WHAT'S GOING ON

IN COMMUNITY MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The media revolution promised for the past forty years has arrived – again. The United States is now experiencing the third major technical and economic shift in its media environment since the mid-1970s. Four decades ago, the dominance of a handful of television broadcast networks was shattered by the emergence of satellite-linked cable television. In the 1990s, the Internet sent text and data flowing around the world. Now, a decade later, photos, audio, and video are becoming as easily transmitted as text. The era of personal electronic communication and broadband networks is at hand, and every aspect of our media culture is undergoing change.

As might be expected, these technological shifts are prompting economic and political shifts and, with them, fundamental shifts in the nature of audiences and programming itself. Government deregulation and increased concentration of ownership have created a powerful economic incentive to ignore local programming needs. At the same time, large, heterogeneous audiences are becoming a thing of the past; increasingly media are marketing to segmented audiences distinguished by ideology, class, ethnicity, or race. These audiences rarely come into contact with one another, or with disagreeable opinions. In such a fragmented media world, is there an electronic place where people can convene as citizens? Can the new media create a public square where people can be heard – and hear each other?

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The answer is yes. Communities across the country are taking control of media, adapting new technologies to the social, economic, educational, cultural, and information needs of their residents. In *Connecting Communities,* a 2000 report by senior fellow Richard Somerset-Ward, the Benton Foundation documented community-media alliances that are delivering public services effectively. The report envisioned a digital, broadband, interactive, multimedia community platform that would take these services to new levels. That vision is coming to pass.

This report shines a spotlight on media that go beyond the standard notions of media in the public interest to embrace practices that increase citizen participation in media production, governance, and policy. The report summarizes the findings of a nationwide scan of effective and emerging community media practices conducted by the Benton Foundation in collaboration with the Community Media and Technology Program of the University of Massachusetts, Boston. The scan included an analysis of trends and emerging practices; comparative research; an online survey of community media practitioners; one-on-one interviews with practitioners, funders and policy makers, and the information gleaned from a series of roundtable discussions with community media practitioners in Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Portland, Oregon.

Throughout this effort, Benton sought input on key aspects of community media practice, with the goal of understanding how community media can be sustained, strengthened, and expanded. The scan research focused on four key areas of inquiry:

- What are the unique characteristics that distinguish community media?
- What makes media-community collaborations successful?
- What types of community media organizations best leverage new technologies?
- How might community media engage underserved populations in programming tailored to their needs?

The scan grew out of the Benton Foundation's experience with Sound Partners for Community Health, a regranting program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. For ten years, Sound Partners nurtured collaborations between community health agencies and local public broadcasters to improve local health care practices and decision-making. The success of Sound Partners dem-

onstrated the power of community media and inspired the foundation to take a deeper look at collaboration opportunities and the potential for media whose mission is to serve and transform the communities within which they operate. The goal of the scan is to provide inspiration and direction not only for communities nationwide, but also to inform the next phase of Sound Partners. This phase, called New Routes to Community Health, is anchored in local partnerships and poised to increase the health of new immigrants and refugees by involving a broad range of local media and civic institutions in tackling this community's complex problems and giving voice to its vulnerable new residents.

Across the country, communities are partnering with public broadcasters, providing community radio and establishing low-power radio stations, organizing on cable access channels, joining community broadband networks, and producing for satellite-delivered public interest channels. In this report we explore the lessons learned from these important — but often isolated — experiments in community-driven media. We hope this report will help connect present and future innovators with one another and with resources that can get them started and/or sustain them.

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY MEDIA?

Simply put, community media are media created to allow individuals to tell the stories and have the conversations necessary for their own self-directed development as citizens (Howley, 2005; Jankowski, 2003; Rennie, 2006). The faces and voices in these stories and conversations may not be seen or heard anywhere else. Chicago roundtable participants described this experience with the powerful phrase "first voice." Often, it is the first time individuals have spoken publicly or shared their stories.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Four characteristics are common to the community media described in this report, though no one organization can fulfill all these ideals all of the time:

Localism

Community media are created primarily with and by residents of a specific geographic place. They explore local issues. They help define the places where we live and how we relate to one another. They reflect local values and culture. By definition, as one roundtable participant in Boston noted, community media "can't be outsourced."

In the current regulatory and commercial environment of most media platforms, the importance of this key characteristic can't be overstated. Local radio programming is often piped in from other communities and given an automated wrapper that simulates localism. Local broadcast television has been given almost complete regulatory relief from its minimal obligations to serve the needs of local communities. Similarly, the cable and telephone industries are pressing in the regulatory arena to be relieved of local community service obligations, claiming the Internet has so empowered local citizens that it is no longer necessary to require other media to support civic life. (At the same time, these industries are seeking legislation to bar communities from owning and building their own wireless and broadband Internet connections.)

Faced with these changes, communities are left to wonder how they can discover creative ways of plugging into the emerging media and knowledge cultures. It is now widely recognized that the inability to gain access to information networks and global flows of media are critical factors in creating social inequality (Castells, 2005; Lash, 2002). Failure to address these concerns in a networked society places geographic communities at risk of becoming "dumb terminals" rather than creative economic and cultural actors in the networks now emerging. The question of "where are community media?" is critical here. It can be answered in two ways: as a geographic place – a neighborhood, town, city, county, or region – and as an online virtual community – a social network of common interests that is not particularly associated with a geographic place. Failure to keep this distinction in the fore when considering community media puts geographic communities at risk of being disconnected and marginalized 'off the network.'

Without the presence of local institutions committed to supporting communities in their efforts to grapple with a global media culture and create digital inclusion, it is unlikely that the democratic potential of network communications can be realized. This report focuses on media that serve local geographic places, places where a diversity of people live and are inevitably associated with each other, grounded in unavoidable, rich, and complex social relationships that are far from transparent, simple, or mere simulations of intimacy in a virtual communications network.

Diverse Participation

Community media are mission-driven, in service to the broader community. They insist on the inclusion of diverse voices within the community, and their production and distribution processes emphasize community participation. They seek representation of the range of demographics of its citizens – social, economic, ethnic, cultural, political, age – in their programming. And that programming is not merely about the community; it is created in collaboration with the community. Community media institutions see themselves as accountable and accessible to the people they serve, and they embrace their audiences as citizens in a democracy who are entitled both to First Amendment freedoms and to control over content. Their democratic principles are often reflected in participatory management and governance structures.

Storytelling and Deliberation

As both process and content, storytelling is central to community media and can jump-start a deliberative process among community members. It combats alienation and isolation by allowing audience members to express their story

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as well as live in someone else's shoes. It allows participants and viewers to derive broader meaning from personal experience and provides in-depth coverage of issues on an intimate level.

The storytelling is human, from the heart, and not necessarily objective. It is creative and enables bold, raw, relevant, and diverse content critical for civic discussion. At its best, it is not merely "personal" media, but often storytelling in service to larger, civic concerns.

To frame the community's stories and experience for civic discourse, community media often initiate public conversation and deliberation on important and complex topics. In this way community media organizations are assuming the role of conveners and authenticators of information sharing and dialogue, roles increasingly being lost locally in deregulated commercial media.

Empowerment

One goal of community media is to challenge notions conveyed in mainstream media. Accomplishing this requires putting communication tools in the hands of individuals, sharing access with nonprofessionals, and supporting self-expression and community building. Community media institutions engage in empowerment in different ways. Many offer training programs to build the capacity of community members to use media technologies; others assist communities in grappling with a media-saturated culture through media literacy training; yet others emphasize economic and workforce development through skills training and content production. By enabling citizens to make and understand media, community media become a tool for personal, community, and ethnic expression and development. They may even inspire audiences to take action leading to political transformation. They reach those outside the mainstream and provide a voice for the voiceless. This dynamic makes the process of creation as important as the product. (See Appendix 1.)

TYPES OF MEDIA

Where do community media fit in the broader media landscape? The language we use to talk about media culture and programming has evolved to keep pace with changing media forms, technology, and practices. Increasingly, the term *public media* is used to distinguish media that are supported by the public and that allow the public to engage in civic life and have a voice in their development. Within this broad understanding of public media, several terms describe media practices that facilitate people's participation as citizens. *Community media,* as defined above, fits easily within this category. Also falling under the umbrella of public media are terms like *alternative media, independent media, participatory media, citizen media,* and *development media;* these are overlapping practices that emphasize varying priorities, but all may also qualify as community media.

For the purposes of this report, it is useful to specifically distinguish community media from local media. Here we have focused on community media that are local geographically, but we have also defined community media as media that emphasize inclusiveness and have a unique set of participatory practices.

It is also useful to note that the terms *citizen media* and *citizen's media* have taken on two different and important meanings in recent years. Neither term refers to media that are exclusively local. The possessive form, *citizen's media,* is a term used by scholar Clemencia Rodriguez and others to refer to the use of media that allow people to act effectively as citizens across the spectrum of daily life (Rodriguez, 2001). The other term, *citizen media,* is now being used within the world of online collaborative media to refer to decentralized practices involving video and audio blogging, social software applications, and other collaborative media tools. Practitioners of online collaborative media have adopted the language and practices of participatory media. The current visibility of the blogosphere has contributed to the misconception that citizen media and community media have just emerged with the Internet, and that participatory media are a function of technology rather than of people acting as citizens. This confusion fails to recognize sixty years of grassroots media experience.

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Community media are not limited to any particular venues or technologies. They reflect a long history of adapting new media technologies as they emerge. Early experiments in community radio began in the 1940s and 1950s. A broader movement followed in the 1960s with the use of small-format video, film, sound recording, and the expanded FM radio spectrum. It continued through the 1970s and 1980s with the diversification of television distribution networks and local public, educational, and government channels on cable. Today, community media are a vital feature of the electronic media environment. Following are brief descriptions and historical overviews of different platforms, which provide context for the community media profiles contained in this report.

Community Radio

Grounded in earlier efforts to preserve spectrum space for educational uses, community radio first appeared in San Francisco in the 1940s with the creation of the Pacifica Foundation's KPFA radio station. The station pioneered an approach to radio that combined responsiveness to listeners through subscription funding and community service with the creation of an open forum for cultural, journalistic, and social expression. Since then, community radio initiatives have been developed in more than 225 communities in the United States, and in countless communities around the world.

In 1975, community radio took on a national institutional expression with the formation of the **National Federation of Community Broadcasters*** (NFCB), an organization dedicated to promoting community radio development in the United States. The federation advocated community control, noncommercial ownership, and voluntary participation in the operation and programming of community radio stations, especially by populations and groups that historically had been denied expression in the United States. NFCB provided training and development support to its member stations and undertook Federal Communications Commission (FCC) advocacy on their behalf. Within a decade, NFCB had seventy member stations and 120 associate members nationwide (Engelman, 1996).

As community radio has evolved in different communities, interpretations of its mission have expanded to include stations dedicated to minority communities and ownership, foreign language stations dedicated to specific language communities in a locale, and varying commitments to community involvement, volunteer production, and funding strategies. With this diversification has come ideological debate over creeping commercialization and professionalization of the field. However, despite disagreements over philosophy and practices, community radio stations remain vital parts of their communities, supporting civic participation and education, community building, and communities' sense of themselves as unique places.

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Radio station **KFAI**, in Minneapolis-St. Paul, is one such station. A volunteer-based community radio station that broadcasts information, arts, and entertainment programming, it offers an eclectic mix of programs including music, local news, poetry, spoken word, political forums, and interviews. KFAI emphasizes empowerment through training. It provides board certification training and workshops on announcing, interviewing, and program development to volunteers. Courses are taught in English, but bilingual volunteers have access to any of the on-air programmers for assistance in their own language.

Low-Power FM

Community radio reached another stage with the development of low-power FM radio, or LPFM. The LPFM movement was a political response to increasing consolidation of local radio ownership after the passage of the 1996 Communications Act, and a sense among those in the grassroots radio movement that community radio was falling prey to pressure from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to become more audience-driven, homogenized in programming, and professionalized, thus less interested in community participation (Cano, 2003). To counter these trends, media activists began setting up micro-power radio stations in communities using low-power broadcast transmitters with an approximate service range of three-and-a-half miles, an area often as small as a single neighborhood.

In 1998, the growth of LPFM spurred the creation of the **Prometheus Radio Project**, founded by activists to assist community groups in acquiring low-power FM radio

*The URLs of organizations set in boldface are provided in Apendices 2 (aggregators/associations) and 3 (practitioners).

broadcast licenses from the FCC, and in getting their stations up and running once they were licensed. As a result of this activism, the FCC officially acknowledged low-power FM in U.S. broadcasting policy in 2000. LPFM stations are now licensed for noncommercial educational broadcasting only, and a construction permit is required before a LPFM station can be built or operated. The low cost of low-power radio has allowed many organizations with strong commitments to community control, noncommercial grassroots funding, and participatory production and management processes to enter the community radio movement.

WCIW-LP is a low-power FM station in Immokalee, Florida, operated by the 2500-member Coalition of Immokalee Workers. It is hard to imagine a better example of community empowerment in grassroots LPFM than WCIW-LP. It focuses on a community that is both a community of workers and a geographic community; the station and transmitter are located in the same lot where the coalition's members board buses bound for the tomato fields of Florida. Launched in 2003 with the help of the Prometheus Radio Project, WCIW-LP produces news, educational programs, and music in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and indigenous languages of Mexico and Guatemala. The station is a primary organizing tool for the community in its defense of the rights of Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian migrant and immigrant farm workers.

Public Broadcasting

Unlike many locations in Europe and Canada, the United States has not developed a strong community-focused broadcasting sector separate from public broadcasting. Public broadcasting in the United States is largely synonymous with the **Public Broadcasting Service** and **National Public Radio,** institutions that came into existence with the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The act established a federal system of television and radio heavily dependent on federal and corporate funding.

Though embattled from its inception and saddled with a cumbersome decentralized structure, public broadcasting has managed to survive and find an important role in American media. Neither governmental nor commercial in its orientation, yet heavily dependent on each, it provides valuable noncommercial programming (Aufderheide, 2000b). Public radio and television have also led the way in the United States in the innovative use of digital and satellite technology. The PBS web site is considered to be the most frequently visited nonprofit site on the Internet (Starr, 2003).

Yet public television and radio fall short of the vision described in its founding documents. They were envisioned as "... a forum for debate and controversy," a space for expression "... for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard" (Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, 1967). As Jeff Chester, media critic and reform advocate, writes, "While public radio, at its best, comes much closer to this ideal, public television appears to have become a victim of its own success – full of artistry and professionalism, to be sure, but rarely the source of the localism, diversity, and risk taking that its founders envisioned" (Chester, 2006). Still, it is arguable that public broadcasting would not have survived to the present had it insisted on living up to the participatory visions of its founders.

The Public Broadcasting Service, National Public Radio, and their member stations cannot uniformly be characterized as community media. Their programming and management structures have reflected the top-down nature of their funding, and they have tended over the years to emphasis professionalism and station management prerogatives over a commitment to diverse local participation and community building (Engelman, 1996).

Public broadcasting holds many examples of exemplary community programming, but fewer examples of robust program scheduling with community-oriented, community-driven, and community-created programming. For instance, **"Basic Black"** from **WGBH in Boston,** which has chronicled the concerned and culture of African-Americans since 1968, and the multicultural weekly talk shows that are a staple of **WYBE** in Philadelphia, are noteworthy for having created unique local media spaces that do function as community media. In the 1990s, the national "Nitty Gritty City Group" attempted to move public broadcasting beyond program excellence to being an agent for social change and a means for citizen empowerment (Larson, 1993). It worked with grassroots groups to bring attention and access to the citizens of their communities. While the group no longer exists, its passion for community engagement is still alive in station personnel around the country.

It can be seen in many of the **Sound Partners for Community Health** experiments in collaborations between public broadcasters and community health organizations. New, hopeful experiments are underway from CPB and its community engagement initiative with the Harwood Institute. Broader station successes in engaging community members are chronicled in Richard Somerset-Ward's *Connecting Communities* (2000) and his more recent *Broadband Community Networks* (2005). For example, there is tremendous potential at the intersection of public broadcasting and online collaborative media. **WHYY** has extended its on-air radio and television programming

through a physical and virtual "civic space" in Philadelphia, and **ideastream**, the merger of two public broadcasters in Cleveland, offers its multimedia digital facilities and expertise to Cleveland's community institutions and citizens. Radio projects like the **Public Radio Exchange** and **Minnesota Public Radio's Public Insight Journalism** are providing interesting glimpses of the potential of collaborative media for public radio. Each example suggests that public broadcasting has great potential and technical capacity to move beyond simple notions of "localism" to a more robust stance of civic engagement and participation.

Cable Access

Public access television, or Public, Educational, and Government (PEG) access television, refers to a collection of entities that provide local content over dedicated channels on cable television systems in the United States. PEG access is rooted in the activism of the 1960s and 1970s, a time when public access advocates enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship with an emerging cable industry eager to demonstrate its potential to diversify television.

In 1969 the Federal Communications Commission saw the potential of cable television to open up television to more local programming and began requiring larger cable systems to develop local programming experiments. The FCC's first comprehensive ruling on the cable industry in 1972 included requirements that cable systems in the 100 largest television markets dedicate at least three channels for public, education, and government access. The ruling set off a round of optimistic community media experiments nationwide. But this informal partnership between community media advocates and the cable industry came to an abrupt halt in 1979 when the Supreme Court ruled that the FCC had exceeded its regulatory authority in mandating that channels be dedicated to PEG access. The ruling did not prevent Congress and local governments from requiring negotiated access channels, however, and by 1979 access advocates were sufficiently organized to make PEG a standard offering of cable television.

By this time, the cable industry had entered what are referred to as "the gold rush years." The success of HBO's satellite-delivered cable programming service demonstrated that audiences with good, free broadcast reception would pay to receive uninterrupted movies and sports. Cable companies vigorously competed for franchises in the country's most populous areas. If a local community's franchise authority expressed a desire for PEG access channels in its request for proposals, often the cable companies would respond favorably. In addition to channel set-asides, a requirement that operators provide funding for equipment and public interest channel operations became universal. Though many PEG access centers have diversified their funding sources, the bulk of funding for PEG access channel operations and programming comes from congressionally and municipally mandated fees in return for the use of public rights-of-way.

In their early years, the more than 2000 access channels then in operation were administered in various ways. A few cable companies were able to competently undertake community-based management of these channels, but, generally, the cable industry had little appetite or capacity to successfully manage these local channels. In some cases the franchise authority itself managed the channels. In other cases it was the library, the university, community college, or high school. However it soon became clear that the local community needed to manage this new communication capacity, separate from cable companies and government, if its potential to create community media was to be realized. The independent nonprofit corporation eventually became the standard management model among community media advocates. Today most successful access centers are managed through nonprofit community groups (Olson, 2000).

Because public access channels carry First Amendment protection allowing anyone in the community to place programming on the channels without being subject to prior restraint, some programming on these channels can seem exceedingly strange to the uninitiated. Much of the programming on public channels is made by nonprofessionals and reflects the idiosyncratic interests of producers. In recent years, however, public access centers have astutely expanded their missions beyond individually focused programming to address the needs of whole communities through more complex notions of empowerment and community building. This has meant developing more programming in partnership with associations and nonprofits, community groups, agencies, and educational institutions that have a clear relationship to the life of their communities (Rennie, 2006). Significant numbers of access centers have also moved to incorporate other media beyond video, and to carry out a larger range of media education and media arts activities beyond cable programming.

Over the course of cable access development, the **Alliance for Community Media** (ACM) has consistently provided both political and professional leadership to the field of cable access. Formed as the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers in 1978, ACM quickly grew to occupy a presence in Washington, DC, policy circles

and has steadfastly provided a voice for the interests of the 2000 access center in the U.S. Currently the ACM is leading the fight along with cities in fighting the wave of statewide 'video franchising' legislation through which the telephone companies and cable companies are attempting to gain near-monopoly control of local telecommunications markets, which would effectively end cable access in many communities.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN), which provides public access cable services in Manhattan, is one of a growing number of cable access centers in the United States that have embraced a broader mission of multimedia education and training. Beyond its cable channels, television studios, and electronic field production and post-production facilities, MNN functions as a community meeting and arts space, and operates a granting program and a support network to sites throughout Manhattan. In recent years MNN has provided a rich selection of its video to Internet streaming. It also features a **Youth Channel,** one of the first television channels to facilitate creativity and social and political participation among disadvantaged, low-income, and minority youth by providing them with access to a dedicated channel, media production resources, and training.

Media Arts Organizations

Media arts organizations were organized in North America in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the availability of new, more affordable, and more portable media technologies, such as film, video, and computers. Media arts organizations support art that makes use of film, video, audio, multimedia, and interactive media. Individual centers often focus on one or two elements of the total media arts infrastructure, providing some combination of access to media tools, production, production training, distribution, archiving, and exhibition of media art.

Over the years, centers have engaged in an incredible range of artistic practices embracing avant garde experimentation in film and video, documentaries, narrative and storytelling, computer art, and installations using all media. These practices intersect with community media in their emphasis on participatory programming development.

The history of media arts organizations is closely entwined with the trends and politics of public funding and developing technology in the United States. Early centers often received foundation funding to experiment with specific emerging technologies, particularly video. This initial phase of development was given significant support by the MacArthur Foundation and its media arts program, followed by the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts, which in turn began a program of consistent support for media arts organizations nationwide. The period was marked by the long-term support by MacArthur Foundation, relatively stable growth, and a heady range of artistic practice and experimentation.

In the politically conservative climate of the early 1990s, as funders became increasingly wary of supporting art that might prove controversial, the National Endowment for the Arts gradually withdrew most funding for the media arts. By the end of the decade, the MacArthur Foundation, one of the media arts' most consistent funders, ended its yearly support for media arts organizations, closing the era and forcing a period of development, diversification, and restructuring for media arts organizations.

The field has proven extremely resilient. Today, the field of media arts is made up of a more diverse and mature array of nonprofit organizations and arts practices. Although media arts organizations now place more emphasis on earned income and diverse funding sources, they continue to be vital cultural centers providing communities access to both media facilities and a full range of media cultural experiences. Media arts organizations like Scribe in Philadelphia and Appalshop in Whitesburg, Kentucky, for example, have navigated the technological and funding shifts of the past three decades with surprising creativity and savvy.

The **Scribe Video Center** in Philadelphia, which emerged in 1982 during the media arts heyday, persevered through the upsets of the 1990s to become an extraordinary example of what a social asset a media arts center can be for a community. Scribe reaches out to communities, including people of color, women, senior citizens, and teens, that traditionally have not had access to video training or production facilities, and provides them tools for storytelling. In addition to production and scriptwriting workshops, Scribe offers artists' services such as fiscal sponsorship, equipment rental, and editing facilities. Ongoing programs include Community Visions, a video production program for community organizations; Street Movies, a free outdoor neighborhood-based screening series; and the Producers' Forum screening and lecture series of visiting artists and media activists. Additionally, Scribe produces the Documentary History Project for Youth, an annual production workshop for middle and high school students.

Appalshop, in Whitesburg, Kentucky, is one of the oldest media arts organizations in the United States. As its web site indicates, Appalshop was founded in 1969 to

enable people to use media to tell their own stories in order to "solve their own problems." It has become a nationally recognized media center working in film, video, audio and music recordings, literature, theater, live performance, and radio, all focused on Appalachian culture. Its work documents traditional arts, explores history, and addresses social issues that affect the Appalachian region today. Appalshop provides regionally and nationally focused education and training programs. Two of the most notable are the Appalachian Media Institute, a youth media training initiative, and Community Media Institute, which works with grassroots groups and public interest organizations from the region and nationally to accomplish strategic communication planning around social justice organizing.

The **National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture** has consistently provided thoughtful leadership to the media arts field through technical assistance programs and strategic planning initiatives. Its Deep Focus project in 2004 used scenario planning to envision the future of media arts (Blau, 2004). As a result of this kind of work, the early network of media arts organizations has expanded to include over 274 media arts organizations. This represents a significant broadening of the field of media arts, encompassing many smaller media arts organizations with specific artistic, cultural, or community objectives. The media arts field has most recently seen the emergence of many youth media organizations with the critical mission of creating media literacy survival skills for young people as they navigate the media saturated social environment of the twenty-first century.

Ethnic Media

Ethnic media represent a growing, vital sector of American electronic media that intersects with community media in a number of important ways. Historically, ethnic media outlets have arisen on the periphery of U.S. broadcasting, often without network affiliation, to serve populations that do not have access to mainstream media and popular culture. These have included new immigrant groups, non-English language groups, the politically oppressed, and populations striving to maintain cultural traditions and ties to their homelands while adapting to a new society.

That pattern has repeated, waxed, and waned as different populations have come to the United States in the past century. The key historical intersection between community media and ethnic media lies in the early years of community radio following World War II, when a wave of Black radio stations and formats filled space created in the shifting media landscape by the introduction of television. This shift brought a wave of Black investment and program experimentation that seriously influenced the kinds of community radio programming that evolved in the United States. To a large extent, the improvisational radio formats combining music and political talk, culture, and current affairs were first worked out in post-war Black radio (Barlow, 1988; Lloyd, 2006).

Ethnic media encompasses commercial and noncommercial media, huge multinationals, and small, locally owned operations. Ethnic and community media often intersect geographically. Ethnic groups often identify with a specific place and use media to articulate a sense of solidarity in those places. Like community media, ethnic media frequently embody participatory approaches to programming and production and are often responses to deep dissatisfaction with the ownership structures and biases of the mainstream media.

One of the most significant ongoing sources for ethnic media has been the Corporation for Public Broadcasting through its funding of the five members of the National Minority Consortia: **National Asian American Telecommunications Association, National Black Programming Consortium, Native American Public Telecommunications, Pacific Islanders in Communications, and Latino Public Broadcasting.** These ethnic programming networks, and the **Independent Television Service,** provide millions of dollars each year to their networks of ethnic and independent program makers for programs targeted to the Public Broadcasting Service.

Currently ethnic media are undergoing explosive growth across the United States consistent with demographic shifts. There are significant increases in the proportion of non-English speakers, Latinos, Asians, Middle Easterners, and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. population, and corresponding increases in ethnic media. During the community media roundtables conducted for this report participants repeatedly expressed appreciation for the number of ethnic media outlets that used participatory strategies in supporting the immigration protests that occurred throughout the United States in 2006.

One indication of the growth and sophistication of ethnic media is **New America Media** (NAM), the largest national collaboration of ethnic news organizations in the United States. NAM "produces and aggregates editorial content from and for the ethnic media sector and develops pioneering marketing services on behalf of corporations, foundations, and nonprofits who are targeting ethnic media and ethnic communities." New America Media is a networked community that links thousands of ethnic

media organizations in the United States. Its recent study, "Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight," surveys Hispanic Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans, and Native Americans (New America Media, 2005). NAM found that more than a quarter of the nation's population uses ethnic media in some capacity.

New online journalism sites such as the **Twin Cities Media Alliance's *Daily Planet,*** profiled in this report, are emerging from the restructuring of the newspaper industry and the use of blogging and social networking software. The *TC Daily Planet* aggregates increasing numbers of ethnic, immigrant, and non-mainstream journalists in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Another example mentioned in this report, **Radio Arte (WRTE),** may be the only bilingual (Spanish/English), youth-operated, urban, community station in the country. It operates with a focus on youth in Chicago's Pilsen/Little Village neighborhoods. An initiative of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, this educational radio station has a youth training and production training program, and a powerful web presence in addition to its urban broadcast footprint.

Both *TC Daily Planet* and Radio Arte underscore the commonalities between ethnic media and community media. In many circumstances ethnic media and community media can be virtually indistinguishable. This convergence of values, geography, and politics could easily serve as the foundation for collaboration and partnering between community and ethnic media in specific communities.

Civic Journalism

Both civic journalism and public journalism refer to a movement within professional journalism that honors news organizations' role in convening and facilitating public deliberation and debates in which audiences are treated as active participants rather than passive consumers. The **Pew Center for Civic Journalism** defines civic journalism as "both a philosophy and a set of values supported by some evolving techniques . . . At its heart is a belief that journalism has an obligation to public life – an obligation that goes beyond just telling the news or unloading lots of facts" (Pew Center, 2007). This philosophy emerges from an understanding that citizens are increasingly disengaged in civic life and that news organizations can reactivate an apathetic citizenry. News organizations practicing civic journalism aim to establish deeper conversations with broader cross-sections of their communities, resulting in enhanced credibility, improved communication between themselves and the community, and better coverage of issues of local concern.

News organizations practicing civic journalism aim to establish deeper conversations with broader cross-sections of their communities . . .

Committed to supporting journalistic efforts to revitalize citizenship while objectively reporting hard truths, the Pew Center established the Batten Award for Excellence in Civic Journalism in 1995. One of the first awards went to ***The Charlotte Observer*** of Charlotte, North Carolina, for a nineteen-month in-depth series on crime in nine neighborhoods. Reporters spent two years in crime-ridden neighborhoods, encouraging residents in those neighborhoods to report on the root causes of crime and to participate in the search for solutions.

Community Networking

While still in its early text-based phase, the Internet was being adopted as a community-building tool by a number of geographically based organizations. Many of these early community networks evolved from "freenets" allied through the **National Public Telecomputing Network** (NPTN). At that time, NPTN was the fourth most popular public computer network, behind CompuServe, America Online, and Prodigy (Schuler, 1995).

Some of these early community networks were simply Internet destinations where community-based information was collected and presented. Others evolved as adjuncts to the Internet connections provided by local Internet service providers. Like other community media, the pioneers of community networking were motivated to use this new communications technology to strengthen their communities.

Community networking was changed irrevocably with the advent of the World Wide Web and the surge in demand for Internet access. The World Wide Web replaced most of the software applications that were being used at that time to make information accessible to people through a community network. This, and the demand surge, lowered the price of commercial Internet access to the point where there was little motivation to become a member of a community network as they were practiced at the time. As a result, community networking has become less about Internet access and more about the cultural practice of

community networking, with a focus on social networking software development and utilization. Community networkers have always enjoyed close alignment with open source software developers and now are concerned with using the Internet in tandem with open source social networking software to accomplish many of the goals of community media (Schuler, 2004).

The **Metropolitan Austin Interactive Network** (MAIN) is a nonprofit organization committed to information sharing and communication among people and governmental, educational, commercial, cultural, religious, and civic organizations. It operates a community-based web site that provides and aggregates a broad array of information critical to Austin residents, from employment information to environmental, arts, and cultural content. MAIN is committed to helping its community make effective use of the Internet and other network communications structures but does not directly provide network connectivity. MAIN provides free web hosting and web development assistance through a broad digital literacy program that includes training in general computer and Internet usage.

Satellite

While satellite television cannot be considered community media because it is neither local nor specifically community-focused, it deserves mention here because of its existing and potential contributions to community media goals. Satellite television is focused on national video distribution via cable and direct broadcast services to home satellite dishes. To foster the public's interest in diverse programming via satellite, the FCC in 1992 imposed certain public interest obligations on Direct Broadcast Service (DBS) providers. The commission ruled that DBS providers must reserve four percent of their channel/transponder capacity exclusively for noncommercial programming of an educational or informational nature. Unfortunately the FCC left it up to the DBS companies to decide which programmers would be selected from eligible programmers. Many feel the potential of DBS to serve the public interest has been significantly curtailed as a result (Anderson, 2000).

Nevertheless, satellite has become home to some programmers that embody the values and practices of community media. Notably, Deep Dish TV, Free Speech TV, Link TV, and, as of April 2007, Starfish Television Network are all distributed via satellite, due to the set-aside rules adopted by the FCC. Each offers programming that embodies values of diversity and empowerment while demonstrating the necessity of set-aside policies for noncommercial frequency and bandwidth at all levels of the media infrastructure if noncommercial media is to flourish. They consistently run programs produced by community media activists and independent producers and represent one possible way for community media organizations to develop a national programming reach that could facilitate "local to local" communications while developing a national network of progressive community programming.

Deep Dish TV pioneered the use of satellite to establish a collaborative network among activist television producers and public access cable stations in 1986. Drawing on the earlier experiments of the Public Interest Video Network, Deep Dish began creating program installments for satellite distribution. Video programming selected from activist and community tapes around the country were fed to satellite transponders with a national footprint, where they were picked up by hundreds of cable access organizations and community media centers in the United States (Pierce, 2003).

Deep Dish's 1991 satellite broadcasts of the Gulf Crisis TV Project are considered by many to be historic moments in community media and U.S. communications history, a direct intervention in an international crisis by public access television and independent media activists. Deep Dish TV assembled a video anti-war teach-in during the first Gulf War and made it available to their network via satellite. The success of the Gulf Crisis project expanded Deep Dish's network to include independent public television sites, anyone with a home satellite receiver, and other community media and media arts organizations. Ralph Engelman writes that Deep Dish's use of satellite allowed community media activists to fulfill two of their core objectives: ". . . grassroots participation and the presentation of diverse, alternative perspectives" (Engelman, 1996).

These early successes in networking community television via satellite have more recently been extended by **Free Speech TV** and Amy Goodman's Democracy Now programming. Free Speech TV extended the technical capacity to network with cable access by raising funds to buy direct satellite receivers for cable access facilities interested in cablecasting Free Speech TV programming. This technical network then became a progressive program network called into existence almost single-handedly by the highly sought-after progressive programming of Democracy Now. In turn, the presence of Democracy Now programming is consistently serving to increase the audiences and support for cable access in communities throughout the United States.

ENGAGING COMMUNITY: WHAT'S WORKING

At their heart, community media are about making media with people, not merely about or for people. It is, as one Chicago roundtable participant noted, like "the neighborhood going out to dinner." But as anyone who has ever hosted a large dinner party knows, this is not always easily accomplished. In roundtable discussions with community media practitioners, three strategies – ***collaboration across sectors and platforms, training, and outreach*** – emerged repeatedly as ways of successfully engaging the breadth and diversity of their communities. In addition, a fourth strategy, ***connecting with immigrant populations,*** yielded insights into some unique challenges and benefits.

STRATEGIES

Collaboration

Media institutions can play the role of facilitators in their communities, demystifying the process of production, providing people with access to the resources they need, and building on the history and goals of civic journalism. This role requires media institutions to rethink traditional journalism and may entail the re-balancing of editorial policies – committing to diversity, embracing egalitarian values, and reassessing the value of editorial neutrality. Inviting community members to help with stories makes coverage more reflective of the community, more of a two-way conversation. For instance, **Twin Cities Public Television** (TPT) dedicates time on one of its digital channels to local and regional programming, including programs targeted at the Latino, Hmong, Hindi, Somali, and Vietnamese communities. To create programming for the "Minnesota Channel," the station partners with nonprofit organizations, who pay TPT for production support and guaranteed broadcast of the programming.

Inviting community members to help with stories makes coverage more reflective of the community, more of a two-way conversation.

Sound Partners for Community Health has shown that authentic partnerships between public broadcasters and community institutions enable each party to reach larger, more diverse, and targeted audiences on health issues important to the community. Community institutions promoted broadcasts, and public broadcasters increased the visibility of their institutional partners, who offered additional resources and referrals to viewers and listeners and helped to disseminate programming on CDs and DVDs. In addition, by marrying the expertise of community-based health organizations and voices of local residents with the production values of high-quality radio and television programming, Sound Partners positioned community members as proactive planners of and stakeholders in media initiatives, rather than passive recipients of media attention.

But there was inevitable tension in separating journalism from advocacy, which required trust on the part of all participants to resolve. In the case of the Sound Partners collaborations in community-based journalism, public broadcasters needed to trust that their nonprofit partners wouldn't advance their own organizational agendas at the expense of truth, and nonprofit health organizations needed to trust that their broadcast partners would respect their expertise.

The Sound Partners experience affirmed what many roundtable participants pointed out — the need to build bridges across media as well. Sound Partners found that commercial radio stations and public access channels with close links to and influence on the community helped implement strong media campaigns in collaboration with public broadcasting. Roundtable participants saw commercial media outlets as especially important among immigrant groups.

Pointing to another aspect of collaboration, roundtable participants implored media institutions to be open to sharing infrastructure to accomplish their missions. Many nonprofit media groups are struggling to survive but have assets that can be shared or integrated to better serve their communities in a coordinated, efficient way. Creating collaborative structures as basic as co-location of facilities or as complex as organizational mergers can be important for disseminating programming, securing funding, and protecting potentially controversial issue programming. For example, **Manhattan Neighborhood Network** has historically leveraged its cable franchise-secured capital funding

Collaboration is hard, expensive, and time-consuming.

to build capacity in other media organizations, such as a studio and post-production facilities with Downtown Community Television in Chinatown. And in keeping with the same network-building approach to facilitating participation, MNN also features a Youth Channel, considered to be the first channel created for youth, by youth. MNN has become one of the central hubs in Manhattan around which independent and community media gather for screenings, advanced educational opportunities, artistic and political debate, community building, and social networking, creating an exciting democratic media culture.

Many participants acknowledged that collaboration is hard, expensive, and time-consuming. It places demands on in-house knowledge and confronts partnering organizations' different goals, editorial policies, and resources. If they are to last, partnerships need proper research on the front end and multi-leveled support. Changes in leadership can disrupt plans, so partnering can't be tied to one person's relationship to another person; it requires a network of people understanding and contributing to the partnership. Multi-year projects are important to develop infrastructure and sustain efforts.

Training

Roundtable participants saw community media institutions as important sources both for jobs and skills training and for building the capacity of local nonprofit groups. While acquiring media skills may be a career path out of poverty, ironically, community media work is often unpaid, and poor people must prioritize paying jobs over participation in community media making. Roundtable participants expressed concern that there is not currently a way to economically sustain the efforts of low-income people who do volunteer in community media.

Cable access centers like **Chicago's CAN-TV** and Manhattan Neighborhood Network provide grants, training, and equipment to community groups, who then develop multimedia products and showcase them in different venues. These centers facilitate the expression of non-technology-oriented community members and provide them with useful job skills.

The training component is crucial for developing authentic voices in programming. Blessed with a diverse, technology-savvy community that includes both Harvard and MIT campus populations, **Cambridge Community Television,** CCTV, has broadened its educational programs to include advanced workshops and extended educational programs in documentary making, digital storytelling, web site design, and strategic communications planning and implementation. Community members are also able to use CCTV's computer technology center for training in a variety of software applications including photo editing and design and computer networking. The center has broadened its distribution of video programming to include web-based media streaming of pre-recorded programming, podcasts, audio channels, and "Cambridge Community Radio," where members can sign up for two-hour blocks of live radio time. The center's services address the needs of activists, nonprofit community groups, media educators, and people seeking job skills that extend far beyond those needed to fill the public channels with video. Its offerings are expanding to include workshops in podcasting, digital audio production, video blogging, and cyberjournalism. CCTV takes digital media convergence seriously, understanding that media production training, production, and distribution are now applicable across a number of platforms and production skill sets.

Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) is another organization that makes emerging video technology accessible to independent media makers. It has evolved into an internationally renowned media arts center that leads the field in its high-quality production and professional development support for noncommercial media makers. The center also provides classes to low-income youth in media arts production, as well as workshops for community groups and nonprofits. BAVC has consistently offered development seminars and training programs that bring commercial producers and noncommercial producers together in a common setting. It offers one of the region's key certified training programs for companies like Apple, Avid, and Digidesign. Through a grant from the Ford Foundation, BAVC has undertaken a national study on "Digital Workforce Development," allowing the organization to establish itself as a national and regional leader in professional development (Most, 2002). Its professional development program is a significant forum in which commercial and noncommercial media makers can come together for professional development activities in settings that respect the public interest and role of media in social development.

Outreach

Outreach, a key tool for media groups, moves the relationship between community and media beyond consumption

The key to creating relevant outreach is researching what the community needs . . .

to social change. It invites people to interact with media, to be affected by it, and to affect others. It asks people what they need and invites them to come together to meet those needs.

The key to creating relevant outreach is researching what the community needs, determining how to reach it most effectively, and hiring staff who have outreach skills and are well versed in the culture and language of the groups being targeted. A Chicago filmmaker recounted how these considerations impacted his documentary about workers' rights. Outreach staff considered the potential impact on two audiences: a large audience of PBS viewers sitting in their living rooms and a smaller but more engaged audience of steelworkers watching the documentary at a local bar. They concluded that the bar viewers would be riveted because the information in the documentary was geared to them. Successful outreach asks: What do groups pay attention to? Whom do they trust? What platform authentically represents them?

National programming can be a catalyst for local outreach. Participants in Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul discussed the example of "The New Americans," a national PBS series on immigrants produced by **Kartemquin Films. Active Voice,** a national organization that works with media makers to bring about personal and institutional change, worked with Kartemquin to package series footage that focused on new arrivals to Minnesota. The result was a local series, "The New Minnesotans," and a partnership that used media to educate the mainstream community about local immigrants and to develop discussion and activity guides for community outreach.

Connecting with Immigrant Populations

Minority populations and groups concerned with supporting the identities of marginalized populations have increasingly turned to community media as sources of information, validation of culture, and production support for the creation of their own content. Community media have helped call attention to the lives and concerns of immigrant communities that are otherwise invisible outside their particular community. Because they often have found innovative ways to use community media for networking and social change, immigrant populations illustrate the power of community media and present rich opportunities for making community media organizations more diverse and participatory. Roundtable participants shared lessons in what works and offered specific ideas for framing a new community media program addressing the needs of immigrants and receiving communities, called **New Routes to Community Health**.

In reaching out to immigrant communities, roundtable participants noted that it is critical to identify and work with existing agencies that immigrants trust, perhaps a church or association for a particular ethnic group. But though immigrant groups are the most appropriate conveners of such collaboratives, they must also have the capacity to convene.

The selection of platform also deserves careful consideration. Roundtable participants noted that, in adapting technologies to their own purposes, specific immigrant groups often prefer one platform over another. For example, Chicago's Korean-American community has been successful in using ethnic print media to address community issues. The Persian storytelling tradition has made Persian a huge and growing language segment on blogs. Persian is now the fourth most widely used language on web logs (Macintyre, 2004). A 2000 survey of Somalian immigrants in Minnesota showed that over forty percent even then considered the Internet their main news source (Aynte, 2006).

Radio in particular has shown tremendous power in the developing world, partly as a result of the United Nations' emphasis on radio as the medium supporting the most widespread practice of community media in the world. Because they are familiar with radio before coming to the United States, immigrant groups often quickly embrace radio upon arrival in this country. It is also one of the most inexpensive forms of media and therefore one of the most accessible. "If they come from Latin America, they know the power of radio," Chicago participants noted enthusiastically. Local commercial Spanish-language radio stations effectively helped mobilize turnout for immigration protests in Chicago in May 2006.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Many communities in the United States can point with pride to the achievements of their community media organizations. When attempting to identify best practices in the networked media environments we see today, however, it is useful to think in terms of interconnection and collaboration, not to look simply at individual media centers or broadcast stations. Often, the most successful examples of community media emerge out of ongoing alliances and collaborations among local community media groups. The

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communities spotlighted below have begun incorporating partnerships and cross-platform collaboration into the practice of community media and have begun to reap the benefits of that approach.

Portland, Oregon

The **Metro Government Community Media Initiative** illustrates the potential power of communities working together to produce their own media rather than having their story framed by commercial news organizations. Although the project has now ended, it is included here because it provided such a strong model for future community media efforts. The initiative was rooted in a proposal by local independent filmmaker Tom Chamberlin that local media makers, community media organizations, community groups, and government agencies collaborate to produce public affairs television programs on issues of concern to Oregonians. Metro, a unique regional government primarily responsible for regional land-use and transportation planning, took Chamberlin's idea to heart. With a grant from the Federal Highway Administration, Metro and an alliance of community organizations and government agencies developed "ZigZag; Real Stories, New Angles," a program by local filmmakers featuring personal stories from a diverse group of regional residents as they grappled with the transportation choices affecting their families, neighborhoods, and communities.

In addition to the centerpiece broadcast on **Oregon Public Broadcasting**, the project created an interactive web site and distributed a DVD of the program to the area's cable access channels. Elements of the project also found their way onto Portland's community radio station, **KBOO**, and packets including extensive support materials and DVDs were made available for screening in neighborhood centers and independent media venues. There was also a planning and deliberation process to strategize about how citizens, governments, and media makers can collaborate to create community dialogue and solve civic problems.

As urban space is increasingly defined by telecommunications as much as transportation and land use, the project also illustrates the powerful outcomes that can result when regional telecommunications planning becomes integrated with land use and transportation planning, and when community media are integrated into both formal and informal processes of planning and deliberation. The Metro Community Media Initiative resulted in a significant and measurable rise in regional awareness of the transportation planning issues addressed by the project. Viewership and DVD uses of the media in community settings exceeded expectations (Metro, 2004). Although the project was not immediately replicated, Portland now enjoys continuing collaborations between Metro government and its area community media.

Participation in the Metro Government Community Media Initiative is only one of the many ways Portland's KBOO radio has demonstrated its full commitment to the original democratic intentions of community radio over the course of its forty-two-year history. Older than National Public Radio, KBOO is among the longest-living community radio stations in the United States. Of the noncommercial radio stations in Portland, KBOO is the only station whose mission contains an explicit commitment to minority programmers and listeners (Sussman and Estes, 2004). KBOO's commitment to democratic practice extends to a board of directors elected entirely from its membership, which is open to anyone, and an aggressive training program consistent with the station's commitment to volunteer-produced programming —all programming is produced by volunteers with assistance of paid staff. The participation of women and minorities far exceed the community's racial demographics (Sussman and Estes, 2004).

Portland Community Media (PCM) has a rich twenty-three-year history in Portland when it comes to using media to build community. PCM started out as a cable television access center and still provides the administration and training to program Portland's cable access channels, but has expanded its mission to embrace the use of community media to bring about broader participation in civic and cultural life. PCM's web site describes the center " with three words – Educate, Communicate, Participate." Currently PCM has a number of collaborative projects supporting media literacy and media education in the public school system; it regularly programs media productions from Portland's media arts center, the Northwest Film and Video Center, and it is planning to expand its center to support economic development of micro enterprises for new media.

The **Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission** (MHCRC) oversees a cable-related telecommunications development for greater Portland, Oregon. Serving

the communities, residents, and local governments of Fairview, Gresham, Portland, Troutdale, Wood Village, and Multnomah County, Oregon, The Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission negotiates and enforces cable service franchise and acts in the public interest on communications policy issues at local, state, and federal levels. It would be hard to overstate the importance of MHCRC in fostering the growth of community media in greater Portland. Through clear and insightful regulation of the cable franchise, it has assured that the necessary networks and telecommunications infrastructure are available to allow community media to grow.

Mt. Hood's Community Access Capital Grants Program is particularly noteworthy. The Capital Grants program provides capital funding to communications projects that support social justice, community involvement, and the effective delivery of services through cost reduction. The program has allowed scores of community groups to increase their communications capacity through the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and technology. In implementing this grant program, the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission has been extremely strategic in convening grantees and creating the conditions that lead to partnerships and collaborative relationships.

The **Northwest Film and Video Center** is a long-standing regional media arts organization serving the Northwest region. The center provides a rich program nurturing media arts culture. It features an active exhibition program for experimental and independent films, a highly regarded film school, and extensive youth media programs. The center presents a number of yearly film festivals including the Portland International Film Festival, the Northwest Film and Video Festival, and the Young People's Film & Video Festival. The center's productions often find their way onto to the area's cable channels. The center is also a trusted source of equipment access for area independent producers active in the rich media culture of Portland, a service partially supported by the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission's Capital Grants program.

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

The **Saint Paul Neighborhood Network** (SPNN) is a cable access station serving St. Paul residents. The station provides opportunities to the public to produce and air programs on one of its five channels dedicated to multi-faith, public, education, community, and international content, respectively. SPNN has a youth education program and a community productions program, which works with nonprofit organizations to create public service advertisements or programming. Workshops include production, grant proposal writing, legal questions, and lighting. SPNN is particularly effective as convener and capacity builder in its community. Its education and training programs are focused on community development and on keeping the technical training elements of its work in a social perspective.

Minneapolis Television Network (MTN) is SPNN's sister access station, serving Minneapolis with a similar commitment to providing a community gathering place. Operating three public access channels, MTN offers television training and media literacy classes, and is especially encouraging of youth participation. The channels serve as a bridge for immigrants to use in adapting to their new home; many new immigrants use them to communicate in their native languages with their Somali, Ethiopian, or Vietnamese compatriots. Somali-language programs, for instance, offer eight hours a week of music, entertainment, community news, and religious instruction to one of the largest settlements of Somali people outside Somalia. In touting Somali television as the best public access cable television program in the Twin Cities, *City Pages* said, "For some, public access is an early, inspiring lesson in democracy and free media" (City Pages, 2004). Wanting to strengthen the nonprofit community's Internet savvy, MTN created and eventually spun off the River Project to offer Internet dial-up access and web hosting to nonprofits.

Public broadcasters have also offered strong models of community collaboration in the Twin Cities. **Twin Cities Public Television** (TPT) is the public television station serving the Minneapolis–St. Paul region. In 2004, TPT began dedicating time on one of its digital channels to Minnesota-related programming. A number of the programs on the **Minnesota Channel** (some of which are then cablecast on public access television) are targeted at Latino, Hmong, Hindi, Middle Eastern, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities and produced in partnership with nonprofit organizations. TPT is a partner in the Minnesota Community Campaign that encourages urban and rural areas in and around the Twin Cities to welcome the tens of thousands of immigrants and refugees that have settled there in the past several decades. Seeking to effect positive change on immigrant issues through art, media, education, social service, and policy making, the campaign produced the "The New Minnesotans," a sixty-minute program that originally aired on TPT based on the Kartemquin series "The New Americans."

In addition to community radio station **KFAI,** the Twin Cities is home to **Minnesota Public Radio** (MPR),

which has pioneered a fresh approach to journalism called public insight journalism (PIJ). PIJ taps into the collective knowledge of MPR's diverse audience to enrich its reporting. Creating a ten-thousand-person Public Insight Network via the web, the station invites the public to be sources of story ideas, reactions and perspectives, and brainstorming on public issues.

The independent film and video community works collaboratively in the Twin Cities to support and promote artist and community perspectives. **IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts, Intermedia Arts,** and the **Walker Art Center** are among the multi-disciplinary venues for discussion and production.

And the Internet is home to a new aggregation of community media sources. According to its web site, the ***Twin Cities Daily Planet,*** a project of the Twin Cities Media Alliance, is "a community newswire and syndication service showcasing the best work of the neighborhood and community press, as well as work by Twin Cities independent journalists and the voices of engaged citizens. . . The premise of the *TC Daily Planet* is that new technologies are making it possible for these citizens to become more active and powerful participants in the news production process." Modeled after Korea's *OhmyNews,* the *TC Daily Planet* seeks to improve the quality, diversity, and accountability of the local media and to involve the rapidly growing immigrant and ethnic communities. It recruits and offers training to citizen journalists and has partnerships with over forty neighborhood and community media.

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago Access Network Television (CAN-TV) offers five public access channels to Chicagoland residents. This public space provides Chicagoans an opportunity to discuss issues of local concern, promote health, educational, and economic resources in the community, and celebrate local talent and initiatives. CAN-TV provides video training, equipment, and facilities for area residents and nonprofit groups. It videotapes and cablecasts public forums, town hall meetings, community events, and other activities of local interest. Through this service, the station provides Chicagoans with access to information they may not otherwise have through commercial television. For instance, CAN-TV worked with eight to ten AIDS agencies to disseminate basic education about AIDS prevention via live call-in programs.

CAN-TV supports Chicago's associations and nonprofits through services like live "hot-line" call-in shows from automated studios that one person can operate, production services that generate programming for community events, and strategic communications planning workshops. CAN-TV has refused to follow a simplistic "neutrality" programming philosophy in which the access center transmits only programming that randomly comes from the community. Instead, CAN-TV actively creates programming important to community development. In addition to its focus on nonprofits, CAN-TV actively creates partnerships with content-rich groups, such as local museums and arts groups. It also partners with local media activist production groups like Video Machete and Street Level Youth Media (profiled below). Similarly, CAN-TV aggressively engages in programming for local elections; a typical election season will generate around two hundred hours of original programming each month, and nearly all the candidates will be featured or actually create their own CAN-TV programming to carry out their campaigns.

Street-Level Youth Media provides opportunities for Chicago's urban youth to use media arts and emerging technologies for self-expression, communication, and social change. Its staff provides instruction in video and audio production, computer art, and the Internet to help youth address community issues, access advanced communications technology, and gain inclusion in society. In one project, it collaborated with two seventh-grade teachers and an ESL instructor to help students research issues about immigration in one neighborhood. The teachers were trained to use video and then trained other teachers, who guided their students in producing videos for screening at the school. More than thirty videos were created, and video training and use has been incorporated into the school curriculum.

Radio Arte (WRTE) is the only bilingual (Spanish-English), youth-operated, urban, community station in the country. It operates with a focus on youth in Chicago's Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods. An initiative of the National Museum of Mexican Art, this educational radio station has served Chicago for more than six years, training youth with a priority on developing individual and group communication competencies that allow young people to enter public life with confidence through the broadcast medium. Providing a forum for young people to be creative and responsible to the largest Mexican community in the Midwest, Radio Arte is committed to training young people in the art of broadcasting. Radio Arte's unique two-year training program provides youth with special courses on writing for radio and journalism, voice training, and

FCC regulations as well as basic computer skills, production skills, and on-air training. Participating in two grant rounds of Sound Partners for Community Health, the station's "Radio Vida" produced programming on substance abuse and addiction by and for Latino youth.

Casa Guatemala Media Project is a nonprofit, community-based organization that serves the Guatemalan and broader Latin American community in Chicago and the Midwest. Since its founding in 1986, it has used media, including web, print, TV, and radio, to raise consciousness about issues affecting communities from Latin America. In particular, it works with CAN-TV to provide the educational component of self-authored media that will positively transform communities through workshops on the production and alternative uses of emerging technologies.

Beyond Media Education works with underserved and underrepresented communities, primarily women and youth, to tell their stories and organize for social justice through the creation and distribution of alternative media and arts. In a recent effort, it worked with a Chicago shelter to help streetwalkers tell their own stories in an effort to raise public awareness and promote state-level reforms. The organization organized a six-month workshop that included teaching and practicing storytelling, public speaking, and video production skills to over a dozen prostitutes. Their groundbreaking video gives insights into Chicago's sex trade industry and recounts the triumph of the participants over homelessness, violence, and discrimination. Their lobbying in the state capitol resulted in passage of a bill to destigmatize and decriminalize sex workers.

Keeping tabs on and showcasing much of the community media activity from a journalistic perspective is the **Community Media Workshop (CMW).** CMW serves as a bridge between social activists, community media practitioners, and journalists. It hosts an annual academy for progressive organizations in the Chicago area that brings activists and journalists together to share ideas and attitudes. Prominent area television and newspaper journalists are recruited to serve on panels, lead workshops, and generally share their ideas of how progressive groups can effectively gain the attention of the press. This approach leads to buy-in from key personnel in Chicago's mainstream media, who can now better understand the grassroots groups that approach them and their issues. It also gives community participants at the workshops the opportunity to develop more personal relationships with key members of the media. This approach also enables community groups to better understand what motivates editors and reporters.

Community media organizations have begun to understand their missions in terms of a shared culture of community media, looking beyond their individual missions to the common social and political values they have in common.

These three communities show common development patterns and factors. Community media organizations have begun to understand their missions in terms of a shared culture of community media, looking beyond their individual missions to the common social and political values they have in common. This approach opens the way for community radio, media arts centers, community media centers, and cable access to create community-wide program initiatives in which several media platforms are engaged. It creates the conditions in which it is possible for community media organizations to act with unified stances in political advocacy regarding media issues and other issues critical to their communities. This kind of cross-platform networking also creates opportunities for community media to receive more diverse funding and support from the community as they extend the network or culture of collaboration to community development groups and officials in their regions.

"The boldest experiments in public telecommunications take place when technologies are new and their commercial potential not yet fully apparent."
— Ralph Engelman, 1996

Across their many platforms and many communities, community media have become central cultural institutions in the civic, cultural, and economic life of our communities, providing invaluable media programming, access, and education. They can in such instances enable communities to develop informed citizens, artists, and activists, who possess the skills and knowledge needed to grapple with complex media literacy and development issues at the local level.

For decades, community media organizations have addressed the urgent need to create local institutions that facilitate citizen access to media networks and effective participation in media culture for both citizens and workers. They are proving themselves vital to the political and economic life of their communities. They play multiple roles simultaneously, as critical cultural enhancements to the quality of civic life, as employers, and as educational sites for workforce development.

Community media organizations are proving themselves vital to the political and economic life of their communities.

Community media are also contributing important values, practices, and organizational methodologies to the emerging collaborative media environments of the blogosphere. We can look to these contributions as technological and organizational opportunities for strengthening and expanding community media practice. With the Internet, a media culture is emerging that is more consistent with the noncommercial practices of community media production, collaboration, and democratic participation in media making and distribution. Consequently, many community media organizations are integrating the capacities of the Internet and new media into their practices without much fanfare or difficulty. New organizational forms and new media formats like streaming, archiving, podcasting, and blogging are becoming the norm, part of "blended" production and dissemination practices in community media.

NEW COMMUNICATION SPACES: CYBERJOURNALISM

The increase in Internet bandwidth and the availability of online social networking software have qualitatively changed the relationship of journalists to their audiences. New web destinations like MySpace, Shutterfly, Friendster, Flikr, Evite, and Google are developing virtual communities for sharing video, attracting younger audiences, and making content more than passive and one-directional. Social networking software enables people to rendezvous, connect, or collaborate through computer-mediated communication, and form online communities (Spannerworks, 2007). Popular social network software applications like web logs, or blogs, seem particularly well suited to participatory citizen journalism, allowing easy publishing of interactive text, photo, audio, and video content. The new ease with which video clips can be prepared for use on the web has brought on the rise of "vlogs" and sites that facilitate the sharing of video clips and accompanying content. An enormous range of blogs and cyberjournalistic sites have sprung up on the World Wide Web in the past five years, with an equally wide range of editorial standards and practices; Technorati.com currently tracks seventeen million blogs sharing one and a half million hyperlinks (Rennie, 2006). A Pew Center Internet study estimates that the number of regular blog readers in the United States is equivalent to almost half the entire radio audience, which is about a quarter of the U.S. newspaper readership (Rennie, 2006).

Combined with affordable new digital media production cameras and recorders, these web-based dissemination tools make it possible for citizens and consumers to participate actively in newsgathering. Nonprofessionals have begun to play a more active role in the processes of journalism, from collecting information and reporting to analysis and dissemination. Jan Schaffer, who directs J-Lab, a University of Maryland incubator for interactive journalism projects, explains that many people are becoming more active citizens through journalistic activity but do not necessarily aspire to be journalists. The new technical

Journalists are beginning to conceptualize themselves not so much as gatekeepers of news but as moderators in a conversation . . .

capacity for communication, she observes, allows people to ". . . participate in news and information in various ways — participate in interacting with it, questioning it, truth-squading it, and creating it. And now that they have the tech tools and the tech skills to do that, the appetite has only increased" (Schaffer, 2005b).

Such conditions have set the stage for intense popular interest in what has been branded "we media" or "participatory journalism." Today, numerous online journalistic experiments bring together professional journalists with citizen media activists and those involved in events. More and more, the earliest images and information regarding breaking news are coming from non-journalists present at the moment of the event. As a result, journalists are beginning to conceptualize themselves not so much as gatekeepers of news but as moderators in a conversation, with license and time to speak frequently and, hopefully, accurately (Bowman and Willis, 2003).

This kind of community-centered coverage may entail the re-balancing of editorial policies – committing to diversity, embracing egalitarian values, and reassessing the value of editorial neutrality. It puts into question the role and significance of often innovative "personal media," exemplified by the millions of blogging sites on the Web. Is this kind of "news" serving a public, civic purpose of community problem solving or individual, private expression? In a *Washington Post* opinion piece on December 21, 2006, George K. Will voiced skepticism of the seriousness of much of the web's amateur journalism in response to Time magazine's naming all of us Person of the Year.

It is difficult to predict the future of cyberjournalism and blogging precisely in these early stages, but three outcomes seem likely: First, blogging will continue its rapid integration into mainstream media content. Second, blogging and other forms of social networking software will give rise to new media entities that will challenge mainstream media, locally, nationally, and globally.

The third outcome is the one most relevant to a community media scan. Cyberjournalism and participatory citizen journalism seem particularly well suited to address the current U.S. mass media's difficulty in providing coverage of local events in smaller communities, suburban regions, and commuter communities that are developing outside formal political jurisdictions. Community-based online journalism sites have sprung up in hundreds of communities around the United States. They are managed and organized in widely divergent ways.

An experiment in cyberjournalism and community networking, the ***Twin Cities Daily Planet*** aggregates some of the best journalism from Minnesota's Twin Cities neighborhood and community press and independent journalists, as well as the voices of engaged citizens, presenting them to the public through an interactive web site and community database. By aggregating citizen and neighborhood journalism in one site, it increases the capacity of small neighborhood media to reach beyond their borders to a wider regional audience. Using Real Simple Syndication (RSS) software, the *TC Daily Planet* can potentially reach a global audience.

A project of the Twin Cities Media Alliance, the *TC Daily Planet* is a very new form of community media emerging from the restructuring of the newspaper industry and the use of blogging and social networking software. Although early in its development, the *TC Daily Planet* is giving voice to an increasing number of ethnic, immigrant, and non-mainstream journalists, while focusing the community's attention on a far greater range of publications and ideas.

The earliest expressions of cyberjournalism are the **Independent Media Centers** (IMCs), or Indymedia. Indymedia came into being as part of the protests and demonstrations around the World Trade Organization talks held in Seattle, Washington, in 1999. This first IMC was a convergence of the emerging interactivity of the Internet with the intense need of protesters to get independent information out to the world about the protests. A network of independent community media makers, activists, and journalists banded together to pool resources and information (Howley, 2005).

The IMCs foreshadowed the blogging and video distribution that was shortly to emerge by using the Internet and the World Wide Web in conjunction with video and audio distribution to create a truly unprecedented multimedia environment. In terms of both quality and quantity, the Seattle IMC was an impressive performance by any news and current affairs standards. Over the course of the five-day protests, a daily newspaper and daily radio program were created, and countless print stories were disseminated

globally; also video feeds were sent through the Internet to public access and community channels around the world. Six years after the Seattle protests, there were 149 Indymedia web sites in about 45 countries on six continents (Whitney, 2005).

The open form of communication practiced by most IMC sites has not been with out problems and contradictions. Many sites are now cluttered with ideological diatribes and unedited content (Halleck, 2002; Whitney, 2005). But there are a number of Indymedia sites that provide alternative news and information regarding a global scope of concerns that would be very difficult to obtain anywhere else in the media. A number of sites, in places such as New York City, Portland, Oregon, and the San Francisco Bay area, have established themselves as stable parts of their community's media culture.

Increasingly, community media development is happening through networks of local nonprofit media organizations, rather than within single organizations.

NEW ORGANIZATIONAL SPACES: NETWORKED CLUSTERS

Perhaps the most promising trend on the horizon for community media is the emergence of new highly integrated organizational structures and collaborative processes. Increasingly, community media development is happening through networks of local nonprofit media organizations, rather than within single organizations.

In many ways these reorganizations at the community level parallel the restructuring taking place in the private corporate sector. There, communications networks are being used to support complex partnerships and joint company project development; interactive networks ease the aggregation of large or strategic capital and employee skill sets across geographic and organizational boundaries for the purposes of innovation and market development. In the language of community and economic development, these complex partnerships are known as "creative clusters" or "industry clusters." Michael Porter, a leading theorist and proponent of the concept of clusters, defines them as "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are present in a nation or region" (Porter, 2000). The companies in an industry cluster have a complex web of mutually supporting relationships that encompass both competitive and collaborative relationships. They link across profit and nonprofit practices, utilize common infrastructure, make common contributions to the development of a highly skilled workforce, share funding and, in some cases, talented staff.

Successful community media organizations are merging as network clusters.

Increasingly, community development practitioners and analysts are coming to understand industry clusters as powerful strategies for both economic and community development in the twenty-first century. This is proving doubly true for nonprofit community media organizations whose role it is to bring powerful tools and knowledge to any community's deliberations around community and economic development. Broadband and wireless networks are providing the practical means of linking community media organizations within communities, offering a key strategic advantage by enhancing the effectiveness of collaboration and partnership building.

As the examples in the previous chapter show, community media organizations are taking on new roles, including combining production and training, taking on workforce development functions, and becoming technology centers for diffusion of new media. Beyond these examples, longstanding, successful community media organizations are merging as network clusters, linking different groups and organizations within communities to create entirely new community media organizations, or blurring the boundaries between their organizations. Others are bringing historically separate community media groups within one organizational structure, or under one roof, to share buildings and communications infrastructures in a cost-effective manner.

The organizations that emerge from this integration may be similar in function, though their names remain different. A community-based site for citizen media and cyberjournalism, for example, and a community network like MAIN in Asheville, North Carolina, or a cutting-edge cable access center like Grand Rapids Community Television, begin to look very much alike in terms of

technology, programming activities, and the experience of community audiences, volunteers, and participants. Each organization relies on noncommercial affordable bandwidth; each plays some role in advocating for supportive government policies; and each is experimenting with the potential of new collaborative media tools. Often committed to engaging and training volunteers and community members in some manner, they may offer training and volunteer programs that require similar, sharable online tutorials, and online outreach and schedule management tools.

The examples that follow demonstrate the ways community media creative clusters are making unique contributions to their communities' quality of life and economic well being. They are doing so in three important ways:

- first, by amplifying the role that arts and cultural groups play in enhancing the quality of life and attracting a talented workforce and capital to the community — a role that is gaining in significance in the twenty-first century;
- second, as contributors to core economic development functions in the community, including workforce development and training, as micro-enterprise incubators, and as creators of new knowledge and educational experiences; and
- third, as facilitators and catalysts of community dialogue committed to embracing marginalized voices and allowing the community to undertake its own development democratically.

Community media creative clusters are making unique contributions to their communities' quality of life and economic well being.

Lowell, Massachusetts

Lowell Telecommunications Center (LTC) is a public and government access channel and media and technology center. It provides education and training in media creation, including web design, digital photography, and television production. LTC works in collaboration with other local community-based organizations, municipal departments, and educational entities to produce diverse multicultural programming that meets the community's communication and information needs. LTC has become a convening organization for building capacity among Lowell's nonprofit, community-based organizations in their use of participatory media and civic engagement strategies.

LTC is working to build a network for participatory media and civic engagement throughout the Merrimac River Valley.

LTC is more focused than other community media organizations on community building and communication technology. The corporation is working to build a network for participatory media and civic engagement throughout the Merrimac River Valley. Through a U.S. Department of Education grant, LTC acquired funding and staff to help its partner organizations become Internet-capable, assess their information technology needs, acquire technology upgrades to address those needs, and undertake the training to use the technology effectively.

Rather than waiting for groups to come to its center, LTC created a circuit rider training program that took the training program into the community. Through LTC's information technology center, scores of community groups have received training, designed and created web sites, and developed strategic communications plans for the future. Those developments include web-based historical archives, GIS mapping systems, multimedia materials, and Internet video. To help organizations acquire the software they need to carry out their missions, LTC created the Community Software Lab, which develops unique software to fit the needs of area nonprofits. The lab has been spun off to create a separate nonprofit entity, joining the growing number of independent organizations that network through LTC.

The most recent LTC initiative is "Digital Bicycle," a peer-to-peer network that allows media centers worldwide to download and share local content. LTC staff envision Digital Bicycle as an online community for cable access, media arts, independent media, and other noncommercial media.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

"Building community through media." This simple mission statement guided the **Grand Rapids Community Media Center** (GRCMC) as it evolved from a typical cable access operation to become a broad-based multimedia center and a model for the development of community multimedia centers in the United States. Over the past twenty years,

GRCMC has pulled the diverse community media activities of Grand Rapids under one organizational umbrella and taken the lead in articulating the potential for aggregating noncommercial networked communications there.

The evolving network of media platforms, disciplines, and cultural groups that converge to become GRCMC now includes the following centers of practice: **GRTV,** a community television center that programs multiple cable access channels; **WYCE,** a community radio station; **Grandnet,** a community technology and network center that provides citizen and nonprofit access to the Internet; and the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy, a critical media education and research center that tracks media and local public interest issues and publishes information on media accountability and reform.

But the Grand Rapids Community Media Center is more than the sum of its parts. The components of the center work together in a mutually reinforcing whole that creates a powerful community media presence in Grand Rapids and allows the center to undertake far more ambitious projects and programming than would be the case separately. One excellent example is the Mobile On-Line Learning Lab for Information Education. Known as MOLLIE, the program provides skilled trainers and digital video production equipment to schools and community organizations for special projects. Originally funded by a federal Department of Education grant, MOLLIE fills in technology gaps in Grand Rapids educational institutions and nonprofits. In the hands of a less integrated institution, the MOLLIE project could easily be a technically oriented equipment loan and training program. In the hands of the center, MOLLIE has become a sophisticated media and technology educational initiative providing a training program that addresses media education from the perspective of all the components of the Grand Rapids Community Media Center.

Asheville, North Carolina

One of the most articulate efforts merging the creative clusters idea with participatory communication has come about in Asheville, North Carolina. Through a persistent collaboration between forward looking regional groups and organizations – involving a broad network of individuals, community media, and media arts groups in the Asheville region – Asheville has laid the foundation for a community media development center that will function as a cable access center, media arts center, and new media micro-enterprise incubator. At the center of this effort is an informal coalition of four important groups in Asheville: Mountain Area Information Network, Media Arts Project, Boncombe County Economic Development Commission, and URTV. The groups represent distinct points of view and concerns, as well as converging interests.

GRCMC has pulled the diverse community media activities of Grand Rapids under one organizational umbrella . . .

Each group shared the insight that civic participation and economic success in the twenty-first century are directly related to having access to communications technology and knowledge. Each also understood that the renegotiation of the cable franchises in the City of Asheville and surrounding Boncombe County was a strategic moment to catalyze and associate a number of community-based information and media arts activities already in place or planned in Asheville. The groups used the cable franchising process to create a common organizational and facilities infrastructure supporting the use of media for both civic and economic development.

The Media Arts Project (MAP) is a network of media artists that cultivates innovative arts and technology in western North Carolina. MAP worked tirelessly to frame cable access as a community development issue, bridging the media activist communities and the more forward-thinking factions among economic development professionals in the region. With the recent opening of **URTV Inc.,** Ashville's cable access organization and facility, MAP and its network of partners are now turning their attention to funding the media arts and economic incubator elements of the vision.

Asheville's interest in supporting community media arises from the presence of the **Mountain Area Information Network** (MAIN). In the tradition of the rural cooperatives that helped spread the reach of electricity in the 1930s, MAIN is a nonprofit Internet service provider offering reliable, low-cost Internet service both in western North Carolina and nationwide. It is a unique community network with a broad vision of its role in the community that encompasses media literacy, economic development strategies, community low-power radio, a community-based web portal, and the provision of Internet connectivity to rural western North Carolina. MAIN is largely responsible for the remarkable expansion of Internet accessibility in western North Carolina, allowing thousands of people to

spend their Internet access dollars with a locally controlled and accountable organization. MAIN demonstrates the value of the community networking concept to areas that are lagging in connectivity due to failures of the market.

MAIN has taken a leadership role in building a community media culture in Asheville that demonstrates the ease with which digital media leaps organizational boundaries. Its community network runs the Blue Ridge Web Market, which provides a free, customizable Internet presence to hundreds of small businesses throughout western North Carolina. Its Latino Digital Literacy Project offers training to help the area's growing Latino populations access the Internet. MAIN has been one of the key partners in bringing a cable access center to Asheville and has been the driving force behind **WPVM**, WNC's low-power FM radio station broadcasting local news, views, and music over-the-air in the Asheville region (and the world via webcast).

MAIN has taken a leadership role in building a community media culture in Asheville that demonstrates the ease with which digital media leaps organizational boundaries.

Cleveland, Ohio

Perhaps the most robust community-based nonprofit network in the United States, **One Cleveland** provides what it calls "ultra broadband networking services" to Cleveland area education, government, research, arts, culture, and health care organizations. One Cleveland operates a fiber network ring that covers much of the city of Cleveland and many of its surrounding suburbs. Subscribers to the network connect at gigabit speeds.

One Cleveland represents what can happen when powerful community development forces come to a consensus regarding their community's need for high-speed connectivity to global economies and media.

One Cleveland represents what can happen when powerful community development forces come to a consensus regarding their community's need for high-speed connectivity to global economies and media. Its founders are Cleveland mainstream institutions: Case Western Reserve University, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland State University, The City of Cleveland, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, ideastream, Cuyahoga County Public Library, and NorTech. The network has formed relationships with technology companies to maintain up-to-date applications that leverage the potential of such a powerful network.

One of the network's key partners, **ideastream,** illustrates the significance of working together to make high-speed connectivity publicly available throughout a community on its own terms. By building a high-speed network, One Cleveland has created a civic network space and infrastructure that allows a new kind of multimedia public media organization to be created. Ideastream resulted when WVIZ/PBS Television and 90.3 WCPN Radio public broadcasters merged to form a new nonprofit "multimedia public service organization." Ideastream is able to extend its media expertise beyond broadcasting to online technologies and applications of all types — when you are connecting to the network at the gigabit speeds of One Cleveland's, the range of applications and their potential are huge.

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of preparing this report – pouring over the literature and synthesizing hours of structured round-table conversations and one-on-one interviews with opinion leaders and successful practitioners of community media – one thing is extremely clear: The way our society makes and shares information, knowledge, and culture is in a heightened state of change. The interactive nature of the Internet has demonstrated that it is possible to organize communications in a much more democratic fashion. Some have concluded we are witnessing the transition from an industrialized information environment to a networked information environment. The old industrial media structures based on exclusive high-cost production processes are being challenged by an emerging media sector in which the cost of creating information, knowledge, and culture has been profoundly reduced and the products are interconnected widely through networks like the Internet (Benkler, 2006). Indeed, there is increasing evidence that these new media and digital networks are particularly conducive to noncommercial and nonprofit cultural production, as well as more participatory and collaborative media practices. In many ways the long-standing values and intent of community media foreshadow this new media environment.

The scan research focused on four key areas of inquiry: What are the unique characteristics that distinguish community media? What makes media-community collaborations successful? What types of community media organizations best leverage new technologies? How might community media engage underserved populations in programming tailored to their needs? In each instance, we found that community media combined with greater affordable bandwidth and open-source approaches to production do have tremendous community development potential. However none of that potential will come about magically. The community media sector is facing the challenging task of managing extensive change and transformation.

CHALLENGES

The success, disappointments, and social value of the past sixty years of community media initiatives must be judged in historical context. Consistent misrepresentation in the mainstream media, and limited, unaccommodating social policy have resulted in inadequate visibility and financial support for community media. Any discussion of its successes or failures must incorporate an understanding of these external constraints. In this light, the existing expressions of community media at their best are wildly successful social experiments, giving cause for great optimism.

Nevertheless, community media face both external and internal challenges. The internal challenges arise from structural tensions that occur in any attempt to create organizations and cultures that embody diversity, democratic expression, and equitable access. Rather than being expressed as "weaknesses" as is so often the case in mainstream media and academia, these internal tensions are more properly understood as predictable developmental problems and opportunities that practitioners should be prepared to grapple with in any community media setting.

Balancing Free Expression and Audience Development

Community radio and public access cable have historically privileged the interests of producers by granting them great political freedom in making decisions regarding what programming to create and what aesthetic and formatting approaches to use. The trade-off for a culture of activist volunteerism and free expression has been smaller audiences and lower levels of production and program support. Program producers carry an intense commitment to individual ownership of their programming initiatives that may not take the audience's interests fully to heart.

While these approaches in radio and cable access have resulted in a diversity of programming and political viewpoints, they have also prevented radio station programmers or cable access organizations from building a flow of programs that can define and construct an ongoing audience in the community. Each program or scheduled program slot carries its own micro audience, "fragmented publics" that are often not part of an integrated flow of programming that attracts an audience to the channels overall (Higgins, 2002).

Free expression and audience development are not mutually exclusive; nor do participatory management structures, volunteer involvement, and producer training programs need to impede audience development. The success of Amy Goodman and Democracy Now soundly demonstrates this. In fact, many community media organizations have created programming initiatives that combine sophisticated measurements of social outcomes with

Free expression and audience development are not mutually exclusive; nor do participatory management structures, volunteer involvement, and producer training programs need to impede audience development.

training and participatory program planning. They have not only raised the social value of their programming to their communities; they have also increased the size and loyalty of their audiences (Aufderheide, 2003). As interactive media begin to create the conditions where niche programming can be far more successful, the tension between free expression and audience development is not only a challenge but also a tremendous opportunity.

Programming Metrics

Still, roundtable participants repeatedly noted that even when programming meets community needs, community media organizations can find it difficult to document impact. They felt that funders have generally not yet addressed the role of media in popular culture or the power of popular culture in addressing social problems. In addition, funders find it hard to establish cost-benefit measures of social impact for their media expenditures.

Participants asked for models of audience feedback and outcomes measurement that go beyond audience numbers. They acknowledged the difficulty of quantifying notions of success, which tend to be very subjective, and of using success stories in the common programming metrics of the day. Many recognized skepticism among funders about the importance of community media, a suspicion about agendas, and a fear of the costs involved, making community media a hard sell. Even though a few good evaluation efforts were acknowledged, their collective results have not been incorporated into the thinking of the wider funding community.

Community media organizations can find it difficult to document impact.

Funding

Multi-year, stable funding support for community media initiatives is critical to stability, innovation, and growth. Roundtable participants discussed numerous instances in which projects with multi-year support had powerful positive impacts extending beyond the initial project goals. Multi-year funding creates the stability to undertake proper strategic planning and partnership development.

There is some early evidence that a multiple-platform, nonprofit-oriented niche market could emerge as a significant opportunity to provide enhanced revenue for the community and noncommercial media sectors. The interactive capacity of the new networks significantly increases the revenue potential for cooperative and subscription-style programming flows. However, strong markets for commercially funded, participatory community expression have not yet emerged in the digital era, due to the limited size of populations and available advertising support. If there is to be a vital sector of community-based media, some form of significant public funding will be necessary, even in instances where community media organizations might realize significant revenue from new markets. In order to make the most efficient use of public funding, communities must evolve funding and governance structures for community media that can facilitate the aggregation of funds, coordinate multiple-organization projects, and act as trusted conveners of programming and development discussions in communities.

Policy Threats

While the convergence of technology and practices creates increasing potentials for a unified community media sector, there is unfortunately no cohesive and unified national policy framework for community media. The government policies and regulations that exist for community media have been retrofitted in the arenas of U.S. broadcasting and telephony policy. While they represent hard-won political victories and strategic insight, they do not address the needs of community media in a holistic way.

In the current political climate, broadcast media ownership, control, and programming will continue to be centralized in fewer corporations, leaving communities with less options for controlling their local media environments. At the same time, the telephone companies will enter the market for video, telephony, and broadband by deploying high-capacity digital television networks in many communities in the United States.

The current trend of centralization in U.S. telecommunications policy is threatening the ability of local

There is unfortunately no cohesive and unified national policy framework for community media.

governments to mandate community-based communications networks and programming initiatives as rent on the public rights-of-way. These funding mechanisms currently support Public, Education and Government (PEG) access cable television centers, media arts centers, and many municipal communication networks. While far from perfect regulatory mechanisms, they are one of the most successful forms of public media support to arise in the last thirty years.

Over the next five years, these successful funding strategies will be under heavy attack by the telephone companies and the cable television industry in a struggle with governments for community control of the public rights-of-way. The same dynamic threatens equitable Internet access. Increasingly, broadband community networks are municipally owned or mandated. While some of these municipal broadband networks were deployed for internal municipal purposes, time has shown that such networks can serve a number of non-governmental community-based purposes, including wireless ISP connections for residents, businesses, and visitors. Many communities are seeking (and some have obtained) "Community Benefits Agreements" with proposed wireless broadband vendors that set aside a small franchise fee on gross revenues to support digital inclusion activities, following the example of cable companies support of PEG access. However, municipal broadband and municipal wireless are under attack by industries trying to reserve these development rights for themselves.

The outcome of the debates around control of the rights-of-way will have a significant impact on the future path of community media development. These debates will range across the regulatory spectrum; they are now being waged in local, state, and national legislative arenas and the courts. The resulting communications infrastructure and regulatory framework will be able to realize the potentials of community media if, and only if, communities are able to take leadership in providing substantial public as well as private funding. As an old truism notes, "money is policy."

There are no political or technical guarantees that digital media networks will remain open and participatory as they evolve. It is unlikely that market forces alone will serve to realize the democratic potential of today's participatory media technology. Building a robust sector of community-based, democratic new media will require effective citizen activism, clear and responsive government policies, and effective political strategies. Community media needs separate recognition and support within federal, state, and local communications policy and regulatory structures in order to ensure equitable and stable funding and development.

MODELS FOR THE FUTURE

The government regulations and subsidies that underpin community media have evolved in a hodgepodge fashion over the past sixty years. It can be argued that community media should be treated as a separate sector with integrated funding structures, consistent infrastructure, and tax and subsidy policies that are separate and distinct from existing local media policies and also from the policies underpinning public broadcasting. Possible models for a more unified approach are numerous, but two appear particularly well suited to community media's diverse forms, organizations, and programming approaches:

Public Funding

Finding appropriate methods of increasing public funding for community media in a shifting regulatory environment is crucial. Current local cable franchising regulations to support cable access and the community benefits agreements of municipal wireless networks offer successful models, but are now both under attack. The laws requiring commercial cable providers to set aside bandwidth/channel capacity for the public in addition to operating funding based on a percentage of commercial revenues could be extended to include voice, video, and data. Essentially, then, any commercial provider using the public rights-of-way or the wireless spectrum would be required to contribute an equitable percentage of bandwidth and revenue to support the community communications sector.

Community Media Development

Adequate levels of funding are only part of the equation. While funding should support the overall growth of the

. . . set aside bandwidth/channel capacity for the public in addition to operating funding . . .

. . .affordable broadband and wireless network infrastructure with a strong community benefits agreement . . .

community media sector in a sensible fashion, any funding solution must address the difficulty now experienced by funders in dealing with community media: how to provide overall support to a sector made up of small, independent organizations with an extremely diverse set of funding sources and missions. One economic development approach seems particularly useful here. Progressive community economic development strategies have evolved to support the growth of a diversity of small enterprises within a common sector, while recognizing that these enterprises can at different times be collaborators, partners, or competitors. Similar strategies can guide development of the community media sector.

There are at least two short-term steps that could assist in the development of community media organizations and support their citizens' ability to cope with commercial media and information saturation. One is for communities to build or secure affordable broadband and wireless network infrastructure with a strong community benefits agreement in support of digital inclusion. Hundreds of communities across the country either have or are launching such wireless community networks, many in collaboration with wireless vendors who, in order to win a service contract with the municipality in question, are supporting digital literacy training, inexpensive refurbished computers, and local content development—in short, programs of digital inclusion and excellence.

A second opportunity identified by roundtable participants is the potential for a national support network for existing community media organizations. A national support network linking communities and their community media practitioners and institutions could facilitate a range of activities, including: local-to-local communication, or exchanges of information and programming between communities; virtual space for a national network of community media organizations to help to organize unified policy advocacy; wider distribution of past products; formation of issue-response teams to advance interests of community groups and tap into local resources; and shared directories of practitioners, trainers, and facilities. Convening leaders from the aggregators and associations serving community media in their various forms (listed in Appendix 2) might be a good next step to explore this opportunity.

. . . a national support network for existing community media organizations.

THE PROMISE

The practice of community media has managed to grow and evolve over the past sixty years despite uneven and generally low levels of support and inconsistent government policies. Ellie Rennie, a research fellow at the Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, has written that community media are often defined negatively for what they are opposed to, rather than positively for what they have achieved (Rennie, 2006). We are aware that community media have often been dismissed as marginal and idiosyncratic, but the examples cited in this report provide powerful evidence to the contrary. It is time to define community media by what they have achieved. Community media at their best have consistently demonstrated their potential to empower communities and individuals to participate as citizens in community and economic development, arts, education, community dialog, and political debate. In many instances they have become central cultural survival institutions as our communities deal with the impact of commercial media saturation and globalization.

During the roundtable discussions that took place as part of this scan, it was obvious that the value of community media to communities transcends the measurable effects of civic engagement and community development. Community media can allow individuals in communities to have profound experiences of actively expressing themselves through media. For people who have seen themselves as passive receptors at the bottom of a cascade of packaged media experiences and messages, active representation of their own lives and circumstances has a transformative effect that goes beyond simple phrases like "civic engagement." The value of community media to individuals and the communities they live in is incalculable.

APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY MEDIA EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES

EMPOWERMENT	ACTIVITY	APPROACH	INFRASTRUCTURE OR VENUE
Access: Access to communications infrastructure, production tools	Making available media production tools, computers, television and radio distribution, Internet, software, community communications infrastructure, meeting space, web servers	Democratic citizen access to communications tools and dissemination infrastructure	Cable, broadband, municipal telecom, Internet, WiFi WiMAX local and public service broadcasting
Alternative Content	Creation of video, audio, film, websites, Internet-based citizen media, P2P, media blogging, social networking, software, databases and print production	Content positioned to counter or supplement mass media content and information from mainstream sources	All platforms, with an increasing expansion within IP Networks and cross-platform production and dissemination
Competency/Literacy: Media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy, and cultural literacy	Media arts and aesthetic education: learning to gain a civic voice in a media culture, articulation of media biases, engaging in media and politics, understanding commodity culture, parenting in a media-saturated home	Intervention in the complex manipulation of symbols and culture	All mass media: print, electronic
Community Building	Workforce training and skill building, micro-enterprise development, business infrastructure development	Community organizing, participatory planning, democratic economic development, workforce and infrastructure development	Local media, municipal telecom infrastructure,computer and technology incubators and technology centers

APPENDIX 2: AGGREGATORS AND ASSOCIATIONS

It is difficult to understand the full scope of community media culture without knowing of the following organizations, which support community media and independent media practices. They play a number of roles: as national associations representing networks of community media organizations and media arts organizations; as producer networks and strategic communications planners linking community organizations with community media organizations; as organizations of community activists and producers working to more effectively support and use community media; and as collaborators and partners in community development, training, and education.

Active Voice: http://www.activevoice.net/

Alliance for Community Media: http://www.alliancecm.org

Association for Community Networking: http://www.afcn.org/

Community Media Workshop: http://www.newstips.org/

Community Technology Centers' Network: http://www.ctcnet.org/

Deep Dish TV: http://deepdishtv.org

Free Speech TV: http://www.freespeech.org

Independent Television Service: http://www.itvs.org/

Independent Media Center/Indymedia: http://www.indymedia.org

Latino Public Broadcasting: http://www.lpbp.org/

Link TV: http://linktv.org

LPFMDatabase.com: http://www.angelfire.com/nj2/piratejim/lpfm.html

Media Tank: http://www.mediatank.org/
Media Working Group: http://www.mwg.org/

National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture: http://www.namac.org/

National Asian American Telecommunications Assoc: http://asianamericanmedia.org/index.html

Native American Public Telecommunications: http://asianamericanmedia.org/index.html

National Black Programming Consortium: http://www.nbpc.tv/

National Federation of Community Broadcasters: http://www.nfcb.org

National Public Radio: http://www.npr

National Public Telecomputing Network: http://www.nptn.org

Paper Tiger Television: http://www.papertiger.org/

Pacific Islanders in Communications: http://www.piccom.org/

Pew Center for Civic Journalism: http://www.pewcenter.org

Prometheus Radio Project: http://www.prometheusradio.org/

Public Broadcasting Service: http://www.pbs.org

Public Radio Exchange: http://www.prx.org/

Reclaim the Media: http://www.reclaimthemedia.org/

Starfish Television Network: http://www.starfishtv.org

Web sites of U.S. PEG Access Channels: http://www.bevcam.org/peg/

World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters: http://www.amarc.org/

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY MEDIA PRACTITIONERS

Web sites of those practitioners mentioned in the text

Appalshop: http://www.appalshop.org/

Bay Area Video Coalition: http://www.bavc.org/

Beyond Media Education: http://www.beyondmedia.org/

Cambridge Community Television: http://www.cctvcambridge.org/

Casa Guatemala Media Project: http://www.casaguatemala.org/

Charlotte Observer: http://www.charlotte.com/

Chicago Access Network Television: http://www.cantv.org/

Grand Rapids Community Media Center: http://grcmc.org/

GrandNet: http://www.grcmc.org/nposervices/it.php

GRTV: http://www.grcmc.org/tv/

ideastream: http://www.ideastream.org/

IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts: http://www.ifpnorth.org/about.html

Intermedia Arts: http://www.intermediaarts.org/

Kartemquin Films: http://www.kartemquin.com/

KBOO: http://www.kboo.org

KFAI: http://www.kfai.org/

Lowell Telecommunications Center: http://ltc.org/

Manhattan Neighborhood Network: http://mnn.org

Media Arts Project: http://www.themap.org/

Metro Government Community Media Initiative: http://www.metro-region.org/

Metropolitan Austin Interactive Network: http://www.main.org

Minneapolis Television Network: http://www.mtn.org/

Minnesota Channel: http://www.tpt.org/mnchannel.new/

Minnesota Public Radio: http://minnesota.publicradio.org/; http://minnesota.publicradio.org/publicinsightjournalism/

Mountain Area Information Network: http://main.nc.us/

Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission: http://www.mhcrc.org/

New America Media: http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/

New Routes to Community Health: http://www.newroutes.org

Northwest Film and Video Center: http://www.nwfilm.org/

One Cleveland: http://www.onecleveland.org/

Oregon Public Broadcasting: http://www.opb.org/

Portland Community Media: http://www.pcmtv.org/

Radio Arte: http://www.wrte.org/

Saint Paul Neighborhood Network: http://www.spnn.org/

Scribe Video Center: http://www.scribe.org/

Sound Partners for Community Health: http://www.soundpartners.org/

Street Level Youth Media: http://www.street-level.org/

Twin Cities Daily Planet: http://www.tcdailyplanet.net

Twin Cities Media Alliance: http://www.tcmediaalliance.org/

Twin Cities Public Television: http://www.tpt.org/

URTV: http://www.urtv.org/

Walker Art Center: http://www.walkerart.org/index.wac

WCIW-LP: http://pacificanetwork.org/radio/content/view/175/42/; http://www.ciw-online.org/

WGBH: http://www.wgbh.org/

WHYY: http://whyy.org/

WPVM: http://www.wpvm.org/

WYBE: http://www.wybe.org/

WYCE: http://www.grcmc.org/radio/

Youth Channel: http://www.youthchannel.org/

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