, the deadline for submitting an application, and any other important information.

Understanding the positions to be filled will help you design your fliers. Start by compiling a list of available positions and what they entail. These fliers will be your main source of information as you spread the word to potential volunteers, so make

sure they are strategically placed in high-traffic areas around the station, in residence halls, around the library, and anywhere large groups of people congregate.

Once the application deadline passes, begin an audit of all applications by organizing a tentative employee list pairing applicants with suitable positions. Next, conduct interviews with the selected pool of volunteers. During this phase, be on the lookout for promising leaders as well as possible liabilities to the organization. Remember, the individuals you interview are volunteering their time and energy, so they should be approached and handled differently than a salaried employee would be.

Finally, after the interviews have been conducted, another audit of selected volunteers should take place. Determine where the volunteers would best be suited based on their abilities; once all volunteers have been positioned, training can begin.

## **VOLUNTEER TRAINING**

Each volunteer should be trained on the specific equipment they will use while working at the radio station. When training large groups of volunteers, it is best to train several key members initially then split the load among each other. Each leader should instruct about ten volunteers on how to work the equipment. This method will effectively derail what could be a large, loud group of volunteers into a more manageable, one-on-one environment. My experience has taught me that volunteers absorb and learn more using this method than a large group setting.

As a manager, a huge aspect of success is based on organization and time management. How well a manager uses his/her own time and manages the employees time can be the difference between a great station and an average station. Keeping a volunteer on-task and managing his/her time helps get the job done quickly and more efficiently. When given guidance and specific tasks volunteers thrive, whereas they seem lost and less productive when given too little direction.

## **THE MUSIC LIBRARY**

When all necessary training is finished, the next step is to establish a station music library. First, audit all of the current HD1 CDs no longer being used. Determine what in the existing station library can be used on the HD2 side. Secondly, make a list of record labels that sign artists that fit the new station's format(s). Using the Internet, find contact information for as many labels as possible and start a record label log. In this log, list all labels that have been contacted, when they were contacted, and what music format they are. Draft a professional email and/or letter template to send to each label. This will, of course, take time and a CD collection will not be amassed overnight.

When starting a station with virtually no budget, purchasing CDs is generally out of the question, but using personal or donated record collections is not. This is legal because the HD1 station should already have music licenses with at least two of the big three licensors, BMI, ASCAP and/or NMPA. However, always make sure that the music you are playing is covered by your license(s). In general, only use personal collections to start the station, and don't rely on them for future playlists. It is acceptable to use personal records to help launch the station but the ultimate goal is to have all applicable record labels bolster your playlists continuously by sending new releases.

If personal record collections are lacking, borrowed CDs may be used to your

advantage. Most libraries have what is known as an Inter-Library Loan, where libraries lend each other requested items. Although this will not help you amass a physical CD library, it will allow you to receive music to launch the station in its infancy. CDs acquired from libraries must immediately be edited and put on the station automation software.

However, music obtained illegally or taken from user-duplicated CDs are not usable to play on air. Legal or illegal MP3s downloaded from the Internet may be low in quality (especially for an HD station) and are sometimes not cleared by labels, leaving the station open for fines. In most cases, user duplicated CDs are obtained illegally and reproduction is prohibited, especially for commercial use. Unfortunately, the only way to tell if a user duplicated CD has been used is to catch the person in the act of using it.

The best way to obtain CDs is by contacting record labels directly. Once in contact with a particular label, all new releases from the company will be sent directly to the station, often before they are even commercially released. Most of the time, these CDs will be content sanitized for play on the radio. This eliminates much of the editing work associated with getting new songs on the air and helping start the music library.

A collection will not, however, be amassed overnight from this method. It may take years to receive enough albums to have a substantial library, but the payoff is worth it. For example, WMHW-FM has a specialty show called *The Furnace*, that has been around for twenty-four years. In that time, the producers have been in contact with all of the biggest heavy metal labels in the world, effectively receiving (for free) nearly every album each label releases.

## **APPLICATION AND LAUNCH**

Now that you have most of the general information needed to start a radio station, how do you apply it? Follow these steps one at a time and try not to do too much at once. The same goes for your volunteers—you cannot expect too much from them or they may resent you and your organization. Remember, operate your station the way it works best for you and your volunteers.

By now, you should have:

- At least one thousand songs in the system
- Started collecting a music library
- Amassed a volunteer base for the main executive staff and at least 15 air-talent positions
- Trained the volunteers
- Created and maintained station imaging and production
- Made certain all volunteers were knowledgeable and comfortable with the equipment and policies at the station

During the launch, consider inviting all volunteers to the station as well as other individuals that had an impact on creating the station. A solid date and airtime should be set for the launch and announced to the local press and via word-of-mouth promotions.

Begin the first broadcast with a legal identification for the station, followed by a short talk set explaining the aim of the station. After all the hard work and long hours you and your volunteers invested in the station, this moment is the ultimate payoff. As a

whole, you and your volunteers will witness what you brought to life, establishing a bond between all who participated in a successful launch and creation.

This is only the beginning, however. Now that the station has successfully launched, there is much more maintenance and work to be done. Unfortunately, that is another avenue of management study entirely. What follows is a brief guide to common technical problems you may encounter.

## **SECTION 2: TECHNICAL OPERATIONS**

Now that your station is successfully broadcasting, technical operations and personnel management will need to be addressed. In short, technical operations encompass an important and substantial area of successful radio station operations. These particular types of operations cover everything from technological training to general maintenance of the station.

### **TECHNICAL OPERATIONS**

In most cases, volunteer-based radio stations may have little or no access to engineers in the event of a station malfunction. As AOM, you need to be familiar with some of the more simple problems that arise, or at least understand the chain of command through which a problem can be remedied. Three common engineering problems are:

#### **1. Station Crash**

The most common problem is automation software freezing or locking up. In this event, the station will go off the air. A quick fix is to maintain up-to-date backups of programming. This is done using DAT tapes, minidisks, or other long play media. When the station is functioning properly, simply record that particular daypart onto the medium of choice. In the event of an off-air situation, these disks may be used as source material to put the station back on while the problem is being repaired.

As simple as it sounds, the best fix for a frozen computer is to restart it. If this does not work, the next course of action is to contact the support section of the automation software company.

#### **2. No Levels**

Perhaps the second most common problem is no microphone levels. This might be fixed with a simple push of a button. In most cases, another button was selected by accident, effectively cutting off any signal from the microphone. In this case, tell the air-talent to press the PGM or program button on the specific channel and the problem will be fixed. However, if that does not work, closer attention will have to be paid to the console. If the problem still persists, contact the respective company.

#### **3. Other Fixes**

Other simple fixes an AOM should be able to do are re-soldering audio cables, running cables from equipment, and handling most computer issues. These computer issues (for the most part) will need to be resolved from technical support phone calls to the proper companies. It never hurts to ask for help.

Preparing yourself to handle small fixes like these will not only save your station

money, it will save time and maintain proper technical operations of the station.

## CONCLUSION

In the future, HD radio may provide many new and exciting options for listeners, but for now, this new technology is on the ground floor of what could be the future of terrestrial radio. Using strictly volunteer staff and virtually no budget, you have successfully completed from start to finish, an HD radio station. This study has covered, in general, most every step needed to complete the task of creating and launching an HD radio station. Using this document, anyone should be able to start a radio station using volunteers and a limited budget.

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# STUDENT SALES LITERACY: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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ously.

## BACKGROUND

During a recent departmental meeting with broadcast media professionals, a discussion ensued on the growing need for college graduates to have an understanding of media sales. Several of the professionals mentioned it was important for students to gain an understanding of how to promote and sell advertising in today's marketplace. Unfortunately, they felt most students have little understanding of how to sell accounts or develop new business for broadcast stations. As a result, new graduates tend to be limited to careers that are often the first to be eliminated during bad economic times. Also, the professionals feel many students tend to misunderstand the need to wear various media hats to be a value to employers. Many new graduates are job specific in their thinking and as a result do not adjust quickly to new economic conditions. Therefore, many sales positions remain unfilled while production and talent related jobs are difficult to find for the average graduate.

## SOLUTION

Because of this situation, communication programs need to add sales content to broadcasting courses. Sadly, too many college professors have little or no experience in media sales. Students are told by faculty to go to the business school for sales classes. This advice often results in students learning general marketing concepts rather than sales concepts specific to broadcast sales. Too often, business schools teach students how to navigate the world of large corporations and not how to partner with local retail businesses—a potential source of 70 percent of a station's income.

To achieve the goal of developing student sales literacy, broadcast educators need to include the following key concepts on how to market broadcast media. This knowledge will help graduates qualify for future sales positions in today's broadcast environment.

1. All media sales “flow” from your local communities. Service to your community is the most effective way for stations to build audience share and stay connected to sponsors. Station sales people must be active members

of local community service groups. It is their participation in these groups that allows critical contacts to be forged with community sponsors.

2. Local sponsors remain the primary source of a station's revenue. As a result, the station's sales efforts must focus on the needs of the advertisers. National sponsors are welcomed, but local sponsors are the foundation for reoccurring advertising dollars. Direct communication on a regular basis with local sponsors is vital for renewing advertising support.
3. Broadcast advertising audiences will continue to fragment during the coming years. The ability to sell multiple station programming will be expected from new sales people. It is vital that new graduates understand the strengths and limits of various competitive media.
4. All sales solutions need to incorporate a "media mix" of various forms of mass media. Sales people are expected to design and sell station websites, print, broadcast, and mobile media to reach marketable audiences.
5. Lastly, broadcasters must educate younger audiences and retailers on the value of HD radio and television. Broadcasting is not old media; it is an extension of the current media world. A great deal of misinformation is circulating concerning the value and reach of various new media. Broadcasters must stress the primary value of a free media system that does not rely on a subscription base for its audience; disconnects are still a major problem for wired and/or wireless media systems. The universal nature of broadcasting allows equal access for audiences to receive a sponsor's message.

## CONCLUSION

These important sales concepts need to be taught and reinforced to students. Without this sales knowledge, students will enter the job market as hired hands with a limited understanding of the various aspects of broadcasting and its future.

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# ENGAGED STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH LIVING HISTORY DOCUMENTARIES

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## INTRODUCTION AND CONTENT

“What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand.” This famous and often-cited Chinese proverb says it all! Learning by doing (i.e., active learning) is more effective than passive learning (Angelo, “A Teacher’s Dozen: Fourteen General, Research-Based Principles for the Improving of Higher Learning in Our Classrooms,” *AAHE Bulletin*, April, 1993, pp. 3-13.) Engaging students in hands-on, problem-based learning challenges them to become meaningfully involved with their education by requiring the direct application of classroom knowledge and skills. To hear more about hands on learning click here: [Hands On Learning](#)

The purpose of this two-part article is to describe a project that has emerged over time as a collaborative, multi-dimensional, integrative, hands-on, problem-based learning assignment for senior television production students in mass communication at Winona State University. Part one of the article describes the history and the elements of the living history documentary project and provides a link for viewing the products of the students’ creative work. Part two of the article assesses the benefits and challenges of this project and provides a few tips needed to engage students effectively in a project of this type.

The Living history documentary Project is a collaboration between the WSU Retiree Center (a campus entity whose mission is to maintain meaningful connections between the university and its retirees through service, education, and social activities) and the mass communication department at WSU. A retired professor of sociology who is active in the campus Retiree Center approached staff in the office of university communications who, in turn, involved a professor of broadcast journalism in the Mass Communication Department about producing documentaries of the personal and professional lives of prominent WSU retirees. Interest was sparked in the challenge of this project and joint planning began for the first living history project to be produced in fall 2005. Annually since then junior and senior students in an elective television production course have applied their knowledge, creative talents, and technical

expertise under the direction of their professor to produce outstanding and award-winning documentaries. The documentaries bring to life slices of the university's rich and varied history, provide an important archival record of this history, help promote the university among staff, alumni, retirees, friends and the community and, most importantly, showcase the student's abilities in their professional portfolios for use with future employers.

## **PROJECT ELEMENTS AND TIMELINE**

Two to three months prior to the class commencing, considerable time is spent selecting and contacting retiree candidates to participate in the living history project. A committee of faculty and staff members who are knowledgeable about the history of WSU and the retirees whose distinguished careers at the university made notable contributions help identify four or five individuals each year to be honored. Honorees, in turn, are asked to identify two other individuals, who could serve as support interviews in their documentaries, and these individuals are contacted and arrangements made to participate as well. Honorees and their support interviewees are briefed on the project when contacted initially by phone and then sent a packet of information describing the interview, release forms, projected dates for taping, and the premiere showing of the completed documentary.

### **Week 1: Meeting the Client**

Once the honorees have been selected, it is time to fully inform the students about the project and provide them with a detailed timeline. This project consists of a video, a thirty-second TV commercial, a short TV studio production, and a podcast. The project can take 12 to 13 weeks to complete. There are several face-to-face meetings with the students during this time, and when the students and professor are not meeting in class, students use this time to work on the project independently.

The first week of class is an introduction to the project. The client comes to class at least two days so that everyone understands the process and expectations and to help the students become more comfortable working with a client. On the first day of class the assignment is handed out, the professor discusses the backgrounds of each honoree, and the supporting interview outline and format. The students also watch examples of several past living history video documentaries to see what their documentary might resemble at the end of the semester.

On the second day of class the schedule for the 12 to 13 week project is discussed to set the stage for the unfolding of the weeks ahead. By the end of the first week students must telephone the honoree to introduce themselves and set up an in-person interview. It is important for students to build a relationship with those being interviewed before the filming begins. Many of the retirees have not been involved with an on-camera interview before and benefit from some coaching about the interview and taping process. The meeting typically happens the second week of classes and may take up to two hours. During this meeting they go over the interview outline and talk about what should be included in their video. Students also use this opportunity to do media training with the honorees by explaining what to wear on camera, where to look during interview, and the logistics of the shoot.

## **Week 2: Researching and Meeting the Honoree**

The second week of class students conduct most of their background research. They visit the university library to research archived materials including old yearbooks and pictures of those to be honored. Students meet with some of the honoree's former co-workers and review their curriculum vita or resume.

## **Weeks 3-4: Shooting**

The students are given up to three weeks to shoot all the interviews. This includes scouting and lighting locations, determining how many cameras to use, and reviewing the interview outlines. Students conduct the interviews with all participants. It is up to the student to keep the flow of the interview going, help the participant feel comfortable during the interview, and develop all of the questions on the semi-structured interview form.

## **Weeks 5-6: Writing Scripts**

By the fifth week of the project students begin transcribing and logging their interview tapes and writing the scripts. While logging, students look for interview portions to use in the video, facts, and the overall structure to tell the story of the honoree. Students are given two weeks to write a rough draft of their script. The professor meets with each group separately to edit and approve the script before being reviewed by the client.

## **Week 7: Obtaining Client Approval of Script**

The client receives the script by the seventh week of the project. While the client is approving the script, the students are importing sound bites onto their computers using video editing software. The script approval by the client usually takes two or three days. The client meets with the students one-on-one to discuss changes or to ask questions about the scripted interviews.

## **Week 8: Editing the Video**

Students use Final Cut Express to edit the project; training on this software was provided in prerequisite courses. The timeline allows two weeks to edit a rough draft that must include all sound bites, voice tracks, music, pictures, graphics, archive video, or new video they shot during the first three weeks of class. Students are responsible for creating all content and it must be copyright free; including all music, photos, and graphics. Many students create their own music using GarageBand software.

The student groups then meet with the professor to review the rough draft of the video. This meeting may take up to two hours depending on the length of the video. It is important to review the video frame by frame with the students before the client sees the project. While doing this, the professor can catch errors such as typos in graphics, smooth out audio or video transitions, and assist in selecting the right video for the project. Once the rough draft is produced, students meet with the professor again to obtain approval of the first draft of the edited project. Students have one week to make changes prior to meeting with the client.

### **Week 9: Completing the First Edited Draft**

By the ninth week of class students are ready to meet with the client and professor to show the client the first draft. This meeting typically takes an hour per video. It is important for the client to understand this is their opportunity to recommend any changes to the documentary such as different music, video, graphics or even editing out parts of the video. Students meet one final time with the client following the final revision.

### **Week 10: Doing Commercial and Studio Work**

Weeks ten and 11 focus on developing the commercial and TV studio production elements of this project. Students produce a thirty-second commercial to air on the local cable channel. They also create a TV studio introduction to the video so the video can air in its entirety on the local cable channel.

Looking back on the entire project, it is clear students learn more than just how to produce a documentary video. Students are able to strengthen their skills in shooting, writing, and editing as well as learn how to work with a team and a client. Additionally, they gain valuable experience taking a project from beginning to end while being attentive to essential deadlines to keep their project on schedule. Finally, students learn valuable lessons about how to research using library resources, archives, and personal interviews. To hear more reaction on student learning outcomes click here: [Student Learning Outcomes](#)

## **WSU LIVING HISTORY PREMIERE**

The premiere showing of the living history documentaries is the culminating event of the semester course. The premiere showing of the students' creative work provides the entire campus community the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of distinguished retirees to the university. The premiere includes remarks by university leaders, introductions of the honorees and their assembled family and friends, showing the completed documentaries, and sharing a convivial atmosphere centered on the student production teams and the honorees. Students present copies of the documentaries to the honorees at this time as well. The event has become a centerpiece of the activities sponsored by the Retiree Center and one of the high points of the semester for the students and campus community alike. To hear more about the Living History Premiere click here: [The Big Premiere](#)

Readers may view several recently produced Winona State University living history videos at: <http://www.winona.edu/retiree/10426.asp>

Part II of this article will appear in the January 2010 issue of the Journal of Media Education, available at [www.beaweb.org](http://www.beaweb.org).

## MI RADIO, SU RADIO: HELPING STUDENTS SEE SPANISH LANGUAGE AS A PARAMETER

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Latino families are multilingual and multigenerational. OK, so what does that mean to my undergraduate students? Latino families are extended households because they might not live under the same roof but their communication is constant. Their activities always involve one another and to put it mildly, you know you are Latino if your best friend is your cousin. Cousins are the playmates of most Latino families living near one another. Even close friendships are possible between family members from far away locations. That is great. But what do I tell my students who are not particularly close to their families or do not see the point of all this togetherness. Well, I will explain to them that a Latino family is the dream come true of survey companies because in one call they could reach more than one generation, political view, education level, and perhaps sexual preference.

Perhaps we should talk about buying power. With impressive buying power U.S. Latinos purchase power is nearing \$958 billion in 2009. The rising affluence of the nation's 44.3 million Latinos is increasing quickly. In the last ten years, Latinos' purchase power grew 6.96 percent versus just 2.8 percent of the total US disposable income (Hispanic Business). While times are challenging, this segment of the market represents an opportunity. It is important to pay close attention to what customers want and need, and take care to specifically meet those needs.

Radio is no different. We look to radio for satisfaction and connection. The connection comes in many levels- relaxation, updated news programming, advise, humor, faith, language, trends, opinions, politics and much more. That connection determines the amount of time a person gives to radio. If you have a true connection to content you follow the program, the radio station and even the radio personality. It becomes a sophisticated network of uses and gratifications. How then can language serve as a connection? Most non-Spanish speakers feel not knowing Spanish isolates them from the whole Latino experience. This is not true. Many Spanish-language stations switch from Spanish to English constantly during live programming

like the case of L.A.'s 91 and its nearly 1 million listeners can attest, according to NPR's Ethnic Media show of April 7, 2009. It is not enough to know Spanish is out there with a significant amount of listeners but instead it is better to think how do we let our students into the picture. Fluent Spanish speakers or remotely bilingual students should intern and get to know the market. A radio station is a good way to learn about promotions and news content. What a good 30 seconds can do? It can teach you how to write it, read it, and improve it. It is a challenge that changes students' perspectives once they have interned in a radio station. We know that no matter how good we teach them, the professional experience of internships gives them 10 times more to think about.

The 2006 State of the News Media by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists reported that radio stations are going the opposite direction—to format traditional radio stations so precisely they would capture a smaller but fiercely loyal niche audience. Grab the underserved bluegrass listener, for example, or program for the old-school rap lover. As Pat McNew, executive vice president and director of operations, PHD Local Media Network told the Radio & Television Business Report, “We are seeing more networks reconfigure due to this need to reach a certain demographic—such programs are ‘Country only programs’, rock programs, specific political talk, etc. Again, because buyers and clients are searching for their own desirable audience specific programming is necessary. Networks need to be more in-tune to creating programs that cater to specific categories, enabling clients to own a specific program.”

Sometimes working with a national organization is easier than starting a new infrastructure. Invite NAHJ to campus or work with your local chapter to start internships, or even cordial conversations to exchange ideas and hopefully students. Look what Temple University did January 2009. “La nueva frontera digital: A multimedia Experience for Journalists” was a joint effort of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists and NAHJ. This activity used resources and labs from Temple with the direction of faculty and NAHJ professionals. The hands-on sessions provided demonstrations on software programs such as Final Cut and Photoshop in an effort to learn how to write for the web and how video is changing the ways to use visual journalism.

Remember, membership of any of these groups is not based on race or ethnicity but on interest or common cause. If your students are Latino or Black but you are not it does not matter. You still need to provide an experience that will prepare them for a future career. The farther you think your students might be from experiencing a Latino radio station the more emphasis you should place on offering this experience to them. The language is not a barrier but a parameter. It serves as a marker of distinction but not a wall. You can still work in a station without being 100 percent bilingual. You know why? Because chances are the radio announcer is 100 percent bilingual. It is important to both sides that advertisers and mainstream media focus on English-speaking Hispanics as a critical demographic. In the next ten years, the battle for the consumer dollar is going to grow increasingly tough. You will see advertisers discover and go after this demographic more and more. Finding the right message will be key.

Currently it appears English-speaking Hispanics have lost their culture, but the successful advertisers and media outlets will be those who realize that is not the case—we are living a nuanced life (Heibel).

While only 23 percent of Hispanic immigrants are comfortable speaking English, nearly all of their children born in the U.S. are fluent in English, according to a 2007

report from the Pew Hispanic Center. This study and books, such as Marta Tienda's *Multiple Origins, Uncertain Destinies*, are a quick way to begin understanding the life of a local foreigner.

The Latino consumer is multilingual, multi-generational, and loves technology. According to a recent study by Mintel, Hispanics adapt to newer Internet technologies faster using the World Wide Web through their cell phones and browsing social networks far more than non-Hispanics. Another study by Metrics confirms this growth in Internet and wireless savvy, reporting Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanics to use text-messaging, access the Internet through multi-media, or surf the Web via mobile phone.

Latinos adapt to many technologies faster than non-Hispanics and many also explore with new technology breakthroughs. In 2006 when mobile TV was just starting in the cellular market, a survey by Telefia showed Hispanics were among the first ethnic group to embrace it. Although Hispanics only represent 10 percent of the market share of wireless subscribers they comprise nearly a quarter of mobile TV subscribers. Regardless, Latinos make up 15 percent of the total U.S. population. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that one in every four Americans (25 percent) will identify themselves as Latino by the year 2050.

The telephone and Internet giant Verizon recently launched a website in Spanish-Verizon.com/espanol in order to provide help to customers who are more comfortable using Spanish for often-difficult technological questions.

Radio's reach is great with nearly 235 million weekly listeners. "Radio's accessibility, content diversity, and personality make it an essential part of the weekly routine for 93 percent of Americans," said David Rehr, president and CEO of NAB (New Radio Here). Radio Heard Here, a partnership of the National Association of Broadcasters, the Radio Advertising Bureau, and the HD Digital Radio Alliance, is a far-reaching, multiyear initiative designed to reignite the public's passion for radio. The far-ranging creative—including two original Spanish language spots that emphasize radio's strong bond with the Hispanic community—will reach more than 700 FM HD stations and over 900 FM/AM stations across the country.

Spanish Language radio never died, instead stations multiplied. Some were bought, others became automatic, and others grew in revenue. There is an audience that connects and feels satisfaction. The reason for such satisfaction is complex, just as the reason behind a connection to radio programming. Let's include our students in this scenario and allow them to understand culture and language.

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# NEBRASKA IMMIGRATION: DELIBERATIVE POLLING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ON BROADCAST AND NEW MEDIA COVERAGE

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## ABSTRACT

Data were analyzed from an October 2007 deliberative poll event in Omaha, Nebraska. The focus of pre-event survey questions was on the usefulness of media sources on the coverage of the global immigration issue. The goal of the project was to promote civic engagement of citizens on an important public issue. The focus of post-event survey questions was on attention paid to media. Additionally, a post-event focus group explored public opinion on credibility of various news sources. While the deliberative poll produced some evidence of short-term effects in terms of citizens learning about the immigration issue, attitudes about media credibility appeared to be well established before the event and based on personal experiences. These beliefs may also have influenced the course of dialogue within the deliberative poll event. The method proved valuable for exploring in-depth views about controversial issues.

Immigration has been a contentious issue across the United States. As undocumented workers cross the U.S./Mexico border and fill job openings, some Americans have criticized federal government policies and their impact. Analysts point out that half of immigrant workers come to the U.S. from Mexico but the public, confused by a lack of issue education and superficial media coverage, may not be able to distinguish between legal and illegal workers:

People used to read newspapers and listen to the news regularly; today, headlines and the ten-second sound bite may form the depth of news knowledge...The Internet and blogosphere have contributed to negative attitudes about immigration, as they quickly and widely disseminate myths and misconceptions, as well as vitriolic commentary (Strategic Discussions for Nebraska 2008: 4).

Research on how people use media and obtain gratification

from content date to the 1940s and it has been found that prior motivations and selectivity impact potential influences on social issues (Baran and Davis 2000: 256). In brief, the public seeks information that reinforces goals, needs, and orientations.

From a social utility perspective, we often talk about what we read, see, and hear. In the view of Dominick (2009), media use has “conversational currency” because “media provide a common ground for social conversations...” (40). While such conversations typically happen within one’s primary groups, it is also possible to bring people together in social settings that are designed to cultivate and develop beliefs about public issues. Such conversation is one way to activate engagement of citizens on important public issues.

## **DELIBERATIVE POLLING**

In response to the limitations of public opinion polls to represent informed opinion in a democracy, Fishkin and his colleagues have developed a deliberative poll method that includes providing people with information on public issues before seeking their opinions (Luskin et al. 2002). Deliberative polling can be used “when policy makers or the media want citizen input on subjects as diverse as health care, immigration, or foreign policy...” (Fishkin and Rosell 2004: 55). A daylong event may provide people with an opportunity to learn about complexities of issues. Additionally, deliberative polls often have been paired with the videotaping for a later public television broadcast. The results of deliberative polls provide researchers with information about opinion formation in “a quasi-experiment” (Fishkin and Luskin 2005: 188). Further, the discovery of informed opinion on a controversial issue, such as immigration, is designed to provide policy makers with valuable information in advance of possible legislation. From a communication perspective, deliberative polls not only address the problem of uninformed public opinion, they also may trigger democratic interest among a disinterested public (Sturgis et al. 2005: 30).

Deliberative polls may be related to civic engagement movement, that seeks to broaden public discussion beyond political elites and mass media. While a deliberative poll can produce group effects by changing opinion in more than one direction, the focus on a single issue “...can translate into sizeable shifts in the distribution of collective preferences” (Sturgis 2003: 474). In the case of immigration, some of the important context for the public involves immigrants filling minimum wage or sub-minimum wage jobs in “...primarily the agricultural, construction, manufacturing, hospitality and domestic-work sectors” (Murphey 2006: 339). As such, arguments often are reduced to the problem of illegal immigration versus the need to fill jobs that are unappealing to most citizens. In Nebraska, the meatpacking industry, agriculture, and construction provide ample opportunities for legal and illegal immigrants to find work. Against this backdrop as well as a concurrent and intense national immigration debate, a 2007 deliberative poll in Omaha sought to explore the issue.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**RQ1: How useful was media information about the immigration issue to deliberative poll participants?**

**RQ2: How credible were various news sources on the immigration issue?**

### **RQ3: What was the impact of the deliberative poll event on participants?**

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data were analyzed from an October 2007 deliberative poll event in Omaha, Nebraska.

One hundred Omaha residents gathered on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus to engage in a *By The People: Dialogues in Democracy* deliberation (University of Nebraska Public Policy Center 2007). The local project was part of a larger national PBS television dialogue research effort. The deliberative polling methodology was developed in the United States in 1996 and has been adopted by researchers in various foreign countries (Center for Deliberative Democracy 2008). In brief, research subjects are administered a pre-event survey, attend local discussions and then are surveyed again following the small group and large group deliberations. In this study, media questions were asked within the context of a broader collection of data before the deliberative dialogue.

### **Sampling**

In the present study, the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center contracted with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR) to recruit participants from within the Omaha city limits. BOSR began with 3,091 random telephone numbers, over-sampling African-American and Hispanic/Latino neighborhoods. In September 2007 BOSR sent 2,120 pre-notification letters and then made contact through telephone calls and contact with 1,956 households in the sample. Of these, 542 respondents completed the pre-event survey, 179 agreed to attend the deliberation, 89 indicated they might attend and 274 declined. BOSR followed up with two informational mailings and telephone calls. Participants were given a briefing booklet summarizing the various Nebraska immigration issues. A total of 189 individuals agreed to participate, including ten from the original uncertain group. In the end, a total of 100 actually attended the October 14, 2007 event. While participants constituted a non-probability sample, they reflected a diverse group of Omahans on a wide range of demographic variables and were similar to other deliberative polling groups across the nation. Out of these participants, 51 percent identified themselves as Democrats, 21 percent as Republicans, 23 percent as Independents, and five percent as Other. Respondents were paid \$75 each.

### **Survey Instruments**

Local and national survey questions were focused on immigration and civic engagement (University of Nebraska Public Policy Center 2007). The focus of pre-event survey questions was on the usefulness of media sources on the coverage of the global immigration issue. Respondents participated in one of ten breakout discussion groups on issues related to immigration. Afterward, post-event survey questions asked for information on the amount of attention respondents paid to media. Additionally, a post-event focus group explored public opinion on credibility of various news sources.

### **Focus Group**

During the final survey, participants who expressed an interest in mass media issues

were asked to remain to participate in a post-event focus group. Six participants agreed to do so and responded to a set of structured focus group questions.

## RESULTS

The pre-event survey data revealed a broad range of useful media types. While there was an emphasis on traditional media, usefulness of Internet news was increasing (see Table 1, N=101).

**Table 1: Pre-Event Usefulness of Media Information about Immigration Issue**

Media Type	Not Useful	Useful	Very Useful	DK/Other
Network TV News	5.9	<b>46.5</b>	42.6	5.0
Cable News	9.9	37.6	<b>42.6</b>	9.9
Local TV News	9.9	<b>47.5</b>	37.6	5.0
The Local Newspaper	12.9	<b>49.5</b>	31.7	5.9
National News Magazines	16.8	<b>46.5</b>	21.8	14.9
Local Radio News	22.8	<b>39.6</b>	28.7	8.9
Talk Radio	26.7	<b>40.6</b>	24.8	7.9
Internet News	22.8	<b>32.7</b>	22.8	21.7
Blogs	<b>43.6</b>	13.9	3.0	39.5

Bold numbers reflect the largest percentage for each media type.

The respondents were asked which best described their view of media coverage on the immigration issue: “news media are more liberal on the issue than my personal view” (7.9 percent); “news media are more conservative on the issue than my personal view” (32.7 percent); “news media mirror my personal view on the issue” (34.7 percent); “don’t know” (24.7 percent). The results suggested a higher proportion of liberal leaning responses.

A majority of respondents used television, radio and newspapers on a daily basis (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Frequency of Using Media Types for General News**

Media Type	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Television	<b>86.1</b>	10.9	0.0	1.0	2.0
Radio	<b>55.4</b>	14.9	3.0	13.9	12.8
Newspapers	<b>54.5</b>	26.7	4.0	8.9	5.9
Internet	30.7	17.8	8.9	9.9	<b>32.7</b>
Magazines	8.9	19.8	23.8	<b>32.7</b>	14.8

Bold numbers reflect the largest percentage for each media type.

Television, newspapers and radio also were seen as the most credible news sources for information about the immigration issue (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Credibility of News Sources on the Immigration Issue**

Media Type	Not	Neutral	Fairly	Very	DK/Other
Television	9.9	16.8	53.5	15.8	4.0
Newspapers	7.9	15.8	55.4	15.8	5.1
Magazines	7.9	35.6	42.6	5.0	8.9
Radio	12.9	20.8	50.5	12.9	2.9
Internet	11.9	31.7	39.6	6.9	9.9

### Group Assignment

At the event, participants were randomly assigned into ten different discussion groups. Participants completed a second survey about immigration and civic engagement issues. At this point, participants were given written and video briefing materials about immigration issues in Nebraska. The groups then convened for breakout sessions moderated by trained discussion leaders. Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) and the present research group videotaped some of the discussions, moving from group to group. Additionally, trained note-takers summarized all discussion. In general, the group discussions focused on the following topics: undocumented immigrants, education, language, employment, economic impact identification of workers, health insurance, and social security. Mass media were rarely mentioned.

At the end of small group sessions, the 100 participants reconvened at a plenary that featured a state lawmaker, an immigration attorney, and a professor. A television moderator from NET led the discussion that was videotaped for a later broadcast. At the end of the final session, participants completed a post-event survey about immigration and civic engagement issues.

### Post-Event Survey Data

A post-event survey reflected a balance between media use and interpersonal talk about the immigration issue after participation in the deliberative polling (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Activities Following Event Compared to Usual Behavior**

Activities	Much <	<	Usual	<	Much <	DK/Other
Paid attention to TV, radio, or newspaper stories about political issues	1.9	6.8	47.6	26.2	12.6	4.8
Talked with family, friends, or coworkers about political issues	3.9	4.9	39.8	34.0	12.6	4.7
Searched for information about political issues on the Web or in the library	10.7	17.5	35.0	21.4	9.7	5.6

### **FOCUS GROUP DATA**

Six participants who expressed an interest in media issues stayed after the polling event had ended and took part in a focus group. There were three men and three women. Among men, all three were Caucasian, with two under 50 years of age and one older than 50. Among women, one was Latina, one was African-American, and one was Caucasian. In terms of age, one was under 50 while the other two women were over 50.

Focus group members were asked for their perceptions of the prime media source for the public's information about immigration. Specifically, they were asked: "Which media is your primary information source when it comes to immigration?" Four of the six focus group members mentioned television (that included cable television news, public television news, and local television news), one mentioned newspapers and one mentioned the Internet. All three females responded that it was television, while males mentioned television along with newspapers and Internet sites. The heavy Internet user, Peter, sampled major national newspapers as well as the entire political spectrum. Similarly, a heavy cable television news user, David, mentioned CNN, FOX, and MSNBC. One focus group member, Ruby, mentioned only television generically and would not be more specific. Two other group members, Donna and Lonnie, mentioned the convenience of cable television news. The primary newspaper user, Joseph, was interested in local issues.

Further, respondents also were asked: "Which media do you think are most influential?" Four respondents pointed to cable television news, one to newspaper and one to network television news:

Peter: "I still think major newspapers such as the *New York Time* and *Washington Post* are the most influential. I believe local newspapers are the most influential in their own markets. I tend to dismiss local TV news because it tends to be pretty superficial."

Ruby: “I try to read the local newspaper and I thought they were the most influential, but my kids don’t read the paper or watch TV, but they get all their information over the Internet, and they seem as well informed from that as my husband and I are.”

Focus group members were also asked: “Which media do you think are most reliable and least reliable?” Three of the six focus group members perceive the local newspaper as most reliable, and four of the six members perceive the Internet as least reliable. For example, Joseph, was a heavy local newspaper user and this influenced him:

Joseph: “To me the farther you are away from a story, the less accurate you’re going to be... The Internet, without a doubt. Anybody can put anything on there without accreditation or follow-up, or back-up, or supporting documentation.”

But Donna was the only focus group member emphasizing the Internet as the most reliable source:

Donna: “There was a time you couldn’t believe anything in the National Enquirer, but now it’s like I make sure I get in the aisle where it’s sold... There is a lot of truth on the Internet, because people are not afraid. There’s a sense of anonymity. They’ll say things on there they can back up.”

All six participants agreed that talk radio is one of the least reliable media sources.

Focus group members were asked to look beyond mass media and describe other good sources for immigration information: “Besides media, who or what do you consider a good source on immigration topics? Why?” Focus group members emphasized the value of personal experience and observation of local immigrants. Additionally, they talked about obtaining information through their local schools, churches, and visits to ethnic restaurants:

David: “This is a radical idea, but immigrants just might be a good source of information...or just something as simple as visiting 24<sup>th</sup> Street on a regular basis or visiting the restaurants. There is no substitute for personal experience...or for first-hand experiences and contact. Show me somebody like a teacher or somebody in social services, and I’ll show you somebody that I’d like to listen to.”

Joseph: “If you want to know about immigration or the latest scoop, go ask someone who’s in the process, or is hiding from the process, or is looking to find out about the process.”

Ruby, a Latina focus group member, was the only participant of the six currently living in a predominantly immigrant area of Omaha. Her daughters attended a local high school and brought information about immigrants home. She synthesized a multitude of observations about immigrants over time:

Ruby: “Watching how they live, and realizing that their customs are not the same as ours, but if you give them a chance and sit back, they watch to see what we are doing and they try to live the same way we are.”

Another focus group member, Donna, hires immigrants and talks to them about issues. Finally, four of the six focus group members had some connection to the local school system and explained that this led to learning about immigration issues.

There were two final questions asked of focus group members. First, they were asked: “After hearing opinions expressed today which of you, if any, may re-evaluate the quality of information from your preferred media sources?” Nobody said they would. Second, they were asked: “After hearing what you heard today, will you go out and seek a different source of media information?” Donna, a cable television news

user, responded that Peter, an Internet user, had convinced her to go look at some of his suggested websites.

## **DISCUSSION**

While the deliberative poll produced some evidence of short-term effects in terms of citizens learning about the immigration issue, attitudes about media credibility, based upon the focus group, appeared to be well-established before the event and based on personal experiences. These beliefs may also have influenced the course of dialogue within the deliberative poll event. The method proved valuable for exploring in-depth views about controversial issues. Although a deliberative polling event is conducted with a relatively small number of people, the results reflect the context of an intense, daylong interaction on a specific issue.

Education may reduce public confusion about the immigration issue and the deliberative polling approach offers useful context. Structured discussion appeared to promote formation of opinions on controversial aspects of the immigration problem. Such discussion may trigger civic engagement and allow for public sentiments to reach media and lawmakers.

Participants utilized deliberative poll briefing facts to help frame their discussions. They reported traditional media remained most useful but this was in combination with Internet sources. Radio, television, and newspapers were judged as the most credible news sources on the immigration issue.

The post-event focus group highlighted the importance of both elite national news media, particularly newspapers and cable television networks, and the local newspaper. The Internet served as a supplemental source for additional information. The deliberative poll appeared to have some impact on participant interest in media stories about immigration and their desire to talk about the issue with others. The activation of civic engagement on important public issues goes beyond what typically happens in private settings where news is consumed. Citizens process media stories, but it is civic conversation that helps people articulate their views. The Omaha event led to short-term crystallization of opinions.

However, waning media and public interest in the immigration issue followed because of the 2008 presidential election and worsening global economy. Among competing issues for political, media, and public agendas the immigration issue and its possible solutions took a backseat to the more pressing issues of the day.

Future research should study opinion formation over time, across a wider range of political viewpoints. A limitation of the current study was that the attendees of the deliberative poll event leaned slightly liberal in their overall political perspectives. In the end, states such as Nebraska have less control over immigration law than the federal government. The deliberative polling method may be valuable as a mechanism for measuring and using national public opinion on important issues.

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# TOWARD A NEW INTERACTIVE ONLINE TV PARADIGM: REAPPROPRIATING TELEVISION CONTENT TO INDUCE GREATER PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

In light of the numerous industry reports that establish interactivity as the defining aspect of online technology and communication, we conducted a two-programming template study to assess whether increased opportunities for interactivity incorporated within primary content will increase end-user engagement. In the first template, we tested viewers' recall of an edited TV program segment and banner ad content. In the second template, we monitored recall of the same TV program segment, this time with breakout narrative interactive windows providing back stories. Results indicated that program content elicited higher recall than ads but these were not correlated, and the interactive program had higher recall than the regular TV program at  $p < .10$ . Implications are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Using the concept definition of interactivity introduced in Eric Bucy's 2003 conference paper *Interactivity in Society: Towards a Theory of an Elusive Concept*, this study proposed to construct and test a new TV-programming-for-the-Web paradigm to assess whether an increase in opportunities for interactivity within new media appropriations of old media content will result in an increase in end-user engagement. This area of research is important because numerous media industry reports have found consumers are abandoning television for the Internet. DVRs, online video streaming, and the greater control afforded viewers via increased utilization of the remote control are a few examples of how media companies have tried to meet the demands of the new media environment. But merely redesigning content delivery

methods is insufficient. The rapid convergence of media technology is leading to the introduction of an integrated television/PC that is necessitating the redesign of content itself. Researchers have identified interactivity as the key characteristic differentiating new media from old; thus, successful media companies, competing in a new media world, will need to create high interactivity content.

Audience retention is a key consideration in the design of TV-for-the-Web programming, because in the new media world media companies will not only compete across channels, they will also compete against the World Wide Web. Consequently, in addition to enhancing viewer engagement, new media content should provide viewers with opportunities to surf within it, thereby dissuading them from surfing outside it (i.e. across channels). Thus, existing technology should be used to seamlessly integrate narrative threads and advertising opportunities into a spider web of content that engages viewers.

The testing instruments employed in our study are TV-for-the-Web proof-of-concept prototypes. Refinements to the prototypes are guided by video game theory, design and technology. Video game designers appear to be the natural architects of new media content, as they are well versed in constructing non-linear, highly interactive systems that employ sophisticated onscreen signals to seamlessly move players through self-contained worlds. Thus, the most expedient way for the entertainment (as well as the publishing) industry to arrive at a framework for creating wholly original new media content is through collaboration with those in the video game industry.

## BACKGROUND

Although there has been much research connecting interactivity with engagement, most of it has been conducted in the fields of education and advertising. Texts such as Marc Prensky's *Digital Game-Based Learning* and Kurt D. Squire's *Video-Game Literacy* attest to the pervasiveness of the new media technologies that are fundamentally changing contemporary communications.

Few industries have been impacted more by these changes than broadcast television. Current assessments of entertainment media note that consumers are abandoning old media content delivery platforms, such as television, for new media content delivery platforms, such as the Internet. USA Today technology reporter Andrew Kantor's prediction, in 2005, that "the home of the future will have a single, ultra-high-speed connection"<sup>1</sup> that will carry television, telephone, and Internet is presently being realized. At the 2007 Consumer Electronics Show, CBS CEO Leslie Moonves boldly asserted, "the days of old media and new media are over."<sup>2</sup>

IBM's 2007 report entitled *The End of Advertising as We Know It* noted the

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1 Kantor, Andrew. "Court quietly hears case on the future of television." *USA Today*. 4/08/2005. < [http://www.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/andrewkantor/2005-04-08-fcc-brandx\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/andrewkantor/2005-04-08-fcc-brandx_x.htm)>. 09/16/08

2 Graham, Jefferson and Michelle Kessler. "Video leads parade as old media and new media hook up." 1/07/2007. < [http://www.usatoday.com/tech/products/2007-01-07-ces-media\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/products/2007-01-07-ces-media_x.htm)>. 09/16/08

“decline of TV as a primary media device”<sup>3</sup> and attributed the decline to an increase in the number of end-users opting for new media devices. The reports authors assert that consumers “armed with...interactive content and tools...are vying for control of attention, content and creativity.”<sup>4</sup> Mirroring Kantor’s “one big pipe” prediction, IBM predicts the evolution of cable companies into “home media portals” and “broadcasters and publishers racing toward new media formats.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the authors of the End of Advertising as We know It assert that within five years various “evolving future scenarios”<sup>6</sup> resulting from the highly interactive nature of the Internet will lead to the squeezing out of broadcasters, distributors, and advertising agencies from the marketplace “unless they can successfully implement consumer, business model, and business design innovation.”<sup>7</sup>

In an effort to meet the demand new media technology is placing on the communications industry, old media companies have sought guidance from a growing body of research that has identified “interactivity” as the key characteristic differentiating new media from the old. In the research paper *Interactivity as a Measure of Advertising Effectiveness*, researchers Chang-Hoan Cho and John D. Leckenby assert that the “unique characteristic differentiating the Internet from other media is interactivity”<sup>8</sup> and that “[i]mproving interactivity is becoming a single most important guideline for future technological development in the WWW.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, to fully maximize the profit generating potential of new media technology it will be necessary for media companies to reappropriate traditional media content for the Web by making it interactive.

Present attempts at creating high interactivity environments within new media platforms are limited to merely uploading old media content intact, while incorporating opportunities for interactivity into the supplemental content that surrounds it. Although this may prove to be a successful strategy for increasing end-user engagement, new media content creators cannot claim they are fully exploiting all of the possibilities for engagement until they make primary content interactive.

At the Web media industry conference User Interface 11, international Web content authority Gerry McGovern observed that:

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3 “IBM Consumer Survey Shows Decline of TV as Primary Media Device.” IBM Media Relations. 08/22/07. <<http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/22206.wss>> 09/16/08. 1

4 IBM 1.

5 IBM 1.

6 Berman, Dr. Saul J., Bill Battino, et. al. “The end of television of advertizing as we know it.” IBM

Institute for Business Value. January 2006.” (2007).IBM. <[http://www-03.ibm.com/industries/global/files/media\\_ibv\\_advertisingv2.pdf?re=media&sa\\_message=title=download\\_complete\\_ibm\\_institute\\_for\\_business\\_value\\_study](http://www-03.ibm.com/industries/global/files/media_ibv_advertisingv2.pdf?re=media&sa_message=title=download_complete_ibm_institute_for_business_value_study)> 9/16/08.

3

7 Berman and Battino 3.

8 Cho, C.H., and John D. Leckenby. *Interactivity as a Measure of Advertising Effectiveness*. University of Austin Texas. <[http://www.ciadvertising.org/studies/reports/info\\_process/99AAACHO.html](http://www.ciadvertising.org/studies/reports/info_process/99AAACHO.html)> 9/16/08: 2

9 Cho and Leckenby 5.

Over the years it surprised me how little respect content had within most organizations. It was seen as a menial, trivial task. Print content was copied and just put up on the Web. From 2003 onwards, the better organizations recognized there was indeed such a thing as Web content and that if it was professionally managed it became the engine of value for the website.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, in a 2002 article for *New Thinking* magazine, McGovern criticized the way the term interactivity was being used. Asserting that, “interactivity on the Internet is often vastly over-hyped”<sup>11</sup> he advocated for “a more realistic view of what interactivity and community means on the Web.”<sup>12</sup>

## **INTERACTIVITY: CONCEPT DEFINITION**

McGovern’s view of interactivity is related to response time and participation within person-to-person communication mediated by technology. It is for this reason that McGovern dismissed the notion of interactivity in new media platforms. McGovern argues that, “it is the very removal of people—with the consequent reduction of interactivity and community—that has attracted many businesses to the Web.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, McGovern contends “[b]asic interactivity on the Web very often fails.”<sup>14</sup> He observes that “[i]t is still surprising the amount of people who believe installing some chat or discussion board software will create an online community for their website. The software is only one percent of the job. The real work involves getting people to interact.”<sup>15</sup> It is for this reason we believe the new media content paradigms with the most potential for cross-platform application will be predicated on message-based, person-to-machine communication.

In the conference paper *Interactivity in Society: Towards a Theory of an Elusive Concept*, Eric Bucy attempts to synthesize the body of research surrounding interactivity to arrive at a concept definition of the phenomenon that is generalizable “across different technologies and settings, and thereby achieve a measure of context independence.”<sup>16</sup> Bucy holds that delimiting the definition of interactivity to

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10 Perfetti, Christine. “The Importance of a Customer-Centric Design Approach: An Interview with Gerry McGovern.” *User Interface 11 Conference*. 6/08/06 <[http://www.uie.com/events/uiconf/2007/articles/importance\\_of\\_customer/](http://www.uie.com/events/uiconf/2007/articles/importance_of_customer/)> 9/16/08

11 McGovern, Gerry. “The myth of interactivity on the Internet.” *New Thinking*. 3/18/02 <[http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2002/nt\\_2002\\_03\\_18\\_interactivity.htm](http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2002/nt_2002_03_18_interactivity.htm)>. 10/10/08. 1

12 McGovern 2.

13 McGovern 1.

14 McGovern 1.

15 McGovern 1.

16 Bucy, Erik. “Interactivity in Society: Towards a Theory of an Elusive Concept” *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication*

“exchanges that are in some way mediated by technology begins to distinguish the term from any form of communication and discourages its wonton application as a universal descriptor of anything involving dialogue.”<sup>17</sup>

Bucy found that one of the major sources of confusion about interactive systems comes from trying to define them “in terms of the hardware rather than the effect or end result on users”<sup>18</sup>:

Hardware provides the technical support for interactive experiences with media but does not guarantee their occurrence. “A more helpful perspective is to look at the other side of the technology to the program itself, the participant, and the psychological and physical interaction between the person and the program.”<sup>19</sup>

Arguing that interactivity is a “perceptual variable involving communication mediated by technology”<sup>20</sup> Bucy observed new media technology allows for “user-to-system” interaction:

Unlike traditional mass media, the online environment allows users to more fully interact with the medium itself by clicking on hyperlinks, taking part in viewer polls and surveys; downloading information, calling up streaming media; searching archives, customizing information delivery; and making electronic purchases, all “without ever directly communicating with another person.”<sup>21</sup>

Although new media technology allows for interpersonal interactivity—those involving person-to-person conversations mediated by technology—we argue that most new media content will involve what is alternately referred to as user-to-system interaction, media interaction, and reactive communication. All of these terms refer to person-to-machine communication.

Bucy characterizes person-to-machine communication as a message-based approach to interactivity that involves “role exchange; semantic relatedness; and a three-message threshold.”<sup>22</sup> Addressing the question of where interactivity resides, Bucy asserts that:

Locating interactivity as a feature of technology equates the phenomenon with the set of interface actions that the system allows (i.e., its affordances). However, unless a medium’s technological affordances are recognized and understood by users, they will remain unutilized.”<sup>23</sup>

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*Association, New Orleans Sheraton, New Orleans, LA, May 27, 2004* <Not Available>. 2009-02-06 <[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p113438\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p113438_index.html)> 22

- 17 Bucy 17.
- 18 Bucy 10.
- 19 Bucy 10.
- 20 Bucy 8.
- 21 Bucy 12.
- 22 Bucy 14.
- 23 Bucy 18.

Thus Bucy asserts message-based, as opposed to technology-based, conceptions of interactivity are “manifested as subjective experience,”<sup>24</sup> therefore “interactivity effects depend to some degree on the ratio of user skills, motivations, and competencies to system challenges”<sup>25</sup>:

Depending on their skill level and experience with advanced media technologies, different users may perceive a different range of affordances, or set of action that a technology makes possible, for the same medium...Although perceived interactivity is not physically observable, it can be measured, just as attitudes, perceived behavioral influence, and other perceptual constructs are reliably measured.<sup>26</sup>

If the experience of interactivity is to be assessed according to the end-user’s level of advanced media sophistication, it is vital the content delivery systems employed be capable of adapting, dynamically, to the end-user’s skill level. Also, the degree to which content is able to be manipulated should be controlled so as to allow for meaningful exchanges that validate the end-users choices:

What seems to be true is often more influential than what really is true...perceptions are far more influential than reality...a consumer’s perception of behavioral control over [computer-mediated environment] use and its impact on intentions and actions is more important than real control.<sup>27</sup>

If the opportunities for interactivity are not fully apprehended by the end-user, “usage gaps”<sup>28</sup> may occur.

Early research identified frequency of user choices, the significance of interface actions, and the range of how many choices are available” as “important elements of the interactive process.”<sup>29</sup> Later research mirrored these findings:

Three factors that contribute to interactivity— speed of interaction or response time, the range of attributes that can be manipulated in a mediated environment, and the ability of a system to map its controls to user actions in a natural and predictable manner.<sup>30</sup>

Bucy states the psychological approach to interactivity defines it as a “perceptual variable that with proper cues...”<sup>31</sup> induces a sense of within the end-user of engagement in an interactive process. Alison McMahan, the author of *Immersion, Engagement, and Presence*, concurs. McMahan found that “total photo-and audio – realism is not neces-

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24 Bucy 19.  
25 Bucy 8-9.  
26 Bucy 19.  
27 Bucy 21.  
28 Bucy 18.  
29 Bucy 14.  
30 Bucy 15.  
31 Bucy 21.

sary for a virtual reality environment to produce in the viewer a sense of immersion, a sense that the world they are in is real and complete”; therefore “immersion is not totally dependent on the physical dimensions of the technology.”<sup>32</sup> McMahan identified three conditions that create a sense of immersion:

1. The user’s expectations of the game or environment must match the environment’s conventions fairly closely.
2. The user’s actions must have a non-trivial impact on the environment.
3. The conventions of the world must be consistent, even if they don’t match those of “meatspace.”<sup>33</sup>

Bucy cited similar findings in *Interactivity in Society* identifying “sensory richness, social presence, responsiveness, transparency, spatial management”<sup>34</sup> as key components to interactive media systems. These components should be applied in three interface design objectives:

Simulating face-to-face communication; maintaining the “illusion” of involvement; and “mind amplification.”<sup>35</sup>

...media users may have the sense of participating in a meaningful two-way exchange without ever achieving actual control over the content or performing an observable communication behavior...<sup>36</sup>

Bucy cites researchers who “identified six dimensions of interactivity, including complexity of choice, effort users must exert, user responsiveness, monitoring information use, ease of adding information, and facilitation of interpersonal communication.”<sup>37</sup> Bucy notes such typologizing of the “concepts of interactivity” have been criticized because “their high degree of complexity make it very difficult to deal with the concept on a practical basis” and because the “multidimensional aspects of such models have a tendency to overlap each other.”<sup>38</sup> Such criticisms are blunted by advances in technology and new media theories particularly those related to the video game industry.

In summary: Interactive new media content is perceived as such by the end-user. The platform establishes the expectation, that must be met if the end-user is to find consumption of content an engaging experience. The degree of engagement varies

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32 McMahan, Alison. “Immersion, Engagement and Presence: A Method for Analyzing 3-D Video Games” Chapter on issues of presence and engagement in virtual reality environments and computer games for volume *The Video Game Theory Reader*, edited by Mark Wolf and Bernard Perron, Routledge, 2003, p.68

33 McMahan 68-69.

34 Bucy 10.

35 Bucy 11.

36 Bucy 19.

37 Bucy 11.

38 Bucy 11.

depending on the end-user's tolerance for content disruption. Seamless integration of interactive components would create a virtual environment in which interactivity would no longer be perceived as "disruptive." Fully integrating design components with narrative in a synergistic and adaptable relationship is key to the development of interactive content.

## ENGAGEMENT: CONCEPT DEFINITION

In relation to advertising and TV viewing, new media authority Erwin Ephron defined engagement as "the sum of all measurable variables that significantly affect the probability of viewer response to the ad message."<sup>39</sup> Erwin then lists the four key variables for advertising metrics: Size of unit, clutter, situation, and relevance. Relevance is of most use to new media content creators because:

Relevance comes closest to the feel of the word "engagement" in measuring the consumer connection. It is defined as the closeness of fit between the characteristics of the viewers to the program carrying the advertising and those of the ideal prospect the advertising is trying to reach. Said another way, relevance is successful targeting as experienced by the consumer.<sup>40</sup>

In his November 11, 2008 blog posting for marketing and advertising website Media Post, new media reporter Josh Chasin observed that Ephron's definition of engagement is useful because Ephron's "construct introduced two important concepts: the requirement that engagement variables be measurable; and, the idea that engagement is a sort of grand metric that is comprised of the sum of component parts."<sup>41</sup> Chasin notes the findings of new media researcher Eric Peterson support Ephron's concept definition. Chasin states that, "[i]n Peterson's definition, engagement is indeed the summation of an array of observable phenomena describing the visitor's interaction with a website."<sup>42</sup>

The 2008 executive summary of Peterson's and Joseph Carrabis's 2007 research study states that "[v]isitor engagement is an estimate of the depth of visitor interaction on the site against a clearly defined set of goals."<sup>43</sup> Although Peterson and Carrabis have "applied the definition directly to a specific object: a website,"<sup>44</sup> their definition can be adapted to TV-programming-on-the-Web content as: end-user engagement is an

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39 Ephron, Erwin, "Engagement Explained." *Ephron on Media*. 11/21/05 <[http://www.ephrononmedia.com/article\\_archive/articleViewer.asp?articleID=146&origin=AR&categoryID=16&categoryName=Accountability](http://www.ephrononmedia.com/article_archive/articleViewer.asp?articleID=146&origin=AR&categoryID=16&categoryName=Accountability)>. 11/10/08

40 Ephron

41 Chasin, Josh. "Putting Engagement to Work." *MediaPost*. 11/11/08 <[http://www.mediapost.com/publications/?fa=Articles.showArticleHomePage&art\\_aid=94591](http://www.mediapost.com/publications/?fa=Articles.showArticleHomePage&art_aid=94591)>. 11/13/08

42 Chasin

43 Peterson, Eric T. and Joseph Carrabis, "Measuring the Immeasurable: Visitor Engagement." *Web Analytics Demystified* <[http://www.webanalyticsdemystified.com/sample/Web\\_Analytics\\_Demystified\\_and\\_NextStage\\_Global\\_-\\_Measuring\\_the\\_Immeasurable\\_-\\_Visitor\\_Engagement.pdf](http://www.webanalyticsdemystified.com/sample/Web_Analytics_Demystified_and_NextStage_Global_-_Measuring_the_Immeasurable_-_Visitor_Engagement.pdf)> 11/10/08. p. 9

44 Peterson and Carrabis 9.

estimate of the depth of end-user interaction with the program. Echoing Bucy's assertion that interactivity is a perceptual phenomenon, Peterson and Carrabis observe that, "engagement transcends object and device...so the measurement of engagement must be able to transcend objects and devices as well."<sup>45</sup>

The cumulative effect of the previously noted interactive variables leads to a state of sustained engagement referred to in the video game industry as "flow." In the article *Engaging by design: How engagement strategies in popular computer and video games can inform instructional design*, author Michele Dickey cites research that found that:

The condition of flow or flow activities involves "deep concentration, high and balanced challenges and skills, and a sense of control and satisfaction."<sup>46</sup>

In *Digital Game-based Learning*, author Marc Prensky observes that:

The trick with flow is to keep someone in the state. Make things too easy and the players become bored and stop. Make things too hard and they stop because they become frustrated. Well-designed games are especially good at maintaining this flow state in players, and game designers have developed specific techniques to do this.<sup>47</sup>

The success of new media content at inducing flow states will depend on the adaptability of the content delivery system and how seamlessly opportunities for interactivity are integrated into narratives.

## MEASURING ENGAGEMENT: RECALL VS. RECOGNITION

Recall is the broadly accepted metric by which engagement is assessed within the advertising industry (where the bulk of research related to engagement and new media has been focused). But, the unique nature of person-to-machine communication within virtual, highly interactive environments has prompted doubts about the usefulness of old media metrics in new media research.

When communication scholars Robert Heath and Agnes Nairn compared "recall-based metric...against an approach that deduces effectiveness from recognition" they found that recall "seriously underestimate[d] the effectiveness of the advertising tested."<sup>48</sup> Heath and Nairn speculate this may be due to the influence of implicit memory on cognition within new media environments. Heath and Nairn observe that:

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45 Peterson and Carrabis 9.

46 Dickey, Michele D. "Engaging by design: How engagement strategies in popular computer and video games can inform instructional design." *Educational Technology Research and Design*, 53(2), 68-69

47 Prensky, Marc. *Digital Game-Based Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

48 Heath, Robert and Agnes Nairn. "Measuring Affective Advertising: Implications of Low Attention Processing on Recall." *Journal of Advertising Research* 45.2 (2005): 269-281. [ABI/INFORM Global](http://www.proquest.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/). ProQuest. Syracuse University Library. 27 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.proquest.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/>>. 10/15/08. 1

Implicit memory has...been shown to work conceptually; in other words, it can record and store simple meanings that we attach to what was perceived from our semantic memory store.

Implicit memory is unlikely to be able to exert much influence on purchase if it works in the perceptual mode alone, because no meaning will be attached to the perceptions that are stored. But if implicit memory can also process concepts, then it can store emotive values triggered from past experience alongside these perceptions. In this way we open up a theoretical route by which implicit memory on its own can influence intuitive brand choice.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, Heath and Nairn cite studies that have found implicit memory “to be superior to explicit memory in three... respects: It has been shown to be substantially more durable than explicit memory... it has been shown to be substantially more capacious than explicit memory... and... it has been shown to be independent of attention.”<sup>50</sup> Heath and Nairn conclude that:

Metrics based on recall are likely to work even less well when it comes to measuring advertising with a strong affective content. To examine this hypothesis we need to identify an intermediate metric that will be capable of measuring advertising that works affectively and inattentively, i.e., a metric that can tap into implicit memory.<sup>51</sup>

Heath and Nairn then argue that recognition is a more useful metric for assessing engagement:

Another test of memory that is extensively used in psychology because it is more powerful than recall and is much less dependent on attention... is recognition.

The value of using recognition is that it taps into both explicit and implicit memory, that means we can get a much better idea of the actual level of advertising exposure that has taken place.<sup>52</sup>

Communications scholar Erik du Plessis’s observations published in *The Advertised Mind: Ground-Breaking Insights Into How our Brains Respond to Advertising* mirror these findings. Du Plessis states that:

Recognition is an emotional task, and recall is a logical task. In other words, recognition makes use of the right hemisphere of the brain, that appears to be primarily concerned with emotional matters, and recall makes use of the left

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49 Heath and Nairn 5.

50 Heath and Nairn 5.

51 Heath and Nairn 6.

52 Heath and Nairn 6

hemisphere, where there is most activity when logical thought is required.<sup>53</sup>

If the prompt material is 'rich', and triggers lots of neural activity, the output (the memory triggered) is also likely to be rich. A stingy or indirect prompt (like the brand name) will generate relatively little output.<sup>54</sup>

The findings in both *The Advertised Mind* and *Measuring Affective Advertising* can be easily adapted to the measure of engagement in TV-for-the-Web programming. In *Interactivity in Society* Bucy states:

Routinizing interactivity by designating it as a perceptual variable...may encourage the concept's theoretical development by enabling empirical measurement through attitudinal and emotional scales and qualitative elaboration through focus group research and open-ended questions, allowing systematic knowledge about interactivity to accumulate."<sup>55</sup>

In the book *Digital Game-Based Learning* author Marc Prensky isolated 12 elements of the video game experience that lead to player engagement:

1. Fun, which give players enjoyment and pleasure
2. Play which gives players intense and passionate involvement
3. Rules which give players structure
4. Goals which give players motivation
5. Interactivity which gives players a sense of "doing"
6. Outcomes and feedback that gives players the opportunity to learn.
7. Games are adaptive which gives players a sense of "flow"
8. Win states, which give players ego gratification
9. Conflict/competition/challenge/opposition give players adrenaline
10. Problem solving which sparks player creativity
11. Interaction which allows players to participate on social groups
12. Representation and story that allow for emotional involvement.<sup>56</sup>

Further research needs to be undertaken to assess how such interactive variables can be manipulated to successfully create engaging new media content.

## **APPLICATION OF CONCEPT DEFINITIONS: INTERACTIVITY & ENGAGEMENT**

QUESTION: How should television content creators go about the reappropriation of

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53 Du Plessis, Erik. "Chapter 16: Recognition, Recall and Persuasion." *The Advertised Mind: Ground-Breaking Insights Into How our Brains Respond to Advertising*. <[http://www.aef.com/on\\_campus/classroom/book\\_excerpts/data/3010](http://www.aef.com/on_campus/classroom/book_excerpts/data/3010)>. 10/10/08. 2

54 Du Plessis 3.

55 Bucy 23.

56 Prensky 102.

old media content for new media delivery platforms?

Present attempts at incorporating interactivity into the new media environment have been focused on increasing choice as it relates to content delivery. We hold that additional opportunities for exploiting new media technology are being developed by video game authors and scholars.

Video game authors create highly sophisticated diegetic worlds informed by cinematic conventions. Yet the action that occurs within these worlds is organized around nonlinear narratives that lend themselves to segmentation. In the article “Video-Game Literacy” video game scholar Kurt D. Squire asserts that: Video games push the boundaries of interactivity, immersive environments, community design, and digital storytelling.<sup>57</sup>

Games are one—although perhaps *the* quintessential—site for studying digital literacies as a medium of *interactivity*...[v]ideo games are the medium of the computer, and in understanding them, we can understand what it means to think, act, and learn in simulated worlds.”<sup>58</sup>

In his explication of video game theory Squire identifies two distinct contexts through which video games may be understood:

The core organizing debates have centered on whether games should be studied from the perspectives of media studies (this orientation has been characterized as “narratology”) or as a form of play (this orientation is often called “ludology”... ).<sup>59</sup>

If applying the logic by which Bucy arrived at his concept definition for interactivity, researchers should approach video games using the media studies lens. Doing so brings to surface the key area of conflict that needs to be resolved before old media content can be successfully reappropriated: How does one incorporate interactivity into narrative? While video game scholars, particularly those who adhere to the ludologist view of gaming, hold that such integration “is neither obvious nor easy”<sup>60</sup> the field of narratology provides a useful filter through which to examine the issue.

Some narratologists hold that stories are linguistic and linear. But those advocating digital game-based learning are challenging this notion by deconstructing widely held assumptions about the function and form of narrative content. In reassessing the

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57 Squire, K. (in press). “[Video-game literacy: A literacy of expertise.](#)” To appear in J. Coiro, M. Knobel, D. Leu, & C. Lankshear, *Handbook of research on new media literacies*. New York: MacMillan. < <http://website.education.wisc.edu/kdsquire/tenure-files/04-video-game%20literacy.pdf>>. 10/10/08. 642

58 Squire 643.

59 Squire 644.

60 Prensky 124.

relationship between narrative and audience, forward-thinking media scholars strive to update outmoded notions of literacy so that the term reflects the realities of contemporary communication. In the new media world virtual space is accepted as a launching point for interactive narrative content.

In "Video-Game Literacy" Squire cites the findings of video game scholar Henry Jenkins who identified "four ways that games use space to create narrative"<sup>61</sup>:

1. Evocative stories (stories that reshape based on previous characters and media).
2. Enacted stories (Stories where players enact specific plot points)
3. Embedded narratives (games where narrative events are embedded in artifacts in the world)
4. Emergent narratives (narrative experiences that emerge as the result of simulation)

Squire notes that "[a] critical feature of these spaces...[is] that they evolve in response to users' actions."<sup>62</sup>

In *Engaging by Design* Dickey observes that "narrative has a long history of being embedded in game design" and that "among devices used to support gameplay are both plot-based and character-based narrative."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, "typical narrative devices that may be included within both plot-based and character-based storylines include backstory, cut scenes, flashbacks, foreshadowing, cliffhangers, and red herrings."<sup>64</sup>

In his masters thesis, *The Automatist Storytelling System*, new media scholar Michael Murtaugh identified two key questions that frequently arise in discussions about the convergence of interactivity and narrative:

1. Why should an author relinquish control over the narrative?
2. Why should a viewer want to exert control over the narrative?<sup>65</sup>

In answering the former question Murtaugh states:

[A]n author may be willing to release some control if in return such a loss provides additional benefits as prior constraints are removed...[a] program might need to be a specific length or be structured in a particular way to facilitate television scheduling. At the same time, filmmakers generally gather much more content than they can fit into their allotted time slots.<sup>66</sup>

The implications of this for the broadcasting industry are significant. With viewers able to control access to, duration of, and level of interaction with content, it is vital for new media content creators to exploit video game technology, design, and navigation

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61 Squire 646.

62 Squire 646.

63 Dickey 73.

64 Dickey 73.

65 Murtaugh. "The Automatist Storytelling System." Masters Thesis, MIT Media Lab. < <http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~murtaugh/thesis/Introduction/Introduction.html>>. 11/10/08. 2

66 Murtaugh 2.

techniques to create TV-on-the-Web programs that induce prolonged flow states. Such programs are now possible due to the opportunities for sophisticated, adaptable storytelling enabled by new media technology. Murtaugh observes that:

Lacking information about a specific viewer's interest or knowledge, the author is similarly asked to tailor story content to a vague notion of "broad interest" or appeal. The result is an absence of any significant depth on issues not believed to be of general interest.

In sum, lowest common denominator programming places depth of content in inverse relation to breadth of audience; the result is shallow and disjoint "sound bite" programming...relinquishing certain aspects of authorial control enables viewers to form a more personal and meaningful connection to the story. In this way, interactivity may function to increase viewer engagement with the narrative by facilitating a specific viewer's knowledge and viewing situation. As a form that supports multiple meanings, the interactive narrative has the potential to tell more complex and personally meaningful stories than those delivered to a mass audience.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, current attempts at incorporating interactivity into narratives have been disappointing due to their reliance on a hypermedia approach, that maps viewer actions "into story actions—placing the viewer in the role of a character."<sup>68</sup>

Murtaugh asserts that in hypermedia approaches to narrative interactivity "choices seem contrived and constrained and the experience seems flat and ultimately devoid of meaning."<sup>69</sup> Murtaugh advocates the use of Storytelling Systems, which "present an alternative to simple graph-structured hypermedia."<sup>70</sup>

The system uses descriptions of the content and built-in editing competencies to select and sequence materials dynamically. The Storytelling System provides hooks to make this sequencing process responsive to a viewer. Thus the Storytelling System is a kind of "editor in software" or "narrative engine" -- a computer program capable of constructing responsive narratives based on the content and description provided by an author.<sup>71</sup>

Murtaugh offers the *Automatist Storytelling System* as "one possible approach to building a Storytelling System":

The model presented in the *Automatist Storytelling System* is similarly content-driven and decentralized. Structure and meaning are considered emergent properties of the storytelling process. Rather than there being a central "conducting"

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67 Murtaugh. 2-3.

68 Murtaugh 3.

69 Murtaugh 3.

70 Murtaugh 5.

71 Murtaugh 5.

process, sequencing decisions result from the interacting effects of individual material presentations.

...the approach uses keywords as a means of indirectly defining potential links between materials. During the presentation process, keywords function in parallel, pushing and pulling the narrative toward and away from specific pieces of content.<sup>72</sup>

Yet, it is vital that end users always have an option to remove themselves from overly challenging interaction with program content. In *Interactivity in Society*, Bucy observes that “[o]nline, interactive features may exact a considerable cognitive and emotional cost by demanding more patience, expertise, and cognitive resources of the user, increasing the likelihood of confusion, frustration, and reduced memory,”<sup>73</sup> thus the system by which interactivity is incorporated into content must be adaptive to the end-user’s skills, expectations, and desire for interactivity.

Ideally interactive content systems will also be instructive in that they should teach end-users how to use the system. As end-users become more sophisticated in their use of new media technology, the opportunities for interactivity should increase. Thus, the experience of “play” can be incorporated into interactive new media systems by making skill enhancement a key component of the new media experience, with access to additional content presented as a reward.

By incorporating opportunities for “play,” new media content can be structured in a way that will induce end-users to surf deeper into it. As in a video game, getting to the next level will result in acquisition of additional content. Adaptable systems such as the *Automatist Storytelling System* and the music genome project allow for personalization of content and offer many opportunities for product placement.

A message-based perceptual definition of interactivity suggests the key to creating a successful TV-for-the-Web paradigm rests on improving person-to-machine interaction. Optimal new media person-to-machine interactivity should make few demands of the end-user and be intuitive in that it is able to anticipate the end-users desire for content. As Bucy observes in *Interactivity in Society*, to “make gainful use of interactive media” new media content creators will have to consider how the content delivery systems adapt to ensure the “challenges presented by the medium” are consistent with the “skills, motivations, and competencies” of the end-user<sup>74</sup>.

It seems most likely that new media content that successfully integrates interactivity into narrative will result from the video game industry’s attempts at expanding their range of content. Possibly, DVDs of popular films and television shows will be tailored for the video game platform. Thus, video game consoles may become a conduit for an expanding range of content aimed at highly sophisticated new media users.

The potential for video game design and theory in creating interactivity in new media environments extends beyond the creation of TV-on-the-Web programs. Video

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72 Murtaugh 5-6.

73 Bucy 25.

74 Bucy 27.

game theory and design is also useful in conceptualizing movement within virtual space because the symbols and visual signals employed in video games can be utilized to coherently navigate through any kind of content.

## STUDY FOCUS

There are several yet-to-be-tested variables regarding new media reappropriations. Specifically, various designs and frameworks for interactivity, frameworks for old media content and levels of engagement are frontiers just now being explored. In some way, this made the decisions of what to study and how to study it more difficult, as any investigation would open up several new doors. As such, we decided early on that our focus would be on determining: does interactivity increase engagement?

To arrive at an answer we needed to create an opportunity for interactivity and we needed to decide on a way in which to measure engagement. Since our focus has been on new media reappropriations of old media content, we isolated the specific merging of television and the Internet. Television shows are currently available in great quantity on various Internet sites like hulu.com and abc.com. They were the most obvious choice, providing old media content; the show in question, with a burgeoning new media format; the Internet. As such, we established an Internet-delivered television show as our basic testing template. Furthermore, this format provided us with a chance to manipulate the opportunities for interactivity.

To measure the engagement of these subjects, we elected to focus on recall. Granted, there is a great amount of debate about recall vs. recognition. However, recognition testing is based on repeated exposure. Given the constraints of our fledgling test, we would only have the subjects once. Recall would provide a way to determine whether or not the subject really gleaned anything from the episode in question. In short, the more engaged they were, the more they would recall. And, according to our theory, the more they interacted with the program, then more engaged they would be.

## METHOD

### 1. Testing Instruments/Procedure

To determine which program to target for our testing template, we had to consider the interests of the potential subjects. A show had to be selected that would be likely to reach a basic threshold of interest for our subjects; something that would hold their interests enough to keep them watching to some degree, even as their opportunities for interactivity varied. We chose *Grey's Anatomy*. A popular show, it was likely to meet with some baseline level of interest from a larger audience. We settled on episode 3 of season 1.

Two initial testing templates were established as a starting point for our study. The first allowed *Grey's Anatomy* (ep. 3, season 1) to be viewed as a regular program on the Internet. Banner ads for various commercial entities were displayed for the duration of the show. The only breaks in the narrative occurred during periodic commercials. This was the control template; utilizing a baseline level of interactivity and representing the current format of the TV-Internet convergence.

In the second template we offered more opportunities for interactivity. In this model, when breaks occurred, no ads appeared. Instead subjects were given the opportunity to continue with the host narrative or select a secondary embedded narrative that provided

a back story to what they had just viewed. The embedded narratives/back stories came from episodes 1 and 2 of season 1. The second template allowed us to begin isolating the effects of variations in narrative format.

After viewing the episode, each subject was then moved to another room and asked to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire asked about demographics (age, sex, etc) and program content/ad content. Other questions included previous program viewership, and media technology usage (had they ever seen *Grey's Anatomy*? Had they ever watched TV on the Internet?)

The content-based questions were trivia questions of varying difficulty that we developed. All of the content-based questions were culled from episode 3, so that there would be no bias from one template to the next. The theory, however, was that for those willing to explore the back stories, personal involvement and interest in the characters would increase, making the content based questions easier to answer.

Upon completion of the questionnaires, we scored the content section 0 for an incorrect answer and 1 for a correct answer. A total of 46 TV content questions were asked. A recall index score was created by dividing the summed score by 46 and multiplying the product by 100. Index scores of accurate responses were compared across the two test templates, gender and personal experience watching the show. Higher index scores indicated higher recall and, theoretically, higher engagement. The same procedure was performed with the questions about the banner ads (a total of 10 ad content questions).

## 2. Sample Selection

As content delivery formats evolve, a population of varied demographics (age, sex, etc) will be affected. It may well be that a younger age group will be a major target of these evolving formats. Testing in a university, this youthful subpopulation is present in great frequency. As such we elected to focus our study on a nonprobability (specifically volunteer convenience) sample of 18-26 year olds enrolled in a NE mid-sized university. Subjects were recruited from introductory communication courses. A secondary advantage of studying this sample was that some subjects had experience watching old media in a new media format; TV on the Internet. As such, the potential usage gap was not as large. Variations in test results would, theoretically, have less to do with unfamiliarity with the testing template models and more to do with the isolated factor of interactivity.

We did not set an upper range for our sample size. Given that it was a volunteer, convenience sample, we understood that our resources (subjects) were limited. We hoped for an initial minimum of six to ten subjects to analyze our results in a way that would allow us to take continued steps in future studies. A total of 20 students participated in our study, seven in template/test instrument one and 13 in template/test instrument two.

Our test intended to study whether or not interactivity increases engagement. Our study, beyond asking the participants questions relating to the narrative in test instruments one and two and advertisements in instrument one, also gathered demographic information. There were factors of particular interest in this study that would a.) affect the subject's ability to remember details and b.) increase or minimize usage gaps. These included media technology usage such as television, desktop, laptop, iPod, cell phone, console games, portable games and TiVo. We ran t-tests comparing program question

and ad question results for template 1 and comparing program question results for template 1 and template 2. Correlations were run between specific technology use and questionnaire scores. Probability levels were initially set at  $p < .05$ .

## RESULTS

Ability to remember details:

1. We assessed each test subject's familiarity with *Grey's Anatomy*. Any familiarity with the program, its characters, its ongoing storylines or previous viewership would theoretically increase the likelihood of answering the program recall questions correctly. To account for this, we ran a correlation between recall scores and previous viewing of *Grey's Anatomy*.

Results indicated there is not a significant impact on the viewer's previous viewership of a television show. The participant who scored the highest percentage of program recall questions correctly self-reported as someone who has never watched ABC's *Grey's Anatomy* before. Although the subjects who were considered to be dedicated viewers had fairly high scores, the correlation of all viewers indicates that perhaps having a previous knowledge of the shows plot lines and characters may not play a significant factor in determining what directly affects a viewer's level of engagement. What the correlation did show, that may be good news for content creators, is that a person may become engaged without having previously watched an episode of a television program.

2. In assessing each test subject's ability to remember program and commercial content we found that program question scores were significantly higher than advertisement question scores (average: 52.5 vs 34.3,  $t=19.74$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Clearly, when subjects tune in to watch TV (online or connected via broadcast or cable) they do so to watch programs and not ads.

B. Usage Gap size:

One detail about this potential convergence of video game design with narrative content that we have known from the commencement of this study is that in order to encourage users to explore narrative opportunities, they have to be made aware those narrative opportunities exist. Regular gamers are theoretically more comfortable with disruption within a narrative, thus they would be more familiar/comfortable with high interactivity content. Similarly, regular viewers of online television would also be more comfortable than old media users with the evolving format of the episodic narrative, that offers opportunities to branch off into back stories of characters. To account for these different preferences and experiences in delivery, we ran a correlation between the program question test score and what we labeled as skilled viewers. We defined the skilled viewers as those who regularly watch TV online and/or considered themselves proficient in video gaming, whether they own a gaming console or a portable gaming system.

The correlation between skill level and the percentage of correct program recall questions indicated those who have a high skill level performed better on the program recall questions. There were three people who decided to explore the back stories within the narrative of test instrument two, and those three people were considered to have a high

skill level. Perhaps these three people felt comfortable enough to venture outside of the host episode due to their familiarity with disruption within a narrative. Since they chose a path to become more engaged with the program, it may be the reason why the participants with a high skill level performed better on the program questions. If a person is more engaged, they are more likely to notice detailed elements of the episode embedded within the plot line as well as in props, costumes and sets.

### C. Interactivity/Engagement:

Finally we addressed the research question that most directly assessed whether interactivity increases viewer engagement. The t-test showed that question scores for the interactive TV program were higher than that of the regular program (averages: 59.2 vs 52.5). While this was in the direction predicted and represents a promising finding, the result was significant at the  $p < .10$  level and not  $p < .05$  level ( $t = 1.76$ ,  $df = 18$ ). Perhaps with a larger group of subjects, a more definitive result would be obtained.

Placing advertisements within a program did not seem to have an impact on viewer engagement. Placing breakout narratives within a program seemed to increase viewer engagement. Since this was an explorative study, our findings were promising but not definitive. With more time, resources and further research, there may be opportunities to test for viewer engagement in interactive online TV programming.

Our study limitations included using a convenience sample of students who may not be representative of the online TV viewing population. We also had a small sample of 20 subjects and did not explore interactive advertising content. Since this is an exploratory study, our results do point to the promise of interactive programming providing a more engaging environment for the viewer. This needs to be researched and confirmed in future studies.

## CONCLUSION

There is great potential in using video game technology, design, and theory in developing future testing instruments. In *Interactivity in Society*, Bucy cites a study that found that:

The rise in “telewebbing” and “multitasking”...among young media users suggests that audience segments accustomed to interactive experiences come to expect a certain level of hands-on engagement and create it for themselves when it can't be found in one medium alone....the resulting fracturing of attention has, according to media critics, caused content producers to create faster-paced, more visually oriented productions with a fragmented story structure intended to stave off restlessness.”<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, Bucy asserts that “for interactivity to succeed as a concept, it must have some meaningful social and psychological relevance....what is missing from the literature is a broad statement of interactivity's common patterns of impacts on users.”<sup>76</sup> A relevant question that our study does not address is the effect of repeated exposure to

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75 Bucy 28.

76 Bucy 29.

highly interactive media on an end-user.

Aside from societal concerns, further investigation of the relationship between interactivity and engagement is warranted due to the current upheavals affecting the media industry. In addition to increasing viewer engagement, the adaption of video game technology within reappropriated old media content could greatly increase the opportunity for the kind of product integration that recent studies have shown highly influence new media users.

The 2005 Nielsen entertainment report on in-game advertising found that in regard to video games:

Product integration helps drive awareness and recall, but also uncovers a new variable, pervasiveness, that contributes to driving brand awareness as well...the combination of product integration and pervasiveness results in a high degree of persuasion.<sup>77</sup>

A study released June 2008 conducted by new media research firm Interpret LLC found the gaming audience has a “consistently positive opinion of [in-game] ads and how the ads affect their game experience.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the IGA-Nielsen Study of in-game ads found “most consumers reacted positively to in-game ads:” and t “there was an average 61 percent increase in consumers’ favorable opinions of products advertised in-game post-play.”<sup>79</sup>

Clearly, the future possibilities of video game theory technology could have a tremendously positive impact on the way advertisement messages are received by online end users if the products are viewed favorably within a program. In order for content creators to be able to replicate these results to apply to television programming on the Internet, further research is warranted.

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# PODCASTING: A SUPPLEMENTAL LEARNING AID

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## OVERVIEW

The purpose of this paper is to examine the benefits of supplementing the classroom environment with podcasting technology. Students today are not the same learners as previous generations. There is mounting evidence that students born after 1982 have a different relationship with information and learning than do previous generations as a result of their access to the Internet and computer based-enabled technologies (Smith, 2007)(Rogers, Runyon, Starrett, & Von Holzen, 2006). Teaching today's students requires communicating with them and keeping their attention while they live their lives in high gear, with access to music, video, and friends on demand (Smith, 2007).

The nature of listening to content "playable on demand" (POD) became a cultural phenomenon as students' utilized mobile technologies such as iPods, MP3 players, cell phones, and laptop computers to download music. Some in academia saw potential value in listening to content playable on demand through time shifted learning and initiated projects to record lectures for students.

As with any educational technology, whether and how podcasting impacts the quality of the learning experience and/or educational outcomes depends largely upon how the technology is put to use. David Thornburg adds, "How you use technology in education is more important than if you use it at all." (King & Gura, 2009) Professors and universities will need to independently access podcasting and independently evaluate its potential.

Podcasting is a means of publishing audio and video content on the web as a series of episodes with a common theme. A published episode is accompanied by an RSS feed (Really Simple Syndication) that allows listeners to subscribe to the series and receive new episodes automatically (Deal 2007). The RSS file differentiates podcasting from simply storing audio files on the Web. There are three general categories of activities and equipment involved in podcasting: file production, podcast publication, and delivery and playback (Deal 2007).

Podcasting is a rapidly growing method of delivering audio and video content online (Gribbins 2007). The Communications

Executive Council (2006) predicts an estimated 56.8 million podcast users in the United States are expected by the end of this decade. According to Chan, Lee & McLoughlin (2006) the increasing ubiquity of MP3-capable devices in mainstream society is fuelling the growth of podcasting in general, and in particular, educational podcasting.

Ashley Deal (2007) reports *In Teaching with Technology*, educational podcasting falls into three categories. The most commonly discussed is creating audio or video archives (coursecast) of classroom lectures. The second category of educational podcasting involves the delivery of supplemental course materials. Supplemental materials might include summaries highlighting important information, audio or video reviews of assignments, or relevant interviews. Finally, many instructors have developed assignments requiring students to produce and submit their own podcasts.

Since the podcasting experiment by Duke University in 2005 where freshman students were given iPods, other universities quickly adopted the technology (Tyre 2005). The early use of podcasting focused on recording lectures of large classes to be stored and replayed by students on their iPods. This process was labeled course casting. “Course casting delivers traditional components of higher learning in a format kids love—“the MP3” most have been downloading their favorite songs onto their iPods or MP3s since high school.” states Peg Tyre

The nature of listening to content playable on demand is a cultural phenomenon as students’ utilize mobile technologies such as wireless telephones, iPods, MP3 players, and laptop computers to download music. Many professors realized the potential value of time shifted learning and initiated projects to record lectures for students. Podcasting has the potential to provide many benefits to educators. It provides professors with a low-cost method to distribute timely audio content seamlessly to students. At the same time, podcasting offers students additional opportunities to learn course content, with the benefit of being at times and locations convenient to them. (Gibbins, 2007)

Brock Read, in an October 28, 2005 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, writes “More and more professors, are turning to the technology to record their lectures and send them to their students, in what many are calling course casting. Morales & Moses (2006) noted podcasting has revolutionized education and particularly higher education by enabling up-to-date content, addressing multiple intelligences, and allowing for the anytime/anywhere delivery of instructional content.

However podcasting has spurred debate over its usefulness. The primary benefit is the usefulness of academic podcasts as study aids; the main drawback concerns podcasts impacting attendance in the classroom. The goals of this project were to learn about the benefits and drawbacks of using podcasting in production type courses, to raise awareness of the academic uses of podcasting, and to start a discussion of key questions surrounding this educational technology. In this report, I look at the informal results of an examination of using podcasting as a supplement learning aid in the radio production course at Howard University.

The results I present here were gathered in a quick, low-stakes evaluation; this is not formal research and should not be taken as such. This project was totally done at my own expense. Due to the small number of participants involved, this report does not offer any definitive conclusions. What it does offer is a starting point for exploring the educational aspects of this technology in production related media courses.

## BACKGROUND

During spring semester 2006, I wondered how to use the Internet to impact the learning experience in the radio production course and motivate students to engage themselves more creatively in the art of production for radio. As the instructor, I was disappointed in the audio productions being submitted by the students. Several students indicated a fear of the equipment, employment obligations, and time conflicts prohibited them from spending more time in the training studios. Many of the students stated they forgot how to operate the controls in the studios. Through observation it was discovered a majority of the students owned a laptop computer, MP3 player, and cell phone. It was then that I thought to employ the web as an assistant in teaching and reaching the student.

In May 2006, I discovered podcasting and began researching the process. In July 2006, the Teacher in the Pocket Podcast was created. The podcast was designed as a supplement to the lectures and assigned readings in the radio production course. Additionally, the podcasts were intended to reinforce procedures in the production labs, provide study guides for tests, and capture interviews of radio broadcasting personnel. The goal of the podcasts was to reach the student where they are with the technology they are used to and provide a portable 24/7 availability of teaching instruction.

The first concern was developing a podcast production that interested, entertained, and informed students. Additionally, I noted and stated that the Teacher in the Pocket was not a substitute for class attendance. In the pre-production phase I decided not to record an entire class lecture; this was done to insure regular class attendance. Instead of recording the entire class lecture, summaries of the lecture main points and production room operating procedures were produced as podcasts.

Another concern was whether or not I would utilize the university BlackBoard system to distribute the podcasts. I opted to use a third party vendor for hosting the podcasts. There was no cost for using outside vendors and since podcasting was still in the embryonic stages there were several vendor options available. Learning and understanding the podcasting process, control of the production and distribution were priorities. The companies I selected were SwitchPod.com for the podcast hosting and Free Servers.com for website hosting; both companies offered limited services for free.

Creating the podcast was accomplished through the use of several digital audio software programs and digital audio recorders. Adobe Audition, Digidesign Pro Tools, GarageBand, and Audacity were used to create programs. Several digital recorders were used; Olympus Digital Voice Recorder, Marantz compact flash recorder, Sony Minidisc recorder, and the Zoom H2 recorder.

Recording audio to the computer and using a digital recorder can be simple or complex depending on the experience of the user. The recording ability of digital audio recorders has improved tremendously in the last two years. Many units come equipped with great microphones for recording interviews. Digital audio software programs are designed to deliver the highest quality audio for distribution on the Internet. A variety of audio file saving/compression schemes are standard with digital audio software.

Deciding on which file saving/compression scheme is best depends on the podcast, the software being used, and what computer is being used. For Windows-based computers MP3 or wma(windows media audio) can be used. For Mac computers MP3 or AAC can be used.

Several studio equipment options can also be engaged. Recording to the computer can be set up to reflect a traditional analog studio design with microphone, mixer, and signal processors connected to the recording unit or computer. Or the studio set up can be as simple as a good quality USB microphone connected to the computer. Several manufacturers have created high quality USB microphones. The Audio Technica AT2020 is a great microphone. Also, the Zoom H2 compact digital recorder functions as a USB Mic.

How and what equipment is used depends on the experience of the creator of the podcast. I experimented with different equipment in several recording scenarios and found selecting the best equipment for the particular situation is most important. A basic understating of recording audio is necessary. Digital recorders have tremendous audio recording capabilities and the sound from these devices, when used correctly, is incredible.

In my experiences I prefer using equipment with a fast learning curve that produced the highest quality audio and connected directly to the computer via USB connection or removable SD Flash card. This data storage flexibility allows instant access to audio stored on the device for fast and easy audio editing.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Teacher in Pocket Podcast was first launched during fall semester 2006. Most of the initial year was spent determining how to design an effective podcast, determining the appropriate length of each episode, and how much production value for each episode. To further develop the podcast production a review of some literature on the use of audio in learning was researched and students were required to write a brief summary of the podcasts they listened to for extra credit. Of the 28 students taught during the academic year only 20 supplied written summaries. The feedback from the 20 students in the initial year was the basis for podcast improvement. The written summaries helped create and develop podcasts that students found more attractive, entertaining, and informative. The most important revelation in producing the podcasts was not to over produce the production.

During the 2007-08 academic year, the free podcast hosting service was upgraded to a paid service for publishing podcasts. The paid service offered more comprehensive statics on podcast downloads and website visits. The initial podcasts were refreshed and new ones added. The production style was changed to a National Public Radio (NPR) style presentation; straightforward with a news-oriented appeal. In addition, the availability of the podcast was included in the syllabus. Students were encouraged to visit the podcasting sight on a regular basis for supplemental instruction. A link was added on my website for the podcasts and distribution was added to iTunes. At the end of the fall and spring semesters a paper survey was issued and students were given extra credit for submitting summaries. The survey results were analyzed and presented at the WSSA Convention in Denver, Colorado in May 2008.

Mobile technology advanced tremendously in the summer of 2007 with the introduction of Apple's iPod Touch, iPhone 3G, and HD technology. Podcast hosting sites immediately adapted to the new technologies creating options for utilizing video. Video podcasts or Vodcasts were introduced to the Teacher in the Pocket series. The addition of video podcasts brought appeal to the visual learners. The video podcasts produced

for the Teacher in the Pocket series required utilizing video editing and screen capture software.

The pilot Teacher in the Pocket video presentation was produced to demonstrate how to operate the equipment in the control rooms. Other video productions were produced on a variety of audio production and editing procedures. Students were able to contact the professor with specific questions regarding audio editing and provided feedback through video demonstrations emailed directly to the student.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the podcasting surveys were both encouraging and disappointing. Over a period of four semesters 40 students participated in the survey. The encouraging aspect of the surveys was the feedback from students who listened to the podcasts. The discouraging aspect was that not all students in the class listened to a podcast or participated in the surveys. In the initial stages of the podcast experiment students showed no interest. The extra credit option did not motivate a majority of students to engage the technology and participate in the experiment.

Of the responses obtained, 52.2 percent of the students stated they had not listened to a podcast and were most concerned with the ease of downloading, audio quality, and time length of the episode. Short time lengths are preferable. Not only because of the time required to actually listen but the amount of space the podcast occupies on the iPod or other digital media storage. Surprisingly, only ten percent of students surveyed used iPods to download podcasts, while 90 percent of students used a laptop computer to download and listen to a Teacher In The Pocket episode.

When asked about the value of the podcast, 52 percent of the students strongly agreed the podcasts were valuable and 74 percent strongly agreed they would recommend the podcasts to other students. There was a noticeable increase in downloads from fall 2008 to spring 2009. More than half the students surveyed stated they listened to five or more podcasts. Conversely, 57.1 percent indicated that a class being podcast would have no affect on the decision to take the course.

Students submitted a wide variety of comments. Many agreed the audio quality was excellent, the production quality was excellent, and the video quality was excellent. Other comments revealed the content was entertaining and not preachy, easy to understand, and direct to the point.

Student used the podcasts to clarify concepts discussed in class, prepare for exams, catch up, access course materials conveniently, and help with production projects. Only one student responded to the Teacher In The Pocket podcast negatively.

Professors considering adopting the use of podcasts as a supplemental learning aid for classes must realize extra production time will be required. A professor who desires to provide a podcast must independently assess the value of the production. A major hurdle for a podcast production is creating the standard for the production. Once the standard is established more time can be devoted to producing great podcasts as opposed to learning the technology. Be flexible; there is an abundance of software and equipment available to produce a good quality podcast. Remember to study the basics of recording audio then strive to get the best from the equipment you are using. The great thing about podcasting is the technology is growing and digital audio recording

devices are constantly improving sound quality. Structured researched is now needed to determine if podcasting contributes to student learning.

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# WOMEN IN TELEVISION NEWS IN CHINA: PRESENCE, STORY ASSIGNMENT AND SOURCE SELECTIONS

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## ABSTRACT:

A content analysis of 20 episodes of CCTV News during a period of six months shows that women are treated discriminately in television news in China. Although women are predominately used as reporters in the newscast, female correspondents are segregated in story assignments. They are less likely than males to be assigned to cover “harder” news. Men are more likely than women to be quoted as expert sources. There is no significant difference between male and female reporters in their selection of men or women sources.

It is widely noticed that women are excluded from news media. If they do appear, they tend to be portrayed in stereotypical types. In the last several decades there has been an increase in the number of female media professionals entering the newsroom. This increase, however, does not translate to increased power in the media workplace. A plethora of studies have been done on women’s presence in television news in the United States and other countries but few have studied the situation in China. This study assesses how women are treated in television news in China and whether gender-related differences are manifested in news content.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

News production is a process affected by many factors. Newsroom socialization and communication accommodation standardize news reporting (Breed, 1955; Manzingo, 1988). Personal experiences and association contribute to differences in reporting practice (Flegal & Chaffee, 1971; Lynch-Paley, 1993; Liebler & Smith, 1997). Journalists tend to cover issues that are congruent with their own worldview (Hofstetter & Buss, 1978), and reporters’ selection of sources may reflect their own frames of references (Entman, 1993; Liebler & Smith, 1997). Where gender is concerned, men and women journalists may report news differently which may be attributed to their gendered life

experiences (Gilligan, 1982; Pearson, 1985).

Journalism was traditionally a male-dominated profession. There was a strong prejudice against women because of the common belief women were not authoritative (Sanders & Rock, 1994; Elmore, 2003). Partly due to the gender shift in journalism education, the number of women working in news media has increased dramatically since the 1980s (Beasley, 1987; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1992; Janis, 2001). The increased diversity is expected to improve the type and amount of coverage women receive and lead to the collapse of traditional gender roles (Beasley, 1989; Lumby, 1994), but workplace routines and some social factors mediate this impact. According to Creedon (1993), organizational routines and norms force reporters to conform to dominant values, even if they initially held opposing attitudes. Theorists of stereotyping also noted that discriminated persons participate in the same stereotypes that discriminated against them (Devine, 1989; Jost & Banaji, 1994). The hiring situation of women in news media shows that journalism is no longer an occupation exclusive of female professionals. However, given the long held perception of a masculine media culture, gender-related discrimination is still likely to exist in the operation of newsrooms. This discrimination may be sensed in story assignments and women's presence as reporters and sources.

## **WOMEN AS REPORTERS**

Previous studies have shown women are less visible than men as reporters in television news. In a 1989 study, Soderlund et al. examined public and private Canadian news stations for gender differences in presence as anchors and reporters, placement of story, and type of story assigned. They found that men anchored 57 percent of the time and reported 79 percent of stories. Based on the almost equal proportions of male and female anchors, the authors suggested that women might be hired to achieve a visible-on-air equality. In a comparative study of network correspondents and their sources, Liebler and Smith (1997) found that female journalists reported 32 percent of the news stories; evidence that women were underrepresented as news reporters. In 2001, Cann and Mohr also addressed female reporters' invisibility when analyzing 450 news stories broadcast by five Australian television networks over a period of one week. In their sample, male reporters covered 69.8 percent of the stories and women reported 30.2 percent.

## **STORY ASSIGNMENT**

Previous studies have shown that male and female reporters were assigned stories on the basis of gender (Singleton & Cook, 1982; Smith & Wright, 1998). Soderlund et al. (1989) found that men reported on 83 percent of lead stories and that male reporters tend to cover hard news (specific events) while female reporters covered more feature news (general events). Liebler and Smith (1997) noticed in their research that even in the narrow focus of U.S. public policy stories men and women reporters covered different topics. Women presented 53 percent of social issue stories but only 14 percent of foreign policy stories. In their study about Australian journalists, Cann and Mohr (2001) found male reporters dominated in politics and male sports while female reporters dominated in health topics. Irrespective of topic, men reported 82.4 percent of the lead stories. Based on the assumption that the lead story is generally the strongest and

the most newsworthy in the newscast, this finding suggested an association of male reporters with newsworthiness.

## **WOMEN AS SOURCES**

Women's roles as news sources have been addressed by many researchers and most of them have found evidence that television news sources were more likely to be male than female (Whitney et al., 1989; Ziegler & White, 1990; Larson & Bailey, 1998). Studies also found female sources were less likely than males to be shown in professional capacities (Davis, 1982; Silver, 1986). A content analysis revealed women were sources for less than 20 percent of news stories but they accounted for 40 percent of quotes from ordinary citizens (Media Report to Women, 2002). Liebler and Smith (1997) noticed in their study that both men and women reporters used professional titles more frequently for male sources than for female sources and male sources were more likely than female sources to appear in professional locales. Some researchers have tested whether there was any difference between men and women reporters in their selection of male or female sources but few of them got positive answers. One exception to this was a study about news source selection in newspapers. In a content analysis of ten years of three southern newspapers, Zoch and Turk (1998) found women reporters were more inclined than their male colleagues to include female sources in their stories.

## **FEMALE JOURNALISTS IN CHINA**

Like most countries in the world, journalism has been traditionally a male-dominated profession in China. A 1995 report on Chinese women working in media presented to the Non-governmental Organization Forum of the Fourth World Women's Conference held in Beijing that year showed women made up only 20 to 25 percent of the country's total media staff.

In past decades, promoted by an increase in the number of female journalism students in China, women's share in the country's media workforce has grown dramatically. According to the data about China as part of the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), women accounted for 69 percent of the total media staff in the country. Fifty-four percent of all journalists in China were female. Similar to the situation in America, however, the increased number of female journalists cannot be interpreted as an increase in women's power in reporting the news. Also as shown in the 2005 GMMP report, despite the large share women enjoyed as journalists and other media professionals, only 19 percent of news subjects were female, while males comprised 81 percent of all subjects covered in news stories. When present in the media, women frequently covered social, health, celebrity, and children's issues, while men predominately reported on politics, governmental employees, and business. Women reporters were active in almost every topic area from economics and crimes to sports and arts but took a backseat compared to men in politics and government issues. Of the subjects in news reported by female reporters, 27 percent were women. In male reporters' coverage, 20 percent of the subjects were women.

A content analysis of a series of television newscast can provide empirical evidence of the newsroom practice in China today and generate a clearer insight into the country's media picture.

## **CCTV NEWS**

CCTV News (Xin Wen Lian Bo in Chinese) is the core news-reporting program in China produced by the China Central Television station (CCTV). From its debut on Jan. 1, 1978, the program has been on screen for 30 years and evolved into one of the most important television programs in the country. On September 1, 1982, the central committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) mandated that all important news should be released initially on CCTV News making the program the official television news program controlled by the CPC government.

CCTV News is on live every day from 7:00 to 7:30 pm. If there are special events that require extra emphasis the program length may be extended accordingly. In addition to its premier on CCTV 1 and broadcasts on news, integration, and international channels of the CCTV, CCTV News is rebroadcast around the country several times in a day. As the official news program of the CPC government, CCTV News enjoys the largest viewership among all news programs, or even all TV programs, in the country. As one of the most important propaganda tools, contents and structures of CCTV News may have a great impact on the audience's perception of the real world. A study on how women are treated by CCTV News may provide insight into women's status in Chinese society and how the government wants the two genders to be represented in the media.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Women's presence in television news has been well documented. This study examines how women are involved in CCTV News as reporters and sources with the goal of determining whether any gender-related differences are manifested in the content of television news in China. Based on the literature, the following questions are posed:

**RQ1:** What is the presence of women as reporters and sources in CCTV News?

**RQ2:** Is there any segregation in the story assignments of female reporters in CCTV News?

**RQ3:** Are female sources less likely than male sources to be depicted in professional capacity?

**RQ4:** Is there any difference between male and female reporters in their selection of male or female news sources?

## **METHODS**

Twenty episodes of CCTV News broadcast from May to November 2008 were examined for their treatment toward women. The news programs were accessed on the Xinhua Website (<http://www.xinhuanet.com/video/xwlb.htm>) where each episode of CCTV News is uploaded several hours after it is first broadcast on TV nightly. Programs as recent as eight months ago are kept available. A content analysis focused on how many women were presented as correspondents and sources. A comparison was conducted between the themes of stories covered by male and female reporters in order to test if there was any assignment segregation between the two genders. Comparisons were also carried out to test if female sources were less likely than male sources to be used in professional capacities and whether there was any difference between male and female reporters in their selection of male or female news sources.

## **SAMPLING OF NEWSCASTS**

The 20 episodes of CCTV News were selected using a systematic random method. May 26th was drawn to be the starting date and the other 19 dates were decided with a sampling interval of nine. Therefore, dates of the CCTV News programs selected were: May 26, June 4, June 13, June 22, July 1, July 10, July 19, July 28, August 6, August 15, August 24, September 2, September 11, September 20, September 29, October 8, October 17, 1 October 26, November 4, and November 13.

## **CODING OF VARIABLES**

Each news clip was examined for the topic it covered and gender(s) of reporter(s) and source(s). Variables included 1) the ranked order of news clip in newscast; 2) gender of reporter; 3) story topic; 4) gender of source, and; 5) status of source (expert/non-expert). Reporter and source gender were determined on the basis of manifest content. Topic categories of news stories were decided on the basis of a preliminary content analysis of a ten percent sampling of stories (two episodes of the program). They were policy and law; politics and Communist Party-related issues; Sichuan earthquake and restoration; country development; economics; agriculture; society; Olympic Games preparation; crisis (flood, typhoon etc.); foreign affairs; children and education; culture and art; sports; role models; international news; and others. The categories requiring further explanation are society and role models. Society news referred to new happenings in everyday life in society. Examples of this category are reports about new traffic control methods and food contamination scandals. In addition to covering the latest news in the country, CCTV News has a tradition to dedicate part of its airtime to introducing Party members or individuals that are doing an outstanding job in their positions. Such coverage was categorized as role models for this study. The status of source was determined by whether both the title and the name of the source were given. If so, the source was regarded as expert; if not, non-expert.

The story topic coding was performed by the primary researcher and a graduate student majoring in organizational communication. A pretest of ten news bits showed an intercoder reliability of 85 percent.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Data**

A total of 456 news stories in the 20 episodes of CCTV News were examined. Of the 66 news clips where reporters appeared ( $n=66$ ), 25 (37.9 percent) had male reporters and 41 (62.1 percent) had female reporters. Regardless of whether reporters appeared in the news story and the reporter gender, the most covered news topic was politics and Communist Party-related issues (69); followed by international news (60); Sichuan earthquake and restoration (53), and; country development (53). Within the 150 news stories where sources were quoted, 115 (76.7 percent) used male sources, and 35 (23.3 percent) used female sources.

### **Research Question 1: What is the presence of women as reporters and sources in CCTV News?**

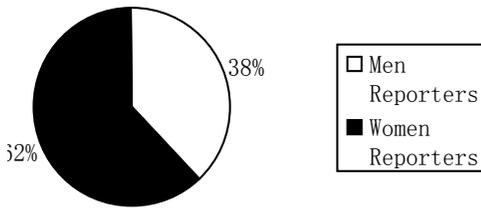
Among the 66 reporters that appeared in the 20 newscasts examined, 25 (37.9 percent) were men, and 41 (62.1 percent) were women. Women outnumbered men

three to two as reporters in the newscast sample.

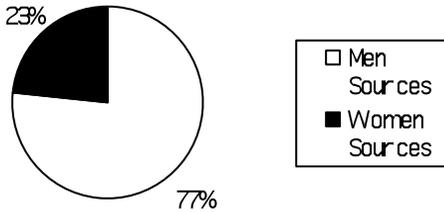
In the 150 sources quoted in the 456 pieces of news stories, 115 were men, making up 76.7 percent of the total, and 35 (23.3 percent) were women. Men were more likely than women to be used as sources in the sample of television news.

Charts 1 and 2 show gender compositions of reporters and sources in the sample examined.

**Chart 1 Gender Composition of Reporters**



**Chart 2 Gender Composition of Sources**



**Research Question 2 Is there any segregation in the story assignments of female reporters in CCTV News?**

Among the 25 news stories covered by male reporters the most common issue was Sichuan earthquake and restoration (14, 56 percent), followed by crisis (3, 12 percent). For females, the most covered issue among the 41 news stories where women appeared as reporters was Sichuan earthquake and restoration (13, 31.7 percent), followed by Olympic Games preparation (8, 19.5 percent).

According to the definition by Soderlund, Surlin, and Romanow (1989) that softer news stores are “of a general nature that remain viable over a longer period of time”, Olympic Games preparation; children and education; culture and art, and; role model issues covered in this sample can be regarded as softer news and others as hard news. Under this categorization, 24 out of the 25 stories covered by male reporters were harder news and 28 out of the 41 news stories reported by females could be regarded as harder ones. A Chi-square Goodness-of-Fit Test shows there was a statistically significant difference between men and women in their story assignments. Male reporters were more likely than female reporters to be assigned to cover harder news. (Chi-Square=7.13, df=1, p<0.05) Table 1 shows news categories covered by male and female reporters.

Table 1 News Categories by Genders

News Categories	Male Reporters		Female Reporters	
	Number of Story	Percentage among stories covered by the gender (%)	Number of Stories	Percentage among stories covered by the gender (%)
Policy & law	0	0	0	0
Politics & Communist Party issues	1	4	7	17.1
Sichuan earthquake and restoration	14	56	13	31.7
Country development	0	0	4	9.8
Economics	1	4	0	0
Agriculture	2	8	3	7.3
Society	1	4	0	0
Olympic Games preparation	0	0	8	19.5
Crisis (flood, typhoon etc.)	3	12	0	0
Foreign affairs	0	0	0	0
Children & education	1	4	4	9.8
Culture & art	0	0	0	0
Sports	0	0	0	0
Role models	0	0	1	2.4
International news	2	8	1	2.4
Others	0	0	0	0

### Research Question 3: Are female sources less likely than male ones to be depicted in professional capacity?

Among the 150 sources quoted in the sample, 76.7 percent were men, and 23.3 percent were women. This significant difference proves that men were more likely than women to be sourced in news reporting in China.

Based on the assumption that the citation of a source's title and name is an indication the individual is regarded as having professional status, sources used in the sample could be divided into two categories: expert and non-expert. Within the 115 male sources quoted, 85 (73.9 percent) had both their names and titles displayed on the screen and were coded as experts. However, among the 35 female sources used, only seven (20 percent) could be regarded as experts. This difference indicates that women were less likely than men to be depicted in professional capacity.

**Research Question 4: Is there any difference between male and female reporters in their selection of male or female news sources?**

There were all together 15 sources quoted in news stories covered by male reporters. Among them, 14 were male, and one was female. Within the 135 sources used by female reporters, 101 were men, 34 were women.

Both male and female reporters used more men sources than women sources and there was no significant difference between male and female reporters in their selection of source gender. (Chi-Square=2.589, df=1, p<0.05) Table 2 shows the gender shares of sources used by male and female reporters.

Table 2 Source Gender by Male and Female Reporters

Source Gender	Male Reporters		Female Reporters	
	Number of Source	Percentage among sources used by reporters of the gender (%)	Number of Source	Percentage among sources used by reporters of the gender (%)
Men	14	93.3	101	74.8
Women	1	6.7	34	25.2

**CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The findings indicate women were slightly predominant in the presentation of reporters in the sample of CCTV News examined. Their higher number, however, did not translate to increased power in news media. Women were segregated in their assignments of news stories and were more likely than their male colleagues to be assigned to cover softer news that was thought to be less newsworthy. There were serious inequities between men and women’s involvement as references in news reporting. Women were far less likely to be used as sources in CCTV News and were seldom quoted as experts. Reporters of both genders tended to use male sources more frequently than female ones and there was no significant difference between men and women in their selection of male or female sources.

These findings show that, despite the substantial number of females as journalists, women are still suffering from discrimination in newsroom practice though at a more subtle level than before. As the official television news in China and as an important propaganda tool of the government, CCTV News may be making an extra effort to balance gender shares in its reporting assignments and content arrangements, with the goal to reflect the CPC’s focus on gender emancipation. Given the long-held belief in Chinese culture and society that women are inferior to men in terms of both mental and physical abilities, it is not easy to keep all differences that may be attributed to gender factors from influencing media practices. It can be inferred then that CCTV News is including more and more women reporters to achieve on-the-air diversity but is not psychologically prepared to accept female journalists as equals to male reporters. The subconscious prejudice against women leads media management and news directors to treat male and female reporters differently. Such organizational practices

reinforce the stereotypes cast on women journalists in terms of their incompetence and inability as compared to men.

Of course, such discriminative practices cannot be fully attributed to news organizations. Prejudices in society as a whole contribute greatly to the formation of unfair professional practices. Deeply influenced by the Confucian teaching that women are born inferior to men, Chinese culture and society have a long history of discriminative treatment toward men and women. Although gender equality is a priority with the CPC government, gender discrimination remains a common social practice in today's China. Despite the large number of women professionals in political and business fields, few females hold high-ranking management positions. Women are still expected to focus on family life as opposed to career pursuits and occupational accomplishments achieved by women are usually regarded as insignificant.

Gender discrimination in news media is consistent with the general practice of Chinese society. Although great efforts have been made by the government and professional management to achieve equal treatment of men and women, there is still a long way to go. The media plays an important role in this campaign for human rights. Along with its own struggle for gender equality in news reporting and other professional practices, the media must attempt to promote social awareness with its media products.

#### Limitations and Future Research

As a preliminary exploration, the news sample selected in this study was not encompassing enough to be representative of the CCTV News as a whole, let alone the entire television news industry in China. The period of time from which the sample was selected was special because of the Beijing Olympic Games and the Sichuan earthquake that occurred May 12, 2008. The content of television news in China during this period was different than usual; this influenced the reliability and validity of the results.

Future research may be done using a larger sample of CCTV News selected from a more typical time period. An analysis of women's images portrayed in news stories can provide a clearer insight into how the female gender is treated in the media and in the country as a whole.

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# COMPETITION AND REGULATORY POLICY IN THE U.S. MULTICHANNEL VIDEO PROGRAMMING DISTRIBUTION (MVPD) INDUSTRY: BASED ON THE HISTORY OF THE DIRECTV CORPORATION

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## ABSTRACT

The Direct Broadcasting Satellite (DBS) industry has developed extensively and is still undergoing development due to the unique way it delivers high quality video service to millions of customers through 18-inch dishes. Among various DBS operators, DirecTV has played a critical role in the development of direct broadcasting satellite service and multichannel video programming distribution (MVPD) industry in the United States.

In light of the evolution of DirecTV Corporation, this essay discusses the technological progress, competition, and related policies that have been developed with the history of the DirecTV in the U.S. MVPD industry.

## INTRODUCTION

The Direct Broadcasting Satellite (DBS) industry has developed extensively and is still undergoing development due to the unique way it delivers high quality video service to millions of customers through 18-inch dishes. Among the various DBS operators, DirecTV has played a unique role in the development of the DBS service and multichannel video programming distribution industry in the U.S. The launch of DirecTV offered the first opportunity to rural consumers who were not served by cable to access television programming like urban and suburban counterparts (“Who we are,” n.d.). In addition, according to Comor (1998), DirecTV also has affected the development of the Global Information Infrastructure (GII). Thus, it could be argued the development of DirecTV has already influenced

our current multichannel media and information technology environments. This essay examines the evolution of the DirecTV Corporation and discusses the technological progress, competition, and related policies in the MVPD industry that have been developed due to DirecTV.

## **PHASE1: BIRTH AND EXPANSION (1990-1996)**

GM Hughes Electronics (GMHE) acquired General Dynamics' missile business in 1992 and hired former IBM executive Michael Armstrong as CEO. He reduced personnel by 25 percent and refocused the company on commercial electronics ("History," 2004). Later, GMHE became Hughes Electronics Inc. As a subsidiary of General Motors (GM), Hughes Electronics Inc. began a direct broadcasting satellite service in 1994.

Direct TV officially began its service in June 1994 since Hughes Communications had prepared the launch of the advanced Galaxy 1 satellite in 1983 ("Hartenstein," 1992). Hughes Communications launched DBS-1 December 17, 1993 (Anonymous, 1993). That was the first high-power direct broadcast satellite for the operation of DirecTV. In addition, the company launched the second satellite in summer, 1994. DirecTV chose RCA/Thomson<sup>1</sup> to manufacture its equipment (Bolton, 1995). Eddy Hartenstein, the senior vice president of Hughes Communications, authored most of Hughes Communications' initial business plans to provide consumers with "a more individual choice and specialized video services not available through any other means" ("Harten," 1992). He promised investors the high quality standard such as digital-picture sharpness and CD-quality audio service (Bolton, 1995).

## **SEEKING EXPANSION**

DirecTV had no choice but to provide appealing contents to its customers. That was the first step necessary for the success of its business. Obtaining quality programming was important yet, at the same time, a key obstacle because it involved dealing with the company's competitors. In many cases, program providers were controlled by their parent companies. Fortunately the Cable Act of 1992 mandated access to programming (Bolton, 1995). Initially, Hughes Communications signed programming contracts with the Disney Channel and Paramount Pictures in January 1993 to begin its service (Cole, 1993). DirecTV thought its programs should be strong enough to steal urban area viewers from cable services. Moreover, strong programming was definitely necessary to make subscribers pay the expensive service fees for the dish and decoder. After having contracts with Disney and Paramount Pictures, DirecTV contracted with several other business entities to enable the successful launch of the service. The company signed distribution agreements with five Turner Broadcasting System Inc. services—CNN, Headline News, Cartoon Network, Superstation TBS, TNT, as well as with other cable television networks—USA network, Sci-Fi Channel, TNN, CMT, Family Channel ("Marketing," 1993), and the Physicians Television Network (PTN) (Martin, 1993).

In addition to program contracts with program providers, DirecTV needed to complete its system facility and build the DirecTV Broadcast Operation Center in

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1 Thomson had exclusive rights with DirecTV to manufacture the first million digital satellite system (DSS) units (Martin, 1995).

Castle Rock, Colorado (“DirecTV,” 1994). As a result of these efforts, DirecTV gained a high percentage of subscribers in rural areas during the first year of operation<sup>2</sup> (Bolton, 1995). The growth was due to expanded program offerings with the launch of DirecTV’s third satellite, DBS-3<sup>3</sup>, in June, 1995. In September 1995, DirecTV also added Bravo, Home and Garden Television, Black Entertainment Television, The History Channel, The Home Shopping Network, International Film Channel, NewSport, and Midwest Sports Channel (Martin, 1995).

In October 1995, Hughes Electronic Corporation began a \$3 billion global expansion plan in video and television transmission (Cole, 1995). That move was considered to defend its video-and-data transmission businesses from increasingly aggressive rivals such as PanAmSat Corporation who was expanding rapidly the business of international video transmission. Hughes Electronics bought a majority stake of PanAmSat in 1996 (“History,” 2004).

## EARLY BATTLES

In its early years, the primary competitor of DirecTV was Prime Star—the sole DBS system in the U.S. until 1994 (Comor, 1998). In 1990, PrimeStar was established through a joint-venture<sup>4</sup> partnership involving five of the largest cable multiple system operators (MSOs) in the United States such as Time Warner, Inc., TeleCommunications, Inc., Comcast Corporation, Cox Communications, Inc., US West/Media One, and PrimeStar’s satellite provider, GE American Communications Inc. (Rubinfeld, 2000). The number of PrimeStar service channels was nearly 90 (Piiro, 1995) but that number was still less than DirecTV. Moreover, PrimeStar required a larger dish than DirecTV’s 18-inch (Piiro, 1995). Despite superior advantages in terms of the large number of channels and small sized antenna, DirecTV could not maintain its superiority simply because of PrimeStar’s cost saving. For example, subscribers to DirecTV paid \$700 to \$900 to purchase the dish and decoder plus a \$30 monthly subscription fee whereas PrimeStar subscribers paid only \$200 initially plus a subscription fee of \$30 to \$50 per month (Piiro, 1995).

Eventually, a reduction in the price of direct satellite service equipment led to the increase of consumer interests in DirecTV. Thomson Consumer Electronics initiated the price reduction in August 1995 with a \$100 rebate program that reduced the cost

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2 In 1994, DirecTV provided its subscribers with the first programming service of football games and attracted more than 200,000 subscribers. Due to the success of its football service, during the fall in 1995, DirecTV offered another National Football League package, which gave football fans a chance to watch nearly every NFL games nationwide during the 16-week season (Pulliam, 1995).

3 DBS-3 was designed to give DirecTV the ability to provide data service and limited Internet access (Martin, 1995).

4 Originally, the venture was called K Prime Partners. In K Prime Partners, there were total nine cable multiple system operators (MSOs). The nine MSOs were American Television and Communications (ATC), Comcast Cable, Continental Cablevision, Cox Cable Communications, Newhouse Broadcasting, TeleCommunications Inc. (TCI), United Artists Entertainment, Viacom Cable, and Warner Cable (Elasmer, 1995).

of DBS service to \$599 (Martin, 1995). Because of the cost reduction, DirecTV signed up 85,000 new subscribers in August 1995 and 50,000 new subscribers in July of the same year (Pulliam, 1995). In addition Southwestern Bell Telephone acted as a reseller of direct satellite service equipment for DirecTV (Meyers, 1995). In September in 1995, Southwestern Bell began reselling and renting direct satellite service equipment including an 18-inch satellite dish, a digital decoder box, and a remote control unit so by the end of 1995 DirecTV had nearly 500,000 subscribers. By contrast, PrimeStar served nearly 1.9 million subscribers providing more than 150 video and audio channels with 13.5-inch (high-powered service) to 48-inch (medium-powered service) dishes (Rubinfeld, 2000).

**PHASE 2: COMPETITION (1997-2000)**

The direct broadcast satellite industry was flying successfully during the mid-1990s. There were 1.4 million new subscribers in 1995 and more than five million subscribers up to 1997 (Parsons & Frieden, 1998). In 1997, DirecTV gained nearly 50 percent of the U.S. DBS market (Colman, 1997) and had nearly one million more subscribers than PrimeStar, its primary competitor (Table 2). It seemed obvious that DirecTV gained a benefit from having General Motors as its parent in terms of the advertising and family-ties help in the relationship with other companies. During this period, DirecTV partnered with AT&T to develop transnational DBS services. In January 1996, AT&T agreed with DirecTV to invest \$137.5 million for a 2.5 share (Cole, 1996) although AT&T decided to sell its equity stake in DirecTV back to its majority owner, Hughes Electronics (Meyers, 1997).

**Table 1. Direct Broadcast Satellite Television Service offered by DirecTV and EchoStar**

	DirecTV	EchoStar
<b>Orbital Slots</b>	3	2
<b>Transponders</b>	46	50
<b>Birds</b>	5	4
<b>Channels</b>	370+	500

Source: *Cable World*, 11, February 1999

**Table 2. Number of Subscribers in U.S. Direct Broadcast Satellite Service**

Year/ Company	DirecTV	USSB	PrimeStar	EchoStar
1994	320,000			
1995	1,200,000			
1996	2,300,000	1,210,000	1,600,000	350,000
1997	3,300,000	1,700,000	1,950,000	1,040,000
1998	4,460,000	2,050,000	2,300,000	1,940,000
1999	8,100,000	-	1,400,000	3,400,000
2000	9,520,000	-	-	5,260,000
2001	10,746,000	-	-	6,830,000
2002	-	-	-	-
2003 (June)	11,500,000	-	-	8,800,000

\*At the end of 2000, PrimeStar merged into DirecTV

Source: 1994 and 1995 data came from Salomon Smith Barney, June 1999

1996 and 1997 data came from Cable World, 10, January 1998

1998 data for USSB came from Cable World, 10, December 1998

1998 data for DirecTV, PrimeStar, and EchoStar came from Satellite International, 2, 1999

1999 and 2000 data came from Cable World, 13, July 2001

2001 data came from Screen Digest, 147, May 2002

## COMPETITIVE RIVALRY

During this period, the DBS service industry experienced severe competition among incumbents such as PrimeStar, DirecTV, U.S. Satellite Broadcasting, and newcomer EchoStar<sup>5</sup>. EchoStar entered the U.S. DBS service market in 1996 nearly two years after the launch of DirecTV (“Company,” 2004). By 1996, the primary competitors in the U.S. DBS service market were DirecTV and PrimeStar; DirecTV’s closest competitor in terms of the number of subscribers. EchoStar was a bit different from PrimeStar in that EchoStar was more aggressive than PrimeStar in acquiring subscribers. EchoStar was the first player to unbundle hardware and programming and the first company with hardware and installation price cuts<sup>6</sup> (Colman, 1997). On August 2, 1998, EchoStar offered retailers a \$100 reward for every DirecTV subscriber who converted to EchoStar Dish Network. Soon after, DirecTV doubled the reward to \$200 for each Dish Network customer who converted to DirecTV (Colman, 1998). After that, EchoStar expanded its program by offering a \$100 reward to any DirecTV, PrimeStar, wireless cable, or cable customers who became an EchoStar customer (Colman, 1998). These cases illustrate clearly how aggressively EchoStar pursued new subscribers and how severe the competition was between DirecTV and EchoStar at the time.

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5 The company provided its own DBS service on December 28 in 1995 with the successful launching of EchoStar1 and established the DISH Network brand name. The EchoStar filed for a Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) license with the Federal Communications Commission in 1987 and was granted access to orbital slot 119° West Longitude in 1992 (“Company,” 2004).

6 When DirecTV was considering \$100 off installation fee with one regional chain, EchoStar did it nationwide (Colman, 1997).

**Table 3. Market Shares in U.S. DBS Market (percentage)**

Year	DirecTV	PrimeStar	EchoStar	Total
1994	-	-	-	-
1995	-	-	-	-
1996	-	-	-	-
1997	84	-	16	100
1998	78	-	22	100
1999	70	-	30	100
2000	66	-	33	99
2001	63	-	37	100
2002	61	-	39	100
2003	61	-	39	100
2004	60	-	39	99

Data from 2000 to 2004 are projected.

Source: 1997 to 2004 data came from *Cable World*, 12, December 2000

Another game between DirecTV and EchoStar was the television-signal game. DirecTV did not consider the transmission of local channels via satellite in its business plan while EchoStar included local and/or regional customer service in its business (Colman, 1997) and began beaming broadcast affiliates' local signals into their markets (Colman & Albiniaik, 1998). In March 1996, DirecTV and Microsoft Corporation agreed to deliver TV signals to personal computers (Tedesco, 1996). This agreement permitted DirecTV to send content via satellite, or make it assessable on PCs or TV monitors. While DirecTV launched direct-to-PC service with Microsoft, EchoStar was planning to launch a data broadcast service (Tedesco, 1997); thus, it would be maintained that the entry of EchoStar accelerated the competition in the U.S. direct DBS service industry in terms of the quality and price of service.

### **PHASE 3: DEAL! DEAL! DEAL! (1999 TO PRESENT)**

Direct broadcast satellite service industry evolved as a strong competitive player in the U.S. television and video industry. In particular, direct broadcast satellite became a competitive substitute for cable. In 1998, direct broadcast satellite companies captured two out of every three new multi-channel video customers (U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2002).

EchoStar developed enough to have the capacity to provide more than 500 channels of digital video and audio via DISH Network service using eight satellites owned by the company ("Company," 2004). DirecTV held 70 percent of the market share as a market leader in 1999 in the U.S. DBS market. The market share of DISH Network of EchoStar increased from 22 percent in 1998 to 39 percent in 2002. In terms of the number of new subscribers, DirecTV outweighed DISH Network before 2001, however, DISH Network acquired more new subscribers than DirecTV in 2001<sup>7</sup>.

### **M&A WHIRLPOOL**

<sup>7</sup> The number of new subscriber of DISH Network was 1.2 million while that of DirecTV was 0.8 million in 2001.

On April in 1999, DirecTV purchased rival PrimeStar for \$1.36 billion<sup>8</sup> (Colman, 1999; Spotbeam Communications, 1999). The takeover of PrimeStar gave DirecTV a market share of 78 percent in the U.S. DBS service market and made EchoStar, which was DirecTV's sole remaining DBS competitor, behind DirecTV with a 22 percent market share (Table 3). DirecTV also bought high-powered satellite assets from Tempo for \$500 million (McConnell & Albinak, 1999; Spotbeam Communications, 1999). The nearly \$1.86 billion deal gave DirecTV access to seven million subscribers and enough satellite capacity to deliver 370 channels<sup>9</sup> ("DirecTV," 1999).

DirecTV gained the FCC's approval to transfer 11 satellite frequencies at 119 degrees to DirecTV from Tempo Satellite Inc. on May 28, 1999 (McConnell & Albinak, 1999). This approval was considered "an important step toward the company's goal of offering local TV station signals" (McConnell & Albinak, 1999, p. 18). Legislation was enacted November 1999 that allowed direct broadcast satellite companies to offer local network affiliates in their markets (McConnell, 1999); thus, it was necessary for DirecTV to begin dealing with the big four networks. First, DirecTV signed a carriage agreement with Fox broadcasting in September 1999 and then signed agreements with ABC and NBC on December 1999 (Albinak, 1999). Lastly, DirecTV signed a carriage agreement with CBS in May 2000 (McConnell, 1999). While EchoStar was offering the service in 13 markets, it was considering, as well as DirecTV, the launch of a new satellite to comply with the law requiring satellite companies to carry all local television stations in the markets they serve by January 1, 2002 (Albinak, 1999).

DirecTV was also on the same track with PrimeStar. In September 2000, General Motors confirmed the company was exploring a possible sale of DirecTV owner Hughes Electronics (McClellan, 2000). It was reported that News Corporation, Disney, Sony, Viacom, or Vivendi might be a possible partner for the contract. Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corporation, expressed an interest in buying Hughes Electronics. Soon thereafter, EchoStar also expressed an interest in buying DirecTV, thus the battle between News Corporation and EchoStar over DirecTV began (Grove, 2001). Negotiations to sell Hughes Electronics to News Corporation continued until 2001, when EchoStar made an unsolicited bid to buy Hughes Electronics for \$30.4 billion in stock and \$1.9 billion in assumed debt ("History," 2004). After further negotiations, News Corporation dropped out of the bidding and GM reached a \$25.8 billion deal with EchoStar ("History," 2004). In 2001, the Hughes Corporation announced plans to sell DirecTV to EchoStar Communications. Because the newly-merged company would create a horizontally integrated U.S. DBS monopoly there was much opposition over the merger.<sup>10</sup> It seemed the takeover was enough to bring

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8 This contained approximately \$1.1 billion in cash plus equity in GM worth \$220 million (Spotbeam Communications, 1999).

9 Through the acquisition of PrimeStar and Tempo, DirecTV was able to get 46 high-power transponders at 3 orbital slots-11 at 119 degrees, 32 at 101 degrees and 3 at 101 degrees. By contrast, EchoStar own 50 high-power transponders at two orbital locations: 21 at 119 degrees and 29 at 110 degrees (Colman, 1999).

10 There were a lot of oppositions or concerns with the proposed EchoStar and DirecTV merger. Some specific examples of the opposition were, "DBS monopoly would reduce or eliminate video distribution competition in smaller markets, reduce

a direct decrease of competition to the U.S. direct broadcast satellite industry. The Department of Justice began an antitrust review of EchoStar's takeover of DirecTV and the FCC investigated whether the transfer of DirecTV's satellite license would harm public interests even though the deal did not violate any specific FCC ownership limits (Higgins, 2001). After a lengthy review, the Department of Justice and the FCC rejected the merger based on its serious anticompetitive potential (U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2003). After that, two companies terminated their merger agreement in December 2002 ("Going", 2003; "Overview," 2004).

## RUPERT'S WORLD

When regulators rejected DirecTV's merger of EchoStar, a new company made a bid for DirecTV while Rupert Murdoch and Microsoft were teaming to make a multibillion-dollar bid for a controlling stake of DirecTV ("Problem," 2001). However, the situation was not completely favorable to Rupert Murdoch. At that time, local telephone giant SBS Communications Inc. and General Electric Company's NBC were also interested in acquiring DirecTV (Rosenbush, et al., 2003). Despite the unfavorable environment, Rupert Murdoch attained his objective and in April 2003, News Corporation announced it acquired a controlling interest in Hughes Corporation's DirecTV from Hughes's parent General Motors Corporation for \$6.6 billion (Shearer, 2003). According to the plan submitted to the FCC, News Corporation Chairman Rupert Murdoch became the chairperson of Hughes and former News Corporation co-CEO Chase Carey became president and CEO of Hughes (Eggerton, 2003).

The News Corporations' entry was the prelude of intensified competition between cable operators and providers for subscribers. Cable operators began to worry about market shares in multichannel video programming market. They feared Murdoch would put popular FOX offerings, such as regional sports networks, on satellite to attract their subscribers (Gunther & Leonard, 2003). In addition, several other issues surfaced from the News Corporation and DirecTV merger such as increased programming prices for consumers, harm to competition in video programming and distribution, and the decrease of diversity in media voices. The U.S. Congress decided that because the competitive implications of the News Corporation and DirecTV merger were fundamentally different from those presented by the failed EchoStar-DirecTV merger and because News Corporation had not owned the U.S. based satellite distribution assets, its acquisition of DirecTV would not raise horizontal antitrust concerns (U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2003). Nevertheless, some concerns remained due to the vertical integration and the anti-competitive threat posed by the combination of programming content and distribution outlet. Because of those concerns, Murdoch had to agree to the FCC's program access commitments to gain approval for

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program diversity in smaller markets--American Cable Association--," "merger applicants did not carry burden of proving the merger is in the public interest based upon 'The Four-Prong' Public Interest Test--Duke University School of Law--," "merger would result in consumer welfare loss of approximately \$3 billion or more over the next five years, cannot be justified under prevailing antitrust doctrine, and is completely contrary to public interest--National Association of Broadcasters--." ("Opposition," 2002).

the merger (U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2003). The FCC had banned large cable operators from discriminating against rival programmers (Grover, Lowry, Yang, Capell, & Kripalani, 2004). After Murdoch's agreement, the FCC approved News Corporation's takeover of DirecTV on December 19, 2003 (Pasztor & Squeo, 2003). DirecTV's 19.8 percent ownership was transferred to News Corporation from General Motors and News Corporation acquired another 14 percent from common stockholders ("Overview," 2004); thus the total stake was 34 percent. Later, News Corporation transferred its acquired stake to its Fox Entertainment Group who currently holds 34 percent stake of DirecTV.

## CONCLUSION

Direct broadcast satellite has become a solid competitor with cable in the multi-channel video programming distribution marketplace. Today, consumers can choose from a variety of multichannel video providers including DBS, broadband service providers and local telephone companies. However, DBS is a particularly effective competitor in the multichannel video market. It is available in most states and offers hundreds of channels including the most popular and widely carried national cable networks as well as some programming (such as DirecTV's NFL sports package) not carried by local cable systems. With the passage of the Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act (SHVIA) in 1999, DBS companies can now retransmit local broadcast signals into their market of origin and they do so in the vast majority of markets.

Over the recent years, competition between DirecTV and other DBS competitors has contributed directly to the success of DBS industry which, in turn, contributed to the development of the MVPD industry. The competition between DirecTV and rival DBS service providers not only affects price but also service offerings, customer service policies, marketing strategies, and technical innovations. Throughout the history of DBS, DirecTV and its competitors, especially, EchoStar, have pushed one another to the benefit of the consumer resulting in competitive pricing and innovated technology.

However, some concerns remain. DBS companies are not only getting bigger, they are now vertically integrated. As mentioned above, the FCC approved the transfer of DirecTV's DBS and other licenses from General Motors/Hughes to News Corporation. As we know, News Corporation, as a global media corporation, operates the Fox broadcast network's 35 TV stations, ten national cable networks, 12 regional networks, and other program rights and interests. In addition, mergers between market players, for example, the case of DirecTV and PrimeStar, would lead to fewer programming options and higher prices for consumers. In rural areas not currently served by cable, the result would be a single multichannel video provider in those areas. Even in markets where cable is currently available, the problem still remains. Economic literature indicates that a few competitors in a market will behave in an oligopolistic fashion, thus they are likely to collude with one another and not compete based on price. The approval of a merger within the DBS industry would lead to increased prices for consumers and decreased consumer welfare. In conclusion, with the enormous increase of the size of markets and the rapid technological progress, these problems remains as an important public policy objective to be solved.

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## PROFIT AND EFFICIENCY DRIVE CONNECTICUT NEWS

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Television stations promote their newscasts with such slogans as: “Coverage you can count on,” and “We’re everywhere,” but upon closer inspection these slogans are simply euphemisms for delivering news on the cheap. Local television stations operate under a paradigm of profit and efficiency, in which news is presented based on what station owners are willing to spend, according to research conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (*The State of the News Media*, 2005). New stories that are cheap and easy to present are crime, spot news, and disasters.

The deceptive nature of a newscast’s content is a concern when so many viewers depend on local television news for information about their communities. A February 2006 Harris Poll showed 77 percent of American adults rely on local television news at least three times per week as their primary source of news, more than any other source, including online news (Dalbec, 2006).

However, the deception could catch up with stations. From 1998 to 2004, a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adult viewers found the credibility of local television news had declined from 34 percent to 25 percent (Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2004). Diluting the salience of local television news content with an overemphasis on crime, spot news, and disaster stories could prompt viewers to seek information with more personal relevance from other media platforms. Note that National Public Radio has seen its audience double to 26 million listeners per week from 1997 to 2007 (Lindsay, 2007, para. 7).

### METHODOLOGY

This study compares two historically competitive local television stations (the only two group-owned network affiliates with 11 p.m. newscasts in the Hartford-New Haven, Connecticut market) to see if some of PEJ’s conclusions regarding profit and efficiency are reflected in this DMA No. 28. The goal was not to replicate the PEJ (Project for Excellence in Journalism) studies but to more closely examine the trend of airing more crime, spot news, and disaster stories, and marginalizing government/infrastructure stories. This particular television market is unusual in that it serves the entire state of Connecticut and is the base for



such academic powerhouses as Yale and Wesleyan universities.

The two stations were watched every weeknight for a month as a sampling plan designed to minimize distortion that could be caused by an extraordinary circumstance or major news event. This study focuses on WFSB-TV (owned by Meredith), Hartford, Connecticut, traditionally ranked No. 1 for news in the Nielsen ratings and WTNH-TV (owned by Lin Television), New Haven, Connecticut, traditionally ranked No. 2. The focus was on the 11 p.m. newscast because late newscasts in this northeastern television market typify the trend of offering viewers a large assortment of information in a short time period.

Data were collected after watching and recording 20 newscasts on WFSB-TV from January 23, 2006, to February 17, 2006, and 20 newscasts on WTNH-TV from April 17, 2006 to May 12, 2006. Overall, 239 first block stories were watched in 20 newscasts on WFSB-TV and 445 first block stories were watched in 20 newscasts on WTNH-TV.

For Table 1, data from the report *A Day in the Life of the Media* (PEJ 2006 *State of the News Media/Local Television*) content analysis was compared with data culled from the two Connecticut television stations. The *Day in the Life* study focused on 24 newscasts across eight stations in Houston, TX, Milwaukee, WI, and Bend, OR., (large, medium, small markets) May 11, 2005. Table 2 uses comparisons from PEJ's *1998-2002 Local TV News Project* that looked at 2,400 newscasts in 50 local television markets over the five-year period.

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

PEJ published its third annual report on the state of news media to explore the trend it identifies as, “the new paradox of journalism is more outlets covering fewer stories” (The State of the News Media 2006). The authors’ concern is that if local television

stations continue to shirk their duty to inform the public, audiences will eventually realize they are being ill-served, repeating the same erosion facing the newspaper industry. Citizens have come to expect socially responsible journalism since editors in the Twentieth Century began to realize the freedom to impart information came with the responsibility to serve the public (Peterson, 1966). The meaning of freedom was defined as responsibility and in 1923 journalists created a code of ethics, breaking away from the traditional libertarian approach that anything goes. The libertarian view regarding man as a creature of reason gave way to the view that man is “essentially immature and susceptible to moral corruption,” prioritizing ethical performance to help promote public morals (Peterson, 1966, p. 35).

Trends and issues that shape the way people live and die have gone unreported or underreported, including issues related to energy, transportation, health care, government and infrastructure (Eric Klinenberg, 2007). When private media companies prioritize serving the

economic interests of their owners, then it is difficult to expect those same companies to be “guardians of social interests” (Picard, 2005, p. 347).

## **COST EFFECTIVE TV NEWS**

Attracting viewers for advertisers has television news directors such as Kirk Varner, (WTNH-TV) espousing the current trend in local television newsrooms of offering viewers a

buffet of information—a strategy that allows a newscast to offer as much information as possible within a constrained time period (personal communication, June 9, 2006). However, Tom Rosenstiel, Project for Excellence in Journalism director, says this type of producing creates newscasts with an X-structure—live and late breaking stories are placed at the beginning, highly promotable features are placed at the end, leaving civics stories (government/infrastructure) that have public relevance, in the middle where they are more easily lost (personal communication Aug. 25, 2006). In addition, the government/infrastructure stories get short shrift because they tend to air in a shorter format. PEJ research shows 30 percent of crime, accident and disaster stories run at least one minute or longer, whereas, 73 percent of civics stories run less than one minute (Rosenstiel, et. al, 2007, p. 34).

When form dictates content in local television news, two problems occur. Homogenized news distorts what a community is really like and viewers eventually tune out (Rosenstiel, et. al, 2007). The use of crime stories plays into the hands of the profit and efficiency model, becoming a part of our every day consciousness because it is pervasive and accessible (Gitlin, 2003). In addition, reporters’ work is simplified because they can rely on police officials as regular sources (Chermak, 1995).

Moreover, in television crime stories are seen as serving a useful purpose because they capture the viewers’ attention (Maguire & Sandage, 1999). Crime stories were used during the penny press era to attract readers and the narrative appeal of crime stories continues to attract an audience in the Twenty-first Century because people still appreciate good stories (Perry, 2002).

However, stations that focus on crime stories may be doing so at their peril. The Princeton Survey Research Associates found in 2000 that viewers are hungry for stories on local television newscasts that provide information about the community and how

stories affect their lives, not the latest murder or car crash (Gantz & Potter, 2000). Thirty-two percent of the respondents blamed crime stories for the reason they did not watch local television news on a regular basis. Further research has shown crime coverage can affect viewers' perception of the world around them and lead them to believe crime is worse than it is (Barnett, 2003; Tamborini et al., 1984; Windhauser & Seiter, 1990).

Leading with crime and spot news stories underscores the importance of story placement within a newscast. James Hamilton (2004) found economists use the spatial location model approach to understand how product placement can help sell a product, and he argued that television producers use the same approach when deciding the order in which to air stories in a newscast. They must consider audience interests and expectations, the costs of assembling stories, and what the competition may be doing. Hamilton argues the profit motive has resulted in the decline of hard news reporting. The current study concurs, finding crime and spot news coverage dominated the two stations' late newscasts, not only as lead stories but deeper within the first block.

Industry statistics reinforce why efficiency is the ongoing mantra. PEJ reported local news accounted for 46 percent of station revenues in 2003, and anecdotal reports show station profit margins are high, often higher than 40 percent (The State of the News Media, 2005). The ability to operate with efficiency has allowed consolidation to become profitable. From 1995 to 2003, 10 of the largest media owners began by owning 104 television stations with revenue of \$5.9 billion and increasing to 299 stations with revenue of \$11.8 billion (The State of the News Media, 2005).

Because crime and spot news stories are inexpensive and easy to cover, the commercialized environment of publicly-traded media corporations can help justify cost reduction by laying off as many reporters as possible (McChesney, 1999). PEJ reported average newsroom staffing was not as high as it had been in 2000, when the average number of employees was 37, dropping to an average of 33.8 full-time staff members in 2003. In addition, PEJ found in its 1998-2002 study the percentage of reporter packages dropped by nearly one-third, from 62 percent to 43 percent (The State of the News Media, 2005).

By using economy of scale, stations can turn a profit when they air more newscasts to bring in more advertising dollars without hiring more reporters. In 2003, the average television affiliate newsroom produced 3.9 hours of news per day, up from 3.39 hours in 2001, according to PEJ (The State of the News Media, 2005). The current study found WTNH-TV fills 6 ½ hours of news daily on weekdays (includes 1 ½ hours on duopoly UPN station, WCTX-TV) and WFSB-TV airs 5 ½ hours daily. The result, according to PEJ, is resources are stretched and the content is thin, noting that stations do fewer reporter packages, less original reporting and enterprise reporting, and rely more on second-hand material. Reporters may receive more air time to front and tag their packages live but they are not getting more time to research stories of relevance to viewers. Packages generally run 1:30, but with the live introduction and tag the total can run up to 2:00. WFSB-TV and WTNH-TV each typically aired three live shots with reporter packages during their 11 p.m. newscasts, primarily focusing on crime or spot news. In summary, the concentration of ownership and ensuing costs related to increased debt service, audience decline, and the recession in the early 2000s "created an almost perfect storm that battered local broadcasting" (The State of the News Media,

2005).

The result is that “local TV news in many ways languished. Efficiency not only dictated how newsrooms worked, it became the driving force in determining what was news and how it should be covered” (The State of the News Media, 2005). Structurally, a bottom-line mentality can lead to watered down, sensationalized news that tends to view the public as an audience to be attracted not as citizens requiring substance to stay informed. Citizens wind up with news that serves commercial interests rather than the public interest (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

## RESULTS

Results of this paper exceed PEJ’s findings in three areas. WFSB-TV and WTNH-TV aired more accident stories than the PEJ study, they led with crime and spot news more often, and their government/infrastructure stories never outnumbered crime/spot news stories.

Stories related to crime took up most of the time during the 11 p.m. newscasts; 37 percent at WFSB-TV and 33 percent at WTNH-TV (Table 1). WFSB-TV and WTNH-TV did not use as much of their additional time for government/infrastructure stories compared to the PEJ 2005 stations. Instead, they continued to rely on the “hook and hold” (lead with visual, eye-catching stories) approach by also airing accidents and other spot news stories. WFSB-TV devoted 21 percent of its 11 p.m. newscasts and WTNH-TV devoted 25 percent to accident stories. In comparison, the PEJ stations spent only 6 percent of their time on accidents and spot news.

This helps explain why the PEJ stations were able to devote 13 percent of their time on government/infrastructure stories; more so than the two Connecticut stations.

**Table 1: Late Newscast Topics in local TV news (percent of all time)**

	<b>PEJ</b> <b>5/11/05</b> <b>8 last newscasts, 1</b> <b>day</b>	<b>WFSB</b> <b>1/23-2/17/06</b> <b>20 11 p.m. casts,</b> <b>1 month</b>	<b>WTNH</b> <b>4/17-5/12/06</b> <b>20 11 p.m. casts,</b> <b>1 month)</b>
<b>Crime</b>	44	37	33
<b>Accidents</b>	6	21	25
<b>Govt/ Infrastructure</b>	13	5	8

As indicated in Table 2, the commercialized environment that encourages grabbing viewers from the beginning is evident in the PEJ 1998-2002 study (*Local TV News Project*), that showed stations aired either crime or spot news (accidents, disas-

ters) as the lead story 60 percent of the time. WFSB-TV and WTNH-TV surpassed that percentage by leading with either crime or spot news stories 80 percent and 70 percent of the time, respectively.

Crime and spot news stories dominated the first block of the newscast until story No. 7, which PEJ reported was the pivotal number for the placement of government stories. However, the No. 7 spot was not pivotal for the Connecticut stations. Crime and spot news outnumbered government/infrastructure stories throughout the lineup at both WFSB-TV and WTNH-TV.

Even when the number of government/infrastructure stories increased, crime and spot news stories dominated the lineup.

**Table 2: Story Topics on Local TV News (By placement within Block 1) (PEJ 1998-2002 study)**

	Crime/Spot News (by percentages)			Government/Infrastructure (by percentages)		
	PEJ	WFSB	WTNH	PEJ	WFSB	WTNH
Story 1	60	80	70	30	0	15
Story 2	57	40	60	32	5	0
Story 3	59	55	65	31	5	5
Story 4	55	60	75	34	5	0
Story 5	50	30	65	37	10	10
Story 6	43	50	65	40	25	10
Story 7	36	50	70	42	15	0
Story 8	32	70	45	39	5	30
Story 9	27	60	40	40	0	10
Story 10	25	45	35	36	0	25

The three night side reporters at each station did packages, usually fronted and tagged with live shots. For five of the six reporters, crime coverage was dominant (Table 3). Only Annie Rourke at WTNH-TV did fewer crime stories, devoting more time to stories including an emergency birth, a profile of a state Supreme Court nominee, and a look at the ethical concerns of a Connecticut state worker who accepted gifts.

**Table 3: 3 Night-Side Reporters/11 p.m. newscast**

WFSB-TV			WTNH-TV		
	Percentage of Crime	Number of Stories		Percentage of Crime	Number of Stories
<b>Jessica Schneider</b>	58	17	<b>Jamie Muro</b>	62	8
<b>Jamie Roth</b>	73	15	<b>Annie Rourke</b>	20	20
<b>Jon Camp</b>	52	19	<b>Bob Wilson</b>	50	16
			<b>Profit and Efficiency 10</b>		

## **DISCUSSION**

The trends found in this study coincide with PEJ's concern that profit and efficiency dictate what news is covered and how it is presented, with crime and spot news primarily in the lead position of the newscast and government/infrastructure stories buried deeper in the newscast. With reporters turning quick and easy crime stories on a nightly basis rather than getting time to research stories of substance, then it becomes a concern that reporters are relied upon to help feed the hungry beast rather than provide public service.

Between 2001 and 2006 WTNH-TV expanded its news hole from 26 hours of news per week to 41 hours of news per week without the benefit of adding more reporters. News director Kirk Varner said during an interview June 6, 2006, that staffing did not keep up with the demand, admitting the newsroom was down by two reporters. "We could always use more," he said. WTHN-TV day side reporter, Erin Cox, said her two biggest complaints are doing at least two packages per day, usually linked to live shots, and covering too many Connecticut towns. "I think you miss the connection of having a daily place to go, running into the same people, an ability to check things out and develop relationships," Cox said (personal communication, June 7, 2006). WTNH-TV night side reporter, Annie Rourke, said the deciding factor on story selection is often not whether the story will inform the viewer but rather the need to keep up with the competition. Rourke said, "Unfortunately there's this competition. If someone else has something and you don't, and they're live and you're not, heads roll and it's terrible and you run to each and everything" (personal communication, Aug. 4, 2006).

PEJ's concern that most media owners in this era of consolidation continue to pursue a profit margin of at least 40 percent may result in local television news shooting itself in the foot for the sake of profits. Already, local television news ratings have dropped in evening, late and morning newscasts for all four ratings periods from 2005 to 2006, with the largest drop during the late newscasts; down 13.9 percent (February ratings), down 5.9 percent (May ratings), down 3.6 percent (July ratings), and down 6.3 percent (November ratings) (The State of the News Media, 2006).

Television newsroom managers justify the current news delivery system by point-

ing to their stations' privately-funded research. Gary Brown, former news director of WFSB-TV, said research conducted for his station showed viewers want immediacy, which translates as crime and spot news (personal communication, Jan. 6, 2006). If strict reliance upon research shows viewers want crime and spot news stories, then one conclusion is that newsrooms have painted themselves into a corner, forcing them to air stories of little substance, relevance, or consequence. Further analysis begs the question why stations say they are simply giving viewers what they want—immediacy—when in reality, there is relatively little news going on at 11 o'clock at night. Even the crime and spot news stories that dominate the lead spot at 11 p.m. generally occur hours earlier.

Whereas Hamilton (2004) may be correct that it can be difficult to quantify what the lack of certain information can mean to viewers, there are indications that quality sells according to a PEJ study. Forty-seven percent of the stations that provided quality news saw a rise in ratings. Quality was defined as covering the whole community, providing information that was significant, demonstrated enterprise, was fair, authoritative and highly local (The State of the News Media, 2002).

## CONCLUSION

It will take brave news managers, station managers, and reporters to break the cycle of doing what everyone else is doing and return to the understanding that viewers are citizens, not consumers. News is a public service, not a product. The country is in the middle of another recession—a time when viewers need relevant, in-depth stories more than ever. WJAR-TV (Providence, Rhode Island) reporter Jim Taricani suggests media company owners should learn to accept “a lower profit margin in exchange for good public service” (personal communication, April 13, 2007). Reducing the number of newscasts that, in turn, would give reporters more time to do research for more substantive stories could do this. Even better, newsrooms could return to the traditional beat system to help reporters reconnect with their communities.

Rosenstiel suggests news managers and reporters think of themselves as entrepreneurs of their careers. “Work against the tide of an industry that is pushing them in a different direction. Always have a story going that you really believe in,” Rosenstiel advises.

Former news director and RTNDA chairman Mike Cavender agrees journalists should fight for good stories (personal communication, March 18, 2006). Cavender posits: “There’s something to be said for the old adage the squeaky wheel gets the grease. I think you’ve got to be persistent. If you’re a good reporter in the field, be persistent with your manager in the newsroom.”

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**WILLIAM HAWES & BETH M. OLSON**  
**THE PERFORMER IN MASS MEDIA: CONNECTING WITH TELEVISION AND**  
**ONLINE AUDIENCES, (2<sup>ND</sup> ED.) HOLCOMB HATHAWAY, AZ 2009**

Since 1978 when *The Performer in Mass Media* was first published, author William Hawes has continuously honed the content of this text. Fast forward 30 years, add a converged media market sprinkled with technological innovation, a new title, another author and you've got the recipe for success: a text that is meaningful for students and offers both depth and breadth regarding the background of the media industry, contexts for performance and launching and sustaining a career in media performance. The book is a solid introductory text to be used in conjunction with a readings packet or a companion text for *Introduction to Mass Media*, *Introduction to Broadcasting News*, *Media Performance*, *Media Seminar* or *Media Management* course. The authors promote two key points throughout the book: performance is a conversation with an audience; and performance is extended to include all public spaces where an audience assembles, thus, "[y]ou need to have a large, cohesive set of skills and know how to use the new technology to work out imperfections so that you can develop your image into a marketable performer" (pg. 181). As such, the authors provide a strong orientation to the types of performance a student will encounter and how good material is the essence of their existence and career growth.

Hawes & Olson have divided the text into three distinct areas: background on the performance field and contexts for performance, performance attributes and career planning. The background and contexts for performance section traces the history of performance and protocols for television studio performance, electronic field production and special performances. These sections focus on technologies and well as tools used to support the performer. Compelling information regarding converged media platforms and multimedia as performance venues serves as evidence that students must understand the digital world. The second section focuses on performance attributes and prompts the reader to conceptualize and define personal unique image or "look". Hawes and Olson offer a soup to nuts orientation of "look" in an effort to empower the student to explore how dress, posture, hair, make-up and quality of material impact audience reaction. The authors use a systems perspective to explore content delivery by focusing on voice characteristics, physical elements such as voice quality and breath control and environmental conditions such as microphones and pick-up patterns. The last component of this section is movement where an exploration of how personal movement and nonverbal gesture communicates to an audiences information about the performer. While this section offers a series of creative application exercises, an on-line evaluation system would be ideal in that students' vocal performance could be evaluated against their competition. The last section offers a cogent assessment of career planning and prompts the reader to consider coursework, internships, audition reels and performing on job search materials and interviews early on in their academic career.

As a former television performer, I commend William Hawes and Beth Olson for their conceptualization and execution of this text. The strong content, excellent examples and application exercises provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the business, attributes, and skills associated with performance in media.

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## NAB/BEA FUTURE CONFERENCE DATES

<u>Year</u>	<u>NAB Show</u>	<u>BEA Show</u>
2010	April 12-15	April 14-17
2011	April 11-14	April 13-16
2012	April 16-19	April 18- 21
2013	April 8-11	April 10-13
2014	April 7-10	April 9-12
2015	April 13-16	April 15-18
2016	April 18-21	April 20-23
2017	April 24-27	April 26-29
2018	April 9-12	April 11-14
2019	April 15-18	April 17-20
2020	April 20-23	April 22-25

## FEEDBACK INDEX AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Feedback's* index and bibliography is now in Microsoft Word format. It is available by clicking on the link below:

[Index \(Word Document\)](#)

[Bibliography \(Word Document\)](#)

*Farewell, my Feedback friends. Doc Joe and the rest of BEA, thanks for the opportunity!*  
— Scott N. Davis, November 2009