

Process: I will have ^{me}
streamline → drop
what's to attendees - a. model

Social, political and cultural challenges of the digital age

Myrick

Key points:

- Jury still out on whether digital age will be one of diversity and access or of exclusion and inequality. We face uncomfortable realities that:

- 1) Telecom industries are in the business of making a profit. They're not interested in public service.
- 2) Telecom policymakers are all white males.
- 3) Telecom companies owned and controlled by global conglomerates that are bigger and more powerful than many nations

Primary issues

How to develop new economic paradigm that reconciles profit and public service?

Recommendations/suggestions:

- Develop programs to eradicate gaps, funded by spectrum use fees
- Convert libraries and public-use facilities into information highway on-ramps
- Install public kiosks with affordable fees
- Establish fax/email/WWW equivalent of national 411 and 911 systems

Steinman

Key points:

- Our economic/technological environment is characterized by intensified quest for profitability among companies.
- Long-term institutions are giving way to flexibility in face of market demands.
- Convergence, vertical integration, synergies are all intensifying.
- Digital environment will spread to where markets are
- People will spend more time in mediated environments (HDTV)

Primary issues:

- How to encourage diversity?
- How to serve marketing segments that are not profitable?
- How to provide international markets with alternatives?

Recommendations/suggestions:

- Non-market institutions that cherish diversity are needed.

Discussion

What is being said?

- Emerging monopoly over content and delivery is unprecedented
- Focus on profits marginalizes "democratic soul"
- digital age brings new forms of social struggle
- "Costs per thousands" (CPMs) control programming
- Making money is not equated with satisfying the public
- What people watch isn't what they want to watch, but choice of what's available
- There's an absence of political, cultural, socioeconomic diversity in the media
- Yesterday's rules/ideas aren't still applicable to today's media world.
- Challenge is to respond to new technology and new forms of capitalism
- How to enhance consciousness of civic values, democratic thought to counterbalance consumerism as the dominant paradigm in communications?
- Just providing a computer (the means) doesn't translate into democratic participation

Major points of agreement?

- What motivates corporations is profit
- Spectrum allocation no longer based on public interest.
- Corporations have had little interest in expanding diversity and access
- Diversity in ownership and content both suffer from consolidation.
- We need to increase access

Major points of disagreement/difference?

- Corporations will need to embrace diversity to thrive
- Can/should we build a political base for regulation?
- Regulation can stifle good programs; not always best tactic
- Is answer the government, industry or consumer? or all three?
- Varying levels of optimism and pessimism
- Only the FCC can provide guidelines and foster competition
- Without regulation, will continue to move in direction of monopoly
- Only government can regulate diversity; Wall St. fuels monopoly structure
- Academia has been bought by communications companies
- Internet has independent content, diversity that defies regulation
- Concern should not be about regulation but about OVER regulation
- Regulation of delivery and content should be considered separately

Observations and recommendations?

- Need for public pressure and advocacy (including by academics)
- Push public interest as "in sync" with profit motives
- Thousands of new content providers will be doorways to advertising markets
- Industry-supported ~~board~~ ^{mechanisms} could be developed where people can petition for support/^{grants}

- Use this conference as prelude to one with industry executives (Levine, et al.)
- Don't preach to choir; must convert industry people, politicians and public
- Must build public consensus on benefits of diversity
- Educate people about how to get access and use it in a meaningful way
- Partner with other institutions, companies
- Programs to ensure open access must be put in place ~~within 2-3~~ years before monopoly systems are entrenched
- classrooms can provide motivation and training
- expand public awareness among the neediest groups

Consensus?

Group working session

Responses:

- Public needs both education/motivation and access/means
- Education includes media literacy and training for youth and adult
- Policy is influenced by public, industry, government together
- Policy changes must be effected: open access, fund non-commercial alternatives, fund research.
- Regulation of content and distribution should be considered separately.
- Public can be both consumer and producer
- PR stunts/demonstrations can be effective to raise awareness and support
- Interested groups should work together, focus on shared interest in seeking greater voice, build coalitions (civic: CEM, Rainbow Coalition, Radio for Peace Int'l, FAIR, WOW, schools, Parents TV Council, Consumers Union & Federation, nogatekeepers.org)
- also, seek leadership and multiple partnerships in government (FCC, FTC) and industry (Comcast, AT&T, Time-Warner, Bell Atlantic)
- Advisory boards, local dialogue can be useful
- Pursue multiple strategies: online advocacy, petitions, letterwriting, awareness among public and corporate sectors...
- Policies must address traditional and new media
- Build on existing efforts
- Pursue incremental change
- Produce position paper and publicly circulate conference results: press release, conference, edited video, newspaper ad... also pursue grant and funding opportunities
- establish alternatives to capitalist structures
- amplify discussion
- focus on new technology opportunities
- influence media to reflect cultural and political diversity
- Take advantage of potential in academia to promote change, access, diversity in media

Further discussion:

- How to reconcile different motives and agendas among nonhomogeneous groups?
- Where does funding come from?
- Can there be diversity within a monopoly?
- Should we try to block monopoly consolidation?
- Must state legislate as prelude to funding?
- How to prioritize objectives?
- Do we need new regulations to provide order? or does it suffice to hold agencies accountable for enforcing existing ones?

Challenge to the Family, Community and Media

Chester

Key points:

- E-commerce is powerful force on market and community globally
- There's a clear crisis going on in society (low voter turnout); people are being left out
- We still have the power and the responsibility to influence this dramatic transformation, and leave an electronic legacy for our children and democracy.
- We have opportunity to produce compassionate kids, but corporations see them as just a market.
- Activism has yielded some successes: three hours educational programming per week, first privacy law on Internet, guaranteed federal Internet access for schools and libraries.
- A publicly funded/created platform (Internet) is now seen as the basis for powerful commercial enterprises.
- The dominant vision merges content and advertising with the goal of creating a marketing system where conglomerates control content and delivery.
- Whose vision does this environment represent?

Primary issues

- Privacy: continuous collection of data without users' being conscious of it
- This model promotes consumerism over citizenship
- Media companies have developed a "deregulatory regulated environment" in which 1996 Telecom Act was political free-for-all to take whatever advantages they could.
- Telephone line/ISP system will be replaced by broadband/digital; this will become de facto standard form of transmission. While telephony had to open to competition, cable is a closed system.
- Accelerating monopolies and supermonopolies want to control content, delivery and technology. (e.g. AT&T deal to control 65% of all cable households)
- Monopolized content (proprietary banks, bookstores, charities...) will leave noncommercial civic organizations out in the cold.

- Those without fast access won't be able to capture the public mind.

Recommendations/suggestions

- Create a positive alternative model

Halstead

Key points:

- There are reasons for optimism at the edge of a paradigm shift that's the most profound change in humankind
- Commercial TV can't control the market anymore, can't command their rates any more, can't tell stories effectively anymore. Programming went downhill as companies got bigger... and it's gonna get worse.
- Networks won't control editorial in top-down manner anymore; they'll become aggregators/newsstands, not producers/publishers.
- Lower technology costs are leveling the playing field
- Web presents limitless space; what's gonna fill all that time?
- Broadband will spur migration of funds from print to web
- The role of storyteller is becoming more important
- If we're smart and fleet of foot, we can represent our interests to take charge of this.

Primary issues

- Artists don't create for social impact, but for self expression
- Once TV is cheap to create, thousands of people are gonna go out there and tell their stories
- This new environment will address social issues, give voice to those without

Recommendations/suggestions

Discussion

What is being said?

- Research being done on interactive programs is all proprietary
- Universities forced to raise money from corporations they're supposed to monitor and evaluate
- Key battle will be whether the model is open or closed
- Cooperation/partnership between independent producers and big players is possible.
- Kids learn about the world through indoctrination; by media's unrepresentative representations

Major points of agreement?

- The status quo will change... but how?
- Cooperation/partnership between independent producers and big players is possible.
- Goodwill counts among the assets of media corporations
- Future is being created by those with resources, and others are left out of the debate

Major points of disagreement/difference?

- "Level playing field" of Internet is a technocratic fantasy
- A driving force of visual journalism is visuals; print embraces other elements

Observations/recommendations

- We need a new paradigm founded on principles of access

Consensus?

Group working session

1) Who funds public interest?

- Service providers, by legislative edict
- corporate sector, by grants
- government, via commissions and agencies
- public pays for it all, through taxes and advertising subsidy

2) How do we determine what the public interest is?

- Perform research of documented market failure *and success*
- evaluate the impact and efficacy of commercial programming
- Look at real, broad-scale social problems and prioritize them
- ask the public (surveys...)

3) How do we ensure diversity of voices in ownership, management and representation?

- enforce antitrust legislation
- enable minority content provision by developing advocacy strategies
- legislate a public NEA/NEH-type organization to distribute funds to underrepresented groups for production of content
- form multicultural advisory boards
- make connections with like-minded groups
- re-engage the FCC to promote public interest, diminish special-interest influence
- affirmative action, e.g. set-asides
- put issues on public agenda/ increase public awareness
- address the corporate bottom line
- identify politicians who support diversity

4) How do we ensure quality content for children and youth?

- make children's programming exempt from advertisers' control
- empower children through media literacy in schools
- perform research to identify policies that work/don't work
- form partnerships with educational institutions and groups
- look at existing programs

5) How do we empower consumers to make content choices?

- provide media literacy to adults and educators
- teach civic responsibility

6) How can we make new technology affordable and ensure access?

- cheaper means of production may emerge in the market (self

regulation)

- schools need more funding so not vulnerable to corporate support
- Foundations, corporate sponsorship a la Carnegie, Gates...
- Pursue the objective of universal service, as with telephones

7) How can we nurture and support non-traditional programming?

- support diverse foundations and grassroots groups to disperse power and promote even competition (no single group)
- found community media arts centers, like libraries

8) who will educate the public?

- FTC, Surgeon General, CDC, FCC,
- federal, state and local agencies
- the public sphere (NGOs, foundations)
- schools, academic institutions