

## Beijing Declaration: Women Need Greater Access to Communications

*Following are excerpts of the NGO Communications Strategy Proposal drafted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China. The document was prepared by the Agencia Latinoamericana de Informacion, the Association for Progressive Communications, the Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, the International Women's Tribune Center, the Media Advocacy Group and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters. It is reprinted from AMARC's InteRadio:*

The women communicators and media organizations participating in the communications caucus of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) reaffirm that the right to communication and information is a human right, which required adopting a global policy that will guarantee women's democratic access to all communications systems and media. Communications processes with a gender perspective must be open, pluralistic, and respectful of diversity and freedom of expression and thought.

In order to guarantee access to information and the means of expression, a multi-media communications initiative is required, adapted to different languages, cultures and visions, and to women's diverse access to communications channels.

Consequently, we propose the following communications strategy for follow-up to the FWCW and NGO Forum, designed to support the dissemination and implementation of the resolutions of these events and to increase women's access to communication and media. This strategy contemplates the following aspects:

1) **Promote and strengthen women's alternative media:** The development of alternative media is fundamental to links with grassroots movements and to building a communication process that responds to the needs of these movements.

2) **Access to information:** Access to information is a basic human right and therefore a women's right. Without access to information, women cannot adequately participate

in democratic and decision-making processes.

3) **Access to means of expression, particularly in the mainstream media;** With globalization of the media and the advent of satellite television, access to media, both print and electronic, is an absolute necessity for women and other unempowered groups.

4) **Networking for coordination and information exchange:** Follow-up activities to monitor and implement the UN Platform for Action will only be effective if women's organizations are able to network, coordinate actions and exchange information nationally, regionally and globally.

Actions to be taken:

- Increase women's community radio and television programming, adapted to local needs and languages, in both urban and rural areas.

- Produce visual printed materials in comprehensible

*continued on page 2*

### Summer in Cuba?

"The Union for Democratic Communications is attempting to organize a summer 1996 week trip to Cuba with the purpose of reconnecting with our former hosts and conducting media workshops at the School of Film and Television in San Antonio de los Baños. We expect the trip to extend from mid-July to the first of August, with one week devoted to teaching mass media and an additional week devoted to traveling the country.

Lisa McLaughlin is making arrangements through the Cuba Information Project in New York City, but in order to get the ball rolling, she must have some indication of the level of interest and the breadth of ideas among members of UDC. Given the nature and purpose of the trip, the number of participants must be limited to no more than 15, but we need at least 10 interested persons to meet the Cuba Information Project criteria for group travel. Anyone who is interested in traveling to Cuba in July 1996 as part of this

*continued on page 6*

## Note de l'éditeur

Dans ce numéro du Communiqué démocratique, il est question des revendications mises de l'avant lors du Forum des ONG's dans le cadre de la IVe Conférence mondiale des femmes, à Beijing en septembre 1995. On y a proposé, entre autres, un meilleur accès à l'information et à l'expression pluraliste dans les médias de masse ainsi que le développement de médias alternatifs répondant mieux aux besoins des groupes féministes et communautaires. Dans un même ordre d'idées, on fait aussi état du Festival de la radio-télévision communautaire et populaire d'Amérique latine qui s'est tenu à Quito en novembre dernier. Ayant choisi pour thème la communication démocratique et le développement, les organisateurs de la rencontre concluent que «l'accès à l'expression et à la propriété des médias constitue la clé (de développement) de la société civile latino-américaine».

Ensuite, outre une réflexion fort pertinente sur les niveaux de discours privilégiés dans les «talk shows» d'inspiration américaine et sur la nécessité de «subvertir les questions», comme le suggère Susan Sontag, il est aussi question du «droit à la propriété intellectuelle» tel qu'on en a discuté, à Manchester U.K. en septembre 1995, dans le cadre d'un colloque organisé par le Labour Telematics Centre. Enfin, pour les internautes de la communication démocratique, le nouveau site web de l'UDC commence à prendre forme et vous pouvez y accéder à l'adresse suivante > <http://kows.web.net/udc/>

À vos modems, citoyen-ne-s !

## Beijing Declaration...

language that share information on issues that affect women's daily lives.

- Make available documentation relating to the decisions and progress of the Platform for Action and other related issues, via printed and electronic media.
- Consistently monitor the portrayal and employment of women in the media to ensure greater gender equality and non-sexist portrayal. This media monitoring should be coordinated globally and regionally.
- Employ diverse communications media for women's networking, incorporating traditional and community circuits: alternative media, computer networks and others. By interlinking these channels, a truly global networking system can be built, which will seek to incorporate women who have been marginalized by lack of access to literacy, information or technology.
- Seek to develop relations and liaison between women's organizations and media, with the aim of broadening and deepening media coverage of women's issues.

- Encourage and support the development of media literacy programs at all educational levels in order to develop among citizens critical analysis and monitoring skills.
- Develop gender-sensitive training programs for women trainers in communications practice, policy and new technologies.

Beijing, Sept. 14, 1995

## 1996 UDC Conference

The 1996 UDC Conference will meet at Loyola University's Lakeshore Campus in Chicago, Oct. 13-16. The theme is "What's Left: Critical Communications in the Belly of the Corporate Beast." A conference call will appear in the next issue of the *Communiqué*. The deadline for proposals will be June 15th.

## New Editor Needed

The editor has submitted his resignation effective with the October 1996 UDC conference. UDC members interested in taking up the position are encouraged to contact the UDC Steering Committee. Comments and suggestions on the purpose and focus of this newsletter are also welcome for consideration at the conference and by the new editor.

## UDC Seeks Tenure Referees

For our academic members, UDC seeks tenured full professors willing to serve as referees for tenure and promotion decisions. We are looking for faculty familiar with academic literature relevant to UDC concerns. If you are willing to be listed as a possible referee, contact the editor.

## The Democratic Communiqué

is published by the Union for Democratic Communications (Communication Dept., DePaul University, 2320 N. Kenmore, Chicago IL 60614 USA). Membership is \$30 per year, \$10 per year for students/low income.

Submissions should be sent to **Editor:** Jon Bekken, Dept. of Communications & Journalism, Suffolk University, Boston MA 02114-4280 (517/573-8142; email: [jbekken@igc.apc.org](mailto:jbekken@igc.apc.org))

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**Translations:** French-language material edited and translated by Jean-Pierre Boyer, Université de Québec à Montréal. Spanish-language material edited and translated by Max Dueñas-Guzman, University of Puerto Rico.

# Declaración De Los Radio- apasionados y Televisionarios

Nosotros, los participantes en el Gran Festival de la Radio y la Televisión Comunitaria y Popular de América Latina y el Caribe, organizado por el Grupo de los Ocho (Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica - ALER; Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias - AMARC; Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina - CIESPAL; Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social - FELAFACS; Federación Internacional de Periodistas - FIP; Asociación Latinoamericana de Comunicación Grupal - PROA; Radio Nederland Training Center - RNTC; y Asociación Católica Latinoamericana de Radio, Televisión y Medios Afines - UNDA/AL), apoyado por el Centro Canadiense de Estudio y Cooperación Internacional - CECI y el Consejo Mundial para la Radio y la Televisión - CMRTV, celebrado en Quito, Ecuador, del 20 al 24 de noviembre de 1995,

Declaramos Que

1: La libertad de expresión, derecho fundamental e inalienable de la persona y de los pueblos, se afirma sobre

la justicia social y constituye la mejor garantía de la democracia y la paz.

2: La sociedad civil puede y debe ejercer la libertad de expresión a través de medios de comunicación propios que le den voz e imagen públicas y le permitan ser sujeto de su propio desarrollo.

3: Centenares de experiencias exitosas de radio y televisión comunitaria y popular desarrolladas desde hace 50 años en los países de América Latina y el Caribe, nos han legitimado ante nuestros públicos, conquistando así el derecho al reconocimiento legal. Ellas han sido y siguen siendo expresión de las mayorías marginadas y empobrecidas de la región.

4: En estos tiempos de globalización y homogenización crecientes, las radios y televisoras comunitarias y populares se convierten en espacios de participación ciudadana donde se expresan todas las voces y se defiende la diversidad de idiomas y culturas. El derecho a ser y pensar diferente, a tener gustos y aspiraciones distintas, se vuelve hoy un

## **Latin American Community Radio & TV Festival**

Democracy, development and communication were the interlocking themes of the Latin American community radio and television festival (Gran Festival de la Radio y Televisión Comunitaria y Popular de América Latina) held in Quito, Ecuador from 20 to 24 November, reported the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC). Over 500 participants attended the festival, including producers, journalists, journalism students, scholars, radio-lovers and television viewers from 31 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Africa and Europe. According to organizers, "access to expression and to ownership of media outlets is key for Latin American civil society." AMARC said, "Popular sectors are seeking ways to see that their interests are reflected in the news, and that they can actively participate in building public debate on issues and in their own development."

Participants adopted a twelve-point declaration highlighting the significance of freedom of expression; the need for civil society to participate in its own development by exercising the right to freedom of expression through its own media; the level of recognition already achieved by community radio and television outlets in the region; the plurality of languages and opinions fostered by commu-

nity broadcasters; social, human rights, and environmental issues as inherent priorities for community broadcasters; and ways to guarantee the equal participation of women at all levels. The declaration denounces attacks on community broadcasters, and calls for governments to provide a space for community broadcasting by, among other things, removing barriers to the allocation of radio frequencies to community stations and by reviewing telecommunications legislation.

Activities during the Festival included conferences, debates, panel discussions, workshops, and a Technological Bazaar. A Virtual Festival (Gran Festival Virtual de Radioapasionados y Televisionarios) was held on the Internet parallel to the festival. Topics discussed included indigenous radio and TV, the role of women in the media, and professional privilege. The festival was organized by AMARC, the regional office of the International Federation of Journalists (Federación Internacional de Periodistas, FIP), and six other of Latin America's most important communication networks, including the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (ALER), Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina (CIESPAL), Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social, and Asociación Católica Latinoamericana para la Radio, la Televisión y Medios Afines (UNDA-AL/SCC).

imperativo de la democracia.

5: La defensa de los Derechos Humanos, el respeto a la identidad étnica, la preservación del medio ambiente, el protagonismo de los jóvenes, la protección de la niñez y la tercera edad, la educación y la salud, la denuncia de la corrupción, así como la integración regional, constituyen prioridades de nuestro quehacer comunicacional.

6: La participación democrática de las mujeres en los medios de comunicación debe estar garantizada en todos sus niveles. Ello supone, especialmente, presentar una imagen real y valorada de la mujer en la radio y la televisión, incrementar la producción de programas desde una perspectiva de género y promover medios de comunicación propios.

7: Repudiamos las acciones de algunos gobiernos y propietarios de medios destinadas a entorpecer la labor de los medios comunitarios y populares. El cierre arbitrario de emisoras, la confiscación de equipos, la detención de periodistas y comunicadores, la negativa o demora injustificada en la asignación de frecuencias, atentan contra la libertad de expresión y deben ser condenadas.

8: Los gobiernos no solamente deben autorizar, sino garantizar la existencia de los medios de comunicación comunitarios y populares como una tercera forma de propiedad, la social, con igual categoría que la privada comercial y la estatal. De este modo, se asegura la independencia del ejercicio comunicacional respecto a finalidades lucrativas o políticas.

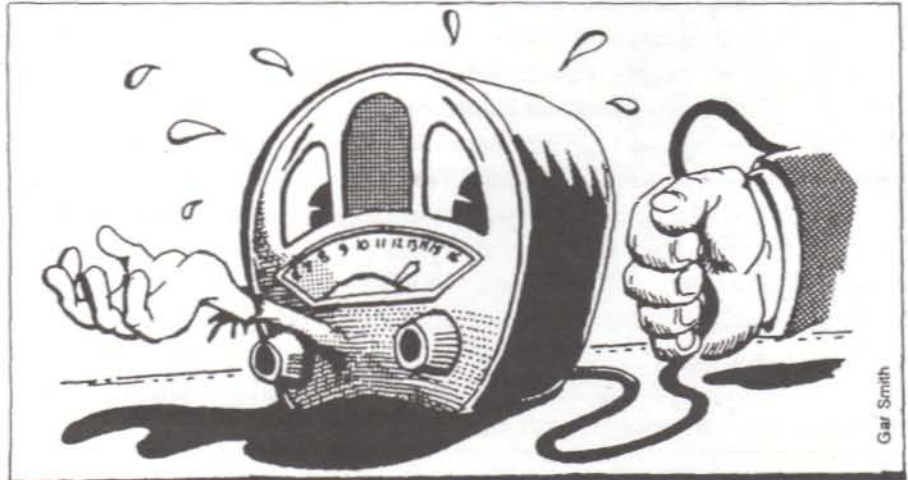
9: El espectro radioeléctrico debe compartirse equitativamente entre todos los sectores de la sociedad civil. Una cuota de frecuencias deberá reservarse para las empresas sociales sin fines de lucro en las bandas de AM y FM, en los canales de televisión, así como en las actuales negociaciones sobre difusión numérica.

10: En las concesiones de frecuencias a las radios y televisoras comunitarias y populares, no deben existir restricciones arbitrarias ni discriminaciones en cuanto a la cantidad de emisoras por localidad, a la potencia de la señal, a la venta de espacios publicitarios, a la formación de redes ni al empleo de las nuevas tecnologías, como ocurre en algunos países.

11: Se hace cada vez más urgente la revisión y modernización de las legislaciones vigentes en los países de América Latina y el Caribe respecto a las telecomunicaciones. En muy pocas se contempla, en efecto, la creación de nuevos medios de comunicación comunitarios y el fortalecimiento de los ya existentes, tal como se reconoció en el Plan de Acción aprobado en el Seminario sobre el Desarrollo

de los Medios de Comunicación y la Democracia en América Latina y el Caribe celebrado bajo los auspicios de la UNESCO, las Naciones Unidas y el PNUD (Santiago de Chile, mayo 1994).

12: Los medios de comunicación estatales, comerciales o sociales, deben cumplir con el espíritu del servicio público y la responsabilidad social del periodismo, respetando los derechos laborales de los periodistas y demás trabajadores de la comunicación, rigiéndose en sus programaciones a un mismo código de ética y promoviendo valores nacionales y humanistas entre la población.



Saludamos entusiastamente la unidad lograda en el Grupo de los Ocho. Esta alianza se consolidará y ampliará convocando, particularmente, a todas las redes regionales de comunicación comunitarias y populares, y promoviendo la cooperación sur-sur.

Invitamos a los gobiernos, a las agencias de cooperación internacional, a las organizaciones no gubernamentales, a los gremios periodísticos, a los medios de comunicación comerciales y estatales, a todos los radioapasionados y televisionarios a sumarse a este movimiento internacional que busca democratizar las comunicaciones para así contribuir a la democratización de nuestras sociedades.

Quito, 24 noviembre 1995

## **IV CONFERENCIA MUNDIAL DE LA MUJER:**

### **Propuesta de Estrategia de Comunicación de las ONGs**

En reconocimiento del hecho que la comunicación y la información juegan un papel estratégico en todas las esferas de la actividad social, política, cultural y económica, por primera vez, estos temas figuran de manera prominente en la agenda de una Conferencia Mundial sobre la Mujer. El punto J de la Plataforma de Acción destaca la necesidad de

“aumentar el acceso de la mujer a la expresión de sus ideas y a la adopción de decisiones en los medios de difusión y por conducto de ellos, así como a las nuevas tecnologías de comunicación.”

Las comunicadoras y las organizaciones de comunicación participantes en el Comité de Trabajo (Caucus) sobre comunicaciones en la IV Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer reafirmamos que el derecho a la comunicación y a la información es un derecho humano, que requiere la adopción de una política global que garantice el acceso democrático de las mujeres a todos los sistemas y medios de comunicación. Los procesos de comunicación con perspectiva de género deben ser abiertos, pluralistas y respetuosos de la diversidad y la libertad de expresión y pensamiento.

A fin de garantizar el acceso a la información y a los medios de expresión, se requiere una iniciativa de comunicación multi-media, adaptada a los diferentes idiomas, culturas y visiones, y al acceso diverso de las mujeres a los canales de comunicación.

En consecuencia, proponemos la siguiente estrategia de comunicación para el seguimiento a la IV Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer y el Foro de ONGs, diseñada para apoyar la diseminación y la implementación de las resoluciones de estos eventos e incrementar el acceso de las mujeres a la comunicación y a los medios. Esta estrategia, que contempla las necesidades de comunicación de la comunidad entera, de las redes de mujeres, y de las organizaciones de base, comprende los siguientes aspectos:

1) Promover y fortalecer los medios de comunicación alternativa de las mujeres:

El desarrollo de medios alternativos es fundamental para lograr esta iniciativa, debido a los vínculos que tienen con los movimientos de base y por su experiencia en construir procesos de comunicación que respondan a las necesidades de éstos. Esta práctica contribuirá a ampliar la democratización de las comunicaciones.

2) El acceso a la información:

El acceso a la información es un derecho humano fundamental y por lo tanto es un derecho de las mujeres. Sin acceso a la información la participación de las mujeres a los procesos democráticos y a la toma de decisión es limitada, pues si las mujeres no conocen sus derechos ni los resultados de la presente Conferencia, será difícil lograr una efectiva movilización para lograr la implementación de la Plataforma de Acción.

3) El acceso a los medios de expresión, particularmente en los medios masivos:

Con la globalización de los medios de comunicación y el advenimiento de la televisión por satélite, el acceso a los medios, sean impresos o electrónicos, es una necesidad

decisiva para las mujeres y demás grupos privados de poder. Su ausencia y marginación en los medios masivos afectará el goce de sus derechos ciudadanos y sociales, lo que redundará en un debilitamiento de la sociedad civil.

4) El enlace en redes para la coordinación y el intercambio de información:

Las actividades de seguimiento para monitorear e implementar la Plataforma de Acción de la ONU sólo serán efectivas si las organizaciones de mujeres pueden fortalecer sus redes, coordinar acciones e intercambiar información a nivel nacional, regional e internacional. El acceso amplio a canales de comunicación adecuados es un requisito fundamental para lograrlo.

Acciones a tomar:

- Incrementar la programación comunitaria de mujeres en radio y televisión, adaptada a las necesidades e idiomas locales, tanto en áreas urbanas como rurales.

- Producir materiales impresos y gráficos, en lenguaje comprensible, para compartir informaciones sobre los temas que afectan la vida de las mujeres.

- Facilitar el acceso a las fuentes documentales relacionadas con las resoluciones, la implementación de la Plataforma de Acción y otros asuntos afines, en forma impresa y electrónica.

- Monitorear sistemáticamente tanto las imágenes de las mujeres en los medios de comunicación, como su situación laboral en ellos, a fin de garantizar una mayor igualdad de género e imágenes no-sexistas. Este monitoreo de los medios deberá ser coordinada a nivel regional y global.

- Emplear diversos canales de comunicación para el enlace en redes de las mujeres, incorporando los circuitos comunitarios tradicionales, los medios alternativos, las redes de computadoras, y otros. La interrelación de estos canales, utilizando a las redes de computadoras como el principal eje internacional, hará posible la construcción de un sistema de enlace de redes verdaderamente global, orientado a incorporar a las mujeres que han sido marginalizadas por la falta de acceso a la alfabetización, a la información o a la tecnología.

- Desarrollar relaciones y vínculos entre las organizaciones de mujeres y los medios de comunicación con la meta de ampliar y profundizar la cobertura de las temáticas sobre mujeres en éstos.

- Alentar y apoyar el desarrollo de programas de alfabetización en medios, en todos los niveles de educación, a fin de desarrollar un análisis crítico y habilidades de monitoreo en la ciudadanía.

- Desarrollar programas de capacitación con enfoque de género dirigidos a capacitadoras en prácticas, políticas y nueva comunicación.

Beijing, 14 de septiembre de 1995

Documento preparado por: la Agencia Latinoamericana

UDC contingent is asked to contact Lisa McLaughlin; Dept. of Communication Studies; University of Michigan; 2020 Frieze Building; Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1285; Phone: 313-763-7349; E-Mail: lisa.mclaughlin@um.cc.umich.edu

All suggestions regarding this trip are welcomed and appreciated, since we are in the earliest planning stages. For the moment, this is "a good idea" whose realization depends on our collaboration."

## Paper Calls

### Communication Conquest: Policy and Practice

The *Journal of Communication Inquiry* is seeking contributions for a special issue devoted to critical discussions of U.S. communication policies and practices, and their implications. Deadline for submissions is June 1. Send 3 copies of manuscripts (7,000 words max.) to editor Jian Wang, 205 Communication Center, School of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Iowa, Iowa City IA 52242.

**Defining Community, Reexamining Society:** Proposals for panels, roundtables, workshops, papers, and performances are invited for an interdisciplinary conference to be held Sept. 20-21, 1996 on the University of Michigan-Flint campus. The conference seeks to examine and respond to the growing crisis in American civic life both by exploring the idea of community and the realities of communities in the United States and by embedding these explorations in an understanding of economic, social, cultural and political forces. We invite participation by scholars from all humanities, social science, and fine arts disciplines. In addition, we solicit submissions by public policy analysts, community activists and representatives of business, labor, educational and cultural organizations. Themes of particular interest include, but are not limited to: Problems in defining community, including the use of spatial, experiential and referential approaches; Case studies in community formation, consolidation, erosion, dissolution and/or re-formation; Intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and class in communities; Expressions of power within and among communities; Attempts to identify and solve community problems...

Partial travel subventions may be available for confer-

de Informacón (ALAI), la Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias (AMARC), la Asociación para el Progreso de las Comunicaciones (APC), el Centro de Estudios de la Mujer (CEM), el Centro Internacional de la Tribuna (IWTC), el Media Advocacy Group (MAG). Area Mujeres - Agencia Latinoamericana de Informacón - Redaccón INTERNET: mujeres@alai.ecx.ec o mujeres@alai.ecx.apc.org Dirección: 12 De Octubre 622 y Patria Edificio Bossano Of. 503, Casilla 17-12-877, Quito, Ecuador Teléfono: (593 2) 528-716, 505074 Fax: (593 2) 505-073

ence presenters. Submit session and paper proposals (including 1-2 page abstracts and brief resumes for all participants) by March 15 to: Dr. Nora Faires, Chair, Conference Committee, Department of History, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, MI 48502-2186, phone: 810-762-3366, fax: 810-766-6838, email: comconfer@umich.edu

## Of Interest...

**Cultural Environment Movement** Founding Convention March 15-17, Webster University, St.

Louis. The invitation notes that cross-media conglomeration is reducing competition and denying entry to newcomers even as alternative perspectives vanish from the mainstream. "Media coalesce into a seamless, pervasive, stereotypes and increasingly homogenized and globalized cultural mainstream that has drifted out of democratic reach." CEM hopes to inaugurate a broad coalition to work for a n alternative to the repressive directions the cultural wars are taking us, which will oppose concentration and censorship, promote critical media awareness and support cultural workers struggling for more freedom from the constraints and formulas imposed on them. "The Founding Convention will launch a broad movement toward a time when all children will be born into a cultural environment that is reasonably free, fair, diverse, and non-damaging." For information contact CEM, University City Science Center, 3624 Market St., Philadelphia PA 19104 (215/387-5303)

**Public Broadcasting in the Age of Communications Revolution** by UDC member Robert McChesney is the lead article in the December 1995 *Monthly Review*. McChesney situates the attacks on public broadcasting and the public service standard in the context of broader attacks against democracy, suggesting the need for revolutionary changes in our communications systems if we are to attain true democracy. The fate of public broadcasting "goes directly to the question of what type of society will dominate... Will it be one in which the markets and profits are sacrosanct, off-limits to informed political debate? ... or will we have a society where citizens have the right to actually determine whatever economic system they regard as best for society?"

**Information Inequality: The Deepening Social Crisis in America** is Herbert Schiller's latest book, published by Routledge. It offers an indictment of the data deprivation corporate interests are inflicting on the social fabric, and describes the processes of privatization, deregulation and commercialization through which they have gained ground.

**Newsworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File**, edited by Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennen (University of Minnesota Press) examines the rank and file of

# Connections

journalism and the conditions under which they produced and participated in the business of journalism. Contributors include UDC members Brennen, Hardt, Jon Bekken, Bill Solomon and Barbie Zelizer.

## **FCC and NAB Join Forces to Silence Free Radio Berkeley**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been joined by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in its effort to stop the growth of the micro radio movement across the United States. By filing a "friend of the court" ("amicus") brief the NAB now stands in support of the FCC motion to silence Free Radio Berkeley.

Free Radio Berkeley has remained a First Amendment thorn in the side of the FCC since its first broadcast on April 11, 1993. Since the FCC's motion for a preliminary injunction was denied by a Federal District Court on January 20, 1995 the micro radio movement has continued to grow, giving people access to the air waves.

Micro broadcasting is even entering the mainstream. The current *Radio Resisters Bulletin* (PO Box 3038, Bellingham WA 98227-3038, haulgren@well.com) reports on Grover Beach, California's Excellent Radio, which illegally broadcasts from donated quarters in a downtown cultural center. Programming includes live broadcasts of city government meetings (the city bought the remote), music (rock, reggae, blues, jazz, world music, free form), local phone-in talk shows and other public affairs programming. The FCC has ordered the station to cease broadcasting, its response cites the station's strong community support and requests a waiver of FCC regulations until the agency establishes a procedure for licensing low-power stations (something it has no intention of doing). (RRB also reprints an article by UDC member Robert McChesney of the new telecommunications bill working its way through Congress, and reports on oppositional radio from around the world.)

## **Salvadoran Community Radio Needs Support**

Ten community radio stations were silenced by the Salvadoran Government who seized their equipment on Dec. 4, 1995. Free Radio Berkeley has been requested to supply ten 70-watt replacement transmitters. In order to do this at least \$4,000 must be raised as soon as possible to cover cost of materials. If you can donate please call (510) 644-3779 or email frbspd@crl.com.

In a simultaneous operation in communities throughout the country, the Salvadoran National Civil Police (PNC)

closed and confiscated the equipment of ten community radio stations, all members of the Association of Participatory Radio Stations and Programs of El Salvador (ARPAS) and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

Stations affected are: Segundo Montes (Meanguera, Morazan), Izcanal (Nueva Grenada, Usulután), Ulua (Cacaopera, Morazan) Cooperativa (Santa Elena, Usulután), Victoria (Villa Victoria, Cabañas), Suchitlán (Suchitoto, Cuscatlán), Excel (Zaragoza, La Libertad), Teo-Radio (Teotepeque, La Libertad), and Nejapa (San Salvador). In Guarjila, Chalatenango, residents occupied Radio Sumpul, protecting it from the police and preventing its closure.

The stations are owned by their municipalities, by associations of residents or agricultural workers, or by non-governmental organisations concerned with improving social conditions. All of them are participatory and educational in nature and strive to serve the poorer sectors of the population. In more isolated zones, these radio stations also serve as a "community telephone system," broadcasting messages, both emergency and personal, to and from listeners. These radio stations offer a space in which all members of the community can exercise their right to inform, to express their opinions, and to be heard.

While none have received broadcast licenses, some have been operating since 1990 and almost all of them have been on the air for at least two years. In a statement issued December 5, ARPAS noted that "the radio stations have done everything possible to assure their legality and continue to do so... But in this country, admired around the world for its ability to negotiate, it has not been possible to move forward in the discussions with ANTEL" (the equivalent of the FCC).

ARPAS and AMARC's Solidarity Network are requesting that messages of protest be sent to El Salvador's president, Sr. Armando Calderon Sol, Presidente de la Republica, Casa Presidencial, San Salvador, El Salvador, Fax: +503-281-0018 or +503-281-0017 Your message should request:

- That the confiscated equipment be returned and that the 11 radio stations be permitted to broadcast once again;
- That the president request that ANTEL accelerate the process of granting broadcast licences to El Salvador's community radio stations.
- That the Salvadoran broadcast legislation be reviewed to ensure that it is in accordance with El Salvador's situation as a new democracy.

Messages of support and copies of your message to the president can be sent to ARPAS: Cond. Flor Blanca A-318, 43 Av. Sur y 6 calle PTE, San Salvador, El Salvador, Tel & Fax: +503-222-4467 arpas@arpas.org.sv

# Bill & Dave's Excellent Adventure: NBC, Microsoft and the Cycles of History

by Mark Surman (msurman@web.net)

*Hypertext version (with graphics) available at [http://kows.web.net/sarnoff\\_and\\_gates/](http://kows.web.net/sarnoff_and_gates/)*

"It was a moment of epiphany. A man on the flickering tube in front of me was talking about a new technology. It would change the way we live. It would bring the world together. It would create electric wonders beyond our wildest dreams. It was – in its very essence – revolutionary."

Who was this eloquent prophet? It was none other than David Sarnoff – inventor commercial broadcasting, creator of NBC, and long-time monarch of the Radio Corporation of America. He was announcing the birth of television.

Sarnoff is a man who – plopping down radio and the TV on the hearth for all to consume – makes you shiver in your boots for the vitality of human expression. He is the spirit of big, big, big crushing small, small, small. He is the spirit of technological hopes and fears turned into the best darned global marketing campaign you've ever seen. I listened to him and his spirit filled me. It felt familiar. I was suddenly aware that his spirit is alive and well and living with us today. Its name is Bill Gates.

As I wandered away from Sarnoff's electric podium – in a museum exhibit called Watching Television – the connection with Gates became clearer and clearer. Both understood that software meant more than hardware. Both understood that their technologies would have the most impact and the most utility when sold en masse to individuals. Most of all, both understood how to define the ways that cultural data is organized – the ways that we eat, sleep and breathe information.

Looking at these similarities, I knew it was true: Gates and Sarnoff are of the same spirit, they are deities in the very same church. A list started to appear in my mind. It made connections between these two historically disconnected lives... [see below]

Staring at this list, I couldn't help but think that the more things change the more they stay the same – especially where money and power are concerned.

But how could this be true? We live in an age of collective glee about the fruits of the net.revolution. We've got all this young, imaginative talent running circles around Gates. We've got Netscapes and Javas that ask – more honestly than Gates ever could – Where do you want to go today? We've got real hope.

The thing is, we've been here before. While Sarnoff's spirit – and bank account – grew in his own time, the buzz of technological innovation and excitement often spun around furiously and far from his grasp. 'Amateur' radio operators built their own informal, two-way networked culture. Young talent like the 24 year old TV inventor Philo Farnsworth snuck past the likes of Sarnoff and grabbed key patents. There was hope. There were dreams.

When I think about the upstart Farnsworth, I can't help but smile. But I also have to remember Sarnoff's spirit. He licensed Farnsworth's technology and took TV down the tired old road he'd built for radio. He crushed the amateurs with regulations and lawyers. He won.

A few days after leaving the museum, I opened the newspaper to find the images of Bill Gates and NBC president Robert Wright (Sarnoff's corporate offspring)

Sarnoff	Gates
Transformed himself from radio geek into mythological cultural hero.	Transformed himself from computer geek into mythological cultural hero.
Claimed that his company could make the world a better place if everyone would just buy a TV set.	Claimed that his company could make the world a better place if everyone would just buy Windows 95.
Turned a hardware industry into a software industry by inventing commercial broadcasting and NBC.	Turned a hardware industry into a software industry by inventing Microsoft.
Cooperated with and then snubbed AT&T.	Cooperated with and then snubbed IBM.
Investigated by the Federal Trade Commission for anti-competitive behaviour (1924).	Investigated by Justice Department for anti-competitive behaviour (1995).
Made so much money that he could buy people and tell them what to do.	Made so much money that he could buy people and tell them what to do.
Created the company – and the paradigm – that dominated the use of radio and television for many years.	Created the company – and the paradigm – that dominated the use microcomputers for many years.



# Manchester Labor Conference On Information & Property Rights

by Jacqueline Cantwell

On the weekend of September 8, 1995, I attended the "Intellectual Property Rights, the Infobahn and the Labour Movement" conference in Manchester, England, organized by the Labour Telematics Centre to "bring together organizations representing 'creators' in an attempt to define an approach to IPR [Intellectual Property Rights] that will work in their interests, and help make the Information Society a reality." The impetus for the conference was a 1988 change in English copyright law that weakened freelance journalists' financial and moral interests in their work. Book authors retained copyright protections when copies are made, but publishers of periodicals and journals did not distribute copying fees to freelancers who, under English law, were not limited by work-for-hire restrictions.

The conference immediately dealt with the "nitty gritty" of creators' and publishers' differences. The outline of concerns began with opening remarks by Carole Tongue, "The Copyright Debate in Europe." As a member of the European Parliament, Ms. Tongue coordinates policy legislation development with the broad range of political parties active in Europe. She wants European copyright to be harmonized not only for the free movement of trade, but to strengthen European culture and values, and preventing the Americanisation of European culture by corporate dominance and American television. However, Chris Barlas (ALCS) pointed out that the Labour Party confused publishers as supporters of creators and that an European Parliament committee on multi-media was made of only publishers' representatives.

As a county law librarian, I have more contact with the

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merged on the page. They were announcing MSNBC – a 24 online and cable news extravaganza. This marriage of corporate technological visions from opposite ends of the century proved it beyond a doubt. Gates and Sarnoff are one. Their spirit is truly with us and it – as much or more than any other – is defining where we will really go today.

Of course there are other spirits that surround us, especially on the net. Emma Goldman and Thomas Paine jump to mind. But we should not let ourselves be overly mesmerized by the beauty and wonder of these spirits. For, if we are not careful or if we happen to be looking the other way, the spirit of Gates and Sarnoff may stomp by and crush us like bugs.

conflicting demands of publishers for reimbursement and the public's need for affordable quality information than I have with writers, the creators of the information available in databases and publications. The publishing industry has become international as publishing houses are purchased by multi-national enterprises. These enterprises respond to the demands of the international economy and the policies of governments attempting to negotiate a balance between the needs of producers (writers and publishers) and users (businesses, schools and the public). This conference was an opportunity to become familiar with the concerns of the writers of the European Community and as a way to unite the interests that had brought me to law librarianship: the creation and distribution of information and the legal rights of those who create and use this same information.

During the three days of the conference, I learned an attitude toward intellectual property that differed from my US-defined experience. At this conference, IPR was seen as part of their national culture. It was perceived to be threatened by Microsoft, Rupert Murdoch and the US market demands for deregulation of national industries and tariffs. The concerns of the trade union sector of the British Labour Party defined the conference's framework for discussion: structural unemployment, teleworking, contract employment, and labor competitiveness.

Conference members had a constant theme: The new medium of telecommunications is in the interest of corporate conglomerates who are not paying the content creators adequately. This conference's intent was to determine how to protect these vulnerable people. Matt Herron, past president, American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP), gave a summary of the US perspective: market development and control. He argued for "strong marketing to protect our rights – commercial structures to sell our work." The closing session of the conference concluded with creator groups stating that their strength in the developing Information Society was that they owned and created the content. Groups had to be willing to organize and use the law to enforce their rights. People had to have a sense of the worth of their work. The European standard of author's rights should be the standard in developing copyright law; harmonization was reducing rights to the lowest common denominator.

User interests were being slighted in this discussion, but the statements of Tamara Eisentchiz (Information Science, City University, London), Peter Day (Library and

Information Studies, University of Brighton), and Joyce McMillan, a freelance National Union of Journalists member, changed the tone of the discussion. Ms. McMillan stated that the vested interests of publishers will ensure document tracking. Technology is not the problem. Politics is the problem. Creators need to extend their argument beyond the self-interest of remuneration and address issues of quality, civic dimensions, and democracy. Creators had to reach out to users to represent their interests. This would require new models of copyright law and library service, requiring a strong public sector, an issue not popular at this time.

The conference closed resolving to create an E-mail list of participants, to create a research group on international collection mechanisms and to write a response to the European Parliament's Green Paper.

Attending this conference was a valuable experience for me, re-acquainting me with the usefulness of our profession and emphasizing the need that librarians participate in public defense of our institutions and traditions of service to the public. The value of the United States' government depository program and California's county law libraries was emphasized to me with every explanation of my job to conference participants; people were astounded when I described the resources available to county residents. Librarians must present their concerns to government, corporate and creator groups; copyright law does not protect only the individual creator, it ensures a body of public knowledge. Libraries house that knowledge and make it accessible.

As information shifts to electronic form, librarians must not neglect our traditional archival role. Out-of-print books are available from libraries for years, at no cost to the user; but when does an electronic document become out of print? How does the user become aware of it if it is not

## UDC Web Site

A new UDC web site is taking shape, with articles from the *Communique* and other materials. If anybody has suggestions for additional material, or conference-related materials (papers, photographs, etc.) in electronic form, Mark Surman (msurman@web.apc.org) would like to hear from you. You can find us at <http://kows.web.net/udc/>

Afterwards, Mark suggests you might want to take a quick look at his piece on the spiritual connection between David Sarnoff and Bill Gates ([http://kows.web.net/sarnoff\\_and\\_gates/](http://kows.web.net/sarnoff_and_gates/)).

catalogued? We librarians must participate in the debate on copyright law, continuing our traditional roles of representing the user and protecting documents.

The British Librarians' "Position Statement on Copyright and the Digital Environment" 3rd draft, September 1995, was the only paper representing users. Under English law, copying of digital information for educational use is not recognized. The paper states: "... it is vitally important that the ideas contained in published copyright works are potentially available for all to use. The benefits of using and experimenting with new technologies should flow to the public as well as to the copyright holders." They want private users to have browsing rights of publicly available copyrighted materials on site or remotely accessible; the right for personal copies of a reasonable amount of digital information for private use and the ability to read or listen to such material; and simple fair-payment schemes for copying in excess of fair use.

### GREAT MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF JOURNALISM

#### Corrections

Because of an editing error, an article in some editions of *Business Day* yesterday about the new law firm of Myerson & Kohn incorrectly described the financial status of Booth, Marcus & Pierce, a law firm whose partners joined the new firm. Booth Marcus and Pierce specialized in bankruptcy law; it was not bankrupt.

An article in *The Living Section* yesterday about duck research misidentified a center that serves as a kind of "fat farm" for ducks. It is the Cornell University Duck Research Laboratory in Eastport, L.I.

The *New York Times* regrets that since the purchase of the paper in 1896 by Adolph S. Ochs its editors have presented a distorted view of American and world history due to the fact that they are part of the ideological superstructure of U.S. and world capitalism. They would hope to do better after the social revolution and beg their readers' indulgence until that time.

# American Talk Shows and the Discourse That Determines Them

by Gina Bailey

I used to practice psychotherapy for a living. I knew the end of any integrity that remained of the profession was near in 1988 when my mother announced that the ultimate symbol of success for a psychologist was a guest appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show, to which she added that she was sure my capabilities were more than adequate. This was in the glory days of the self-help movement, when seminars began resembling infomercials. Publications such as *Women Who Love Too Much* and *Codependent No More* rose to the top of best seller lists and the most fashionable way to 'plug' the latest pop psychology book became the talk show circuit.

My profession was, without a doubt, in the throes of being appropriated by certain intellectually challenged pseudo-elites, predominantly comprised of talk show hosts and the so-called producers that in all probability needed the *Freudian Primer A to Z* to convincingly use the word 'unconscious.' Worse yet, the dissemination of these homogenous 'self-empowerment' techniques appeared to be driven by a combination of marketplace principles, personal alienation, corporate sponsorship, technological mania and a medium that increasingly lured its audiences with sensationalistic practices masked as public service. Sadly, psychology, one of the great social sciences, was going the way of history, which has also, in part, been 'mediatized' for a number of years by Time-Warner.

By 'mediatize' I refer to the ability of certain media — television in particular — to take entire bodies of thought, thrust them into structures and time slots too small for comprehension, much less for integrated knowledge, and, in turn, arrogantly associate the product with an indispensable wisdom necessary for individual happiness and/or participation in American democracy. Within this truncated format, the articulation of most topics becomes disfigured. The underlying tenets which inform such disfigurements are the concern of this essay. Fueled by what I perceive as the partial disgrace of psychology as re-presented within the talk show format and a concern for the long-term political consequences of their rise in popularity as a primary means of exposure to social issues, I offer the following observations on the contemporary discourse of the American talk show.

Vaclav Havel, the Czechoslovakian playwright, once said, "A people without a narrative is a dangerous people." Although he was specifically speaking to the problems of

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*"The only interesting answer is one that destroys the question."* — Susan Sontag

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the former Soviet Union, I believe his poignant observation about the role of narrative can be equally applied to social discourse as presented and discussed on the American talk show. Havel refers, of course, to our human condition as being that of a narrative condition. We derive meaning and interpret ourselves/other through our stories. They shape the contours of our thoughts and determine our sense of place in the world. Consequently, if through political or personal crisis our narratives are shattered or become otherwise ineffectual, we become vulnerable creatures indeed — disoriented and in pursuit of re-cognition that restores some semblance of meaning and order.

It is not that I accuse Americans of being a people without a narrative. On the contrary, American stories have been canonized, sanitized, translated and beamed to nearly all corners of the world. But rather, I suggest that these narratives are in a crisis of meaning and utility. Americans have become a people for whom their discourse no longer provides them with the possibility of collective solutions to pressing problems. Ironically, the problems in question have been incurred, in part, by the narratives themselves. So, what are these troublesome features that serve to undermine meaningful communicative action?

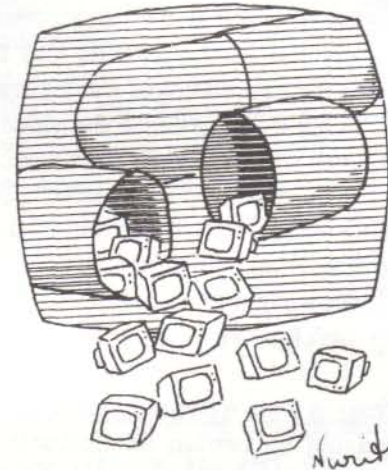
Firstly, American talk shows falsely infuse the notion of democracy into the format itself. Audience participation has become synonymous with citizen participation. This displacement serves to obscure the *raison d'être* of both the home and studio audiences; that being, of course, profit. Audiences are bought and sold according to ratings. They are commodities. Topics are chosen based on their potential exchange value and not on the social needs of people. The success of such shows as "Boys Will Be Girls," "Gonads to G Spots" and "Race Relations in America" are judged by the same criteria. Commodities cannot converse — only people can converse. Granted, audiences are comprised of people, but these people are brought together as a group for reasons other than to enhance the democratic process. Capitalism's notorious exploitation of labor, with its placatively seductive offer of consumer choice in lieu of real political choice, mimics the network's relation to its talk show audiences. Accustomed to being treated as commodities, audiences are easily led to believe that the 'choice' of speaking one's mind

in this highly profit-oriented and contrived format is a genuine form of participation with the potential for real social (as opposed to individual) change. Moreover, the increased use of technology via fax or modem to register opinion on these shows only serves to reinforce this displacement by the illusion of greater accessibility. Access is mistaken for interaction, and interaction is mistaken for attaining that nebulous 'voice' upon which democracy rests. Nothing could be further from the truth. As one talk show producer commented, "It is a fine line between helping people and exploiting them." Although she was referring to the guests, the same can be said of the audience.

Secondly, the epistemological orientation of these shows tends to veil the complexities of most issues and, as a consequence, subvert authentic exploration. How we know what we know, how we come to that state called understanding and how we learn is based on the principle of prerequisites. We must have a basic foundation of a subject before we can adequately grasp the larger implications of those foundations. In other words, we cannot adequately speak to gender issues, for example, until we have some background in several bodies of thought. Yet, as Neil Postman has declared, "TV **hates** prerequisites." Television, as an entertainment medium, has no need for such prerequisites. The lack thereof is one factor that produces pleasure and constitutes entertainment. But talk shows, as with many news type programs, which profess to be a window on the world of social ills and promise illumination as if the world was simply **there**, necessarily fail without them. This is a type of epistemological false advertising. Given that understanding and the production of knowledge requires prerequisites and always takes place within a field of power, the best these shows can hope to offer is the affirmation of the world (predominantly through affect) as we already sense it or as it has already been appropriated for us. This is most strikingly evident when thunderous applause fills the studio after Hallmark-like sentiments have been impassionately announced by a participant. Yes, it is comforting to know someone else in the world feels the way we do, but this comfort does little in the way of understanding why. If anything, it serves to further degrade the collective definition of understanding and knowledge.

Thirdly, talk shows give the appearance of a disdain for elitism. The format is constructed to feel 'as if' the narratives have been deinstitutionalized. It is 'as if' the studio is spatially and temporarily cleared of elite jargon and therefore fertile for the harvest of 'real' people's ideas. Elite language is, after all, often based on abstract prerequisites. On the other hand, the narratives of 'real' people, so the story goes, are based on affective experience, common sense and practical knowledge that can be easily personal-

ized. Except for the occasional speech act of the perfunctory expert, who discursively represents authority, it is the 'real' people's narratives that are privileged. Although overall divisive, this does serve the immediate function of unification and the reaffirmation of Americans' paradoxical yet deeply held suspicions about the elite. Through linguistic differentiation and the exclusion of prerequisite discourse, it begins to feel 'as if' the social playing field had been



leveled; no one holds the monopoly on Truth and everyone's subjectivity is equally valued. The American talk show would seem to embody the great pillars of postmodernism: "A willful reliance on nonauthoritative knowledge" and the collapse of critical distance in the name of plurality. But again, appearances are deceptive. Until a decade ago, these debate-like forums were almost exclusively used by and for the elites. These forums continue to serve factions of their interests under the guise of public service by echoing themes of self-improvement and personal success (ever see a talk show on collective security?). These two themes, coupled with the voyeuristic/exhibitionistic nature of these programs, reveal a culture whose values are steeped in publicity and celebrityhood. They reveal an "image economy" which demands conspicuous consumption. They signify the American theme of upward mobility in which all roads lead to that which has come to be known as 'elitism.' Quite antithetical to their appearance of disdain, these shows offer their participants the fifteen minutes of fame that have, until late, been reserved specifically for the elites — a reaction formation par excellence!

And lastly, we cannot underestimate the impact of the values embedded within the principles of Protestantism and capitalism upon our narratives. These two belief systems both explicitly and implicitly inform the way in which we define, frame and attempt to solve social problems. Together, they constitute what Johan Galtung has called the "deep codes of Western civilization — the Occidental

cosmology.” One underlying premise of American capitalism, for example, posits an “optimistic faith that business people refrain from unreasonable profits and grow exploitation of workers or customers while competing to create increased prosperity for all.” Although most market economy practices belie this premise, the belief nonetheless drives our discourse. Concomitantly, free enterprise has always been backed by God’s blessing. Both Protestantism and capitalism situate the primary locus of control with the individual. One enters heaven or achieves success based on individual merit, individual self-control and individual hard work. As a result, social relations tend to be characterized by competition and short term instrumentalism. Ethics are decontextualized and based on binary justice (right/wrong) rather than the more contextual ethics of care.

Through Occidental eyes, we as humans are viewed as perfectible. The vehicle through which this perfection can realize itself is the exercise of our God-given individual free will. Secularly, the notion of perfectibility is associated with and evidenced by material comforts. Logically it follows, then, that if a person is ‘blessed’ with wealth they must be doing something right. Conversely, those materially less fortunate are viewed as morally responsible for their own suffering. The phrase ‘when bad things happen to good people’ is oxymoronic within Western cosmology. This is probably one of the reasons why talk shows that emphasize the good people/raw deals theme remain so popular. Small doses of cognitive dissonance for short periods of time creates enough tension to facilitate interest. On the other hand, to resolve such apparent contradictions or to allow for their conscious coexistence requires a sustained concentration beyond mere interest.

When taken together and viewed systematically, these four overarching features of discourse might help explain why we see the American talk show as generally following one of two paths. Both paths result in a crisis of meaning and utility. Either the focus is interpersonally oriented (“Why Married Men Cheat,” for example) or it is more socially directed (such as “The Rise of Gangs in the United States”). The interpersonal path, given the parameters and direction of the discourse (extreme individualism, competitive nature of relationships, lack of prerequisite information, primacy of affect, etc.), is destined to collapse in on itself; an implosion of sorts. The discussions become tautological as the narratives simply have no place to go — no place to insert themselves in which to entertain perspective by between or beside other affectively bound, self-referential narratives. There is an autistic quality to the entire process as if multiple monologues take up residence in a system which denies signification to anything outside itself. It is not surprising, then, that we often find these shows degenerat-

ing into solipsistic and hysteric shouting matches in which the studio resembles the barbarism of the Roman Coliseum where the state of suffering became performative. Within this context, the “Married Man Who Cheats” will emerge as just that; no more, no less, no different. The discourse demands stasis.

Likewise, the programs that propose to explore social phenomena necessarily derail into the realm of the personalized. The primary means by which these shows explore the social world is the interview format, which seeks to uncover individual motivation. Using gangs as an example, the routing would be to conduct interviews with the members, possible the victims of their crimes, and probably the families of both. The exclusive use of such personalized questions as “How did you come to be involved with a gang?” limits the possibilities of understanding gang membership as a social issue. The whole is qualitatively different than the sum of its parts. Our discourse does go up as far as to reveal the decay of urban life as one probable contributing factor. It also allows us to acknowledge the economic and spiritual poverty in which these individuals live. It does **not**, however, provide the framework or flexibility to question the structural sources of poverty in general. The interests which inform and monitor the discourse keep their presuppositions implicit. Therefore, when a celebrity/host like Geraldo is able to rescue several individuals from gang life or a 1-800 self-help number flashes across the screen after a show on domestic abuse, we tend to feel assured that our narratives do possess the power of communicative action. There exists visual evidence that they are functional and that their use results in meaningful utility because, after all, certain individuals have been positively affected. But like a physician who misdiagnoses a patient with cancer and temporarily alleviates one of the symptoms like a cough, the origins, structures and functions of gang life in American society remain unrevealed, intact and untreated. The possible structurally determined pathology of any social phenomena lies buried under a discourse designed to point in another direction. It is akin to the early research on gorilla behavior that consistently resulted in the portrayal of gorillas as aggressive and competitive. After 1950, when women were admitted to the university, the data began to show cooperative and nurturing behavior. The gorillas didn’t change, but the paradigm had.

In other words, you can’t get there from here, folks! Like the painful self-sabotaging loops that bring individuals to their first therapy sessions, the discourse of the talk show requires a paradigm shift. It requires a cosmological transformation which is based on inclusion rather than exclusion. It requires a shift from the tiresome and ineffectual repetition of the explicit to the intentional exposure of the implicit.

# Community Television in the US: Public, Educational and Governmental Access

Reviewed by Patricia Aufderheide,  
American University, Washington DC

**Community television in the United States: A sourcebook on public, educational, and governmental access**, by Linda K. Fuller. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Longtime access cable activist and ally Linda K. Fuller (also a UDC member) has put between covers a useful, if idiosyncratic, compendium of stories, studies and references about the movement to use cable television to increase the diversity of sources and views.

Access cable, which developed in the 1970s in the U.S., exists on a minority of cable systems. Cable operators provide, mostly because local authorities have required them to in franchise contracts, a channel or channels for noncommercial use. In the best of cases, operators provide separate channels for public, educational and governmental use, and also offer production resources, equipment and space. In less enviable situations, operators open a channel but provide few resources. And in the great majority of cable systems, no one has forced cable operators to open up this space at all.

The movement for access cable partook of the greater optimism of the period for grassroots democracy and social equity. As Ralph Engelman notes in his new book, *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History* (Sage), founts of inspiration included the Canadian Challenge for Change grassroots media project, a marking experience for access cable pioneer George Stoney, Marshall McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller. Founts of funds included liberal foundations such as Markle and Ford and the National Endowment for the Arts. Activists imagined cable access as

Like Susan Sontag intimates with her statement, "The only interesting answer is one that destroys the question," we need to shift from asking such questions as "Why do individuals join gangs?" to "How does one have to think in order to ignore the poverty and misery which give rise to such groups?" It requires a re-positioning and an elevation of what we now perceive as undesirable side-effects of modern life to a centralized position of consideration. It requires a de-mediatization of thought in general and a re-figuring and re-remembering of the narratives that, when combined as discourse, offer meaning to us as historical and subjective human beings rather than situationally objectified commodities.

a tool to challenge media and political authority. New York-based Paper Tiger TV and satellite distribution service Deep Dish TV made bold claims to provide information alternatives.

After ambitious beginnings, cable access has limped into the '90s. Authorities have, understandably, not warmed to it, and access cable has had friends but never consistent political clout. Municipalities and cable companies often seem to agree that access cable, especially unpredictable public access, is more trouble than it's worth. The 1984 and 1992 cable laws both calculatedly omitted any encouragement for the service, and the 1992 law included a devastating clause allowing cable operators to censor programming (the case is now at the Supreme Court). Public access in particular has few friends in the media; its image ranges from the gentle goofiness of the popular comedy *Wayne's World* to that of sexual provocation. (An impression often mistakenly drawn from New York leased-access programming). At ground level, access centers find it a struggle to mobilize and maintain constituencies; at the best-run centers, directors recognize that their job is not producing television, but using television as a community organizing tool, and this is a very tough job indeed.

Telecommunications reform legislation that was in final stages as this was written in early January of 1996 will radically change the ground rules for access cable, by opening up local competition and eliminating the franchise requirement. While access's national organization, Alliance for Community Media, managed in negotiations to protect existing access channels, it could not win any future reserved space for public, educational or governmental use on cable or other telecommunications networks.

Advocates for community television face brutal new challenges – financial, technological, political. In an era of the Internet, should they become virtual-community infonodes, or should they hold on to the intensely local focus they now have? What will replace franchise fees? How effectively to address the powerful market-competition model that has informed telecom reform? In access cable, as in other noncommercial areas of electronic media, great creativity and fortitude will be needed in the coming years.

Cable access has been a remarkable chapter in 20th century telecommunications. Both its successes and its failures illuminate the choices our society has made, and the consequences of those choices. Much more has been done in access cable than has been written about, however.

Access advocates often end up reinventing the wheel, just because they could not find a journal article or a self-published study. Academics often lack contact with activists. That is why a sourcebook such as Fuller's has value, for scholars and for access producers and advocates alike.

This book, written on the eve of enormous change, is wisely called a sourcebook rather than a monograph. Building on a general enthusiasm for a service that expands the range of speakers in a democracy, Fuller acts as a facilitator and an eclectic collector. She rounds up and presents others' arguments (including those of the author), summarizes and cites surveys and studies, and cites texts extensively (the last 60 pages are a heterogeneous collection of documents). Readers can thus shop for relevant data; Fuller draws only broad conclusions. For instance, following a set of vignettes of access operations, she concludes, "The many case studies here, only a fraction of the thousands that could have been highlighted, are a clear demonstration that diversity flourishes" (p 174).

The book opens with a general definition of access cable (but not a history), a legal summary and a short discussion – drawn in part from personal experience on her local cable commission – of problems and conflicts. Chapter Two, an annotated list of organizations and institutions that support or negotiate with community television types, opens Fuller's Rolodex. (Like all listings, it has its gaps; for instance, under "Mainstream and Alternative Media" there are a dozen references to feminist publications, whether or not they relate to television, without mentioning the influential *Women's Review of Books*. No mention is made of leading left-of-center magazines – *The Nation*, *In These Times*, *The Progressive* – all of which have covered community electronic media extensively.) In Chapter Three, Fuller describes types of programming on education, government and public access, helpfully focusing on the challenge of coping with hate and special interest programs. Chapter Four offers tips and sources for training and management advice to people who want to get into production. Chapter Five provides thumbnail sketches of successful access operations around the country.

Chapter Six is a "whither" chapter, in which Fuller accurately notes that political will is critical to community television's success. As an advocate, Fuller is professionally enthusiastic, but also alarmist: "As fewer and fewer resources are available for us as audience members of both print and electronic media to give feedback, let alone get involved, community television emerges as our only hope" (p 188). Surely this overstates Fuller's understandable urge to defend democratic media. Desk-top publishing and the World Wide Web, among other nascent technological opportunities, ought to mitigate that rather stark picture. In-

deed some would say that our society has never had such proliferation of communications vehicles and so much potential for creative networking. After all, advertisers' major headache is now the breakdown of the once mass audience.

The problem is how to take the promise of the community television of the 1970s and make it real, under changing technological and political terms, for the 21st century. Fuller's book testifies to the energy of a movement that will be important as we grapple with that challenge.

## Detroit Newspaper Strike

The *Detroit Free Press* reported Nov. 7 that it had lost \$36 million in the third-quarter due to the continuing Detroit newspaper strike, and expects to lose another \$20 million in the fourth quarter. The fourth quarter is normally newspapers' most profitable time of year because of heavy holiday advertising. Since the Knight-Ridder owned *Free Press* and the Gannett-owned *Detroit News* share profits and losses equally under the terms of their Joint Operating Agreement, that would put total 1995 strike losses at \$112 million – twice the size of 1994's \$55 million profit.

However, the financial paid does not seem to be making the papers eager to settle. The Detroit Newspaper Agency took three weeks to respond to a union offer to return to work and arbitrate a settlement, and then turned it down flat. The striking unions have launched a weekly newspaper, the *Journal*, to provide an alternative to readers and advertisers avoiding the struck papers.

Autographed poster-sized prints of labor artist Ralph Fasanella's *The Daily News Strike* – a depiction of that 1990-91 struggle – are available for \$50. Unsigned prints are \$25. All proceeds go to members of the six unions on strike against the Detroit newspapers. Copies from: The Newspaper Guild, 8611 Second Ave., Silver Spring MD 20910. Make checks payable to DNA Strikers' Relief Fund.

### Why I Love My UDC Tote Bag

Mike Budd writes: "You asked why I love my UDC tote bag. My significant other took it as her significant carry-all. P.S. I'll see you at the conference."

It's not too late to get your own UDC tote bag. Just send \$5 for each one to UDC c/o Kate Kane, Dept. of Communication, DePaul, 2320 N Kenmore, Chicago IL 60614.

And please tell us why you love your UDC TOTE BAG!

# Are You A UDC Member?

The Union for Democratic Communications is an organization of communications scholars, researchers, media activists and practitioners. Membership includes a subscription to the UDC's quarterly newsletter, *The Democratic Communiqué*, and the UDC Membership Directory. (To see if your membership is current, check the expiration date on your mailing label. Now would be an excellent time to renew your membership.)

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Numéro de FAX ou de TELEX: \_\_\_\_\_

Adresse électronique/Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type de membership:**      \_\_\_ \$30 Membre Régulier/Regular Membership

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**Membership Category:**      \_\_\_ \$50 Membre de soutien/Sostener/Sustaining Member

\_\_\_ \$45 Casa, uno *Communiqué*/Household, one *Communiqué*

\_\_\_ \$30 Subscription Only; No Membership or Directory

\_\_\_ *Je veux que mon nom soit inclus dans le Répertoire des membres*  
*Please include me in the UDC Membership Directory*

*Note: Cotisation payable en dollars  
Canadiens.*

*Enclose check payable to Union for  
Democratic Communications with  
membership form.*

Prière de poster á/Mail to: UDC, Communication Dept., DePaul University

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