



**Beyond Broadcast:
Reinventing Public Media in a Participatory Culture**

**May 12-13, 2006
Harvard Law School**

Rapporteur Report

Organized by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society,
Center for Social Media at American University,
Public Radio Exchange, Center for Citizen Media,
Project for Open Source Media, and
NYU's Interactive Telecommunication Program

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Executive Summary

Beyond Broadcast: Reinventing Public Media in a Participatory Culture, a conference held at the Harvard Law School on May 12-13, 2006, explored the intersection of traditional public broadcast and new web-based participatory media, showcasing emerging models and practices that suggest a “new third way in public media” in a transformed media landscape (www.beyondbroadcast.net). Participants identified ways in which public broadcasters are incorporating user-generated content and testing interactive approaches that move beyond the one-to-many model of push media. At the same time, commercially-driven digital technologies are producing creative experiments in social networking and public expression. The group observed examples of cross-fertilization: public media is tapping into new practices as it draws upon longstanding strengths, while web-based participatory media is a seed bed for new practices in active public engagement. The cultivation of a shared understanding of public mission is essential in this emerging hybrid media environment.

Key issues included *sustainability, accessibility, intellectual property and digital rights management, hybrid business models, and cultural differences* – both *intergenerational* and *between public and commercial media practitioners*.

There was agreement that *open access* to technology, ideas and resources serves the interests of both business and the public, but *openness and property ownership must be balanced*; public attention the *public policy implications* of participatory media is essential. Persistent questions hovered over this rich array of innovative initiatives: to what degree are these projects truly public? Where is the control? How can public behaviors and practices be nurtured in a commercialized environment?

Panelists

The meeting brought together representatives from public broadcasting, business, participatory media projects, as well as advocates, practitioners, and scholars.

The conference was co-organized by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School, the Center for Social Media at American University, New York University's ITP Program, Public Radio Exchange, the Center for Citizen Media, and the Project for Open Source Media.

The Berkman Center was represented by co-founder Charles Nesson, and fellows Jake Shapiro (PRX), Ethan Zuckerman (Global Voices), Brendan Greeley (Open Source Radio) and Susie Lindsay (Berkman Center). The Center for Social Media was represented by Patricia Aufderheide, Jessica Duda, and Barbara Abrash. The Project for Open Source Media was represented by Shawn Van Every (NYU/ITP), Jay Dedman(fireant.com), and Kenyatta Cheese (Eyebeam).

Public broadcasting experiments with on-demand tools and open access to user-generated content and interactivity were presented by David Liroff (WGBH), Christopher Lydon (Open Source from PRI), and Bill Buzenberg (Minnesota Public Radio). Peter Armstrong (OneWorld International) examined BBC's Creative Future project. Non-broadcast participatory sites were described by Paul Jones (ibiblio.org), Tom Gerace (gather.com), and Rhea Moklund (listenup.org).

Economic models that foster public engagement within a commercially-driven media environment were discussed by Terry Heaton (DONATA™ Communications), Thomas Kriese (Omidyar Network), Diane Mermigas (*Hollywood Reporter*), Ken Nova (Highland Capital Partners), and Skip Pizzi (Microsoft), while Mark Cooper (Consumer Federation of America) advocated citizen-based support.

Scholars included keynote speaker James Boyle (Duke Law School); and sociologist Eszter Hargittai (Northwestern University).

Filmmaker Deborah Scranton (*The War Tapes*) and John Lester (Linden Labs, *Second Life*) presented cutting-edge examples of interactive multiplatform community-building sites.

Introduction

An overflow crowd of 350 broadcasters, media makers, activists, techies, business specialists, and academics gathered on May 12-13, 2006 at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at the Harvard Law School for **Beyond Broadcast: Reinventing Public Media in a Participatory Culture**, a conference that was a collaborative project of the Berkman Center, Center for Social Media, Public Radio Exchange, Center for Citizen Media, Project for Open Source Media, and NYU's Interactive Telecommunication Program. The event was sponsored by the Omidyar Network, MacArthur Foundation and the Center for Social Media at American University, with support from the Ford Foundation.

The conference took place in several dimensions under Creative Commons license via webcasting, blogging, wiki, Second Life, podcasting, and cable access broadcast.

Group conversation was concerned with strategies for nurturing public values and practices within a commercially-driven and technologically transformed media landscape. Traditional public broadcasters are challenged by the upsurge of participatory media and the decline of public funding, but find many opportunities for experimentation as business also struggles to adapt in a many-to-many environment. Partnerships between commercial providers and public interest media makers can be highly productive in this uncertain open period, but issues of control and ownership haunt the scene. Public media must develop economic models that learn from commercial practices, but are defined by mission rather than profit.

Keynote

James Boyle, William Neal Reynolds Professor of Law, Faculty Co-Director of the Center for the Study of the Public Domain at Duke Law School

<http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/blog/?p=87>

James Boyle sounded a major theme of the day: the tug of war between the controlling claims of business and demands for open access to technology, information, and ideas in a democratic culture. He highlighted the value of commons-based production in generating cultural content, creating networks, and nurturing innovative ideas, exemplified by the way in which the Internet – based on open protocols – produced wholly new networks and patterns of social value

Historically, in every period of growth, there is a tension between openness and “proprietaryness”. We are in an anxious interval, in which familiar models of intellectual property and ownership rights based on tangible property are challenged, and income streams are declining before new ones are established. We need a “Tarzan economics” that tells when to let go of one vine and catch the next; but predicting the future is a tricky business, bound as we are by fixed patterns of thinking and entrenched interests.

He argued that we must consciously ward against the natural tendency to resist openness, a natural tendency of all incumbents. In this environment, embracing openness also means embracing new economic growth, greater opportunities for democratic engagement and participatory culture.

Open access to technology, information, ideas, and resources is mutually beneficial to both business and society at large, but there is a need for a balance between openness and property. Government has a vital role to play in ensuring full democratic access to the emerging digital communications landscape by supporting infrastructure, skills training, and supporting policies

that ensure open and wide participation. He warned that policies, largely directed by entrenched interests, tend to support closed models.

Emerging Funding Models

<http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/blog/?p=96>

Public and commercial media are facing similar problems and must reinvent their business models. Public broadcasting needs to reassess its strengths (e.g., credibility, trusted information) in an entrepreneurial spirit and seek partnerships with commercial organizations for mutual benefit.

MySpace, YouTube, and Technorati are huge and growing sites that are being built by their users and that have a clear economic upside: the low costs of customer acquisition, marketing and content development, as well as a significant drawback: revenue models have yet to emerge. From the VC perspective, it's all about aggregating audience and waiting for established habits of use to emerge.

Diane Mermigas (*Hollywood Reporter*) sees many niche opportunities outside the traditional models, e.g. in related product sales, in collecting on transaction costs, and in new subscription/membership fees. Pubcasters are in a great position because they already have very loyal memberships.

Is citizen-supported public media possible? Mark Cooper (Consumer Federation of America) calls for business models grounded in civil society, identifying consumer cooperatives as a time-tested model.

Public Sites/ Public Values

<http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/blog/?p=59>; <http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/blog/?p=57>

Social networks and online communities are a powerful and growing phenomenon. What can public media learn from these models? What does it mean to enable and nurture online communities in a media context? How do these spaces represent a redefined public media of their own? Interactivity is key. Discussion revolved around emerging social web services and tools that create public spaces and nurture habits of public expression, within traditional pubcasting venues as well as in commercial and non-broadcast zones.

How to bring public media strengths, such as credibility and trust, into a changing media landscape? How to transform a listening audience into a broad source network? How to monetize traffic? This period – in which neither the old economics nor the old rules apply – provides a brief window of opportunity for public broadcasters and others to explore public opportunities into relatively unknown territory.

Public Broadcasting. The push model that is built into the DNA of pubcasting is disabling to new opportunities. How to aggressively pursue civic-minded interactivity? Public broadcasters are experimenting with emerging participatory and social media tools, providing features that allow the public to submit content and engage with programming.

In this transition, pubcasters wrestle with basic questions: What is the role of public media professionals as curators, aggregators, and organizers? How much editorial control is appropriate? . How to transform a listening audience into a broad source network? How to monetize traffic? Among the notable examples:

The radio program Open Source from PRI – “a blog with a radio show” – is a web-based multiplatform site that gathers story ideas, information, and feedback from its audience, which it engages via blog, e-mail, and Internet. Host Chris Lydon asks, “Is the Internet the new public?”

Minnesota Public Radio's Public Insight Journalism initiative – soon to go national – is a citizen journalism project that taps into public knowledge to strengthen news coverage and spur civic engagement in shared economic, social, and political issues.

The power of public broadcasting informs the ways in which WGBH expands its public engagement with multiple audiences via podcasts, cell phones, blogs, and websites.

Peter Armstrong (One World International) – citing examples from podcasting to BBC's Creative Future project – questioned the extent to which real power has shifted. The fact that viewers are users and makers of media doesn't necessarily translate into dialogue. Many sites are effectively "walled gardens," designed to keep viewers glued to their screens. In contrast, OneWorld.net uses accessible technologies to empower people at the village level by fostering free exchange of information.

Public Values in Commercial Media. In a media environment where the consumer is key, commercial media is also responding with blogs, interactive websites, and on-demand delivery of programming. One example is WKRN-TV, an ABC affiliate in Nashville which operates 15 websites, including two aggregators, blogs and a search site. According to Terry Heaton (DONATA™ Communications) these initiatives provide a public service and, at the same time, improve ratings, revenue and traffic.

With shifting boundaries between public and commercial media and the hot search for demographic and economic models, cross-boundary collaborations and partnerships proliferate. How can public values be articulated and asserted? Is it true, as one speaker suggested, that public media is not necessarily noncommercial or nonprofit, but has become "a style of content"?

Building Community in Virtual Space. Social networking tools have released a creative proliferation of virtual gathering places that respond to widespread desire to connect and share experiences. Members of gather.com coalesce around shared affinities, and earn points for purchases from fellow members. Listen.up.org, which has its roots in a public service campaign, networks youth organizations around the world who share resources and funding to create productions seen on public and commercial television, as well as other venues. Ibiblio.org is, among other things, a digital archiving service and provides multi-language services.

In Linden Lab's *Second Life*, Beyond Broadcasters had an opportunity to collectively create their own virtual world, "a waking dream environment" in which participants retain IP rights to their creations and participate in an exchange economy.

(http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=High_Order_Bit:_Second_Life)

Sociologist Eszter Hargittai's research on college students' uses of interactive online sites revealed Facebook and MySpace as favorites, with political sites at the bottom of the list.

(<http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/blog/?p=58>)

The War Tapes project (<http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/blog/?p=69>) is an example of an emerging phenomenon: collaborative filmmaking. The project was a collaboration between filmmaker Deborah Scranton and the members of a National Guard unit on duty in Iraq to whom she gave mini-DV cameras. The story, culled from 900 hours of footage, was shaped in part via e-mails and IM between the director and the men on the frontlines. While the film is slated for theatrical release and television broadcast, its vital continuing life will take place in the public dialogue it will generate in blogs and websites, community events, and living rooms.

Open Media Developers' Summit

The first day of the conference was designed for exposure, publicity, conversation, and raising awareness. The second day was conducted on a self-organizing model by the Open Media Developers' Summit. Break-out sessions addressed topics of concern to the developers. Issues addressed included:

Intellectual Property, Fair Use, and DRM

http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Intellectual_Property%2C_Fair_Use%2C_and_DRM.

How can user rights under copyright be fortified, in order to permit more public and participatory media to flourish? As framed right now, do copyright and fair use exceptions serve the public? Using the *Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use* (<http://centerforsocialmedia.org/rock/backgrounddocs/bestpractices.pdf>) as an example, the group called for exploration of the application of the Statement to user-generated content.

Citizen Journalism

http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Citizen_Journalism:_Trust_and_Credibility.

In the democratized ecosystem of journalism, truth and credibility –fundamental to good journalism – are not easy to identify. How to create an environment that where people can participate at many levels and where end up with quality for consumers? What is the role of professionals?

The Public Broadcasting Open Source Best Practices Group

http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=The_potential_of_open_source_and_standards_for_operations_and_production_workflows

This group discussed ways to use an open source model of development to get more and better content from limited resources through collaboration and sharing tools. Participants agreed to begin – through a mailing list and a wiki – to share experiences and consider joint requests for code.

Iterative Media

http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Iterative_Media

This group addressed the question: Can we create a world where content is commonly created like software – with roadmaps, feature feedback, and versioning? The group called for the creation of a code of best practices and transparency.

Other break-out groups discussed the following issues:

Potential uses of cell phones

http://www.beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=One_billion_camera_phones

How gaming can serve the public interest

http://beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Gaming_as_public_media_platform;

Overcoming language barriers in a global digital culture

http://beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=What_do_we_mean_by_a_global_stage%3F

Developing best practices in using technology for social activism

http://beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Technology_and_Social_Activism

Promoting independent film using digital and grassroots strategies

http://beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Independent_Media_Promotion_%26_Distribution

Organizing for a democratic media

http://beyondbroadcast.net/wiki/index.php?title=Organizing_for_a_Democratic_Media

Challenges and Opportunities

With a strong trusted relationship with large audiences, nationally and locally, public media organizations can extend their role as conveners of conversation and connection, but there are many challenges in mindset, risk, culture and practice. Public media organizations can draw upon the creativity capacity, brands, and institutional structures that are their great strengths. New media has unleashed a flood of storytelling but, as several speakers observed, who is listening? Public media practitioners have begun to play an active role as curators, filters, and moderators in shaping user-generated content.

Public media is being redefined in a technologically transformed and commercially-driven media ecology. Public broadcasters must articulate their unique mission, roles and services in a competitive environment. As the boundaries between public and commercial realms blur, the challenge is to develop spaces, practices and services in the public interest.

While the openness and democratizing qualities of new media are widely assumed, participants pointed to unevenness in accessibility and uptake. Generational cultural differences and a lack of racial and ethnic diversity were identified as problems to be addressed.

As public funding declines and commercial pressures increase, sustainability is a fundamental issue. Businesses find profitable economic models equally elusive. There is a window of opportunity for experimentation with business models that serve open, accessible, rich media that sustains democratic culture.

The aggressive assertion of intellectual property rights and ownership of information, which challenges public media and its content providers, is being met in part by the exercise of established fair use rights and best practices.