

**BROADCASTERS THINK TANK
JUNE 1993
REPORT PREPARED BY SARA DIAMOND**

**NEW MEDIA RESEARCH
THE BANFF CENTRE FOR THE ARTS**

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RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

In June of 1993 the Banff Centre for the Arts Television and Video Program and New Media Research Project hosted a think tank for commissioning editors for Canadian cultural programs or product. This event was intended to promote the following:

- a) cooperation and creativity in developing, producing and airing Canadian cultural product
- b) an examination of key issues in the future of cultural product, such as the multi channel environment, the emergence of interactive media and the ability to collaborate over distance through the emerging electronic high way.

Participants included David Langer of the National Arts Centre, the ATEC group of TV Ontario, Saskatchewan Communications Network, Knowledge Network, ACCESS Alberta, members of Television Northern Canada, Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, several independent producers and members of the Banff Centre research team. The CBC sent their regrets and their Arts and Entertainment staff communicated after the event through the exchange of minutes and programming ideas. A component of the think tank centred on the role of new media in the television environment.

RESEARCH RESULTS

a) Producing Cultural Product

- i) Television about new media

The meetings resulted in the evaluation and evolution of a number of programming initiatives, which also involve the CBC and international broadcast and which specifically examine the new media environment.

The group discussed ways that broadcasters presented new technologies to audiences with little direct experience of these. Science fiction formats provided both entertainment and some knowledge and tended either to wholeheartedly embrace technology or warn against it. Current affairs programmes had the liability of being superficial and sensational. In depth examinations of the scientific and cultural developments and implications as well as learning oriented programs were few and far between. It was these latter categories which most interested those in attendance.

In 1993-4 TV Ontario planned to launch and has since initiated THE FUTURE, a show which interviewed artists and creative technologists. In the coming season this show will be incorporated into a larger news magazine show with cultural content.

Knowledge network has a series in development in 1994-5 about the information age with independent

Vancouver producer Brian Hamilton. It looks at the relationships between science, culture and sociology.

TV Northern Canada and Inuit Broadcasting Corporation were interested in culturally specific programming, specifically computer animations which would be culturally appropriate for aboriginal communities.

Children's programming was considered very important, in particular a series SCN had in development, "Digital Kids" excited interest.

b) Use of New Technologies

i) Strong interest was expressed in developing high band width fibre to enable the exchange of programming and co-production initiatives amongst broadcasters present and centres such as the National Arts Centre and Banff Centre for the Arts. Using satellite up links to facilitate exchange, including the exchange of interactive programs was also discussed. SCN has since been very active in moving towards information highway program exchange, perhaps motivated by their lack of production facilities and reliance on the independent sector.

ii) The educational broadcasters wanted to test creative uses of teleconferencing with the Banff Centre through planning on line symposia and other such events. Involvement in the upcoming NOMAD symposium which would combine video program exchange, online Internet discussions, teleconferencing and audiences in different locations was discussed. A dance program with interactive events and decentralised participation has since been proposed by SCN with the Banff Centre as a partner. Teleconferencing to plan programming was also strongly supported.

iii) Networked authoring was discussed as broadcasters want directors, composers, editors and other craft categories to be able to exchange data.

iv) Some broadcasters are initiating CD ROM projects as components of on air programs. In specific TV Ontario is developing a CD ROM which will coincide with "Point of Departure", their sci fi series. TV Northern Canada members such as Wawatay were enthusiastic about developing CD ROMs to teach language skills. Knowledge was interested in a possible documentary CD ROM about the "Nomad" program at the Banff Centre.

v) The Banff Centre was asked to provide advice on developing internal networks at several broadcasters.

vi) A larger forum to discuss the future of television and cultural programming in particular was perceived as valuable. Banff will initiate this ("Beyond TV", 1995).

vii) A proposal for an interactive television cable caster was considered. It would be an outlet for interactive programming, intelligent games, cultural advertising. While interest was expressed, most at the meeting felt that they needed to get a grasp on the use of new technologies within their own environments before they could support an external initiative.

FOLLOW-UP

Plans were made for ongoing meetings between project teams. A name for the collaborative group, C3 P2, was coined. The next meeting will be in Saskatchewan in 1994. Specific new media initiatives are moving forward as specific projects of broadcasters or the Banff Centre.