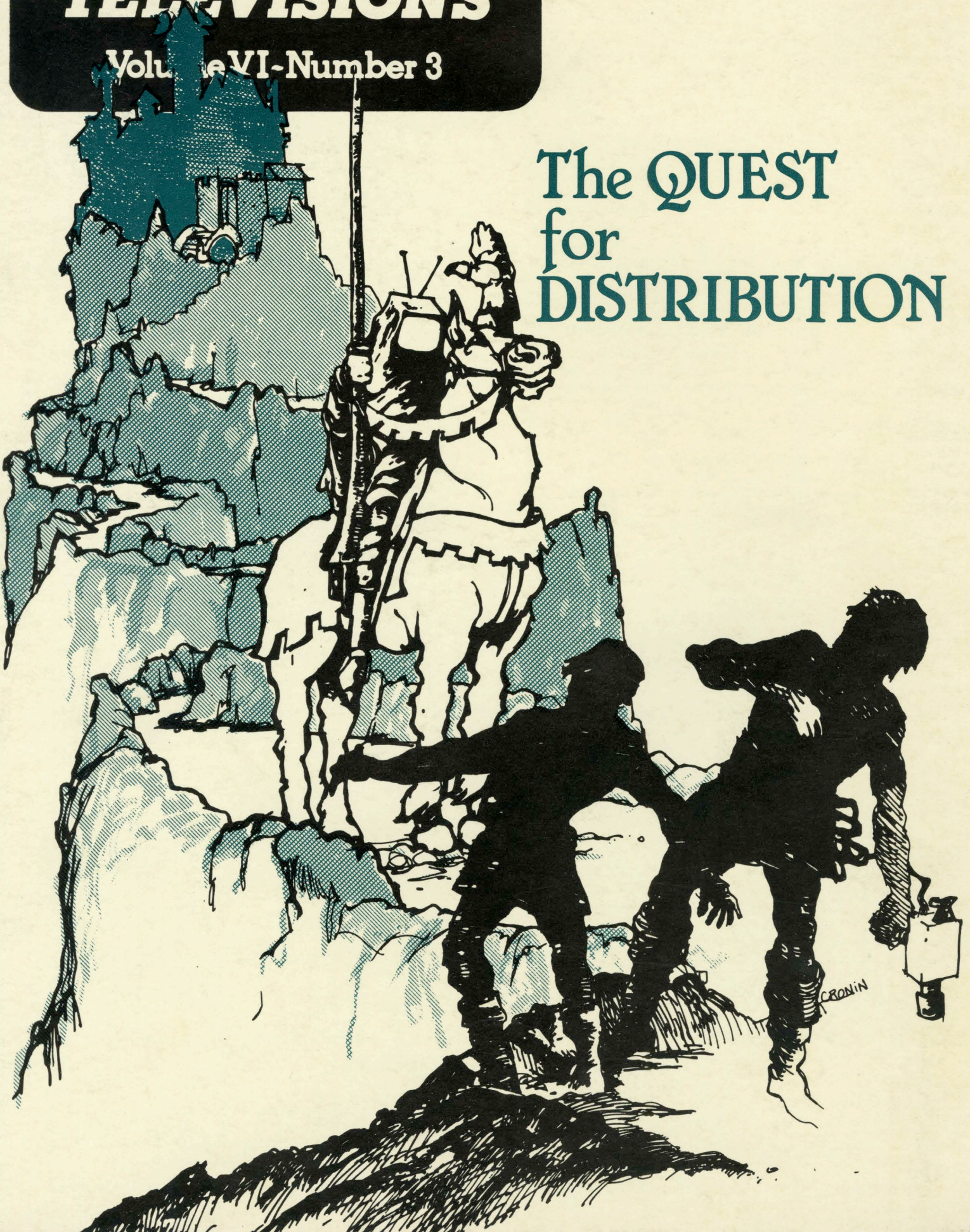


TELEVISIONS

Volume VI-Number 3

The QUEST for DISTRIBUTION



2 Introduction

By Larry Kirkman
Including excerpts from an interview with Erik Barnouw

3 Videodisc

By Bob Gottlieb
MCA, Music Corporation of America, initiates its videodisc campaign with a monopoly controlling hardware, software and marketing outlets. Known as the "Octopus" MCA has been involved in every aspect of entertainment and transfers its successful domination of broadcast TV to a larger economic sphere—the home disc.

6 Pay Cable

By Alexis Greene
"Yes," Pay Cable is growing fantastically but, "no," there isn't diverse programming or an open invitation to independents.

8 QUBE

By Kary Schulman and Debra Simeon
Warner Communications's experiment in Columbus, Ohio may herald the future of TV, but it is more-of-the-same with a new emphasis on 2-way used for collecting marketing data.

10 Minority Cable

By Roger Newell
Since the late 60's cable has been seen as a responsive alternative to broadcast and a new industry where subsidized minority entrepreneurs could establish cultural and information systems for their communities. Throughout the 70's the Communications Resource Center (CRC) has worked to set up minority owned and operated cable systems. With a new grant from NEA, CRC is helping to develop programming for minority audiences but economic difficulties are still central to the enterprise.

13 Self Distribution

3 Case Studies: Downtown Community Television, by Lloyd Trufelman. The New York City access and production center has joined with other groups to put out a catalogue and has used membership organizations as a basis for selling its tapes. Alan Hertzberg details his successful distribution of The Autobiography of Miss Jane Dubois. John Hunt reflects on years of tape showings and distribution through Environmental Communications.

15 Copyright

By Rebecca Moore
The new copyright law affects independents in production and in distribution. Difficulties in use of music and other copyrighted material are offset by protection from piracy.

17 Public TV Satellite Notes

The new satellite interconnection opens up 4 video channels for distribution to Public TV stations and the promise of easier access for independents.

18 Libraries

By Deidre Boyle
Libraries are becoming major video users, with the introduction of the VHS/Beta format. This article profiles 3 model networks in Texas, California, and Ithaca, N.Y.

20 Galleries, Museums and Media Centers

By Ingrid Wiegand
Statements on video distribution by representatives of the Museum of Modern Art, the Everson, the Whitney, The Kitchen, Global Village, Castelli-Sonnabend, Anna Canepa, and the University Museum of Berkeley.

22 A Distribution Bibliography

By Christopher Sterling

Editors

Rebecca Moore
Larry Kirkman
Gayle Gibbons

Art Director

Scott Ripley

Illustrator

Richard Cronin

TELEVISIONS is funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

TELEVISIONS Magazine is a quarterly publication of Washington Community Video Center, Inc., P.O. Box 21068, Washington, D.C. 20009. Phone: (202) 331-1566. All contributions of articles and photographs are welcome, though we cannot guarantee publication. Send stamped, self-addressed envelope if return is desired. *TELEVISIONS* is composed by Circle Graphics. The opinions expressed herein represent those of the staff, except when articles are signed. Copyright *TELEVISIONS* Magazine 1978. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of *TELEVISIONS*. Subscription rates: \$10 per year (special prepaid rate), \$15 per year if billed, \$15 per year institutional rate. Back issue price: Vol. 1, \$25; Vol. 2, \$5; Vol. 3, \$6; Vol. 4, \$2.50 for single issue. Vol. 6 #3 was printed November 1978.

SUBSCRIBE TO *TELEVISIONS*

Individual subscription/prepaid
(\$10/per year)
Individual subscription/billed
(\$15/per year)

Institutional subscription
(\$15/per year)
P.O. Box 21068, Washington, D.C. 20009

Introduction

Larry Kirkman



he blue skies of cable; the elimination of scarcity; the promise of serving specialized audiences; escaping from the lowest common denominator, from the mediocrity enforced by the networks' profit line; the re-birth of vaudeville where storytellers and performers would learn their craft with room to practice, fail, and improve; a golden age of pluralism and harmony of social interests based on new technology able to serve every need: ten years of these confused dreams underpin all the investigations in this special issue of *Televisions* devoted to the state of video distribution—ten years of promise and hopeful waiting for cable, videodisc, consumer-cassette, satellites and fibre optics.

But, as Erik Barnouw sourly reminds us in an interview, all new technologies—phonograph, radio, film and broadcast TV—have carried with them extravagant social claims. We are cautioned against crude technological determinism, remembering Brecht's essays in 1927 when he called radio "an apparatus invented by applied science before society had developed far enough to use it properly."

However, every advance in communications technology does have inherent contradictions which open up possibilities for teaching, learning, mobilizing and expression and it is these possibilities, however unrealized, which are the bases for utopian visions. Some media critics argue that while this new generation of distribution technology will initially be used for more-of-the-same programming on a mass scale, eventually new uses will surface that were never-intended by the parent corporate interests.

Xerox was not developed to copy the Pentagon Papers. Their motto "we can copy anything" was turned against them. In the same way, the telephone, airplane travel, and the offset press have become uncontrollably accessible.

Erik Barnouw's "pessimism of the intellect" has to be matched with an "optimism of the will" which sees each promise in terms of strategy and struggle over the best use of these new tools.

The purpose of this report is to chronicle work to date and to expose the areas of struggle without the rosy "gee-whiz" or the defeatist "nothing can be done" viewpoints.

The picture of monolithic control by MCA and the cable giants, and the relative "success" of individuals, collectives and small entrepreneurs in gypsy distribution using video cassettes and the U.S. mail does not mean that we are idealizing the petit-bourgeois shop. In fact, it is the connection between independents, large membership organizations and institutional networks that stands out in these experiences.

The videodisc, the least expensive and most promising means of distribution, is caught in a stranglehold of vertical monopoly by MCA, the largest media corporation, which will make hardware, software, and market through its chain of giftstore/catalogue outlets.

This issue of *Televisions* does not offer a prognosis for developing an independent use of the disc, except indirectly by exploring independent access and minority ownership of cable. The work of service groups such as Independent Cinema Artists and Producers which can deal with the carriers on their own terms and the struggle for total control through government subsidy are two models for attacking the domination of MCA.

Erik Barnouw/An Interview

When each of the new communication technologies came along there were visions of it doing something spectacular for enlightenment/democratization. You find astonishing predictions.

For example, when the phonograph record appeared in 1878, Edison said it will be a tremendous thing for education. Well, pretty soon it wasn't as much for education as for other things.

Then, when motion pictures came along, it's fascinating to read magazine articles from 1905, '06, '07. They foresaw it solving all the problems of education/democratization and citizenship.

When radio came along in the 1920's, the articles that were appearing in 1921, '22, '23 said the same thing. When FM came along there was a book called *Radio's Second Chance*. FM was going to be different, and for a while it did seem to be different, but as its audience expanded it became very much the same. expanded it became very much the same.

So when cable comes along, and you hear the same blue sky predictions, you feel a little cautious about it.

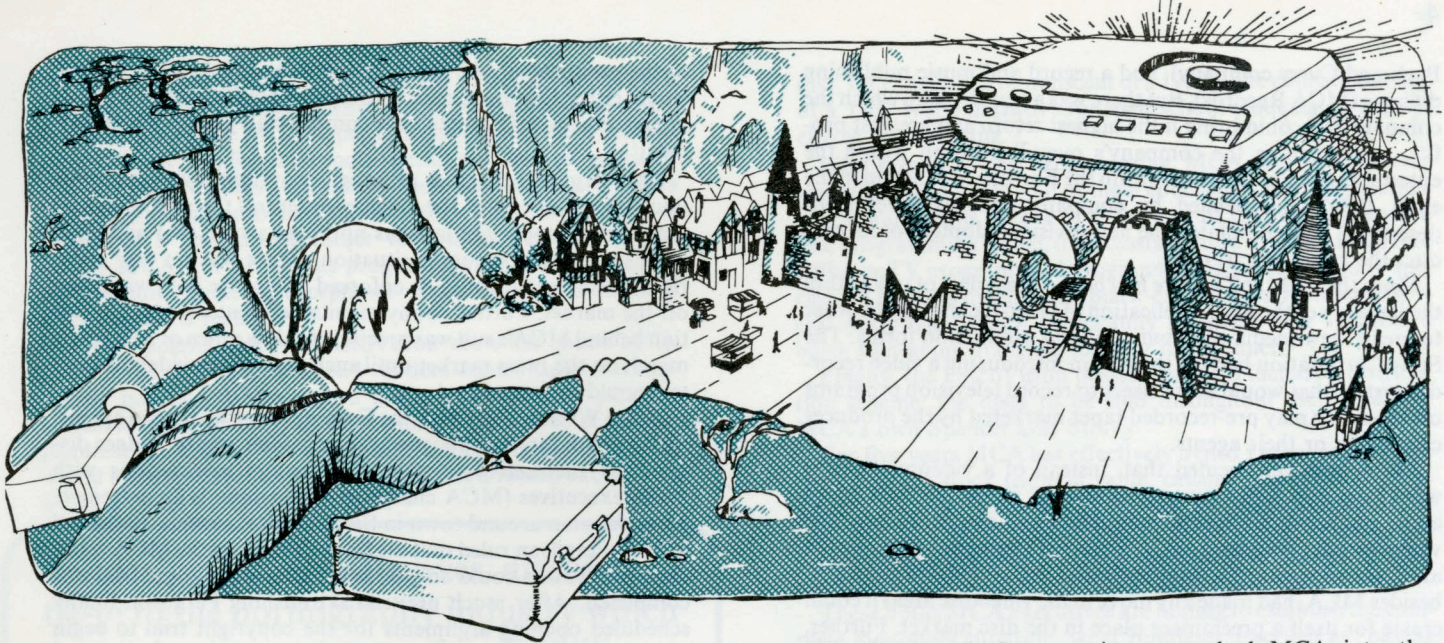
The video medium suggests the possibility it will become almost as cheap to do something on tape as to use a pencil. Then you've got a medium that is accessible to everyone. You'll still have a distribution problem, though. The multiplicity of channels made possible by fibre optics will also provide a distribution channel. But even with more channels—FM acquired extra channels—all seem to be doing more or less the same thing. So where are we?

Take alternative FM. The question is if it can get beyond being a Hyde Park corner or a 14th St. soap box and take off to become a medium that has an impact on ideas.

There is an illusion of wide participation by people in TV but it is easily controlled: you just throw away what you don't want, keep what you want. All the little speeches about how marvelously the soap washed the thing. All those things precipitated in the same sort of way Jean Rouch got people to talk on the street. Apparently you can get people to talk about soap.

Recently, I read a story about CB. FCC members were in favor of expanded channel ruling. They thought it was an access medium. I'm a little skeptical about it. The FCC-created cable access channel has not amounted to much. To talk about CB in terms of access means even less. Mostly one-to-one conversation over a very small area. CB was used to organize the independent trucker strike and also for prostitution. But to what extent is this an answer to the kind of power exercised by commercial TV over millions of homes simultaneously?

We have this optical fibre thing, and again the possibility that technology allows everything to be done through a mere strand of wire. It creates a possibly dangerous situation. If the same wired system can carry cable TV, telephone calls, and handle all the computer networks, etc., then you have the very good possibility of the whole system becoming one system. When such things are technically possible they tend to happen. The issue of control is tremendous and very difficult to come to grips with.



Bob Gottlieb



The excitement, once again, is starting to build. In December, MCA, the huge media conglomerate, Philips, the Dutch hardware company, and Magnavox, Philip's U.S. hardware dealer, will, after more than a two year delay, launch in a few select cities around the country, the long-heralded, much ballyhooed "DiscoVision", the metallic disc that comes in the shape of a record, to be played on the video displayer that all the parties hope will grace Mr. & Mrs. Average Middle American's household in the years to come.

Many see gold in those discs. Already, discreet inquiries have been made by Liggett and Myers and other cigarette companies as to the possibility of producing their own program material (with a cigarette commercial inside) to be marketed as part of the disc bonanza. What better way, the cigarette companies tell their corporate confreres, to get around the FCC ban on cigarette commercials inside the home.

Other companies, with other kinds of needs, are also knocking on MCA's door. It's a marketing dream come true. A consumer market with vast—multibillion dollar—potential. And all of it controlled by that master of mainstream televisionia and filmdom, the bottom dollar company, MCA.

Within the trade, it used to be known as The Octopus, with its penchant for monopoly and its multifaceted operations. The company began as a booking agency for musicians in 1920's Chicago. MCA founder Jules Stein worked out arrangements with mob-dominated nightclubs as well as dance halls and hotels to exclusively use MCA clients, an arrangement through which Stein was able to corner the musician market in the big band era.

The company rapidly expanded its operations to become an all-purpose talent agency, moving its headquarters to Hollywood by the late 1940's. With the advent of television, MCA made an extraordinary breakthrough when it got Ronald Reagan, an MCA client and then head of the Screen Actor's Guild, to issue a specific exemption for MCA to allow the agency to produce its own television programs while continuing to represent its clients. The exemption was necessary since SAG had bylaws forbidding the obvious conflict of interest inherent in an agency functioning as producer.

The Reagan/SAG exemption catapulted MCA into the driver's seat in the television industry. MCA became adept at packaging TV programs, series, or films, complete with MCA actors, directors and writers, on the principle that if you wanted one you had to take them all. One well-known industry story, cited in a *Fortune* profile of The Octopus in 1962, had MCA Vice-President and agent extraordinaire Sonny Werblin (later owner of the New York Jets football team) called in by NBC President Robert Kintner and asked to fill in the remaining holes in the NBC schedule. Werblin tore up the existing schedule and remade it with several MCA packages designed to be the main attractions of the new season.

By 1960 MCA would be responsible—either as producer or talent agent representative—for 33 hours on network television. Such schlock classics as *Bachelor Father*, *Mike Hammer*, *Johnny Midnight*, *Laramie*, and *Wagon Train* graced the tube with the MCA production insignia.

MCA moved further afield in the entertainment industry when it purchased Universal Pictures and the vast acreage of the Universal lot in Studio City, in an \$11 million deal that many felt had shadowy overtones. MCA now had a major film studio operation with its backlog of films from one of Hollywood's key studios, a television production arm, an extraordinarily potent talent agency, and a musical recording arm (Decca Records) that came with the Universal deal.

The Universal deal finally prodded the United States Justice Department to bring an anti-trust action against the company that led to a divestiture order in 1962: either sell the production arm or the agency. MCA choose to keep its production facilities and closed down its agency business. (One MCA agent recalled that top executives Stein and Lew Wasserman decided to eliminate the agency rather than sell it for what undoubtedly would have been a premium price—in order to keep the agency's power—and threat to MCA as producer—out of the hands of another party.

But the company didn't stop expanding. It still continued to package more television programs such as the *Marcus Welbys*, *Kojaks*, and *Battlestar Galacticas*, that kept it on top in the television field. It expanded its film production arm to become the most prolific producer in Hollywood, gearing its product towards certain proven formula (e.g., disaster films such as *Jaws* and *Airport*) as well as experimenting at low budgets—and potential write-offs—with particular markets (e.g., *Car Wash*, *Smokey and the Bandit*, *American Graffiti*) that turned out to be extraordinarily profitable.

MCA also expanded into other areas of the entertainment industry, purchasing a book publisher (G.P. Putnam), a magazine (*New Times*), a retail and mail order operation (Spencer Gifts), a recreation division (Universal Studio Tours, Yosemite

Park and Curry company), and a record and music publishing division (MCA Records). But there was a new division which the company felt could bring it the highest return and greatest profits, strengthening the company's overall position within the entertainment industry and within the Fortune 500. Set up in the early 1970's and headed by company troubleshooter (self-described) John Findlater, the new division adopted for its product the name DiscoVision.

Since the mid 1960's, there had been a great deal of talk within the industry of the mass application of video technology in order to create new media distributional and production forms. The Sony Corporation had led the way in introducing a video recorder system that would allow users to record television programs off the air or play pre-recorded tapes marketed by the producer companies or their agents.

MCA however decided that, instead of a videorecorder, it would develop a disc system somewhat along the lines of an audio phonograph. Several companies had already entered the videorecorder field, and MCA preferred this newer, unexplored area. By pioneering a new videodisc technology (only RCA, besides MCA, had made any move in the videodisc area) it could create for itself a preeminent place in the disc market. Further, MCA would be in the enviable position of having a lock on both the hardware (the disc player and manufacturing the discs) and software (program material for the discs) ends of the system.

MCA also judged that disc technology, as opposed to the videorecorder system, lent itself more easily to a mass market approach.

Early videorecorders and tapes were expensive and, MCA reasoned, marketable for only what MCA executives called an "elite" audience. Since MCA was most interested in the mass potential of the discs (executives envisioned hundreds of thousands—millions!—of people shelling out anywhere from \$10 to \$20 to watch *Jaws* in the safety of their homes), it felt secure that, despite its late start and the early technological problems it ran into, the disc idea was far preferable to the recorder since their aim was to come up with a system that was cheap enough to market to capture the attention of a mass audience.

By 1975, however, Sony and Matsushita had developed their relatively inexpensive recorder systems and began a major marketing drive to get the systems inside far more than just a few wealthy households. MCA feared its system might be overwhelmed by the mass acceptance of the recorder before the disc had the chance to make itself known. MCA decided to take action and systematically began to approach other studios to interest them in a possible law suit against Sony on copyright/infringement grounds. Only Disney was willing to join in. (Within a year after the suit was filed MCA made a deal to market exclusively on DiscoVision the Disney library of films and TV programs.)

In November 1976, MCA/Disney brought suit in Federal court in Los Angeles against Sony, Sony's ad agency Doyle Dane Bernbach, and a number of retail stores such as Carter/Hawley/Hale (the Broadway, Nieman-Marcus) which sold Beta. MCA lined up other television producers, the Guilds, and other unions interested in the residuals question to support their position.

MCA claimed, in its legal filings, that Beta caused two distinct copyright problems. First, it encouraged Beta users to copy off the television set programs that had been sold to television networks for millions of dollars. (One ad by a Sony dealer, cited by MCA in court documents, declared: "NBC paid millions for the *Godfather*. You can have it for \$14.99") Secondly, MCA argued that the Beta user could copy programs off the tube and edit out the commercials. This most unAmerican activity, MCA declared, would have a negative ripple effect on the industry. Advertisers would eventually feel the price paid for TV commercial spots were worth less causing a decline in the cost-per-minute figure. That in turn would cause the networks to pay less

to the producers of the programs, such as MCA, who, in turn, would either lower wages or throw people out of work. It was an interesting logic: failure to view commercials creates unemployment!

Sony argued back that although copyright law was ambiguous on the matter of the videorecorder (all the parties agreed that current copyright law has nothing as such that addresses itself to the videorecorder situation), there was no way copyright infringement could be enforced unless the Beta was taken off the market. Further, Sony maintained that the real motivation behind MCA's suit was precisely to slow down or halt Beta's march on the mass market until such time as the videodisc system could be introduced.

Judge Warren Ferguson, the Federal Judge who ruled against the family hour, was assigned the case after several judges disqualified themselves because of personal associations with MCA executives (MCA chairman Wasserman is an extremely powerful man around town in Southern California). In the fall of 1977 Ferguson ruled that the Sony defense on the MCA economic motivation could only be heard after a copyright trial was completed. After much pre-trial skirmishing Ferguson finally scheduled opening arguments for the copyright trial to begin December 1978.

While throwing its legal resources into the Betamax case, MCA moved ahead with its videodisc system, linked up with the Dutch hardware company N.V. Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken to produce the disc hardware. But before it introduced its mass, consumer-oriented system, MCA released its industrial disc system first, after a 1977 telephone call from Jimmy Carter to Democratic Party bigwig fundraiser Wasserman urging the MCA chief to move rapidly on the industrial player for a government client. The client turned out to be the CIA which saw the value of the disc as an advanced information retrieval system. As the CIA explained it to MCA officials, the agency was constantly presenting reams of material on a wide variety of subjects and individuals to those officials the CIA called "movers and shakers". These briefings consumed mounds of paper and prevented the agency from concisely and persuasively arguing its points. But with the videodisc, complete with its search, frame address, and other devices, the CIA could present briefing papers strikingly and effectively, detailing its case with graphic visuals.

The Army and Navy were also interested in the discs, particularly for recruitment, training, and propoganda purposes, and enlisted MCA to not only manufacture the disc but produce the material through MCA's Commercial and Industiral Film Division.

By the summer of 1978, with a number of government contracts under its belt, numerous corporate clients in the wings, and an arrangement with Pioneer Electronic Corporation, a large Japanese manufacturer, to manufacture and market the industrial players worldwide, MCA had successfully launched one aspect of its disc system.

But the real money, MCA executives felt, was still in the consumer market. Uncertainty, however, surrounded the consumer end, partly because of the growing volume of trade in the Betamax and other recorder systems that began to deluge the market, and partly because it was unclear what consumers might accept.

MCA decided to launch its system via a limited test market run, complete with demographic information to see what—if any—kind of disc consumers might be willing to buy. The test run begins in December 1978 and MCA will be offering five kinds of disc programs: entertainment (feature movies, the "best of" television programs, etc.); "How to" films (e.g., "How to play tennis"); musical performances (e.g., Elton John Live);

educational; and cultural (performances of opera, ballet, etc.). More than 50% of the initial discs marketed will be in the entertainment area since MCA hopes this mass market will become the dominant one. But if the more specialized "how to" series, or educational programs (offered by such producers as Readers Digest) or the cultural discs turn out to be the most popular—indicating a specialized, rather than mass audience acceptance—MCA will increase its programming in this area, biding its time until audience acceptance of the mass entertainment discs become a reality.

Future possibilities for DiscoVision are what entice MCA officials the most. DiscoVision President John Findlater is constantly pointing to the record industry with its \$3½ billion annual revenues (more than three times the revenues for motion pictures) and argues: "Doesn't it seem logical that the consumer would be as attracted to a disc which is like a record except that it has a visual component as well?"

Privately, MCA executives discuss the tie-in to the pornography industry which does a business of more than \$4 billion a year,

according to the California Department of Justice, almost as much as the record and motion picture industries combined. Pornographers feel the disc system—programs viewed in the privacy of the home—will be a goldmine for both pornographers and disc producers alike. "At least 10% of the people who buy tapes" one pornographic producer told *Forbes* magazine, "will want a collection of hard-core films for their libraries . . . It is an absolute natural for homes, for parties, when the boys come over for a beer."

Other possibilities abound. As mentioned above, cigarette companies have already approached MCA about producing programs on discs to be marketed by MCA. "They were quite explicit" one MCA executive told *TELEVISIONS*: "They saw this as a way around the ban on advertising for TV." Liquor companies have also approached the DiscoVision officials for much the same reason. Inserts of the thin and apparently indestructible discs inside such magazines as *Newsweek* and *Time* to be used as promotional devices or advertising extravaganzas are another marketing possibility.

But Findlater and other DiscoVision executives talk a different language when speaking to the select audiences within the video world. In a paper prepared for the Institute for Graphic Communications Conference at Ipswich Massachusetts, Findlater outlined a vision of *decentralized* programming, dear to the hearts and minds of video advocates. "What this is all leading up to" Findlater wrote, "what DiscoVision will provide—is highly personalized television. Special interest audiences whose needs are now excluded from general TV programming, will be offered a steady stream of inexpensive, easily accessible videodisc material of all types. We're going to have a new form of TV that's geared to individual tastes—a new concept in entertainment that will permit the consumer to buy, own and keep his own programming to play on his TV set in his home at the time of his choice—and our progress will be accelerated because we will be riding a trend which is now under a full head of steam—the trend from mass media to selective, individualized special interest material."

Once again, MCA is looking to envelop a trend: seize it, overwhelm it, trivialize it, market it.

MCA envisions a system with both its mass entertainment features that it can control through its vast programming apparatus, and specialized features that it also sees in marketing terms. Having seen the MCA discs to be introduced in the test market in December, one gets the distinct impression that we are being prepared for mass schlock and specialized schlock. The tone and style of the educational video-

disc, for example, is reminiscent of a 1950's-like educational film of a Jack Webb narrative for high school students on the evil effects of marijuana.

With respect to new programming, MCA executives foresee several developments—all of them couched in marketing terms: e.g., simultaneous release of a film and its disc version; special disc programming which, if successful, could then be turned into a film or TV program; and programs designed to appeal to specialized markets much as the black-exploitation features of several years back which successfully appealed to a specialized black film-going audience starving for product.

Finally, the DiscoVision possibilities also include a distribution scheme: the discs to be sold throughout the country in MCA's own Spencer Gift Stores.

For five years MCA has effectively hyped DiscoVision, helping the MCA stock triple in value, causing market analysts to place it in their "must buy" category, and contributing to the company mythology that it always plans ahead. Whether the videodisc gets accepted as a mass product remains to be seen, but the effort clearly fits into the MCA game plan.

These boffo MCA executives are hoping to establish the complete monopoly situation, what Findlater describes as "having both the chicken and the egg"—a hardware, software, and distribution tandem with MCA the first company to achieve such status in the entertainment industry since RCA took off in the 1920's.

It is a heady vision and a unique one—MCA, the quintessential mass programmer engulfing a technology which appeared to offer the greatest hope in undermining the ideological and practical foundations of mass entertainment programming. But in America, the market is king, and MCA—the Star Spangled Octopus as the *Saturday Evening Post* described it more than thirty years ago—likes to see itself as the media's marketing kingpin.

Bob Gottlieb writes for Los Angeles magazine and has recently written a history of the LA Times.

Pay Cable

Alexis Greene



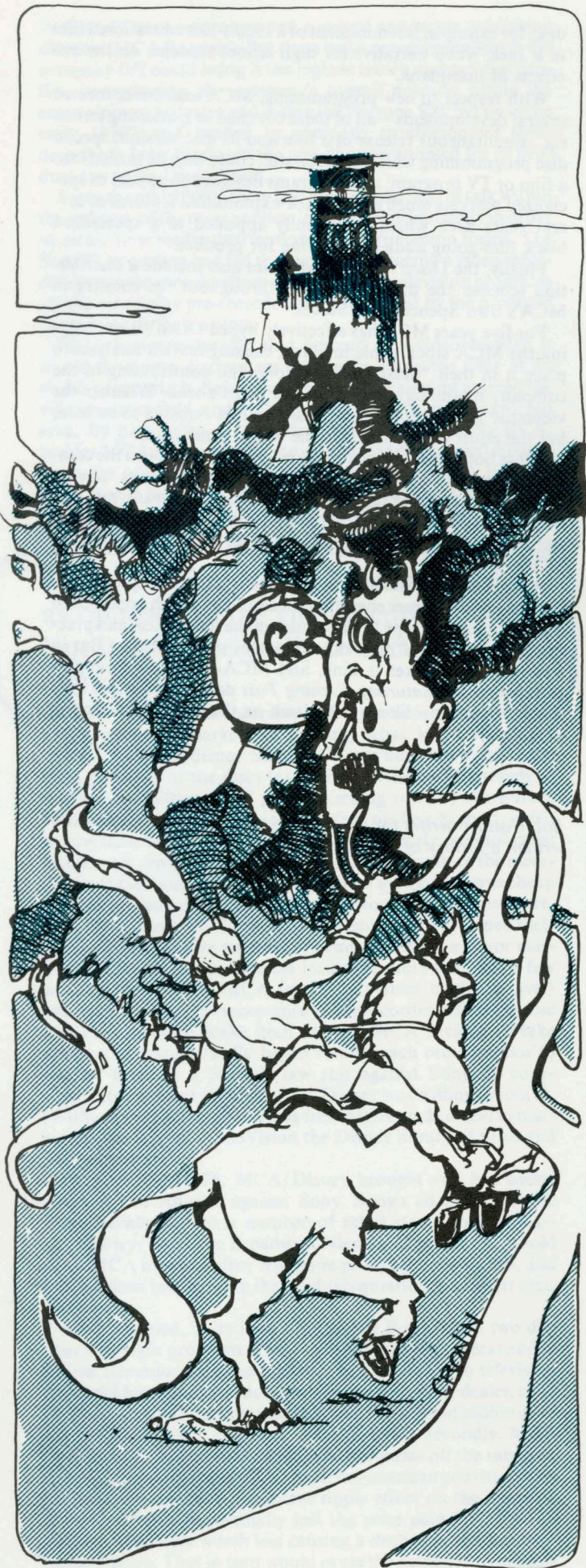
ay cable television just keeps gaining momentum. From a business that in March 1975 could point to only 187,000 subscribers, pay cable television has grown into an industry that, toward the close of 1978, can boast approximately two million subscribers. As the number of subscribers has risen, so naturally have the revenues, which in 1977 averaged \$11 million a month, with about half of those dollars going to pay cable suppliers.

The figures are small relative to commercial broadcast television, but large enough to warrant attention from television producers and distributors. With subscribership growing, and with suppliers thus having more money to spend on both feature films and original productions, the industry's programming trends become increasingly significant to the makers and sellers of television entertainment. Pay cable's programming trends are especially significant to the small independent video producer, for whom the networks and even public television are limited outlets, and for whom the home video market has not yet gotten off the ground. But the producer of video software faces problems within the pay cable industry as well: for example, to what extent will suppliers want to balance feature films, traditionally the bread and butter of pay cable television, with original product? And if suppliers are going to invest in original product, how much will actually come from independent producers, how much will be produced in-house, how much, in fact, will be video?

The two largest pay cable suppliers in the United States, Time Inc.'s Home Box Office (HBO) and Viacom International's Showtime, currently offer a mixture of feature films and specials. This last category is a catchall for a variety of programs, but mainly describes live-on-tape performances such as Tom Jones or Paul Williams in concert (HBO), or *Spice On Ice*, Showtime's Las Vegas spectacular. At Home Box Office, feature films account for 65 percent of the total program mix, and specials and other original fare make up the remainder.

To date, Showtime's program schedule has been dominated by movies; but in September 1978, the Teleprompter Corporation, largest cable system operator in America, became an equal partner in Showtime, a deal that represents a viewership bonanza for the Viacom subsidiary. When this partnership becomes effective on January 1, 1979, 250,000 Teleprompter subscribers that have been receiving Home Box Office will begin to receive Showtime, a conversion that should bring Showtime's total subscribership close to 600,000. And as if a quarter of a million new viewers weren't enough, Showtime president Jeffrey Reiss says that "explicit" in this partnership is the gradual move of all of Teleprompter's more than one million subscribers to Showtime. Says Reiss, Showtime's 1979 revenues should double 1978 figures, there will be many new dollars for original programming, and Showtime will be able to channel as much as \$200,000 toward each original production; motion pictures will constitute about 65 percent of Showtime's full service during 1979, and the number of specials will rise from two a month to four.

These two suppliers appear committed to original productions, but what sort of productions are they planning? Spokesmen at Home Box Office are chary with information about long-range goals, but new programs seem geared toward the largely up-scale audience that HBO says it attracts. As of this writing, an hour-long celebrity interview series called *Up Close* was being readied for an October start, with movie critic David Sheehan hosting the likes of Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, and John Travolta; from Gateway Productions was coming a program called *Consumer Rip-Off*, to be hosted by George Plimpton; Broadway plays were reportedly on the horizon, to be



taped in the theatres themselves or restaged for a television studio.

Of more relevance for those eyeing the pay cable market is HBO's orientation toward in-house production. Currently, says publicity director Robbin Ahrold, Home Box Office produces two-thirds of the original programming it offers. Ahrold reports that HBO's budget for in-house production has increased "dramatically" and will continue to increase. HBO spokesmen aver that this in-house control is necessary if subscribers are to receive the kind of programs they've come to expect from HBO, programming a subscriber supposedly would not be able to get from another supplier, or from the Public Broadcasting Service or the networks. Speaking about producers of documentaries, for example, Ahrold warns that those who have tried to peddle their wares at the networks, with no success, "should not go after Home Box Office," because HBO must be in on the creative process from the beginning. This outlook is consistent with HBO's policy of either bargaining for, or purchasing, all pay TV rights for original programs, and holding these rights for at least some time span.

At Showtime, 60 original programs are in one stage or another of development, although only some of these will see the light of day. In addition to specials, a soap opera and children's programming are being considered; a magazine-format show called *What's Up, America?* is coming from producer Charles Braverman; and from Quinn Martin Productions, a made-for-pay-TV movie (Quinn Martin has only one dramatic series running on network television this year, *Barnaby Jones* on CBS-TV). Says Jeffrey Reiss, "I am interested in finding out whether the public feels there's a value in seeing a novel for television prior to its network telecast. I intend to find that out in 1979, by exhibiting on Showtime some made-for-television movie, if possible before it goes to commercial broadcast television."

To listen to Reiss talk about Showtime's future program aims is to feel that either Showtime is considering any and every kind of original program, or that publicly at least, Showtime is not yet ruling anything out. Will Showtime be buying from the small independent video producer? "Absolutely," says Reiss. Broadway plays? "We should anticipate a number of Broadway and Off Broadway shows on pay television." Reiss explains Showtime's program expansion as a belief that "If we increase both the quality and the quantity of the programs we offer, we will increase the percentage of homes in a community that subscribe to both pay cable and cable . . . Movies have a defined audience, and with movies alone we can only get as high as we've gotten in terms of the percentage of customers in a community taking premium entertainment. If we want to get more customers, we have to diversify." Reiss is quick to add, however, that Showtime "Will not be diminishing movies, that's for sure; I may diminish the times I show them."

Movies are the lifeblood of two smaller pay cable suppliers—Hollywood Home Theatre, a joint venture of Twentieth Century-Fox and United Artists, serving approximately 150,000 viewers, including viewers in two regional systems, Prism and Fanfare—and of Bestvision Home Cinema, a stand-alone supplier with approximately 40,000 subscribers. Hollywood Home Theatre chiefly offers feature films and local sports, with a sprinkling of specials such as *Spice On Ice*; Bestvision's schedule is 90 to 95 percent movies.

To an extent, these suppliers offer movies and local sports from necessity. Neither company has a large enough subscribership base to support in-house production, although Richard M. Galkin, director of operations for Hollywood Home Theatre, says that, "The possibility that we'll be co-producing specials programming is very high." [As *TELEVISIONS* went to press Galkin left Hollywood Home Theatre to start his own business.]

And of necessity, these suppliers turn to movies and local sports in order to market themselves as alternatives to Home Box Office and Showtime, neither of which programs movies or sports for small areas of the country. Hollywood Home Theatre and Bestvision both market their services on the basis that they provide customized programming. Where national suppliers HBO and Showtime have to find a programming common

denominator not unlike that sought by the networks, the stand-alone pay cable supplier can tailor program packages to the requirements of individual communities.

Consequently, Hollywood Home Theatre puts together one kind of film package for the Theta Cable System on Channel Z in Los Angeles, where subscribers come from the film community and are ostensibly more sophisticated film-wise than some other subscribers might be. Bestvision Home Cinema supplies programs designed for a black audience to the KBLE Cable System, which serves a middle-to-upper-income black community in Columbus, Ohio. Bill Johnson, KBLE president, says that Bestvision has been able to bring together a program package that contains a daytime soap opera (all black cast); religious programs; concerts such as *In Session: Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McCrae* (this last produced by Columbia Pictures Pay Television); sports from black colleges; and feature films that HBO—which KBLE also receives—does not schedule. For example, says Johnson, HBO has offered *Sounder I*, but not *Sounder II*.

But Hollywood Home Theatre and Bestvision come to movies and local sports from choice as well as necessity. Despite Galkin's statement that Hollywood Home Theatre may one day produce specials, Galkin says that "We're not sure that the specials really have a long-term place on pay television. General variety entertainment is done very well on commercial TV. It seems to me," he adds, "that the future of pay television depends on giving somebody something different."

Yet "different" is not a category that Hollywood Home Theatre is going to explore strenuously. Galkin believes personally that there is an audience for *Live From Lincoln Center* and for other cultural programming. He goes so far as to say that he would be interested in screening video art to fill those six or eight minutes between the end of one movie and the beginning of another. Galkin adds, however, that long range goals for Hollywood Home Theatre still point toward regionalized sports and movies.

At Bestvision, vice-president Robert Sewak says that "Motion pictures have proven to be the mainstay of the industry and will continue to be the mainstay of the industry. The essence of the cable television system is to provide more and better of what exists on the air. What component will people pay for additionally to have in their home? Generally it is accepted that film is that product. Now there may be a desire, as HBO has proven and as Showtime has proven, for specialized programming of a very high quality in addition to film; because of that, we provide specials also, but the bulk of our programming is film."

Independent video producers regard the pay cable market with cautious optimism.

Martha Stuart, president of Martha Stuart Communications in New York City and creator of the "Are You Listening" series of videotapes, has not yet tried to distribute any of her work to pay cable television, but she has been fairly successful at distributing her programs to other television markets and feels that, with perseverance, the pay cable market would open up also.

At University Community Video (UCV), a documentary-producing video facility on the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota, there is also optimism about pay cable television, although here again, reality has yet to be tested. Jim Malec, director of the University Student Telecommunications Corporation, of which UCV is a part, says that the limited market for documentaries on broadcast television has forced UCV to consider pay cable television as a possible outlet; Malec feels that with the right marketing tie-ins, companies such as HBO and Showtime could incorporate documentaries into their program schedules.

But John Giancola, administrator of Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP), a New York City organization that represents film and video producers is more cautious in his

evaluation of the pay cable market, for ICAP has tried to distribute video to pay cable companies, with no success to date. "The video thing is a problem we work on constantly," says Giancola, who feels that to an extent the content of some video work, built as it is "on a different dimension of reality," is unsalable to pay cable television. Giancola also notes that ICAP itself has had to turn down an "enormous amount" of video that has been shot with half-inch equipment, which Giancola says does not produce a broadcast quality tape and is acceptable only for closed circuit television or local origination. To transfer tape is expensive and generally unsatisfactory, Giancola feels, and he encourages producers to avoid the half-inch format, if they have any intention of marketing their material.

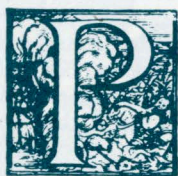
ICAP has been able to distribute video to basic cable television. John Giancola's hope is that more and more of such fare will prove competitive enough to pay-cable programming to elicit interest from that sector, and maybe some investment, too.

Commercial broadcast television, reluctant to try works by independent producers, tends to copy its own popular programs. With few exceptions, it appears this tendency to imitate successful formulas is as strong in pay cable as at the networks. If pay cable suppliers really want to provide an alternative to conventional television, possibly they should begin by becoming alternatives to each other.

Alexis Greene is a freelance writer researching a book on cable television.

QUBE

Kary Schulman and Debra Simeon



eter D'Agostino is a video artist on the faculty of Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. He has been selected to participate in a gallery show, "Six Ohio Artists," sponsored by Ohio State University. His exhibition piece, titled "Proposal to QUBE," is a "theoretical model" for a two-way television

system.

Last April, when first approached about this concept, QUBE personnel were enthusiastic. They were eager to continue good relations with Ohio State (a contract had just been negotiated to broadcast the Buckeyes home football games at a cost of \$9.00 per game to subscribers) and to air some cultural programming that might counteract their growing reputation for mindlessness in local production.

But after the initial excitement, D'Agostino met obstacles at every turn. His requests for studio time at the QUBE production center were granted infrequently and reluctantly. Even his attempts to use the portapak (available to comply with QUBE's charter regulations on public access) were met with indifference if not outright negativism.

Meanwhile, back in April, he began negotiations to have his "Proposal to QUBE" shown on QUBE as well as at the Sullivant Hall Gallery. Again, QUBE staffers were excited—at first. But 6 months later, He still had not been informed whether his work would be shown on *Columbus Alive*—the highly touted "show case" for local programming or on the public access channel, or if, in fact, QUBE would air it at all.

His experience is quite typical of encounters with Warner QUBE. These encounters characterized by difficulty with access to information and access to production, and a discrepancy between the public relations image and the reality in programming.

"Warner Communications, Inc. had another record year in 1977. Revenues exceeded the billion dollar mark for the first time, and net income and earnings per share rose substantially.

Revenues of \$1.1 billion were 38% above those of 1976, net income for the year was \$70.8 million, a 16% increase over last year."

Warner Communications, Inc. 1977 Annual Report

QUBE (the name means nothing) in Columbus, Ohio is the newest jewel in Warner Communications' corporate crown. Why Columbus? Four reasons, says Vivian Horner, a Warner Programming Vice President:

- Warner already had a cable system here—one the right size and demographic configuration;
- Columbus has been a test market city for many products and surveys;
- Ohio is sympathetic to new business (Columbus, as part of QUBE's charter, claims 6 percent of all gross receipts or a minimum of \$5,000,000 annually);
- Columbus is "typical" and thus a good environment for QUBE.

By now everyone even remotely interested in the potential of cable knows about Warner QUBE in Columbus with its 30 channels. Nine channels bring in network broadcasts from as far away as Cincinnati, and, with the single public access channel, make up the pre-existing Warner Cable operation. Then there are 10 P or Premium channels for which the viewer is charged *per show* for movies, sports events, entertainment specials, etc. (The most popular, P-10, is devoted to soft-core pornography at \$4.00 per show.) There are also 10 community channels, devoted to educational, public service, and children's programming, as well as "cultural" programming which, when described, sounds like out-takes from public broadcasting. ("*Freedom 2000*—an animated short film with an educational and colorfully entertaining explanation of our American business system. For children, it's a delightful introduction; for adults, a refresher course to help better understand why the free enterprise system is what it is in America today. It's free, on Community Channel C-10!")

And we know about the interactive capacity of QUBE—the capacity that lets you "talk back to your TV." Usually this capacity is used to "gong" amateur tap dancers and saxophone players by touching button 4 during the "Talent Search" show. But there have been several broadcasts attracting national attention, including a "Town Meeting" which was "narrowcast" only to QUBers in the wealthy suburb of Upper Arlington.

Although the marketing information is only as good as the demographics information, QUBE has that too. Warner's designated cable area takes in some of Columbus' wealthiest suburbs. And, with the "narrowcast" capability of targeting audiences, QUBE is capable of collecting enormous amounts of information from very specific populations (what they watch, how much they watch, how they respond on interactive segments, etc.).

In an important recent development, Warner is cooperating in the creation of the nation's first black-owned cable television station. *KBLE* will serve 38,000 homes in Columbus' predominantly black east side, and will be equipped with interactive capability. This increases Warner's ability to gather precise marketing information about this audience.

There are other reasons for secrecy. Those familiar with the system suspect that one of the things QUBE wants to forestall is public knowledge of its limitations. The potential of the technology is staggering. But right now, according to one source, "they can't do what most people *think* they can." And then there are the trade secrets of the computer software technology. Warner, understandably, doesn't want the cable competition to cash in on their research bucks.

An employee of QUBE describing phone calls received every day:

"I want to talk about my bill, it's wrong. I didn't watch this movie you charged me for, Prorate!"

"Yes, sir, that's not a movie. That's a prorated charge, added every month, sir."

"But I tell you I didn't see it, and I didn't see this one, BASIC TV either!"

"That's not a movie either, sir, that's another monthly charge

...

"That's how it goes—Bills average between \$30.00 and \$50.00 per month but we have people disconnecting right this minute because they're getting bills for hundreds of dollars, for things they don't think they tuned in to. You know the kids have found out already that all they have to do is go down to the dime store, buy a 69¢ magnet, hold it over the empty "QUBE Key" slot, and that will activate the P channels."

When QUBE first started its Columbus operation there was great excitement among video and cable programmers. The potential for creative programming was enormous. As Adam Haas put it: "A lot of the people hired for QUBE were imported from New York. There were many, many applications to work there. They had their pick. They have these incredibly prestigious people working there."

However, there is a perception on the part of many familiar with QUBE recently that there's been a retrenchment. A number of programmers, described as some of the most innovative on the staff ("the ones with ideas") were let go. It's a more or less open secret that QUBE management pays lip service to the importance of creativity in programming, but, in fact, feels it is not really necessary to the operation. "They feel they're running a service and programming isn't paying off," says one source. As a result, production money for most areas has dried up in the last few months. As Peter D'Agostino said, "The actual content of what's on the screen—the image—is the least important factor."

Study of QUBE's recent program guides confirms the fact that programming is not as ambitious as promised and there is, over all, much less production than advertised. Asked to specify upcoming production plans, QUBE mentioned more QUBEsomer-type shows and a new game show.

"In looking to 1978 and beyond, we see continued opportunities for growth in our existing businesses, and numerous areas of potential expansion. The high return on investment we enjoy and the substantial cash we generate give WCI's management an unusual degree of flexibility in guiding its future course. The talented and capable men and women throughout the company are the basis for our belief that Warner Communications will continue to build on its past record of growth."

However, as the *New York Times* reported, "It was not quite the 'first two-way town meeting of the air' that the show's promotional literature said it would be. Votes were not binding (there are 20,000 potential subscribers in Upper Arlington, 2,000 actually subscribe, and about 500 were tuned in) and most questions put to the audience amounted to a multiple choice preference quiz on the town's future rather than the expected referendum on Planning Board recommendations to the City Council."

Recently a QUBE-somer presentation featured Donald Kennedy of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in a hearing on product labeling. The 3,000 QUBE subscribers tuned in got to give Kennedy feedback on such issues as which food types should be fortified (33 percent said "cereals", 30 percent said "all carbohydrate foods", 33 percent said "no foods"), and how nutritional information should be listed on product labels. This program was given the public relations red-carpet treatment and was subtitled "You can change government policy."

But less well-known to the general public, and even cable cognoscenti, is the commercial use of the interactive capability. Such uses have not been lost, however, on the marketing specialists. Here, for example, is what *Advertising Age* had to say last year:

"Commercial time is being sold on 10 "community" channels listed under such headings as "consumer information," "religious programs" and "Live and Learn."

Bradford Travel Service, for example, will use "infomercials" (averaging five minutes in length but no longer than ten minutes) to promote worldwide char-

ter and tour packages. The "infomercials" open by asking viewers which of five places they would like to learn about. The place getting the most votes on the "response" button will be promoted in the commercial that follows. At the close, pricing and tour dates will be given, and the announcer will ask viewers to indicate if they want a brochure."

Most important of all is the QUBE computer. The computer scans QUBE subscribers (about 20,000 homes are now QUBEd up of a potential 100,000) every 6 seconds and records what they're watching or what information they're feeding back by touching the response buttons on the QUBE console. ("If you think Woody Hayes should punt in this situation, TOUCH NOW—TOUCH NOW—TOUCH NOW")

"They mailed me my part this morning. I sent in some boxtops. They write the script with one part missing. It's a new idea . . . And then they go on with the play until he says, 'Do you agree to that, Helen?' And I say, 'I sure do! Isn't that fun, Guy?'"

Ray Bradbury, "Fahrenheit 451"

With its potential for interactivity, QUBE has enormous capacity to make good on some of the "Blue Sky" predictions about public access. Initial publicity suggested that this would be a priority for Warner but, as QUBE nears its first birthday in December, this has not been the case. A QUBE sales representative, queried about how public access is presented to potential subscribers, stated that, as far as he knows, it isn't. The only reference is to the possibility of an appearance on the aforementioned Talent Search—QUBE's answer to the Gong Show. ("The kids love it . . . they like to hit button number 4. That's the hook that gets the guy off the stage.")

In fact, Warner Cable Board Chairman Gustaf Hauser says, "It's a myth that huge hordes of people will want to be on television. The facilities are available for people to put together their own stuff but its just sitting there. People just want to go on a show and talk, not produce a show of their own. The people who get involved in public access are usually small special interest groups." Also, according to Hauser, much QUBE programming already "is in effect public access, but we organize it."

QUBE public relations people often seem to confuse their own versions of public service programming with public access—or else they dismiss it entirely—"Oh yes, we have public access *but it isn't interactive.*" Some QUBE people will even admit that they have enough trouble producing their own programming "without having a lot of strangers in here."

QUBE in Columbus does have a portapak which, for a deposit, can be borrowed. But, as a source inside QUBE commented, "Most of that stuff doesn't make it on the air. It's not of airable quality. We have to ask 'To what extent is this economic?' Do we have an indication there is an audience?' What about outreach—or a training component to give community members the skills they need to take advantage of the enormous information potential QUBE's public access could provide? "No, we don't have time for that . . . you know, studio time is incredibly expensive, and this is a business."

Just recently, QUBE has introduced a new slant on public access: the profit motive. A Columbus group can hire a QUBE crew to shoot whatever they wish, then see their material on the public access channel. This may be a step along the road toward leased access, where those who can afford the leasing of access time will become the "public" of public access.

And this, QUBE people insist, is what the public wants public access to be (and is willing to pay for)—endless copies of *Today Show* interviews with community people about their projects, charity events, and hobbies.

"The Blue Sky predictions are never gonna come through. Cable operators are not in the business of providing public service. They never have been. The only Blue Sky predictions that will happen are the ones that will make money for the companies—they're in it for profit and that is the bottom line."
—Adam Haas, Municipal Access Coordinator for the City of Kettering, Ohio

QUBE officials are very guarded, almost to the point of paranoia, about any information published about their operation. They will entertain few questions regarding finances, such as how much they've invested in the system (estimates vary wildly), and will not give out any information about the numbers of subscribers watching any given show. Even the total number of subscribers is yielded most reluctantly. "They go crazy over the simplest little things," a QUBE staff member who asked for anonymity said in amazement. "When stories are printed they don't like, the place goes nuts." Staff people are ordered to funnel all questions, even the most innocent, through the public relations staff, and they fear for their jobs if any adverse information can be traced back to them.

Why the secrecy? "It's probably not to hide enormous profits," says Adam Haas, Municipal Access Coordinator for the City of Kettering, Ohio. "They're probably not even making a profit. But they are getting some very heavy marketing information, and they want to guard that. It's unique information, an instant reaction from the consumers. A first time thing. QUBE could be called a marketing experiment. They don't necessarily make a profit on it, but find out what is profitable in it."

Kary Schulman and Debra Simeon are free lance writers in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Minority Cable Report

Roger Newell



Blacks are addicted to television, and according to several polls, view it as the most creditable source of information among all media," according to Charles Tate in the Urban League News. "Yet, [blacks] have almost nothing to do with program content and have almost no access to the airwaves as a means of information dissemination by black people. Black ownership of cable systems is the most practical and effective way to liberate [black] communities from these conditions."

"In the long term," he continued, "black community-based ownership can provide the best infrastructure and social environment for the use of cable technology in the delivery of health, education and social services."

However, without continued pressure from black and other minority organizations on the federal government to provide needed capital for the minority cable ventures, all the cable projects and what they can do will remain only words.

For minority groups around the country the idea of cable was seen as the answer to their communication problems. Being able to operate TV stations and develop programming seemed like a dream come true. But that dream has been deferred by the country's economic crisis.

Now minorities involved in cable are teetering between failure and gaining entry into the industry. Which way they fall, according to cable experts, is mostly dependent on the action or the inaction of the federal government. Without the federal government's injection of money for the start of minority cable systems, whether in the form of a capital pool or direct loans, min-

ority cable franchises will remain almost worthless pieces of paper.

While fire-gutted buildings still smoldered and frustration and resentment still burned deep in the hearts of blacks following the summer of 1967, the federal government launched an attempt to uncover the causes of the riots which swept like prairie fires through scores of the nation's cities.

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, more commonly called the Kerner Commission, had as its august task the search for the causes of the civil unrest. In the words of Lyndon Johnson, addressing the nation, "...The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack—mounted at every level—upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. We should attack these conditions—not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society in America..."

Among the major findings of the commission's investigation was the fact that blacks interviewed by investigators for the commission felt that the media could not be trusted to present the true story of conditions which led to the riots.

As one commission interviewer reported:

"The average black person couldn't give less of a damn about what the media say. The intelligent black person is resentful at what he considers to be a totally false portrayal of what goes on in the ghetto. Most black people see the [media] as mouthpieces of the 'power structure.'"

Perhaps Charles Tate in *Cable Television In The Cities* put it more directly when he wrote, "The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders reported that "... Television and newspapers offered black Americans an almost totally white world; and far too often, acted and talked about blacks as if they neither read newspapers nor watched television."

Tate quoted lawyer Donald K. Hill as saying "The commission's report only touched upon the tremendous impact which the white-culturally-oriented media have on the black community. Although black Americans have the opportunity to fully observe the white world, communications flows in only one direction; blacks never see themselves as they perceive themselves, nor does communication flow from blacks to blacks..."

Even though the findings of the researchers were new to many members of the commission, it was a commonly known factor in the black community. For many in the black community media was a dead-end subject. They felt that there was no way that blacks with their limited resources could take on the giants like ABC, CBS and NBC. Talk about changing media was to them foolish dreaming at best and a serious waste of time at worst.

However, there were other voices in the community. They felt that as blacks had confronted the other seemingly omnipotent structure in the urban setting, the police, the schools and the political process to name a simple few, they could also challenge the media. The challenge began to manifest itself on two different fronts. One was a direct challenge to the white controlled media by demanding the inclusion of more blacks in production and on the screen. While some advances were made on this front, it is the other form the challenge took that interests us. Many felt that blacks should be focusing their attention on cable television.

According to Tate, community leaders and organizations were confronted with a major challenge when introduced to cable. He said, "Cable television, a futuristic communications system [was] ideally suited for community control and local programming [and] is on the verge of broadscale expansion into the cities and ghetto communities."

Continuing, Tate said, "This development could provide the leverage needed by local communities to achieve a much greater degree of independence and self-determination or it could seriously weaken the movement. Cable television will have a decided impact one way or the other. Its importance and its potential as a social, cultural, economic and political force cannot be ignored."

Just as things seemed their brightest, the economy's bottom fell out.

The results were predictable for minorities, the resulting recession swept through minority economic ventures like a drought, leaving most of the 25 cable systems without development capital, hanging in limbo like dried-up fruit on the vine.

As a result of the economic recession, the development of minority cable system has slowed from a brisk jog to a hobbling limp.

According to George Burns, deputy director of CRC, "... As a result of the lack of capital, black businesses have generally done poorly." Minority cable ventures have not proven exceptions to the rule. Burns said that the economic recession caused an abrupt change in the cable industry, causing the halting of many new cable systems. On the other hand, Burns said that established systems have continued to function well despite the economy. However, the recession proved to most harmful for those who could least afford it.

Despite the fact that franchises have been granted to 29 minority cable stations, of which twenty are black-owned, only 13 are in actual operation and of that number only two are black owned and operated. The remaining 13 stations, franchises only on paper, await the much needed injection of capital which will turn the blueprints for the cable television into an operating reality.

Even with this dismal sounding scenario, the battle around increasing minority involvement in telecommunications continues.

One of the first organizations to begin work on cable and minority communities was the Communications Resource Center (formerly the Cablecommunications Resource Center) in Washington, D.C. which has done the ground work to involve minority groups in the developing cable industry. Established in the early 1970s by the Booker T. Washington Foundation, a public non-profit operating foundation chartered under the National Business League, the center has as its goal the development and dissemination of technical information, as well as factual data concerning the economic and business potential of cable for minorities. Out of the gloom that surrounded discussions of blacks and the media in the late 1960s, CRC, working with local cable groups around the country, has painted a bright picture: 29 minority-owned franchises with a book value of over \$20 million.

Proponents of the use of cable in minority communities saw it as the clear alternative to commercial broadcasting which, as Richard Adler notes in *The Humanistic Claim on the Cable*, was largely "irrelevant or antagonistic to their beliefs and values." He continued, "... Television in this country grew into a mammoth enterprise with very little exploration of its utility for communicating [human's] knowledge. The cable gives us a second—and perhaps last—chance to determine whether television can be used to teach, to inspire, to change [human's] lives for the better. The task will be demanding and expensive."

The future of cable for minorities seemed unlimited during the days of the early 1970s. Cable appeared to be the perfectly paved "yellow brick road" that would lead minorities, who in the past had been shut out of the telecommunications industry, to gain an important foothold. As Charles Tate put it,

"Cable television may be the last communication frontier for the oppressed."

Between 1972 and 1975, 24 minority groups around the country were awarded cable television franchises in cities ranging from Mound Bayou, Miss. to Gary, Indiana. It seemed as if blacks and other minority groups were on the road to be able to provide the type of programming so greatly needed and so long

denied in the underdeveloped and exploited minority communities in the U.S.

A significant breakthrough for minorities occurred in April of 1977, when as a result of increasing pressure by minority telecommunications groups and minority elected officials, the Federal Communications Commission sponsored the first conference on minority broadcast ownership. The conference, held in Washington, D.C., attracted approximately 550 blacks and Hispanic Americans to the two-day session which covered legal, financial, regulatory and discriminatory barriers to minority ownership, as well as increased federal funding for assistance to minorities entering the field.

The situation for minorities in telecommunications was summed up by Harry M. (Chip) Shooshan III, chief counsel for the House Communications Subcommittee. "The question comes down to money" he said. "Maybe we can move to a lottery or auction process, where some of the money that is generated goes into a minority ownership trust fund."

Most experts in the cable field see such a trust fund as the only real hope for minorities to gain the needed capital to begin large scale cable development. Such a fund would not only help minorities in cable, it would also help to correct the imbalance in other areas of telecommunications. *Cablelines* magazine gives a clear picture of that imbalance when it reports, "Presently, about 0.5 percent of the nation's 8,950 broadcast stations are owned by minority groups (Two of the 950 television stations and 58 of the 8,000 radio stations)."

Pressured by the proponents of increased cable access for minority groups, action on the part of the federal government has resulted in some major advances for minorities interested in cable communications.

On Feb. 1, 1978, the Small Business Administration announced a change in its rules that enabled small firms to obtain money for use in the cable industry. The new rules make it easier for minority groups to "apply for loans to buy, expand or operate a broadcasting or cable television station." According to Jean M. Nowah of the SBA, "The change was adopted to increase small business participation, particularly that of disadvantaged persons in the broadcast industry. SBA regular 7(a) business loans will be available to qualified applicants to purchase, construct, modernize or expand radio or television stations and cable operations, to purchase equipment or materials and for working capital."

She continued, "Under the bank guaranteed loan program, 7(a) loans generally are limited to \$350,000, but can be approved for as much as \$500,000 under exceptional circumstances."

Of themselves the SBA funds alone will not provide the total capital needed by minorities for cable ventures. But they seem to be the first step in the government's recognition of the problems of minority ownership. This additional government support could not come at a better time.

The economic recession notwithstanding, cable—according to experts—has "taken off" in recent years. Les Brown, writing in the *New York Times*, said, "Several new forms of electronic communications have already become flourishing businesses expecting significant growth in the next five years." Cable is included in Brown's list.

George Burns of the CRC stated that with the necessary financial backing, "A very substantial piece of the cable pie can be had by minorities." He estimated that minorities' cable firms could reap as much as 18 to 20 percent of the \$4 billion in profits generated by cable system operations. The *Urban League News* reported that cash flow for cable operations in major black communities "will range from \$100,000 to \$500,000 per month. In mature systems (those with enough subscriber revenue to pay off their construction debt) the cash flow could ultimately reach the \$750,000 to \$1 million per month range." Burns said that minorities in cable currently stand a better chance for receiving government funds given the new sensitivity on the part of the federal government. This new awareness led in part to the FCC lowering its financial requirement for licensing.

But he noted that the real key to increasing minority involvement rests in the establishment of a capital pool, funded by the federal government, which would have a \$25 to \$35 million base. Possible sources for the money needed for such a pool, listed by Burns, included the SBA, a proposed national development bank and the Department of Commerce.

"Chances are good," said Burns, "for minorities to make gains in cable, providing funding preconditions are met."

Once funding is secured to cover the start up costs for a cable system, the next and equally critical question of programming comes quickly to the surface.

Since its inception, cable has been viewed as an alternative to the fare presented on the regular broadcast channels. Kas Kalba in "The Cable Fable" which appeared in the *Yale Review of Law and Social Action* said that the advent of cable would provide the viewing public with an array of socially, economically and ecologically desirable services. Cable was supposed to "... bring opera to Odessa, Broadway to Bayonne, adult education to Appalachia, 'soul' to Watts and Bedford Stuyvesant, and sports—megahertz upon megahertz of sports—to superspectators wherever they are. Cable... will be able to do what UHF stations, public broadcasting, network documentaries, local specials, amateur hours and even Dick Cavett have not been able to do, namely increase the content, variety and breakdown the audience scale of television. For cable will be to network television what newsletters, community newspapers and specialty magazines are to *Life*, *Readers Digest* or *Playboy*."

For minorities one of the most appealing aspects of cable is the ability to present materials which normally would not receive airing on network television, but which have important social and political messages.

Liesel Flashenberg, who directs the Center for the Media Art (CMA) of the Booker T. Washington Foundation, says that at present very few of the minority cable stations in operation are doing their own programming. Most she says are simply re-broadcasting network signals. She feels that both network programming, as well as the Public Broadcast Service are not meeting the needs of the minority community.

"PBS has turned into 'big business' or 'another network' and is gearing its programming for an intellectual elite, because they are the individuals who support PBS with their money."

CMA was developed to meet the growing need for programming that would address the needs of the minority community. It is designed to foster the artistic and creative development of community and neighborhood based arts and has begun a program of matching audiences with their special programming needs.

CMA works to assist minority independent film and video producers, which are considered an important potential source for community based programming of the future. Flashenberg feels that independent producers represent "an untapped reservoir of talent and opportunity for the media to fulfill its function of public responsibility in education, enrichment of the quality of life and entertainment."

She continued, "We are interested in the development of self-responsive community control of art."

"CMA's attention is not focused solely on artistic development. CMA also spends time working to ensure that minorities have the technical training necessary to operate cable stations. Flashenberg cites the example of a program in Knoxville, Tenn., in which minorities will be trained in areas from broadcast licensing to the installation of cables.

Knoxville is also important to minority groups interested in cable for another reason. It is the home of the first black cable radio station, WRKB-Radio Knoxville. Established in 1976, according to its sponsors WRKB is designed "to provide alternative media services to the Knoxville community."

Within the kernel of this radio station rests the essence of what many advocates of cable mean by local, community-based programming. "WRKB is providing the Knoxville community an alternative radio service. Currently it is focusing on a wide range of community issues and cultural concepts, presenting them in a fashion unhindered by commercial concerns. The station is also providing coverage of news and political events from a different

perspective while giving valuable radio experience and training to those persons who could not normally receive it," read a statement from the station's management presented at a recent conference on "Humanizing Media Technology" held at Knoxville College.

"Emphasis at WRKB will be placed on creating cultural programs of broad diverse content, public affair programs with minority and poor concerns expressed and news and sport coverage of events not often covered by the major media," continued the statement.

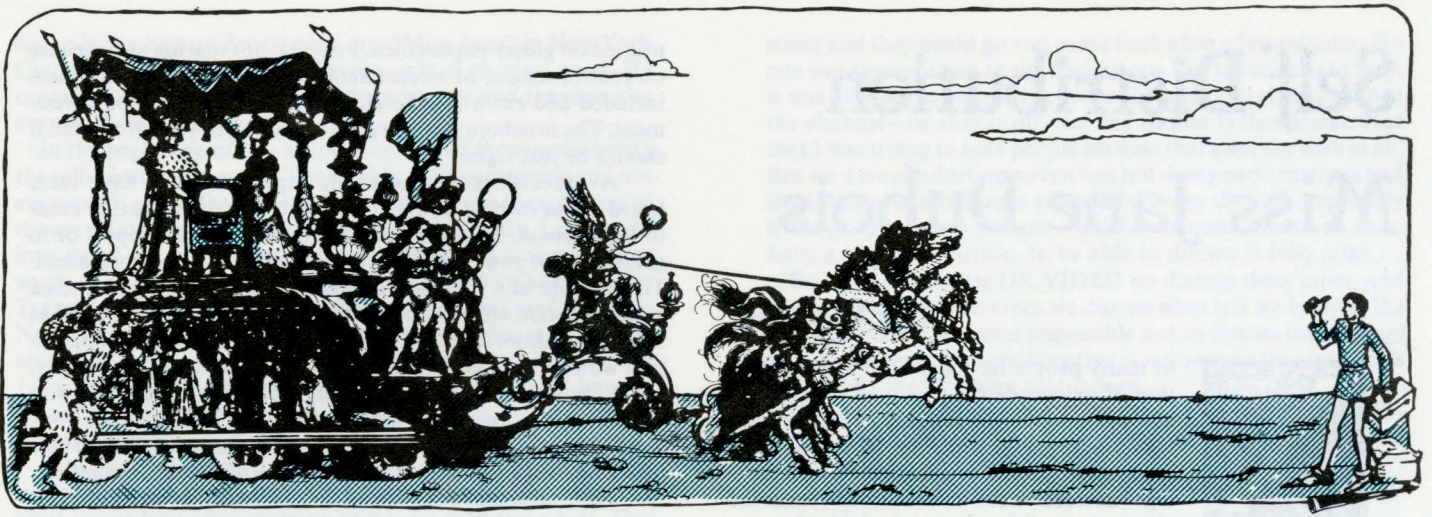
Commenting on the nature of the station's operation, James T. Pippin, general manager, said, "WRKB can present this kind of programming without interruption by advertising and without benefit of any income from advertising or the air, because it is operated primarily as a community service and not to make money. Its major aim is to give you a real choice in the type of radio programs available to you and other residents of the Knoxville area."

Speaking at the "Humanizing Media Conference," Al Hannans, project director for the workshop on communications technology and community development said, "There is very little public knowledge or awareness of opportunities for direct community participation in the utilization of media technology for socially beneficial purposes." He stated that the key to increasing awareness of the potential of cable was through the broader dissemination of information on cable which would be not "just to keep the public informed, but also 'operationally involved.'"

Flashenberg sees the effective development of community-based programming as more than just "sending out films or video tape to cable system operators." To her, community programming also translates into community organizing.

"What we mean by community organization," said Flashenberg, "is working with community organizations, such as arts groups who know what the local needs are in the formulation of programming for that area. Also she says that once minority owned cable systems are "off the ground" she would like to see programming go outside of the home. "We envision in the future using public libraries, churches and schools, just to name a few places, as locations where people can gather and watch and discuss cable programs."

Roger Newell is an editor for the American Federation of Teachers and was formerly a staff writer for the Afro-American in Washington D.C.



Self Distribution

...D.C.T.V.

Lloyd Trufelman



owntown Community Television (DCTV), in Chinatown, New York City, is a combination community access space and production center.

For the community, DCTV lends out half-inch equipment and offers free, open classes every Thursday night on all sorts of video skills. DCTV has also produced a number of quality documentaries for public television and specialized non-broadcast distribution.

"There's a one or two week wait to get into the classes, which hold about 10 people and are usually filled up," said Karen Ranucci, an assistant director. "After people finish the class they can borrow our half-inch black and white equipment. We give preference to community projects over individual projects," she said.

Using DCTV's facilities, members of the community have produced tapes on urban housing, political demonstrations, arts groups, performances, International Women's Day, Westway, and others. "The portapacks go out twice a day, six days a week," said Jon Alpert, one of DCTV's directors. "Thousands of tapes a year are done."

DCTV will also loan equipment out for purposes of viewing tapes, and will also document and shoot tapes on request, if time allows. The last such project was done for the Museum of the American Indian, in the form of a documentary of one of the museum's exhibits.

On a larger scale, DCTV has also done tapes that have been broadcast on PBS, with the help of WNET's TV Lab. The tapes are *Cuba: The People*, *Chinatown: Immigrants in America*, *Health Care: Your Money or Your Life*, and *Vietnam: Picking Up The Pieces* (see *Televisions* VOL. 6 No. 2).

However, most of DCTV's tapes rely on non-broadcast distribution for exposure. "We operate distribution by piggyback, advertising, universities, and specialized showings," said Ranucci. "For example, the Vietnam tape went to the Southeast Asia Resource Center and Friendship. These groups showed them to their members in meetings and passed them on to other groups." Ranucci said that the same was true for the health care tape, with a tremendous request coming from hospitals and schools. The tapes are sent out to organizations on a pay-as-you-can basis.

Through the piggyback system, DCTV gets their tapes shown to select, high-quality audiences. "The tapes are shown to a specialized, interested audience," Ranucci said. "People use them as a tool for solving problems, and they are used seriously and discussed afterwards in group situations. I'm not overwhelmed by the propaganda shown on commercial TV because people are only half-watching those programs. We make tapes for a specific constituency, a captive audience."

DCTV has featured its tapes in a catalogue called *New Contours of Change/1979* which also highlights the work of Third World Newsreel, California Newsreel, and the Pacific Street Film Collective. The catalogue was sent out across the nation via direct mail in an issue of 15,000 copies. DCTV has access to some useful organizational mailing lists. "We work with various organizations during a production, and afterwards, we use their mailing list for advertising," said Ranucci. "We build up a relationship during production. Organizations know that we won't use their information for our own good. We're sincere."

On a community level, DCTV has a mobile unit that they bring through the streets of the Lower East Side and other parts of New York City to show tapes. The use of the mobile unit is very advantageous especially when non-English language tapes are being presented. The unit is brought to street fairs, and community members can view tapes, participate in a current taping (such as the in-progress *Third Avenue*) and show their own tapes to their neighbors.

DCTV also has produced tapes for nurses and patients, broadcast over a hospital's in house system, and a legal services tape that was shown at a national lawyer's convention.

DCTV is quite happy with current distribution mechanisms. "At this time, going cable is impossible to think of," Ranucci said. "It's too much money and our energies are dispersed enough as it is. Non-broadcast distribution is so effective; it's one step of keeping TV close to people. We do use public access from time to time, but we're happy with the distribution that we're now doing."

For funding, DCTV operates on an annual budget of "around \$100,000" which comes from the New York State Council On The Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. "It takes a lot to run this center, especially when most of our services are done for free," Ranucci said.

DCTV has been operating for eight years, mostly on the strength of its reputation, Ranucci says. "In a year when groups got zeroed or cutback, our grants increased. We work hard. We live cheap and are as resourceful as possible. Our funding comes from the reputation that we have and our incentive to keep producing at a higher level. We're not known for the strength of our proposals and we rarely go to Washington. We're funded on the strength of our reputation," she said firmly.

As to the future, DCTV is moving to a huge new facility in a renovated firehouse at 87 Lafayette St., a few blocks away from the present location. The new facility should enable DCTV to increase community services and program production.

Self Distribution

Miss Jane Dubois

Alan Hertzberg



Not many people have explored self distribution of independently produced videotapes. My decision to choose this route was not made lightly, and I caution those considering it to weigh the alternatives before starting. I decided on self distribution because the alternatives did not seem viable for my

videotape.

In 1977 video was in a strange position: it was still a new field, and there was not a well-established distribution network. When my tape, "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Dubois," was completed, there were only four major distributors. Two dealt in art tapes exclusively; another concentrated on art tapes; and one was primarily a film distributor. I was not interested in being distributed by a large company: I did not want to be one small entry in a large catalog where my work receives no personal attention and tends to get lost. After working on "Miss Jane" for a year and a half, I wanted to get it to the people I thought should see it. Since there were no cooperatives set up for video like those for independent film, I decided to go it alone.

Here are some of the things I have learned about video distribution in the last year. Much of the information is similar to that for independent film, but there are significant differences for video. The most important difference between film and video distribution is that many people do not know how to use video. I have had to educate the public how to use the medium and then persuade them to buy my work. This is time-consuming but necessary. Several places where I have exhibited had never shown video before but I did not let that stop me. This is where one must be imaginative. There are few precedents in video.

I decided the educational market was one area to pursue. "Miss Jane" is the story of a young black woman whose life is representative of her subculture. The tape is broken down into 12 chapters of approximately 15 minutes each. Each chapter defines a reference point in Jane's life and is designed to stand alone as well as relate to the other 11 parts. This form lends itself to use in educational institutions, both high schools and universities. "Miss Jane" could be shown to people interested in sociology, black studies, women's studies, psychology, social work, urban studies and American culture among others.

Public libraries were another market I decided to follow. *The North American Film & Video Directory* (Bowker) is a book I recommend to anyone interested in pursuing the library market, whether educational or public. The directory lists over 600 libraries across the country that already handle video. Don't forget: the idea is to get to the people who would be interested in buying your work. This book offers a list of AV specialists with money to spend.

After defining your market the next step is to decide what to send to these AV people. The first thing to do is make up a brochure that explains what it is that you are trying to sell. The brochure is extremely important. You will be sending it to people who, for the most part, don't know you or your work. It is the first line of attack.

Several tips about the brochure. It should be attractively designed and carry as much information as possible without looking too wordy. An interesting picture helps. For the cover of my brochure, I chose a picture of Jane that I shot off the TV screen. I decided to invest the extra money and have the mailing

printed on glossy paper stock. I suggest not sparing any expense on your brochure. Mine cost about \$125 for the first 1500 which included \$60 extra for the glossy stock. It was a good investment. The brochure is the first introduction to your work and it should be just right.

AV specialists generally buy tapes that they have seen, heard about or read about. This opens up several further areas to think about. In order to start word-of-mouth support or to get reviews of your work, you have to give public performances. The premier of a work is a delicate matter and can be handled many different ways. I chose to premier "Miss Jane" myself at The New School for Social Research, in New York, in conjunction with AIVF. I booked the theater for two weekends in May, 1977. The idea of having an opening is to get reviews so that you can send them to people whom you want to interest in your work. This entails dealing with the press. One really has to be a jack-of-all-trades to self-distribute. And it is time-consuming.

Press screenings should be held two to six weeks before your opening, and you should spread the net wide. Try to get those magazines that might be interested in your project to attend the screening. Don't be afraid to approach the press. For "Miss Jane" I had several press screenings that worked out well. I stressed women's magazines, video magazines, the black press, the library press and newspapers.

After the premier, additional exhibitions serve other purposes. They keep the work before the public, and they garner additional reviews. Each time the work is shown you make new contacts and news of it will travel. For each screening you should send an announcement to everyone you think might be interested—even if it is unlikely that they will attend. When people see your work and like it they can be very helpful if for no other reason that that they believe in what you are doing. One woman came up to me after a performance and suggested that I consider contacting sex educators. This field had never occurred to me.

Two other practices that I have found helpful are showing my work at conferences and going on speaking tours. Conferences allow you to show your work to special interest groups. For example, I showed "Miss Jane" at the Institute for Minority Studies at the University of Wisconsin in April, 1977. I saw a call for papers in the *Journal of the American Psychiatric Association*. The theme of the conference was "Minority Women and Ethnicity." I sent a letter with my brochure and a review from the magazine *Film Library Quarterly*. On the basis of this packet I was invited to the conference and had two screenings of the tape during the official program. The conference was attended by 500 people from around the country. It was the perfect conference at which to present this piece. As a result I was invited to appear at two colleges in Louisiana, and there is a good chance of selling two more copies of the tape.

In addition The Institute for Minority Studies publishes a magazine called *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies* and they published a review of the tape. The review can be sent out with the brochure to those schools that have collections dealing with minority studies. I can't stress strongly enough the importance of published reviews. They are like calling cards, and will help you get your foot in many a door. Librarians and AV specialists tend to shy away from independents. They question the quality of independently distributed work, particularly in video. Reviews help establish your credibility.

When I was in Vermont this summer working on a tape, I wrote to the University of Vermont at Burlington. I sent the brochure and two reviews with the letter and requested an appointment with the media librarian to screen the tapes. She liked the work and asked for a preview copy to show to the faculty. They bought the tape. I have found that if you approach school librarians and they like the work, they will get it to the appropriate faculty members. They assist you in selling your work.

Another approach is to interest a faculty member first and let them request that the library purchase the tape. This is what happened at West Virginia University in Morgantown. A pro-

fessor in the history department saw "Miss Jane" in New York City and returned to the university with a preview copy. He organized support from several departments and the tape was eventually bought.

In the beginning of this article I cautioned those considering the self-distribution route. The work is time-consuming and not everyone is up for that. I have given you a rough idea of some of the areas involved in the process of self distribution. I did not go into detail on such issues as letter writing and doing advance work to set up a speaking tour. Last year I visited Florida, Tennessee, Wisconsin and California twice. This year I will go to New Orleans, Boston, Washington, Atlanta, Miami, Nashville and Dallas. This year I took out a full-page ad in the *Film Library Quarterly*. I designed the ad myself. Next year I hope to do a direct mailing of several thousand pieces. All this means time away from other work.

Self distribution is a process that requires much energy, dedication, and persistence. I am just beginning to understand what is involved after working at it for a year and a half. This year I started a new video portrait on a traditional Scottish singer and master weaver, Norman Kennedy. I hope to complete this new portrait by Spring of 1979. Then I assume the whole process will start over again. I can't wait.

Alan Hertzberg is a video portrait artist and photographer. He is also a video consultant to foundations, universities, libraries and public interest groups and is a member of the faculty of the graduate Media Studies Program at The New School for Social Research in New York City.

Self Distribution EC-Doctor Video

John Hunt

In October of 1975 I began to screen video tapes in an interesting and unusual manner at the studios of Environmental Communications in Venice. In no time at all between 50 and 80 people were crowding the inadequate space.

For years I had watched participation in video production grow greatly and finally I felt it was time to give the audience I knew was there exposure to the video they didn't know existed . . . It was new, and it was just what the Doctor ordered.

Of course the main purpose for the weekly screenings was to preview tapes for the EC video catalog. It would contain tapes that received no or limited outlet anywhere. It would mainly be directed to the "educational" market, schools, universities, libraries, etc. But we were also thinking about broadcast TV, overseas TV—a market that appreciates American culture sometimes more than Americans—and of course the home video market, a natural for alternative programming.

Anyway, we appeared ready to test out new outlets. Forty-five weeks of screening video tapes revealed many things to me. First, it's impossible to leave all our habits behind when we enter into a new area, especially television, and that unless you are a video producer it's difficult to remove expectations that have been fostered by broadcast, so most of those who came to the Tuesday night screenings were not ready to judge with altered criteria.

The space at EC is unusual, which helped. But it did mimic the darkened movie theater, a worse comparison than the living room because no one has yet got up and shut off the movie.

When people would complain that the tapes were long, or they were boring and would I please put something else on, I always answered by saying there was a restaurant across the

street and they could go and come back after a few minutes. No one was forcing them to sit. And no one had taken their money, it was all free. In your living room of course you simply change the channel—or shut it off. But the theater is the theater. Not that I was trying to bore people because that's not my wish at all. But we were conducting *screenings* not doing performances and it was important to screen a tape all the way through, especially if the producer was present—which was quite often—so as to have a complete picture, to be able to discuss it fully later.

So when we discuss DR VIDEO we discuss these tapes, and when we discuss these tapes we discuss what it is we bring to the viewing with us. It seems impossible not to discuss these things because inherent in everything that is *not seen* on the airwaves is a criticism of everything that *is seen*.

Of course the most wonderful criticism comes when we discuss what we *want* to see on the airwaves. And this is not even what *could* be on the airwaves.

PBS Satellite Notes

"Public TV's newest star," is what the brochures call the satellite, even if some might say it's public TV's only star.

The completion of the ground station system that will interconnect 163 public TV and 192 public radio stations by satellite will create the largest 24-hour-per-day broadcast programming network in the country. It's no wonder that public broadcasting's newest "star" won an Emmy for technical design this year.

Using common-carrier facilities rented on Westar I, the satellite operated by Western Union, the two non-commercial broadcasting organizations—PBS for television and NPR for radio—have embarked on an ambitious plan to deliver simultaneous program offerings to their stations—it is a plan that may revolutionize all national TV and radio programming, and certainly how the public system will operate in years to come.

It is significant for a number of reasons: *Channel abundance*. Unlike the ground-based system of microwave and telephone lines which PBS and NPR have used since their establishment, the satellite offers extraordinarily cheap channel space. As a result, PBS will rent four "transponders" (channels) and NPR one as a minimum. The per-channel rental price, soon to fall to something like \$300 per hour, will make additional channels relatively easy to add, as necessary. (A transponder carries a single TV channel or up to 12 radio channels, although NPR intends to use only 4 initially.)

Of course, not all channels are filled with different program choices, since every station hooked onto the system receives all channels simultaneously. This means that when PBS or NPR wish to distribute programs across time zones, several channels must be filled.

During the first three months of the TV satellite system's operation, a total of 6600 hours were available for program distribution. Approximately 1100 were used for the National Program Service, 2,000 hours for time zone delays of that service, 250 hours for PBS services and communications with stations, 400 hours for various non-PBS services, and 2800 hours unused. About half of the unused time were between 1 and 6 a.m. In addition, 29 hours were rented from Western Union at times when the four PBS transponders were occupied and additional channels were needed.

Flexibility. The satellite system was sold to public stations on the basis of costs savings alone, since it will eventually reduce the annual bill for interconnection. However, the existence of the extensive ground station network and centralized traffic operations in Washington make new and previously impossible services simple and cheap. For instance, under the single-channel AT&T system previously used (and which the commercial net-

works still use), costs were prohibitively expensive to send out more than one program choice to everyone, much less several signals for use by a minority of stations.

With the satellite, PBS or NPR can continue to send out its main channel service, while sending live hearings from Washington, instructional programming that originates from elsewhere in the country, a Spanish-language offering to those stations in the system in markets with significant numbers of Spanish viewers or listeners.

Competition. What this multiplicity of program offerings could mean is the end of "networks" as we have commonly known them in the past. This is the reason why the commercial networks are so unwilling to permit their affiliates to equip themselves with receiving dishes that would open up new program options beyond the ABC-NBC-CBS forced-fed diet. Already some network affiliates have turned down network revenue incentives in order to carry primetime independent programs like those produced by Norman Lear and Universal Studios and distributed by mail.

The other most important user of satellite time for national distribution of television programming is the pay-cable industry. Home Box Office (HBO) has built a ground system of nearly 500 cable systems that receive its nightly feed of movies, sports and entertainment, several hundred via RCA's satellite.

Similarly, broadcast TV stations modeled after Atlanta entrepreneur Ted Turner's WTCG have begun selling their service to cable systems via satellite, now that the FCC has opened up this part of the business.

Public networks. All of these changes in the commercial TV business have an unclear meaning for the public TV and radio businesses, which operate with somewhat different principles than the profit-making ventures. Nonetheless, the satellite may mean big changes for the stations, national organizations, producers, and suppliers for the non-commercial sector, as well as those groups seeking to gain access to the sophisticated communications system operated by NPR and PBS.

PBS in particular for the past several years has been moving towards the practice of offering a "National Program Service," comprised of programs financed by a number of entities, corporations, and station mechanisms.

This season an ambitious PBS promotion plan focuses upon several programs per week for which advertising is provided. The ratings have reflected how these network-like activities have paid off in viewership which, while far from the commercial numbers, has tripled or quadrupled.

Promotion has been popular among many PBS stations, though opposed by a minority which would prefer a more passive arrangement. Despite the fact that they can veto any PBS program decision, by refusing to carry a given show, these stations have opposed the professionalization of PBS program activities.

Sentiment of this sort led to a bitter dispute over control of the satellite "transponders" which are not carrying main-channel PBS programming. The PBS national staff presumed it would simply operate those transponders as it did the first two. Dissidents, however, succeeded in forcing the creation of a semi-autonomous station committee within PBS that would develop rules for use of the extra transponders and operate as a gatekeeper for access. Following a preliminary search this "Transponder Allocation Committee" (TAC) located more than a dozen potential users of the satellite beyond PBS.

They include the four public television regional station organizations, who are potential rivals to PBS for program loyalty by stations, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Children's Television Workshop, and an instructional TV consortium, and various stations and groups of stations.

Managing the traffic between competing users will certainly become the principal point of conflict for PBS or TAC as the system unfolds. Early statistics indicate that competition for primetime hours is most intense. TAC is currently working on criteria for non-PBS transponder access which will become op-

erational in January. In the meantime, PBS has been charged with resolving differences, with the TAC's assistance.

All of these committee decisions apply only to the distribution space under control of the public TV licensees themselves (radio, which is being developed on a later schedule, is handled differently at NPR).

The public broadcasting satellite system places most of the power in the local broadcast licensees. No matter how many channels are available for distribution, what the sources of programming, and who decides what programs get on, the final decision about what local audiences will see and when rests with station management.

In virtually all cases, these licensees operate only one channel available to the general public.

What the satellite does change is the question of control. In the past, a program-maker was forced to seek distribution to public broadcasting through PBS or more limited arrangements with the regional networks or station-by-station sales. Practically speaking, most producers went to PBS, either directly or through a local station.

The satellite means that programmers can develop their own networks to public stations, if a sufficient number of buyers can be assembled. What was once a question of access now becomes a question of marketing. The cost of distribution is small compared with production and marketing costs.

As the utilization patterns of the new satellite become clearer, it will be possible to determine what other changes are likely to occur. "Blue sky" predictions aside, it is clear that the satellite will offer the opportunity, if not the reality, for greater program choice to stations—not to say the public.

It will provide greater diversity of service offerings and, when they wish it, could transform how local stations operate within their communities.

Copyright

Rebecca Moore



s the number of distribution outlets increases for film and video, so does the problem of piracy.

Piracy is the unauthorized, and usually illegal, duplication of copyrighted material. Independent producers have been victims of pirates, especially by local school systems who copy material aired on public broadcast channels.

More often, however, independents are pirates themselves, using copyrighted material to enhance their own creations.

In an age of electronic reproduction, everything can be copied by anyone. Photocopiers, small printing presses, video recorders, and audio cassette recorders have changed libraries, schools, industry and homes by making it possible to copy anything.

Whether this is a good or bad development depends on which side of the copyright you're on. The rights of individual creators will always clash with the demand for use by the public. We've all used copyrighted material without the author's permission. Yet we may have felt that our use was justified, or that it was not for personal gain.

Commercial piracy, however, is a very different kind of copyright infringement. Last July the FBI confiscated over 600 pirated videocassettes and duplication equipment in a raid on Theater-Vision in Trenton, NJ. These cassettes were copies of

major movies like *Jaws*, *Star Wars* and *Annie Hall*. Everything that's distributed nowadays is a target for big and little league pirates.

Recent court cases, and a new copyright law which went into effect this year, do offer increased protection against piracy. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in July that the possessor of films or tapes must prove that he or she has a legitimate copy. Previously the burden of proof lay on the copyright owner.

The copyright law also provides greater protection to individual artists. Material is now covered under federal law whether or not it is registered in the copyright office. Term of copyright is lengthened from two 28-year terms, to life of the creator plus fifty years. Users of copyrighted material have greater responsibility to get clearances and negotiate fees. This includes public broadcasters and non-profit groups.

When it comes to dealing with copyrights, film and video producers get very schizoid. They're for it, when it protects their own tapes and films. But they begin to equivocate when it comes to protecting someone else's music or art work that they'd like to incorporate into their own piece.

Many independents affiliated with non-profit organizations have felt they were covered by a non-profit exemption which excused them from having to get clearance for copyrighted material they used. These independents "are not covered by the non-profit exemption," declares the Copyright Offices Reference Division Chief Marybeth Peters. "Performance of musical works is the only thing covered under the non-profit exemption."

Independents hoping to sell their work to Public TV have also been working under the misconception that they don't have to get clearances for copyrighted material they use in their productions.

The new copyright law does give a compulsory license for published musical, pictorial and graphic works to "public broadcasting entities." This means that PBS and NPR must pay yearly license fees to various performing rights organizations (e.g. ASCAP, BMI, SESAC) to cover music used in programming.

A program produced by an independent needs copyright clearance unless it is broadcast by public TV. "If they show it anyplace else, however, they must get rights," notes WNET's Kathy Kline. "We're covered only for public TV."

Additionally, the compulsory license applies only to published material and art works. For anything else—opera, ballet, plays, literature—"they have to negotiate like commercial broadcasters," says the Copyright Office's Peters, "although generally the license fee is less."

If independents don't have prior arrangement with a public TV station, "they may have a problem," she continues. "What if they don't sell to a public broadcaster?"

Kathy Kline observes, "There are many artists who try to get clearances after the fact. Even a letter that says you can use the material for free is helpful."

An independent producer must follow the same procedures as anyone else in applying for permission to use copyrighted material. "If a producer is small time, he or she can get permission easily," says Peters.

A producer must write the copyright owner or representative, and describe who he/she is, non-profit status, background, what he/she wants to do with material, who is participating, and anything else that might help the case.

Eric Smith, counsel at PBS, recommends incorporating as a non-profit organization. "Then it's no problem at all," he claims.

It's often difficult to get copyright clearances, though. Deadlines, availability, and flat-out rejections thwart producers.

Music, art, photographs, speeches, film clips, and information published by the federal government is free. This material is available from the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Smithsonian Institution, and other federal agencies. For example, the Smithsonian's special-issue jazz record collection is copyright free.

Additionally, anything in the public domain is free. This means that most works of art 56 years old may be used. Some musical works due to expire in 1962, however, got special copyright extensions until they could be covered by the new law. It's best to check with the copyright office on anything published after 1900.

With sales of 150,000 half-inch videocassette machines predicted this year, and 500,000 VTR/playback units already in circulation, the problem of copyright protection once a work is aired is obvious. "They're (PBS) really worried about Sony Betamax," says Patrice Lyons, attorney-advisor at the Copyright Office. PBS programs are a major target of the pirates, and education institutions are the biggest offenders.

Educators and librarians have justified mass duplicating of copyrighted works under the "fair use" clause in the law. The "fair use" clause principle states that multiple copies—which must eventually be erased—can be made for the purposes of criticism, comment, teaching, scholarship, or research.

Participants in a 1977 conference on fair use duplication felt that reproduction of "theatrical" or "feature" films, as well as off-air taping of broadcasts that were not requested by an individual teacher, were prohibited under the fair use doctrine.

A March 1978 court decision in the *BOCES* case affirmed that view. The court issued an injunction against the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) in Buffalo, NY. The agency was systematically duping broadcasts by WNED-TV, an educational channel.

In the suit filed by Encyclopaedia Britannica, Time-Life, and the Learning Corp. of America, BOCES admitted it duped over 10,000 videotapes in one year, with its half-million dollars worth of equipment.

In enjoining the agency from further duplication, the court said "Fair use... does not... protect the county's widespread and systematic videotaping of televised, copyrighted educational films in their entirety for noncommercial public school use."

The BOCES decision was a first step to increase protection for producers airing works on public TV. Congress' extension of the length of copyright was an earlier step to upgrade the status of authors.

On the other hand, Congress also granted "public broadcasting entities" a compulsory license. This license gives the broadcasters a shortcut for using copyrighted music and art without having to wait for permission from an author.

Independent producers get advantages from both the extended copyright term and the public broadcast copyright term and the public broadcast compulsory license. But as long as there are half million-plus VTR units in circulation, there are going to be pirates.

The following publications may be helpful.

Copyright Primer for Film and Video, by Northwest Media Project, P.O. Box 4093, Portland, OR 97208. \$2.00, \$1.00 for members.

Guide to Multimedia Copying in Schools, published by the American Library Association and the American Association of School Libraries.

Copyright Permissions: A Guide for Noncommercial Use, published by the Association of American Publishers, 1920 L St. NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20036.

Copyright Manual for Public Broadcasting (in production) by Eric Smith, Public Broadcasting Service, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Washington, DC.

The first step in protecting a work is to register it with the Copyright Office. Film and tape producers use form PA to copyright their works.

The Copyright Office published an Information Kit that includes helpful advice on Registration Procedures (Circular R1d), Radio and TV Programs (47e), and How to Investigate Copyright Status of a Work (R22). Write, Register of Copyrights, Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20559.

Library Networks

Deirdre Boyle



With the advent of the portapak in the late sixties, many public libraries moved into the vanguard of library video activity; for many years their emphasis lay on local production, community access, and, in some instances, cablecasting. In the last few years, more and more libraries—many new to video—have begun to collect and circulate videotapes to library patrons. The sophistication of these collections varies considerably. Some libraries have continued to collect locally-produced tapes, adding to them videoart and documentaries. Others have simply acquired films on tape.

According to a 1976 survey of members of the Video and Cable Communications Section of the American Library Association, 199 libraries indicated that they acquired tapes from outside sources; 90 noted that they purchased tapes from commercial distributors. In two years, these figures have increased significantly and the reasons for this are fairly obvious: the new demand for tapes stimulated by the burgeoning "home video" market; and the recognition by many audiovisual librarians that video is a cheaper and, in many respects, an easier medium to circulate than film. According to some library observers, video may become the audio-visual medium of choice for the future.

While some libraries still hold back from collecting, waiting for an elusive "dominant format" to arrive, a number of libraries are actively collecting. California libraries have been in the forefront. Though hard hit by Proposition 13, this state has come up with an interesting cooperative solution: networking. For many systems faced with tightening budgets—always a dire threat to media services in libraries—the advantages of networking are readily apparent. But even more to the point, the California Video Circuit, scheduled to begin in early 1979, is an experiment that bears watching by both librarians and video distributors and producers.

State AV consultant Wes Doak explained the project. Before Proposition 13, home video was the leading topic of discussion. Roughly eight libraries were buying half-inch Betamax tapes and 14 libraries were talking about establishing a cooperative. Without any money, it was up to the state to come up with an alternative.

Doak approached 12 video/film distributors with a "proposal" to sell their programs at a reduced rate on a one-time basis. Of the 12, seven vendors agreed to sell their tapes for \$100 for each half-hour of tape, on both half-inch Betamax and VHS. Doak also contacted several California hardware dealers, some of whom agreed to sell participating libraries equipment in both formats at reduced rates.

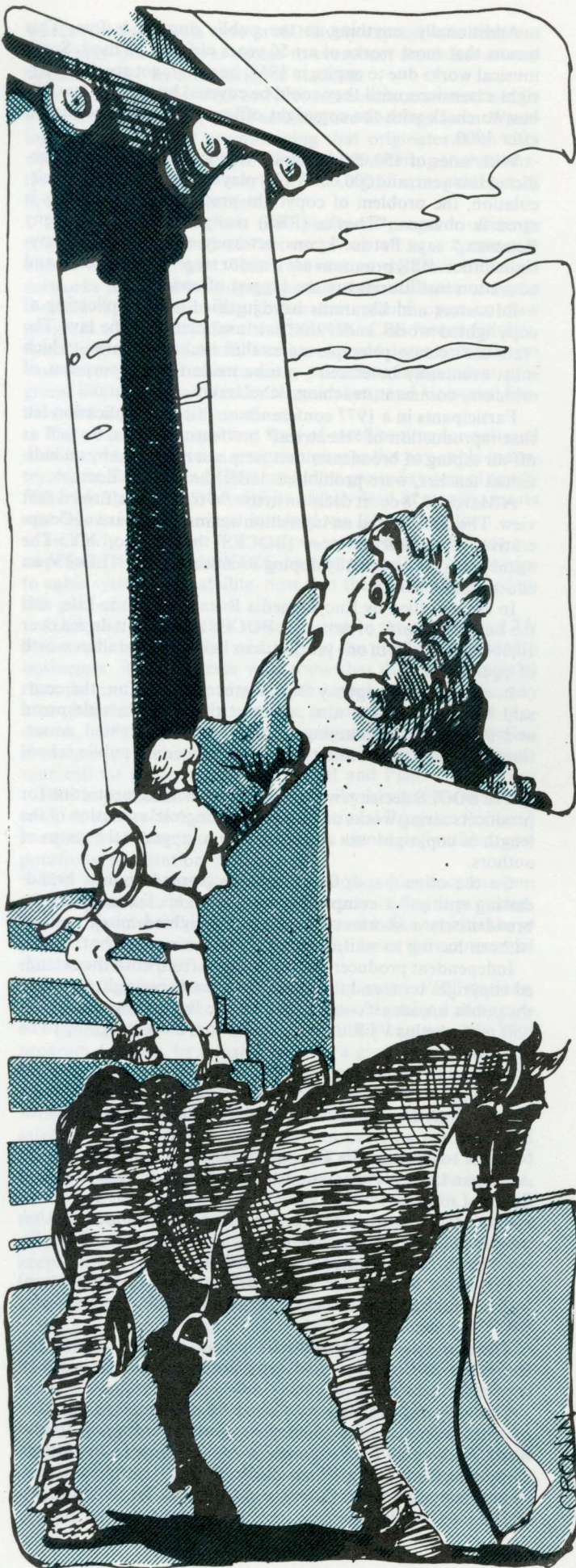
Doak's plan was to purchase about 555 titles from such distributors as Churchill, Public Television Library, Pyramid, Time/Life, Phoenix, and the National Audiovisual Center, and then circulate tapes in both cassette formats to the 12 participating libraries.

The tape collection would be made up of packets of 22 tapes—11 titles on both formats—which would be deposited for a month in each library, and then travel the circuit for 24 months.

If all goes as planned, this circuit will help librarians and video distributors determine which video format—Beta or VHS cassette—is more popular with the public, as well as what kinds of tapes the public wants.

Circuit members, at the outset, would vote on tapes to be included in the collection. Then, a catalog of approximately 260 titles would be sent to all participating libraries so that patrons would be able to request tapes not presently on deposit in the library.

The California circuit needs at least 12 participating libraries.



Garnering libraries with funds to sustain this circuit is tough, so the state decided to spread its net: The Seattle Public Library, signed up to come a circuit member. Doak seems confident that the circuit will be fully subscribed and predicts that the project will shift into high gear on January 1st.

Doak emphasized he plans to include independently-made tapes—not just films on tape—since “one of the purposes of the circuit is to see if people ask for the same titles as traditional 16mm film circuits.” The circuit must provide them with a choice. He did not discuss how independents might compete with the lowered selling prices offered by the larger distributors.

The California Video Circuit—an experiment that should yield interesting data for both librarians and distributors—is yet to become a reality, but other videotape networks are alive and well, and worth inspecting. Anne Hollingsworth is in charge of the Texas State Library's new, federally-funded, video-tape network. Texas has acquired an on-spot collection of approximately 400 titles produced by commercial and independent videomakers. These tapes can be borrowed on demand. In addition to this basic core collection, there are circulating collections of 25 tapes each of which move every two months to one of 31 participating libraries throughout the state. Tapes in the traveling collection are of interest to both children and adults and include a number of programs on “how-to” subjects. This fall the most popular program has been Time/Life's speed reading course.

To become a member of the network, participating libraries have to provide their own three-quarter inch cassette playback equipment and sign a “mother” statement promising not to violate the copyright agreement. Tapes only circulate to library patrons if there are no restrictions placed on them by the distributor. For example, the Public Television Library requested that its tapes not be circulated to public schools.

Hollingsworth noted that there had been many requests for half-inch Betamax tapes, again reflecting the impact of the home video boom. As for the audience coming into the library to look at tapes, children are by far the largest group. They are followed by a good turnout of teens, and people between 17 and 30—an age group the library had not drawn in previously. Senior citizens seem to be the least interested in the tapes, Hollingsworth reported.

Although Texas did not negotiate a deal with distributors as did California, many of the distributors individually agreed to lower their prices. Asked to characterize her dealings with the distributors, Hollingsworth noted that independent video distributors had proven to be among the most reliable. She is now completing a breakdown of tapes and services rendered by each company, but she reports that, in terms of delivery, smaller independents were the most prompt. Some larger companies took up to eight months to deliver their tapes.

The South Central Research Library Council of Ithaca, New York, administers another kind of library video network. The Council serves a 14-county region that includes both public and academic libraries. According to director Ed Menegaux, tapes and films are purchased by the individual libraries, all of whom maintain a union listing of their films and tapes which are then freely exchanged. The tape collections, on both three-quarter inch cassette and half-inch reel-to-reel, seem to emphasize tapes distributed by the larger, commercial tape distributors. At present, no breakdown exists for the 1100 films and tapes shared by the network.

Borrowing of tapes is handled as an interlibrary loan transaction. Tapes are then shipped to the libraries by van and remain for one to two weeks or however long they are needed. The only restriction placed upon the library is that no duplicate can be made.

The council acts as a catalyst for the region, and in addition to the film/tape network, is involved in community cable access, local production of tapes, and the production of training tapes for library clerical staff.

These three library videotape networks are only the tip of an iceberg. As more libraries collect and circulate tapes—a trend which is apparent in such states as California, Georgia, Indiana,

Minnesota, New York, Wisconsin, and Washington—videotape networking will proliferate.

Libraries are now learning, along with video distributors, what video programs the public needs and wants, as well as what formats the public will borrow. The successes and failures of these initial network ventures may point to the future buying trends of not only the educational and institutional markets, but also of home video consumers.

Deirdre Boyle is video editor of Sightlines

Home Video Guide

F. H. Stein

Put yourself in the place of an ordinary consumer who craves the advantages of a videocassette recorder. You go to one of the local television dealers and ask about the machines that can record one football game while you watch another. You're shown six or seven different models made by three or four different manufacturers. When you ask about the differences between the machines, you are told about Beta and VHS. If you want to know something about operation and maintenance there is rarely a response. If the people who sell the machines cannot help you, Charles Bensinger's manual, *THE HOME VIDEO HANDBOOK* can. It is simply written and comprehensive. There is a brief chapter on the development of videotape recording. The sections on *HOW TO USE YOUR VIDEO-CASSETTE RECORDER* and *HOME RECORDING WITH CAMERA AND MICROPHONE* are elementary and practical. Nothing is assumed. With the help of a well-written text and graphics Bensinger strips away much of the mystery of the sophisticated technology. The chapters on *EDITING AND DUBBING* and *MAINTENANCE AND TROUBLESHOOTING* respectively alert the reader to possibilities beyond simple recording and assure you that inexpensive personal care can virtually guarantee reliable operation of all home video equipment.

Since many people are looking for the larger screens the chapter on *TV PROJECTION SYSTEMS* is both appropriate and informative. It gives a brief survey of what is available and how they work. *A LOOK AT ADVANCED 1/2-INCH VCR SYSTEMS* gives one of the clearest explanations of the new fall models that the manufacturers are selling. The graphics are simple but realistic, and they provide the consumer with an accurate image of what can be seen on the showroom floor.

Perhaps the one major shortcoming of the book is in the section on *PROGRAMS AND PROGRAMMING FOR YOUR HOME VCR*. Here Bensinger departs from the “how to” manual format and becomes a social critic:

The home video recorder can provide a potential escape route from all those Zippo Soap, Crust Tooth—paste, in—edible-crispy-chemical-food-obsessed-sell-anything-to-anybody-for-a-buck Madison Avenue maniacs who seem bent on destroying any semblance of mood in television and annihilating any vestige of intelligence and health in American citizenry. If you don't have the new car, the big suburban home, the gorgeous model housewife or handsome husband, you simply “can't be happy,” or so they tell you, though subtly, of course. His promise is that “perhaps a new generation of video children, inspired by the primitive but powerful video tools coming into their home, will rise to demonstrate what great possibilities television has for the expression of hope, peace, positive thinking. . . .”

This promise of video is naive. People have a very broad choice of books, yet most of the books sold are of the same variety as the television programs he criticizes. He lists a number of home program sources for those who want to purchase pre-recorded video programs. Significantly, the distributors who will offer the grade “B” movies do not show up. The technology is here but will the majority of the viewers change their habits when they pay for the programs?

Galleries, Museums, and Media Centers

Ingrid Wiegand



Although this article focuses on the distribution of videotapes through museums, media centers and gallery types of distributors, all the discussions recorded here were colored by references to broadcast television, cable TV and the future of Beta/VHS, because each of these is affecting the way these organizations deal with video artists' works. From this material, it appears that the distribution of these works is in a state of transition, as much because of changes in the vision of many artists as from revisions in the marketing approaches of some distributors.

Accordingly we will look at the museum situation with John Hanhardt (Whitney Museum), Richard Simmons (Everson Museum), David Ross (Berkeley University Art Museum) and Barbara London (Museum of Modern Art); the gallery type of distribution provided by Patricia Brundage (Castelli/ Sonnabend), Anna Canepa Video Distribution, and Howard Wise (Electronics Arts Intermix); and the media centers with John Reilly (Global Village), RoseLee Goldberg (The Kitchen) and Henry Baker (Synapse).

In museums, the developing pattern is that of creating video shows for travel to other institutions: museums, galleries, colleges and libraries, for example. These are not necessarily shows as presented at the originating museum, but coherent groupings of tapes which the curator has shown individually or in other contexts. All charge an artist's fee for the show, usually between \$25 and \$50 per artist in a group show, per exhibiting institution. Museums do not rent or sell individual tapes (although they may travel a show of an individual artist's work), but all are careful to turn all inquiries over to the artist or his dealer. Access to curators is simple—videomakers send their tapes, (with return postage) which the curators normally view within a week or two. Most curators are very conscientious about looking at tapes which are professionally made with serious aesthetic intent, although none have much patience with student or amateur work. Whether they show a tape or not is normally a matter of personal aesthetics and curatorial objectives at a given time, rather than politics.

Whitney Museum

John Hanhardt, Curator of Film and Video at the Whitney Museum of American Art. We have been working with the American Federation of Arts (one of the principal organizations that tours shows of art throughout the U.S.). Since last year, they have been distributing a 'History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema,' which we put together for them, and now we are preparing the first video section ever to appear in the AFA catalog. It will be an "Introduction to Video", and will cover a variety of directions. In the future, we will probably add other groupings of videotapes.

The tapes are rented by universities and colleges, where video is becoming part of the curriculum. Another big group are libraries, with the Donnell Branch [of the N.Y. Public Library] in the forefront. Libraries as renters, buyers and promoters of video are happening all over the country. It was a radical idea that people could take films out of their library. Videotapes in libraries are extensions of that idea.

Beta/VHS will affect this pattern, because people are going to realize that they can have a new relationship to television. As people become aware that they can put variety in their home, a small but expanding audience will develop for video art. It is true that people will be able to buy old films for a lot less, but they are not going to find the stimulation that video art can provide, and they are going to be predisposed to spend more on artists' videotapes.

Everson Museum

Richard Simmons, Curator for Film and Video, Everson Museum (Syracuse). I'm putting together an Everson Museum Video Anthology, although I haven't worked out the specifics for its distribution. We also publish a catalog of all the video shows we do and send it around to other institutions to interest them in the show and the artist.

I see a real division occurring in video art that is caused by artists getting access to broadcast television. There are still people who treat video as an aesthetic medium, with no thought of meeting any external standards, and there are others for whom making a tape is to make a 28-minute, 370-second program. But I think the best video art is work that is made to be art, because it's the right medium for what the artist wants to do at that time.

I don't see a big future for video art on Betamax. I find it difficult to foresee people collecting video art. It's too esoteric for the general public, and without the public you can't bring the price down because the artists still have to be compensated. Even synthesized art, which had a certain popular appeal, is being superseded right here in Syracuse, by Cable Channel 29, which will play FM music through a video synthesizer 24 hours a day. On the other hand, we are leasing a channel together with Synapse and the Syracuse University Student Center, on which we will have video art 12 hours a day. I'll be repeating, two days a week, a single program, 12 hours at a time. That way, different people can turn to it at different times.

University Art Museum/Berkeley

David Ross, Director of the Berkeley University Art Museum. It's been my attitude that as a museum we should distribute through museum channels. I distribute tapes in shows representing a regional survey, or a particular idea, or an individual artist. I send them out with a catalog, and often arrange for artists' lectures. I charge a fee for each artist. The audience for tapes has gotten much larger as more museums and galleries consider video reasonable. Video is shown wherever contemporary art is exhibited, both here and abroad. Requests are usually for 'video art' or for specific video artists, rather than for any style or area of video.

Nevertheless, I don't think that the system has developed so that any video artist can live on the distribution of his work. There is a greater involvement of cable and broadcast, but this has only benefited a very few of the artists working in the medium. I don't see how artists can ever be broadcast in numbers, because good work is always the result of artists working out of their own heads, not to any other standard or audience requirements. The real future for video artists will arrive when viewers can find whatever they want because it's *all* available—sports, porn, and video art—so that the audience for video art can find it.

Museum of Modern Art

Barbara London, Assistant Curator for Video, Museum of Modern Art, New York. I have begun packaging videotapes to travel to other institutions. I think it will encourage the exhibition of videotapes. Right now there are very few curators in this country who can devote the kind of time that's required to inform yourself about video art. So if they can get tapes organized for them by an institution like the Modern, it's a comfortable way for them to show video. My main problem right now is finding out just how much to charge for a show—enough for a reasonable artist's fee, but not so much that the cost is prohibitive to the renting institution.

I think Betamax will be very important for video art. In the future I see it being sold in museum shops. Then, when people have Betamax at home, they will be much more likely to go to the museum shop and buy a copy of a tape they have just watched, just as they now go to buy a print or a book about a show they have just seen.

Video distributing organizations may or may not exhibit their videotapes to the general public, but they represent video artists and get their work sold or rented, sharing the income above

expenses with the artist on a percentage basis. Distributors are much harder for artists to reach, both because they each have about as many artists as they can handle, and because as dealers, they make a long-term commitment to an artist whose work they accept. Thus they tend to select from artists whose work they know, and from artists recommended to them by those in their "stable."

Electronic Arts Intermix

Howard Wise, President, Electronics Arts Intermix. We lease tapes, either for a one-time use (at \$50 per half-hour tape) or for the life of the tape (at \$175 for a half-hour tape). We lease almost entirely to institutions—libraries, art schools, universities and museums.

The big growth is in libraries that have video equipment and are building libraries of video art. In addition we have a small number of advertising companies that want to keep their staff up on video art, and a few business organizations, like banks, who are interested.

One of our main purposes is to enable the artist to earn money from his work. Cable companies have not yet been a market. We are starting to make artists work available on Betamax, but we have to solve the problem of pricing, and of getting rights to material within the tapes. The price-differential between a video artists work and a recycled film in the public domain is enormous: \$29.95 for a film feature vs \$175 for a half hour tape. But home video is the opportunity for video artists. Our job is to gain as large an audience and as much of an impact as we can for the artist. With home video we will have an input comparable to public broadcasting.

Castelli/Sonnabend

Patricia Brundage, Director, Castelli/Sonnabend Films and Videotapes. Video equipment like Betamax, being in the house, being able to play different tapes, that is creating an audience, but it is very small. For the most part, our tapes are distributed to the same places they have always been, mostly by rental: to schools, museums and such. The main difference is that there is much more interest outside of Europe and the U.S., especially in Australia and Iran, as well as Israel.

Distribution will depend on what the artists really want to do to reach an audience. Technology is becoming a factor, both because artists are emphasizing it and because people who have come to video art more recently expect more quality in terms of mechanics. And people will watch video at home differently from the way they view it in a gallery or museum. It will become more ordinary, like an audio record.

Anna Canepa

Anna Canepa, Director, Anna Canepa Video Distribution. I prefer to sell rather than rent tapes because it is the same amount of work, so I charge almost the same for rental as for sale. I also have a small space where my artists can present performance works. Critics write articles about the shows and that is good for the artists.

I really consider video a system of communication rather than a gallery art form. I don't believe in art *per se*, but art as a means of communication. Video is the medium, art is the language. Video is a chance to invent another system of communication . . . Broadcast is something the serious artist will find, while still maintaining his own language. It is the real world. Betamax will become important in video distribution over the next couple of years.

Global Village

John Reilly director of the Global Village Video Resource Center, an organization that operates as the Video Department of the New School, runs video workshops, exhibits artists' videotapes and produces artists' documentaries for broadcast television. One of the problems until now has been that video is distributed as if it has a general audience, when in fact each area, and in some cases, each tape, has a specific audience. We have been so successful distributing our documentary, *Giving Birth*, because we got a number of mailing lists specific to people who

would be interested in it, and sent out several thousand brochures. Even so, almost three-fourths of our sales were on film (from a tape-to-film transfer). Nevertheless, I think that, especially for documentaries, finding the audience is crucial for tape sales. Remember, that in most cases, the documentary made by an independent videomaker is often the best thing that has ever been done in the field. You know who is buying the Raymonds' *Police Tapes*? Police and other law enforcement agencies. It's not only a good work for the public, it's also the best work on the subject around.

So now we are going to start distributing other documentaries on this basis—presenting each to their specific audiences and we'll see how it goes. I don't think we will get involved in Betamax yet. Eventually it will be possible to make a work for a limited audience that makes money, but first you have to have a general audience of tens of millions for that limited audience to exist. I wouldn't hold my breath.

The Kitchen

Rose Lee Goldberg, Media Curator of The Kitchen, a media center where video and contemporary performance works are presented. The Kitchen includes a Lecture Bureau for artists who have shown their work there. The video program includes videotape series and installations, and a Video Viewing Room where weekly programs of tapes such as the oeuvre of a single artist or tapes on a single subject shown on an announced schedule. What we are developing are shows that are curated around an idea. Then we will travel those shows to different institutions. The whole problem with video—its limited acceptance—it is random programming, so that the public still doesn't know what it's looking at. The gallery circuit is one where video work is shown like a painting. You don't watch television randomly like you look at paintings. Television is programmed so you know what kind of program you're watching and the context that it's being presented in. Our "Made for TV?" show consists of a diverse group of tapes, but they are presented in a context that considers their appropriateness for television. Now, that judgment will be different for each viewer. Yet, by creating that context, each viewer can still look at these tapes in a coherent way. I think in this way, even the most difficult tapes can be made accessible on some level.

We do pay artists a fee for exhibiting, and we charge an artist's fee for shows we travel: more for a show of an individual artist: less per artist if it is a group show, but always as much as we can pay. We are not committed to any specific style or artist, but present a broad range of work, including the work of artists outside of the States, such as Canadian and English artists, whose work is not well known here.

Synapse

Henry Baker, director of the Synapse Video Center, which provides a two-inch quad post-production facility for selected visiting artists, and exhibits their work. This year Synapse has gone seriously into the distribution business. At this time, we are still experimenting, working things out. In the meantime, we are letting cable systems like Manhattan Cable show a series of our tapes at no charge. We're not going to continue that. We're fed up with providing free material. From now on, the only free arrangements will be made with places prestigious enough to benefit the artist and Synapse. We are working with PBS, with regional networks, and we're working up to national networks. PBS station WXXI in Rochester ran our tapes—a twenty-week series of half-hour works—last summer, and wants to rerun them.

Our tentative fee scale will be \$50 per week per tape for cable and somewhere around \$190 per tape for public television stations, plus dubbing costs. We expect that from 50 to 75 per cent of the fee will go to the artist, the balance to Synapse for the cost of the distribution program. We will also develop distribution for closed circuit situations like libraries, colleges and museums. We plan to be on a paying basis by January 1979.

Ingrid Wiegand is a New York video artist and writes frequent reviews.

Bibliography

Christopher Sterling

Video Distribution: A Short Reading List

Remarkably little has been published on video distribution, so the following selective listing covers a lot of related ground. Material is dealt with in four sections: video and film markets—this includes business, industrial, educational, and library markets, useful periodicals, communications technology in general, and bibliographies and reference sources.

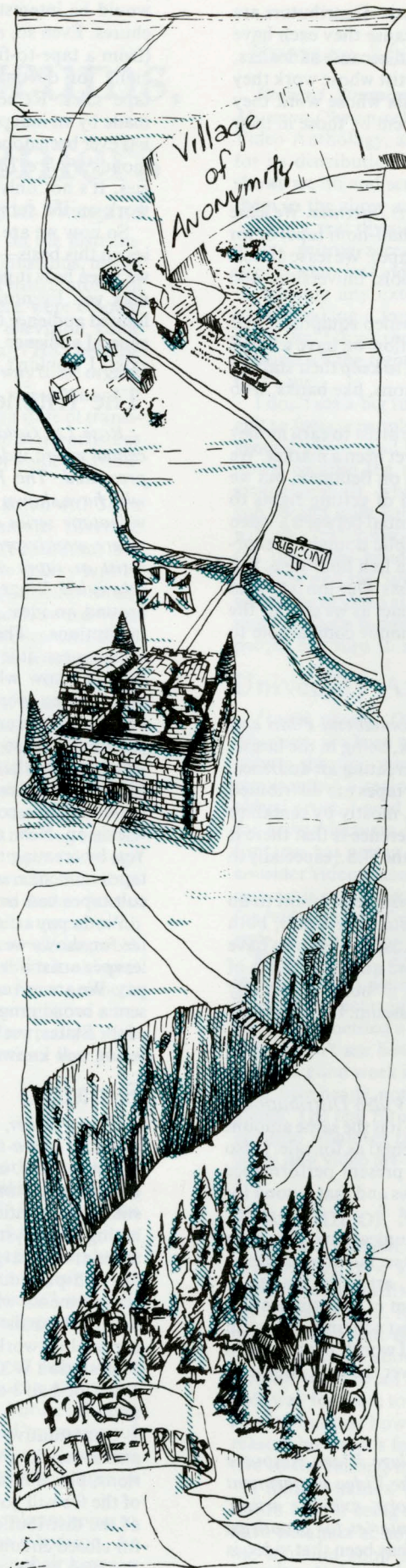
This short guide to the literature should be seen as something of a snapshot of the state of the literature (not necessarily the state of the field—since print is slower than video). Material on film appears throughout, partially due to the dearth of material specifically dealing with video, and also because many of the distribution channels and opportunities for video parallel those of film. Most of the material listed here should be available in any good public or university library, though we give full addresses for the periodicals.

Video and Film Markets

Brown, James W. *New Media in Public Libraries: A Survey of Current Practices*. New York: Jeffrey Norton/Gaylord, 1977. 230 pp. Survey of some 250 public libraries and their uses/applications of non-print materials (all in the sample were considered innovative), with several detailed case studies, and a directory of AV-using libraries. Brush, Judith M., and Douglas P. *Private Television Communications: An Awakening Giant*. Boston: Herman Publishing, 1977. 166 pp. A general assessment of industry and business practices, with text and statistical summaries. Useful for background, and appendices of technology plus a bibliography.

Bunyan, John A., and James C. Crimmons. *Television and Management: The Manager's Guide to Video*. White Plains, N.Y.: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1977. 151 pp. A review of how best to use video systems in business and industry, along with several case studies. Heavily production and logistic-oriented, with some information on distribution.

Davis, Douglas, and Allison Simmons. *The New Television: A Public/Private Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977. 289 pp. A graphic collage based on the proceedings of a 1974 conference, with material on video aesthetics, the support structure for experimental and other non-commercial video, and the politics-philosophy and likely future of television.



Doing it Yourself: A Handbook on Independent Film Distribution. New York: Assn. of Independent Video and Filmmakers, 1977. One of only two guides dealing specifically with distribution, this includes material on a non-theatrical system, promotion, advertising, expenses, booking, and scheduling of film exhibitions and conferences. Some comment on video as well as film. This one is a must.

Feinstein, Peter, ed. *The Independent Film Community: A Report on the Status of the Independent Film in the United States*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1977. 97 pp. Descriptive anatomy of the "industry" with chapters on the filmmaker, distribution, funding, nontheatrical exhibition, preservation, film study, and some recommendations. Good summary statistical data on independent film trends. Some parallel video information.

Hope Reports. *Business Use of AV*. Rochester, N.Y.: Hope Reports, 1977. 28 pp. Case studies of about 50 different users of film and video format material.

Hurst, Walter E., and Wm. Storm Hale. *Motion Picture Distribution: Business and/or Racket?* Hollywood, Calif.: Seven Arts Press, 1975. 158 pp. Part of the "Entertainment Industry" series of this publisher, this concentrates on feature and other entertainment material, but provides vast detail and overview of the whole process, contracts, key participants in distribution, etc. A lot of plain common sense is provided as well.

Kay, Peg, et al. *Social Services and Cable TV*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 200 pp. This report prepared for the National Science Foundation is a survey of literature and projects over the 1968-76 period overviews uses of cable in such services as education, community information, libraries, training and employment, etc. Deals with software, methods of distribution, economics, and operational factors.

Klein, Walter J. *The Sponsored Film*. New York: Hastings House, 1976. 256 pp. The business, industrial and non-profit organization film is analysed here from historical, economic, content trends, creative, marketing, and distribution points of view.

Price, Jonathan. *Videovisions: A Medium Discovers Itself*. New York: New American Library, 1977. 232 pp. Use of portable video systems for community and other non-commercial applications, with heavy use of specific examples.

Schneider, Ira, and Beryl Korot, eds. *Video Art: An Anthology*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. 286 pp. No less than 73 articles and shorter bits on all aspects of non-broadcast video including criteria on applications. Video's role as an instrument of change, etc. Includes discussion of exhibitions and some data on distribution of materials.

Trojan, Judith, and Nadine Covert. *16mm Distribution*. New York: Educational Film Library Association, 1977. Based on a 1976 conference on the subject, this book includes

descriptive and guide information on current practices, plus a bibliography for further reading. Includes reference to video as well as film. Along with *Doing it Yourself* (above) this is a must as it is most focused on the distribution question.

The WAFL Book: A Guide to Film and Video in the Washington, D.C. Area. Washington: Washington Area Filmmakers League, 1978 (2nd ed.). 192 pp. One of several city and regional guides which serve as directories of involved individuals and companies, with many of the entries being annotated. Includes both amateur and professional groups and firms divided by specialty.

Weber, Olga S., comp. *North American Film and Video Directory: A Guide to Media Collections and Services.* New York: R.R. Bowker, 1976. 284 pp. Annotated guide divided by state which is somewhat complete assessment of who is collecting what—mainly film, but some video as well.

Gill, Johanna. *Video: State of the Art.* New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1976. 56 pp. Somewhat like the publication above in intent, this one is arranged by geographical location, and assesses the people and centers of video activity as of the mid-1970s. Emphasis on content trends.

Useful Periodicals

The Booklist (Chicago: American Library Association—23 issues per year/\$20): Has reviewed nonprint materials since 1969 with emphasis on those intended for or useful in small and medium-sized public, as well as school libraries.

CableLibraries (Tepfer Publishing, P.O. Box 565, Ridgefield, Ct. 06877—monthly/\$15): concerned with library applications of cable television and other AV materials, with material on regulation, case histories, new program information.

Educational and Industrial Television (address same as above—monthly/\$12): Production and application of television material in non-commercial situations, including general reviews and news of hardware and software, case studies, directories.

Film and Video Makers Travel Sheet (Carnegie Institute—Film Section, Museum of Art, 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213—monthly/\$1.80): a 10-12 page typescript newsletter to encourage and facilitate wider use of exhibition and lecture tours by film and video makers, this lists who is traveling where and showing what, and provides a central clearinghouse for such information.

Filmmakers Newsletter (41 Union Sq. West, New York, N.Y. 10003—monthly/\$9): Often includes articles pertaining to distribution problems and methods, as well as film and book reviews.

Media and Methods (401 North Broad St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19108—monthly/\$9): AV materials and methods of teaching, reviews,



distribution suggestions for the noncommercial market, etc.

Professional Film Production (PTN Publishing, 250 Fulton Ave., Hempstead, N.Y. 11550—monthly/free): deals with both film and video production and applications of material.

Satellite Communications (Cardiff Publishing, 3900 Wadsworth, Denver, Colo. 80235—monthly/\$15.00): a relatively new monthly with general interest articles on technology and policy of satellite communications. (There are a growing number of newsletters in this field—see especially the two monthly publications: *Satellite News* and *The Satellite Telecommunications Newsletter*, the first published in Washington, the second in Beverly Hills, Calif.).

Sightlines (Educational Film Library Association, 43 West 61st St., New York, N.Y. 10023—quarterly/\$15 including EFLA membership): general needs of the AV field with emphasis on new film/video productions and their producers. (See also, from this publisher, Adam Reilly's "Current Film Periodicals in English," an annotated listing revised periodically).

Video: The Magazine for Home Video Enthusiasts (Reese Publishing, 235 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10003—quarterly/\$6): primarily hardware (video games and recorders) oriented, this includes information on software as well.

The Video Publisher (Knowledge Industry Publications, 2 Corporate Park Dr., White Plains, N.Y. 10604—24 per year/\$75): newsletter dealing with commercial and industrial-educational applications and software, including tapes, cassettes, discs, cable TV, pay systems, and closed circuit. Deals specifically with both distribution and syndication.

Video Trade News (Tepfer Publishing, address above—monthly/\$8): new developments in the field described for dealers, producers, consultants.

The Videocassette & CATV Newsletter (Martin Roberts & Assoc., Box 5254N, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210—monthly/\$42): typed newsletter on home video, videodisc, and various industrial and educational uses of VTR formats—both hardware and software. Often includes in-depth special reports on new systems, companies, trends.

VideoNews (Phillips Publishing, 8401 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20015—24 per year/\$97): covers management, technology and regulation of both industrial uses of video (in all formats) and commercial applications and products.

Videoplay Report (Tepfer Publishing, address above—\$24 per year/\$60): interviews and news articles on trends in program production, distribution, and applications, information on videohardware in all formats, statistical analyses of the business, etc.

Crombie, Douglass D., ed. *Lowering Barriers to Telecommunications Growth*. Washington: Government Printing Office, November 1976 (Office of Telecommunications Special Publication 76-9). 260 pp. A report of OT's Science and Technology Telecommunications Task Force, this useful summary based on both a literature search and direct analysis of industry developments, reviews several developments (direct satellite communication, land mobile radio, broadband communications networks, and fibre optic communications) likely to strongly affect communications channels in the next few years. Includes comparative tables and charts.

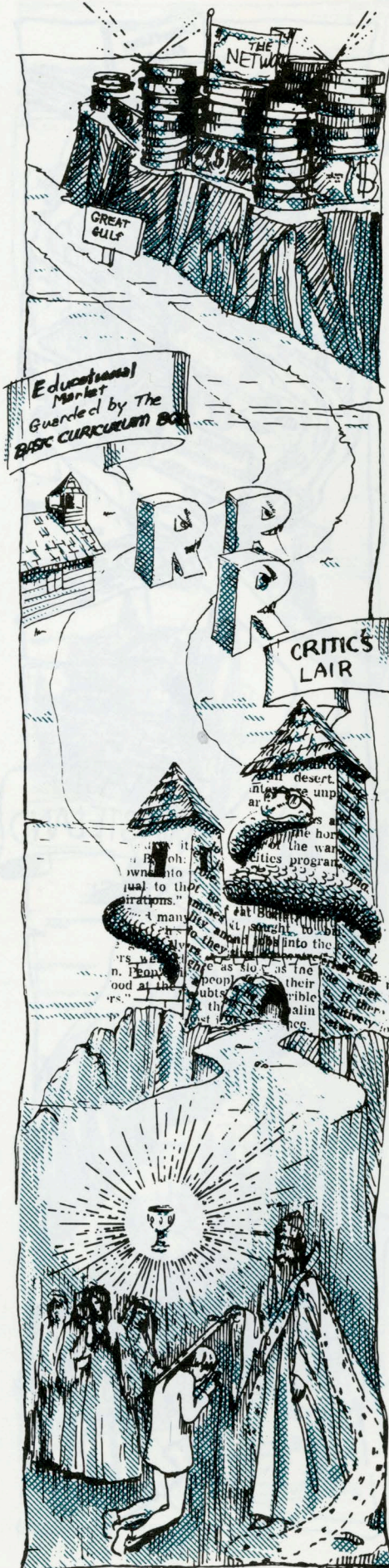
Hollowell, Mary Louise, ed. *The Cable/Broadband Communications Book 1977-1978*. Washington: Communications Press, 1977. 155 pp. The second volume in a series of publications on cable and other technologies, this includes 13 articles dealing with the regulatory framework, use of cable and other technologies (especially in public service roles), and emerging technologies (satellites, fibre optics, and home video systems). Extensive notes and references to further reading.

Martin, James. *Future Developments in Telecommunications*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977 (2nd ed.). 668 pp. Drastically revised from the 1971 edition (suggesting how rapidly things move in this field), this includes both technical and non-technical material by one of the most prolific authors in the field. Concentrating on the role of the computer in communications, the chart- and table-illustrated study discusses various video and audio developments, new means of transmission-delivery, likely resultant societal changes, and technological details of current research and experiments. This is the best single up-to-date source.

McGillen, Clare D., and William P. McLauchlan. *Hermes Bound: The Policy and Technology of Telecommunications*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Office of Telecommunications, 1978. 284 pp. A concise and inexpensive introduction to both regulatory issues and technologies, written by a political scientist and an engineer, this is a well-written analysis for those lacking any background.

Polcyn, Kenneth A. *An Educator's Guide to Communication Satellite Technology*. Washington: Academy for Educational Development, September 1973. 99 pp. Though somewhat dated, this remains one of the best overviews of the topic, including many specific public service examples of satellite use, and many clear tables and diagrams summarizing and comparing systems.

Robinson, Glen O., ed. *Communications for Tomorrow: Policy Perspectives for the 1980s*. New York: Praeger Special Studies/



Palo Alto, Calif.: Aspen Institute, 1978. 526 pp. The most recent and inclusive analysis of the impact of technological change on public regulatory policy, this is written by some 20 current researchers, practitioners and regulators in the field. It includes lengthy analyses of specific technologies, various communications industries, and regulatory bodies, as well as synthesis of all three. Excellent reading.

Bibliographies and Reference Sources

Audiovisual Market Place. New York: R.R. Bowker, annual. 450 pp. The standard guide to hardware producers, software sources, media reviews, reference sources, etc. with an educational emphasis, but including much of interest to others as well. Essentially a regularly-updated specialist directory.

Brown, James W., ed. *Educational Media Yearbook*. New York: R.R. Bowker, annual. 525 pp. Broader than the title implies with review articles on past year, several bibliographies (of both print and non-print material), guides to higher education, and information on countless communications organizations.

Chin, Felix. *Cable Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. New York: Plenum Publishing, 1978. 286 pp. The first book-length treatment of the subject, this includes some 650 annotated items, plus several reference appendices on the cable industry (major systems, key regulatory agencies on state and federal levels, chronology, glossary, etc.).

Filep, Robert T., and Patricia A. Johansen. *Satellites and Public Service: An Annotated Bibliography and Analysis*. Systems 2000, P.O. Box 28, Redondo Beach, Calif. 90277. 178 pp. Over 300 studies covering work done in the past decade is included in this guide arranged alphabetically with a key word index, and supplementary unannotated bibliography and listing of useful newsletters and periodicals.

Rivers, William L. and Wallace Thompson, eds. *Aspen Handbook on the Media: 1977-79 Edition*. New York: Praeger Special Studies/ Palo Alto, Calif.: Aspen Institute, 1977 (3rd ed.). 440 pp. The now-standard guide to the communications field with directories of research and funding organizations, communications organizations (sub-divided by topic), media action groups, government policy-making, international and overseas organizations, special libraries, and resources, an 80 page annotated guide to communications periodicals, and bibliographies of basic books and bibliographies in mass communications. An essential reference source.

Christopher Sterling is a professor at Temple University and editor of Mass Media Booknotes.

TELEVISIONS
A Publication of
Washington Community
Video Center, Inc.
P.O. Box 21068
Washington, D.C. 20009

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. Postage Paid
Washington, D.C. 20009
PERMIT NO. 45242