NUMBER TWO 2007

Ford Reports

The Ford Foundation Magazine of Ideas and Action

WWW.FORDFOUND.ORG

The Public Square in a Digital Age

Making room for diverse voices in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Plugging in the Public Interest

As media technologies grow more complex, so do the battles over access and ownership.

All Things Reconsidered

The next generation of public media draws up a game plan to attract new audiences.

Public Comment

Over 5 but not yet 50? PBS boss Paula Kerger wants you.

Raising New Voices

Three countries, three journeys toward developing diverse media offerings.

Ideas in Action

A healthy democracy relies upon a well-informed and engaged citizenry. Yet today, contrary to conventional wisdom, rapid changes in the media sector may be eroding the basic tenets of a free, democratic and pluralistic marketplace of ideas. In response, the Ford Foundation is supporting a diverse network of organizations committed to preserving public interest values in the nation's media system. Consolidation of ownership, threats to the freedom and fairness of the Internet, and access challenges faced by low-income Americans are among the issues these organizations are tackling. Efforts to re-energize and diversify America's traditional public media are also a priority. And abroad, groups are working to strengthen the role of media in countries in transition.

— The Editors

Ford Reports 2007, Volume 37, No. 2

The Public Square in a Digital Age

About the Ford Foundation

This year the Ford Foundation is making approximately $625 million in grants in the United States and—through 12 regional offices—in scores of countries around the globe. Ford Reports highlights the remarkable work and ideas of the people and organizations behind these grants and how they are creating a better world.

www.fordfound.org

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY RANDY LYHUS

FRONTLINES

MEDIA AT RISK

Journalists Face Safety Challenges in Mexico

KEITH DANNEMILLER

Reporting the news has become an increasingly dangerous line of work. Last year was the most deadly on record for journalists. Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based organization that fights for press freedom, says at least 110 journalists were killed, 56 kidnapped and 1,470 physically attacked or threatened in 2006. Iraq tops the list of the most dangerous nations in the world for journalists, according to the International Press Institute. Mexico ranks second.

"The media environment is reaching a tipping point. Journalists have long felt intimidated by public officials to compromise their objectivity, and now the widespread violence they face has made their daily duties even more precarious," says Mario Bronfman, the Ford Foundation's representative in Mexico City. "We are working with local partners to fight this attack against the press, against freedom of expression."

The Ford Foundation supports grantees in Mexico who are examining human rights abuses against journalists. Much of the violence has been linked to drug cartels. Yet the government has failed to aggressively pursue those responsible. Media outlets are intimidated and, as a result, journalism in Mexico is suffering.

To address the issue, Bronfman has identified a set of organizations focusing on the safety of journalists, and also providing professional training and other supports for democratic practices throughout the media sector.

UPDATE

For Ethnic Media, Generally Good News

The state of the nation's Latino, black and Asian American press is generally healthy. "While many mainstream outlets are suffering declines in audience and revenue, the ethnic media seems to be riding above it all," a recent report from the Project for Excellence in Journalism concludes.

Among the factors accounting for the growth in ethnic media—from Spanish-language television networks to small local newspapers—are increasingly diverse communities that are spreading beyond major metropolitan areas. Every year the minority share of the U.S. population rises. The buying power of this diverse group also increases annually.

The future of ethnic media is complicated, however. Black newspapers, which rely on an aging audience, are a hard sell to advertisers and have been slow to adopt an online presence. In 2006, for the first time, Latino population growth came from births rather than immigration. English is likely to be the first language of the U.S.-born generation, a trend which is bound to adversely affect the market for Spanish-language media.

As part of its mission to build social cohesion and promote citizen participation, Ford has boosted support of ethnic media as a vital cultural resource.

"Promoting an informed public dialogue and strengthening the voice of marginalized groups are at the core of all that the foundation does," says Susan V. Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation.

THREE GRANTEES PLAYING KEY ROLES IN THIS EFFORT:

Fundar: Center for Research and Analysis

Monitors news coverage of elections and major social issues to analyze mass media trends and determine whether news outlets are operating in a balanced, independent manner while increasing awareness of the bias that can occur in news reporting.

» www.fundar.org.mx

ARTICLE 19

Investigates human rights abuses against journalists and designs and implements "first aid" responses to threats, including providing the press with mobile phones and emergency numbers, accompanying those at risk and providing a safe haven within or outside the country.

» www.article19.org

AMARC México

The Mexican branch of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters provides training, technical and legal assistance, and organizational support to community radio stations, ensuring their freedom of expression and ability to promote a social dialogue.

» www.amarcmexico.org

KEITH DANNEMILLER

A Mexican news team interviews a passerby near the entrance to the Metro Chapultepec subway station in Mexico City.

RECENT GRANTS SUPPORTING ETHNIC MEDIA:

Wayne State University

Creates a platform for ethnic media entities in Michigan to develop relationships, share resources and strengthen their impact in the state. Also supports efforts to incorporate ethnic news curriculum in existing courses and establishes a Center for Ethnic Media Policy and Research.

» www.comm.wayne.edu/ethnicmedia.php

University of Massachusetts Boston

Enables the university's Center on Media and Society to strengthen the impact and news quality of Boston's ethnic media. This includes developing an ethnic media news wire service and internships.

» www.mccormacktmp.umb.edu/cms

Pacific News Service

Supports San Francisco-based New America Media and its collaboration with more than 700 ethnic news organizations, as well as efforts to strengthen the communication links between ethnic media and immigrant rights groups.

» www.newamericamedia.org

AL ZANYK/COURTESY WEXNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS

UNITED STATES ARTISTS

Supporting Artists, Sustaining Communities

Zoe Strauss photographs neglected communities. Bill T. Jones choreographs innovative performances that confront issues of race and sexuality. Marilyn Chin pens books considered Asian American classics. All are 2007 United States Artists (USA) fellows, beneficiaries of an innovative program providing support to creative individuals.

"[They are] dynamic artists whose unique visions and creative contributions are opening minds and enlivening communities across America," says USA Executive Director Katherine DeShaw.

Most support for the arts focuses on institutions. In 2005, for example, governments and philanthropies donated nearly $14 billion to arts, culture and humanities programs, but support for individual artists remains fragmented and largely unaddressed.

In 2003, the Ford Foundation and 35 other philanthropies commissioned an Urban Institute study of the everyday issues facing artists.

The report found that although artists contribute significantly to the health and economic well-being of their communities, they lack adequate support systems and often struggle to earn a living wage and maintain housing, workspace and health insurance.

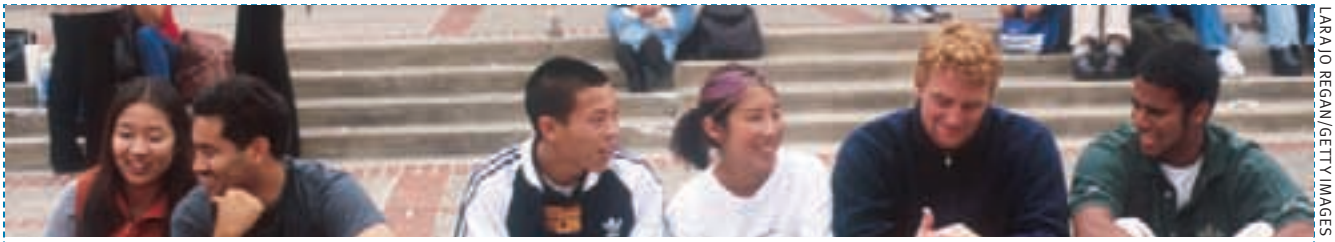
To address the issue, the Ford Foundation led an effort to make a significant investment in working artists. USA was launched with $15 million of Ford funding, along with $5 million from the Rockefeller, Prudential and Rasmuson foundations. The effort builds on Ford's commitment to strengthen the arts and aims to encourage long-term support to sustain working artists.

USA considers hundreds of worthy candidates in fields ranging from architecture and design to music, dance, and visual arts for fellowships worth $50,000 each. The first 50 USA fellowships were awarded last year. The 2007 fellows were announced on November 17 in Los Angeles.

"At its best, art speaks to our minds, our souls and our human spirit," says Susan V. Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation and USA's board chair. "USA's investment in the creative potential of our country will yield returns for us all."

» www.unitedstatesartists.org

» www.urban.org/publications/411311.html



LARA JO REGAN/GETTY IMAGES

DREAM FUND

Making Opportunities for All a Priority

Despite decades of progress, a yawning gap remains between black and white wealth, homeownership, employment and education rates. Similarly, women continue to earn significantly less for comparable work than their male counterparts. To address these persistent deficits, the Ford Foundation established the Fulfilling the Dream Fund, a collaborative funding effort committed to implementing innovative ways to support, strengthen and expand opportunities for racial minorities and women in education, employment and contracting.

Established in 2004, the Dream Fund addresses systemic barriers to opportunity and supports institutions with efforts to become more inclusive. Philanthropic partners engaged in this effort now number 30, including the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation.

As of April 2007, the Dream Fund has invested more than $6 million in 43 grants supporting affirmative action efforts nationwide. The grantees—including the Advancement Project, Asian Pacific American Legal Center and the Education Law Center—work at the national, regional and local levels, using research, litigation and communication strategies to achieve Dream Fund goals.

» www.affirmativeactionadvocacy.com

NEWS BYTES

KAORI FUJIYABU

Prize for La MaMa

Ellen Stewart, the legendary founder of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York, has received the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Art Association. The prestigious international arts prize is given annually to recognize lifetime achievement in sculpture, architecture, music, theater and film. Winners receive 15 million yen (about $135,000). Stewart, 87, opened the off-Broadway club in 1961, providing a creative home where artists have thrived. A longtime grantee, La MaMa first received Ford funding in 1967. La MaMa has supported many critically acclaimed actors including Sam Shepard, Diane Lane, Harvey Fierstein and Robert DeNiro.

» www.lamama.org

STEVE WEWERKA

College Credit 101

Student debt is a growing crisis on college campuses. Over the last decade, student credit card balances have ballooned 134 percent. Today, students are graduating with an average of $4,000 in credit card debt, nearly half the total for U.S. households. To address the issue, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group launched a national effort in fall 2007 to educate students about credit practices. The consumer group's initiative includes funding marketing campaigns that dispel claims of credit card companies; encouraging colleges to restrict credit card marketing; and developing a new Web site, TruthAboutCredit.org.

» www.truthaboutcredit.org
» www.uspirg.org

ONE ECONOMY

High-Speed Access to Opportunity

One Economy Corporation came to the Ford Foundation seven years ago with a vision of maximizing the potential of technology to help low-income people improve their lives and enter the economic mainstream. Ford provided One Economy with its first grant—$250,000—enough to start operations in a Washington, D.C., basement.

Today, One Economy's "Bring IT Home" campaign has succeeded in getting 42 states and the District of Columbia to require developers to include high-speed Internet access in affordable housing units. The initiative has provided 300,000 low-income people in the United States with broadband in their homes.

"Naysayers told us that the poor have little use for computers or the Internet," One Economy Founder and CEO Rey Ramsey has said. "We saw them as folks who were fighting every day to give their children better lives."

In addition to access, One Economy focuses on providing information. In 2001, One Economy established a multilingual Web site called the Beehive. The free resource provides information on homeownership, health, finances, employment and education geared to low- and moderate-income households.

One Economy has succeeded in getting 42 states and the District of Columbia to require developers to include high-speed Internet access in affordable housing units.

A new initiative, ZipRoad.org, uses ZIP codes to help parents find school information, after-school tutoring programs and other education-related resources in their neighborhoods.

» www.one-economy.com
» www.thebeehive.org

Buzzing with Information and Resources

To date, more than 12.5 million people have visited the Beehive, including 2.2 million Spanish-language users.

As of November 2007:

- 740,000 sought information about unemployment benefits
- 475,000 accessed Medicaid information
- 435,000 found information about diabetes
- 467,000 received assistance finding child care
- 480,000 received homework help
- 456,000 sought assistance on family budgeting
- 109,000 found information on earning a GED
- 110,000 sought information on how to write a check

SHAWN ESCOFFERY

BEYOND BEATS AND RHYMES

The Rap on Hip-Hop

Byron Hurt has lectured on more than 100 college campuses and trained thousands of young men and women on issues related to gender, race, sex, violence and the media. The experience inf uenced how he felt about the state of the music he grew up with and led to a film project that took him six years to complete.

His critically acclaimed documentary, "HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes," takes an uncensored look at the negative portrayals of women, stereotypical images of black masculinity and homophobic references that pervade hip-hop music and videos.

"I think more people than is widely known are upset about these images and these representations," Hurt, 37, has said. "People are really starting to tire of these very narrow and limiting representations of not only black men and Latino men, but also of black women."

"Beyond Beats and Rhymes" premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival and was broadcast on PBS earlier this year. Ford gave Hurt a grant to complete post-production and for educational outreach, including a 24-month tour to screen the film at historically black colleges and universities.

Hurt has also shown "Beyond Beats and Rhymes" to NBA players and community groups across the country. The reviews have been positive.

Sabrina Schmidt Gordon, the film's co-producer and editor, says it resonates differently with various audiences. Some people, she says, are glad that the film is out there for their children's sake; others are "thankful that someone is finally saying what they have been thinking all along."

» www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop
» www.bhurt.com
» www.itvs.org/outreach/hiphop

URBAN STRATEGIES

Improving Lives, One Community at a Time

Urban Strategies is turning its attention to New Orleans and Camden, N.J. The nonprofit has a targeted approach to strengthening struggling urban areas. Healthy communities, it contends, require safe housing and good schools.

Founded in 1978, Urban Strategies has received ongoing support from the Ford Foundation, including funding for its plan to revitalize mixed-income neighborhoods in Camden, where two out of every three children live in poverty, and a public housing project in New Orleans, which remains mired in recovery challenges two years after Hurricane Katrina. Urban Strategies is working with local leaders in each city to identify specific community needs. The nonprofit provides a range of services including community planning and engagement, school improvement, and economic and policy development.

The St. Louis-based organization is the nonprofit arm of McCormack Baron, a set of companies that manages property and develops mixed-income housing. McCormack Baron has developed more than 16,500 housing units in 26 cities across the country over the past three decades. The relationship with the companies is one of the many public-private partnerships that Ford has supported over the years. The approach shows it is possible to make profits while improving people's lives.

» www.urbanstrategiesinc.org

UPDATE

Combating HIV/AIDS: The Southern Strategy

The U.S. South is home to nearly half of the nation's new AIDS cases. Forty-one percent of Americans living with HIV reside in the South, and an estimated 46 percent of new AIDS cases are found in the region. Despite these numbers, only 9 percent of philanthropic HIV/AIDS funding is dedicated to Southern states.

While HIV transmission and AIDS-related deaths have been greatly reduced over the last quarter century, the virus continues to spread at epidemic rates in many communities. Minority groups are disproportionately affected, representing 71 percent of new AIDS cases. HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death for African Americans.

Fifty-four percent of African Americans reside in the South. The region has experienced the most rapid increase in AIDS cases, with Southern states leading the nation in the number of people living with AIDS and the proportion of women and African Americans with AIDS living in rural areas.

The state of HIV/AIDS in the South is exacerbated by heightened factors in the region, including a health care delivery system in crisis; a significant stigma surrounding the disease; high rates of poverty; the prevalence of racism, sexism and homophobia; and high incarceration and immigration rates.

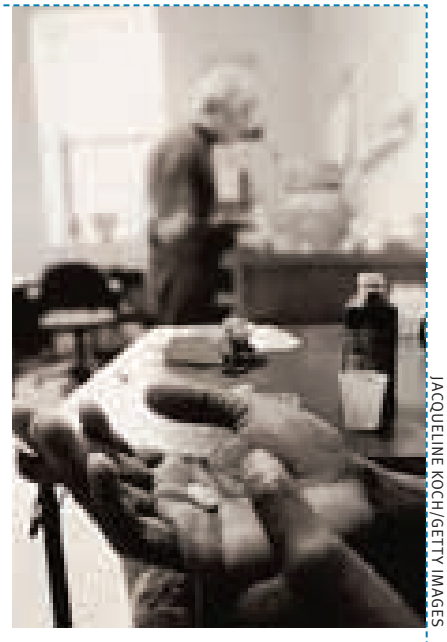
Forty-one percent of Americans living with HIV reside in the South, and an estimated 46 percent of new AIDS cases are found in the region.

"The South has not received adequate HIV/AIDS prevention and care funding," says Ford Foundation Program Officer Terry McGovern. "In keeping with the foundation's tradition of addressing unmet need, we are working to make resources available to the communities most overlooked and devastated by the HIV/AIDS crisis."

An initial $1.55 million Ford grant, along with $250,000 from the Elton John AIDS Foundation, is helping the National AIDS Fund establish a new initiative known as Southern REACH (Regional Expansion of Access and Capacity to Address HIV/AIDS).

This multiyear initiative will support community-based organizations in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The new fund will help secure and develop HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention and care programs and encourage local philanthropy and leadership to devote greater resources and attention to communities affected by the virus.

» www.aidsfund.org

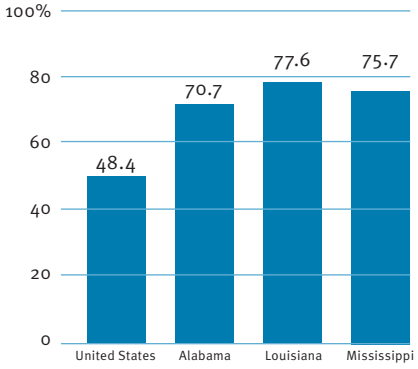


JACQUELINE KOCH/GETTY IMAGES

HIV/AIDS in the U.S.

- From 2000 to 2003, new AIDS cases increased 35.6 percent in the Deep South states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina), compared with 5.2 percent in all other states combined.
- The greatest number of people estimated to be living with AIDS, AIDS deaths, and new AIDS diagnoses reside in the South, followed by the Northeast, West and Midwest.

New AIDS Cases in 2005
(percent occurring among African Americans)



- In the United States, 48.4 percent of new AIDS cases in 2005 occurred among African Americans. In Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, 70.7 percent, 77.6 percent and 75.7 percent of new cases, respectively, were among African Americans. By comparison, in those three states, an average of 31.7 percent of the population is African American.

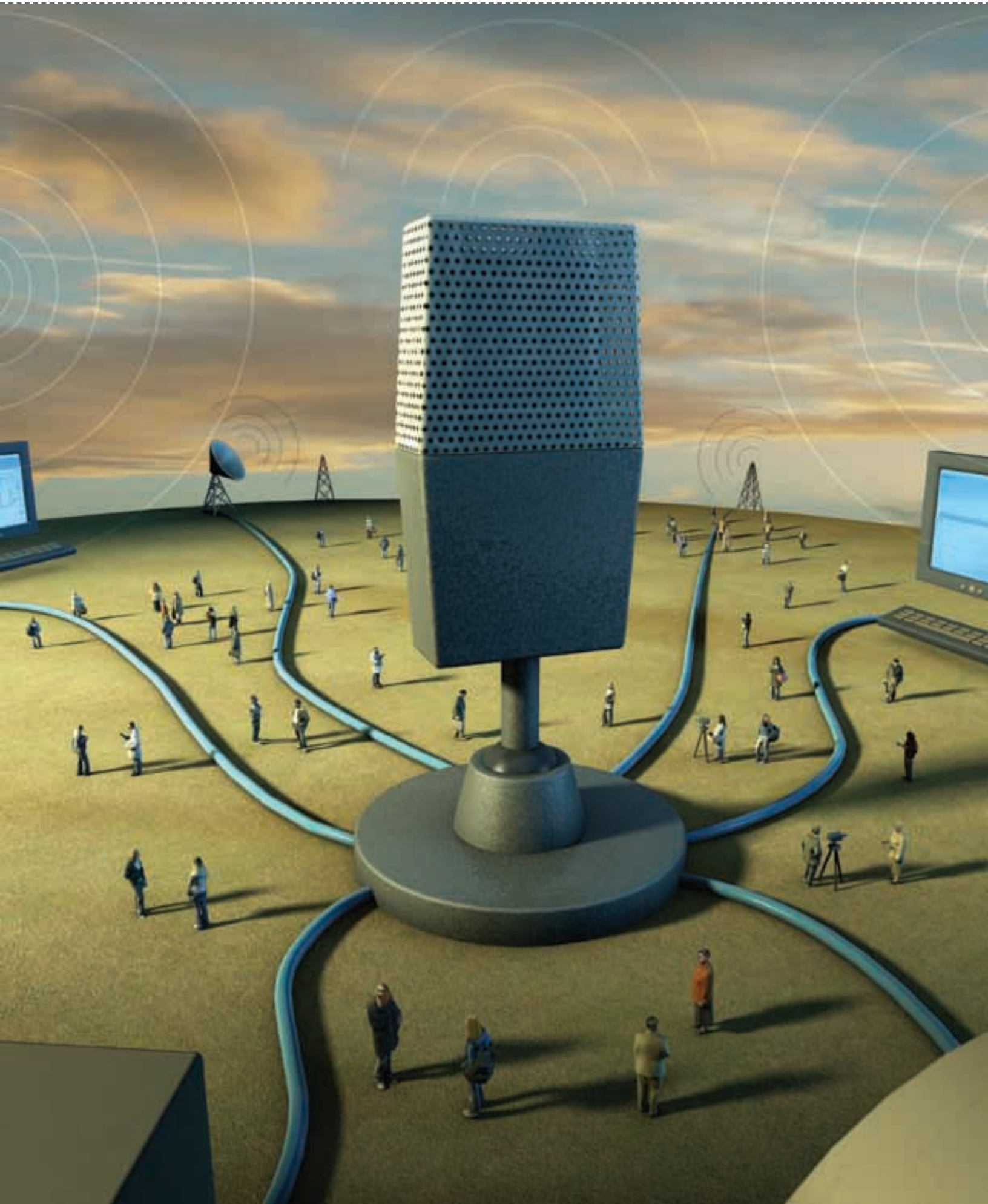
Sources: American Journal of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, National AIDS Fund, Urban Institute, U.S. Census Bureau

How an unheralded network of organizations is making room for diverse voices and true public space in a digital era.

The New Public Square

Ear-budded Americans listen to podcasts on virtually any imaginable topic and text message friends and colleagues about everything from grocery lists to leveraged buyouts. This constant connection and limitless expanse of fact and opinion would seem to be the perfect incubator for democratic involvement and participation. Yet as the media sector reinvents itself, there are real questions about how citizens learn about the issues affecting their lives, make choices, and take part in the governance of a continuously changing media environment where enormous sums of money and power are at stake. Over the past five years, the Ford Foundation has renewed its longstanding commitment to the media field. Our objective is to ensure that diverse voices are heard and that citizens have access to media that enrich the way we practice democracy.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RANDY LYHUS



As the technologies delivering our media grow more complex, so do the battles over access and ownership.

Plugging in the Public Interest

In 2003, the Federal Communications Commission was preparing to loosen rules on media ownership nationally and in local markets. The FCC plan would have expanded the maximum reach of a given broadcaster from 35 percent of the national audience to 45 percent, while also raising the number of television stations a company could own in a single market and eliminating restrictions on cross-ownership of local newspapers and broadcast properties. The plan was consistent with the deregulatory agenda the agency had pursued for two decades.

This time, however, the plan for deregulation failed. On Capitol Hill, and at the FCC's offices in Washington, phones began ringing. Fax lines buzzed. Mail arrived in enormous piles. After two decades of largely unimpeded mass media deregulation, ordinary citizens were suddenly weighing in on the issue.

Indeed, by the end of 2003, more than two million Americans had contacted the FCC to comment on then-Chairman Michael Powell's sweeping deregulation plan. At one point, the FCC's Internet servers buckled under the strain of public comment.

"It was a lightning bolt," says Ben Scott of the media reform group Free Press, who was working as an aide on Capitol Hill at the time. "We were accustomed to getting maybe 10 calls a day from constituents on a variety of issues," he recalls. "Then suddenly we got 200 calls in an afternoon on one issue—and everyone was saying the same thing."

Citizen comments on the plan, both to the FCC and to members of Congress, were overwhelmingly negative. The FCC voted 3 to 2 to proceed with the plan, but Congress and the courts blocked full implementation. The previous rules on local ownership were kept in place. Only the cap on national ownership of broadcast media was raised—to 39 percent instead of 45 percent.

Individuals and groups across the ideological spectrum, from MoveOn.org to the National Rifle Association, had contributed to what was viewed as a singular victory over media deregulation. "It was driven by the handful of people

on the left and on the right who actively seek to participate in self-government," says Andrew Schwartzman, president of the Media Access Project. "They understand how important mass media is in affecting public policy."

Established public interest groups such as Common Cause and Consumers Union were joined in the campaign by newer, media-centric groups, including Free Press, the Media Access Project and the Center for Digital Democracy. These groups have made a mission of reminding political leaders, the press and public that the media have unique privileges that carry corresponding responsibilities to help sustain democracy and civil society.

A Democratic Vision

Throughout American history, democracy's champions have shared a common vision of public media as sufficiently robust, independent and diverse to create a thriving marketplace for what the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. called a "free trade in ideas."

That vision has been tested in recent decades, as the media landscape has grown in complexity. The advent of cable, satellite and digital technologies, have created new industries and revolutionized old ones.

At the same time, deregulation has led giant media corporations to seek greater scale and integration, acquiring vast amounts of content and the varied distribution channels needed to market that content. In seeking to free itself from the obligations of regulation, the industry has pursued what former New York Times columnist William Safire called "a power grab engineered by a seemingly unstoppable lobby."

In fact, the media industry spent more than $1.5 billion between 1998 and 2006 on lobbying members of Congress in both parties. In the race for profits and strategic advantage, many believe the public obligations of private media interests—including broadcasters who rely on access to airwaves owned by the public—have been cast aside.

Yet in 2003, the "unstoppable lobby" was, for a time, stopped. Whether the defeat of industry-backed deregulation represents a turning point or merely a speed bump on the road to further conglomeration is not yet clear. In the long run, perhaps nothing will be more decisive than the success or failure of activists in building a media democracy movement capable of rallying the public behind a pluralistic vision that encompasses diverse ownership and access for independent voices.

Media Consolidation

Between 1940 and 1990, more than 250 newspapers closed. Hundreds more—including top 20 papers like The Boston Globe and Los Angeles Times—were acquired by conglomerates based in other cities. Today, fewer than 300 of the nation's 1,500 daily newspapers are independently owned; 80 percent are controlled by one of the dominant chains, such as Gannett or the Tribune Company.

Yet while independent print media has endured a long decline, the effects of consolidation in broadcasting have been perhaps more pronounced. In the past two decades, companies such as General Electric, News Corporation, Disney, Viacom and Time Warner have secured ownership of everything from the biggest movie studios to all the major broadcast networks. Along the way, they've acquired numerous newspapers, magazines, book publishers, major Internet properties and satellite and cable assets. From 1995 through 2003, the top 10 owners of television stations increased their holdings from 104 stations producing $5.9 billion in annual revenue to 299 stations producing $11.8 billion in revenue.

Cable television expansion was once the basis of a passionate argument in favor of broadcast deregulation, under the theory that cable stations would represent stiff competition for over-the-air networks. The threat no longer exists. Today, about 90 percent of the top 50 cable channels are owned by the same dominant companies that own the broadcast networks.

Groups across the ideological spectrum contributed to what was viewed as

a singular victory over media deregulation.

The concentration of power has reached such density that even CNN founder Ted Turner and Barry Diller, head of Interactive Corp., the media and Internet conglomerate that includes the Home Shopping Network and the USA cable network, have publicly questioned the wisdom of allowing so much media power to accumulate in so few hands.

One consequence of consolidation has been a diminution of local news. The FCC's own research suggests that locally owned television stations run nearly 5 1/2 minutes more news per half hour than stations owned by conglomerates. After a five-year study of 172 news programs, the Project for Excellence in Journalism concluded that stations owned by large media companies ran more syndicated content and more often trimmed the local angle.

"That's not surprising," Turner wrote in a 2004 essay in Washington Monthly. "Local coverage is expensive, and thus will tend to be a casualty in the quest for short-term earnings."

Perhaps no segment of the media is more illustrative of the price of consolidation than radio. In 1995, Clear Channel Communications was already a large company, owner of 43 radio stations and 16 television stations. But after restrictions on radio ownership were lifted in 1996, allowing a single broadcaster to control up to eight stations in a local market while eliminating the cap on station ownership nationally, Clear Channel grew exceptionally. The company now owns more than 1,200 radio stations and is a leading concert promoter, exercising enormous control over the distribution of popular music.

In seeking economies of scale, Clear Channel boosts profits by squeezing localism off the airwaves. "If anyone says we are in the radio business, it wouldn't be someone from our company," Clear Channel Chairman Lowry Mays told Fortune magazine in 2003. "We're not in the business of providing news and information. We're not in the business of providing well-researched music. We're simply in the business of selling our customers' products."

In radio, as elsewhere, size implies force. In response to a political comment made in March 2003 by the lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, the 42 stations of Cumulus Media denied airtime to the country music trio for a month.

"For the media to have a single-minded emphasis on the bottom line is dangerous for democracy," wrote University of Pennsylvania law professor C. Edwin Baker, one of the country's leading authorities on mass media. "Dispersed ownership also reduces the danger of inordinate, potentially demagogic power in the public sphere."

Media diversity, in both ownership and point of view, is a venerable theme in American political discourse. "The First Amendment rests on the assumption that the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public," wrote then U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black in 1945.

In recent decades, however, many of the "diverse and antagonistic" sources of broadcast and print media have been consumed by larger sources, leading to greater homogenization and a worrisome decline in localism and diversity. In 2006 alone, there were $114.6 billion worth of media and entertainment mergers and acquisitions, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

In October 2007, current FCC Chairman Kevin Martin announced his intention to "complete these media ownership issues" by easing restrictions, though it is unclear whether he can garner sufficient support. Deregulation advocates point to the Internet as a medium so vast and fertile that it is capable of supplying all the diversity a great democracy could require. But opponents argue that the Internet, where most of the largest information sites are owned by the biggest media companies, is not immune to the laws of 21st century media dynamics. The medium is sure to be a contentious battleground not only in the fight over consolidation, but on other issues, as well. In fact, it already is.

The Tangled Web

The notion that the Internet should be neutral in moving content among users has deep and complex roots. The government required the telegraph companies founded in the 19th century and the telephone companies that emerged in the 20th century to deliver content on an equal basis, regardless of origin or endpoint. That meant, in the simplest terms, that phone lines had to handle each call or transmission equally. The question of net neutrality boils down to whether Web content will continue to be governed by that same principle.

The Internet as we know it is not a new network at all, but the movement of digital data along the same phone network that handles our calls, the cable lines that deliver our television service and the cellular networks that transmit our mobile conversations. Cable and telephone companies have invested billions of dollars to improve their ability to deliver Internet content. Dial-up service has rapidly given way to high-speed broadband connections that can handle a much greater flow of data.

Complex technical protocols manage the manner in which Web content is shuttled along these networks—and to a considerable degree these protocols strive for "neutral" handling of content, despite the obvious difference between handling, say, a high-quality video transmission and a routine e-mail message.

Many providers see net neutrality as an impediment to their ability to charge content providers based on the demands their content places on the pipelines. Without net

Media Regulation in the United States

1934
Congress enacts Communications Act, establishing the Federal Communications Commission. In its first year, FCC regulates 623 radio stations and a telephone industry with 14 million phones.

1941
FCC Local Radio Ownership and National TV Ownership Rule prohibits broadcasters from owning television stations that reach more than 35 percent of U.S. homes.

1959
Southern television stations impose news blackout on civil rights movement. Civil rights leaders and United Church of Christ, with support from Ford Foundation, sue in federal court, which rules airwaves are public property.

1964
FCC Local TV Multiple Ownership Rule prohibits broadcasters from owning more than one television station in same market, unless there are at least eight stations in market.

1970
FCC Radio/TV Cross-Ownership Restriction prohibits broadcasters from owning a radio station and a television station in same market.

1981
Congress and FCC carry out deregulatory moves, extending television licenses from three to five years. Number of television stations any single entity may own grows from seven in 1981 to 12 in 1985.

neutrality, for instance, broadband providers could move fee-paying commercial customers to the front of the line, making sure their content and applications are accessed more quickly and easily by consumers. Conversely, the content and applications of those unable or unwilling to pay high fees could be rendered less accessible to users—and potentially less valuable in both the commercial marketplace and in the marketplace of ideas.

"Speedier—and more costly—access will benefit the big brands and companies, which can afford to pay the various fees," says Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy. "Think movie companies, ad agencies, fast-food chains. Such a scenario would threaten all civil society-related content, especially from nonprofits."

"Allowing broadband carriers to control what people see and do online would fundamentally undermine the principles that have made the Internet such a success."

Because some broadband providers are also content providers, a non-neutral Internet could create another inequity: Providers such as Time Warner and Verizon would be able to provide speedy access to their own content while slowing down rival content. Net neutrality advocates say the very idea of free and equal access that the Web represents would be severely undermined.

Net neutrality is being enforced by the FCC as a basic organizing principle of Internet traffic, but it rests on a shaky foundation. Cable and telecommunications companies, which together control most broadband Internet access, supported legislation in 2006 to eliminate net neutrality.

Media democracy activists, reconstituting the coalition that defeated the FCC's plan to weaken broadcast ownership rules in 2003, organized opposition to the industry-backed legislation. More than one million people wrote or called members of Congress to register their support for net neutrality. Despite a tenacious lobbying effort by broadband providers, the 2006 legislation languished. (During the same time period, two legislative measures that would have advanced net neutrality also stalled in Congress.)

In the campaign to ensure equity and access along Internet pipelines, public interest advocates have been joined by technology giants Google and Microsoft. "Allowing broadband carriers to control what people see and do online would fundamentally undermine the principles that have made the Internet such a success," says Vinton Cerf, one of the key technical founders of the Internet and chief Internet evangelist at Google.

Few believe net neutrality has been secured. The amount of money at stake for broadband providers is enormous, and the Internet remains a volatile and evolving technical and business arena.

While Japan and some other nations that invest public funds in Internet infrastructure have ascended to the next level of high-speed connectivity, the United States is still searching for ways to overcome the gap in access to digital technology in low-income and minority communities—the original digital divide. That struggle, along with others

1996
Broad industry consolidation prompts Telecommunications Act, considered most important media legislation in over a decade. FCC required to review ownership rules every two years and determine if they are "necessary in the public interest as a result of competition."

2003
House blocks FCC decision relaxing ownership rules. Senate leaders and White House compromise on television station ownership cap allowing Viacom and News Corporation to keep all their stations.

2007
To create more open national wireless broadband network, FCC approves auction of new portion of broadcast spectrum. Bidding companies, in exchange for providing access, must let customers use devices and software of their own choosing on new network.

2001
U.S. government allots television stations a portion of broadcast spectrum to accommodate digital broadcast signals. Final transition to digital is scheduled for February 2009.

2005
FCC eases regulations on broadband services, such as DSL and cable modems, by designating them as "information services." Critics say ruling reduces broadband competition.

Sources: FCC; Chronicle of Higher Education; Corante; Current newspaper; NOW with Bill Moyers; Public Knowledge; United Church of Christ.

tied to the structure, function and economy of media, is a prerequisite for media democracy.

Social Inequality and Media

Media justice may be an elusive term to some, but the concept is fundamental. It stems from a recognition that democracy requires a media infrastructure that is open, accessible and diverse in ownership, content and point of view. Activism focused on media justice is growing. However, some of the most powerful trends in media—consolidation, homogenization and the high cost of broadband—have reinforced the obstacles.

For example, the consolidation wave has had an enormous negative impact on minority ownership of television stations. Since 1998, 40 percent of the stations that were minority owned were sold to non-minority entities. In October 2007, minorities owned 43 full-power commercial stations, accounting for 3 percent of stations nationwide.

"With new technologies and new platforms, we have to look for new ways for the underserved populations to have some opportunity to participate."

And access to the Internet remains a vital issue in many communities. In Indian Country, where Loris Ann Taylor, executive director of Native Public Media, focuses her work, many homes still lack even a dial-up connection. "The digital divide is so huge I call it a chasm," she says. "With new technologies and new platforms, we have to look for new ways for the underserved populations to have some opportunity to participate."

Cable and satellite fees, which for years increased faster than the general rate of inflation, are beyond the means of many poorer Americans, effectively cutting them off from the broadband revolution. "If we literally cannot access the infrastructure, then we're going to be locked out of the discussion," says Joaquin Alvarado, director of the Institute for Next Generation Internet at San Francisco State University.

Deficits in Internet access, as well as in minority ownership and representation, are easier to quantify than more subjective criteria relating to content. Yet even here, the data can be stark. FCC Commissioner Michael Copps says local TV news is four times more likely to show a mug shot during a crime story if the suspect is black than if the suspect is white. It's a data point that would surprise few African Americans.

"If you're marginalized by the media you notice it much more," says Cheryl Leanza, managing director of the Office of Communications, a media justice project affiliated with the United Church of Christ.

Leanza's group oversees three projects on media justice in minority communities. In Dearborn, Mich., one project monitors newspaper and television news portrayals of Arab Americans, who are often cited in terrorism-related stories but rarely appear in the news in any other capacity, Leanza says. Part of the project's mission is to educate journalists about their own racial and cultural biases.

We must be alert to social inequality and its expression in the media. Progress depends in part on securing the goals of media democracy advocates—policies to ensure net neutrality, limit consolidation and protect localism and pluralism.

Looking Forward

Under the portfolio of former program officer Becky Lentz, the Ford Foundation became an early funder of groups working on public interest media issues. Since 1998, the foundation has provided more than $30 million of support to more than 100 grantees. The foundation recognized that the media, while powerful in the past, is likely to become an even more significant contributor to social, political and cultural capital in the future. What's more, in the media arena there is often a clear connection between policies and outcomes, a fact that enables the nascent media democracy movement to focus its energies efficiently. As was the case with the 2003 campaign.

"The 2003 effort has had lasting impact because it generated stronger relationships between grassroots, national and research organizations that have been maintained and in some cases expanded," says Gene Kimmelman, vice president of federal and international affairs at Consumers Union. "We are more prepared as a community, and extensive media coverage of our success has made policy makers wary of reigniting the furor."

As public awareness of media democracy issues expands, new opportunities arise. Surveying the next phase of the media democracy movement, Kimmelman, who has been working on deregulation and consumer-protection issues for more than 20 years, sees "renewed efforts to promote diverse media ownership and an open Internet, coupled with new campaigns to open up affordable new sources of information." Such sources might include new broadband distribution systems, such as community-controlled Wi-Fi, as well as low-power radio, a new class of community-based FM stations with broadcast ranges of two to four miles.

"The people we work with sense the potential of media to strengthen democracy, increase civic knowledge and participation, and bring disenfranchised people into the social dialogue," says Pete Tridish, founder of the Prometheus Radio Project, a nonprofit focused on building the low-power radio community. "These small civil rights groups, farm workers unions, neighborhood associations and others are poorly served by the commercial media, and are not even in the demographic that public stations are shooting for—they know that the best way for the communities to get the full benefits possible from media technologies is to do it themselves."

Looking forward, one of the key issues for media activists and policy advocates is finding sustainability. "Funder education is essential," says Helen Brunner, director of the Media Democracy Fund. "I always ask foundations to consider whether media could be their 'second issue'—it plays a role, whatever their primary concern is."

The agenda is large; so are the complexities and obstacles to its realization. But the movement's vision of shaping media to become more diverse, open and just— that is, more democratic—is informed by values that are central to the American experience. ■

The next generation of public media draws up a game plan to attract diverse, new audiences.

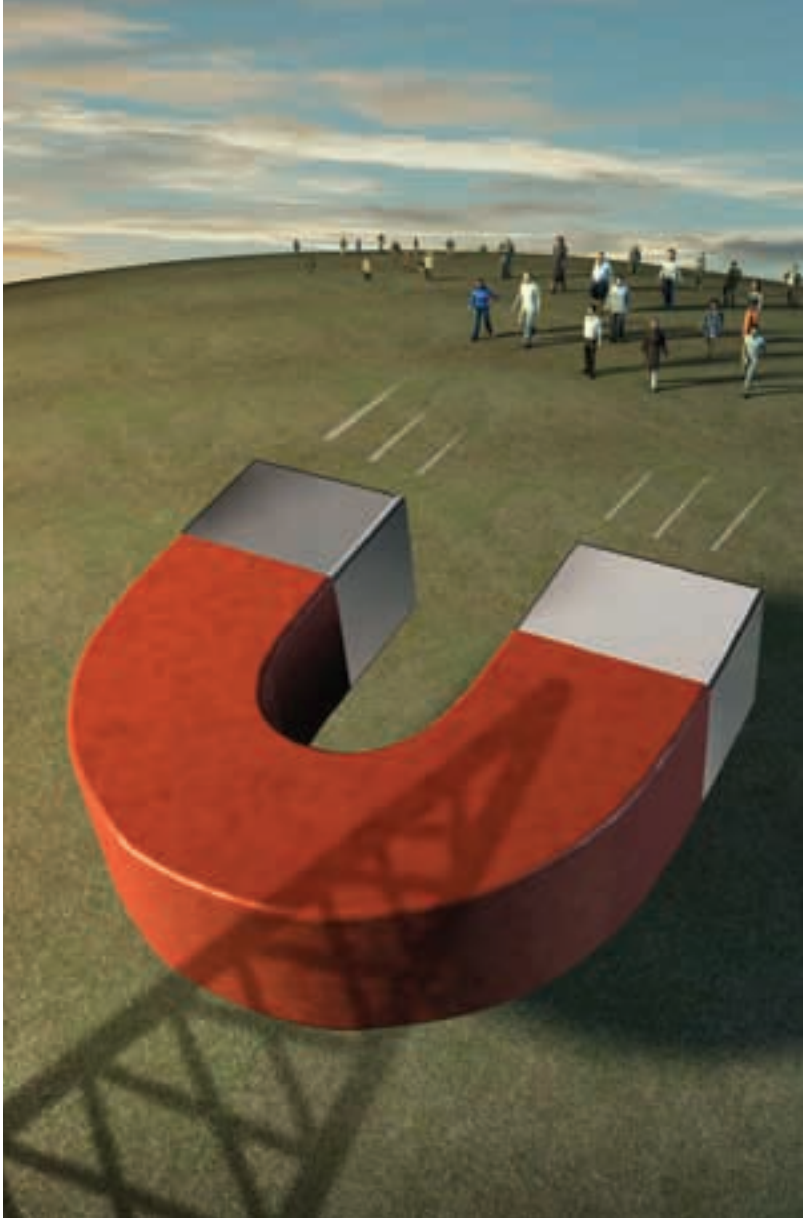
All Things Reconsidered

You listen to National Public Radio. You tune in to Public Broadcasting Service stations. But does Public Radio Exchange ring a bell? PRX, a clearinghouse for archived quality programming, is part of a new wave of public service media that has arisen in response to rapid technological change and segmenting audiences. But can these relative upstarts and their mainline public media forebears keep pace in a digital marketplace where change is the only constant?

Fifty years after their creation, PBS and NPR remain bedrock American institutions. In a 2007 Roper poll, Americans declared PBS the nation's "most trusted institution" for the fourth consecutive year. Other polls show public confidence in NPR and PBS surpassing all other media outlets, including newspapers, network broadcasts and cable news.

And yet some wonder how these public media institutions are adjusting in an environment of ceaseless technological shifts. Almost two years ago, a blue-ribbon panel headed by former Netscape CEO James Barksdale and former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt examined the state of public service media in a report, "Digital Future Initiative: Challenges and Opportunities for Public Service Media in the Digital Age."

In the foreword they wrote: "As the public broadcasting system approaches its fifth decade of service to this country, it is confronted by technologies and trends that are fundamentally reshaping the American media landscape.



The ongoing transition to digital media technologies is for public broadcasters both a great challenge and a momentous opportunity. … If today's public broadcasters can successfully adapt to this new environment, the potential for enhanced public service through digital media is vast."

While the technological challenges and opportunities facing public broadcasters are indeed profound, they are not the only forces at work. The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, aroused new interest among American audiences in news, ideas and perspectives from around the world. And America itself has rapidly diversified, with minorities making up a third of the population for the first time, according to U.S. Census figures released last summer.

How are public service media responding to these forces, developing new programming and employing new platforms to reach increasingly diverse and expanding audiences?

"Freed of certain restraints of mass media audience and

corporate return, publicly funded media can be experimental and targeted," says Karen Brown Dunlap, president of the Poynter Institute, a media think tank. "They can tell the stories of groups and issues that are usually ignored. They can draw closer to communities and help neighbors learn more about themselves and those around them. They can also cover the world as some corporate organizations retrench."

It is precisely these unique democracy-enhancing abilities that convinced the Ford Foundation to become a key player in the formation of public broadcasting from its infancy. The foundation helped develop the educational broadcast channels that led to the 1967 passage of the Public Television Act and the formation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Over the past 55 years, the foundation has invested more than $448 million in global public media.

"Freed of certain restraints of mass media audience and corporate return, publicly funded media can be experimental and targeted."

In 2005, Ford made its largest investment in the sector in a quarter century, providing $50.5 million in grants to 14 entities representing public broadcasting, ethnic media, documentary filmmaking and Internet enterprises. The goal is to diversify audiences, create new programming, add more international perspectives, strengthen the public media field and ensure that the public media sector becomes more financially stable.

"An informed citizenry is vital to good governance and community life, and these grants challenge advocates to strengthen public service media," says Susan V. Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation. "In the midst of a new media revolution of changing technology and shifting audience expectations, public media must once again innovate."

Adding New Voices

One of the hurdles faced by public service media is inventing ways to reach out to new sets of audiences with diverse cultural experiences and expectations. New America Media is based in San Francisco and run by longtime media innovator Sandy Close. Her organization is the country's first and largest national collaboration of ethnic news organizations. Close is working with ethnic news outlets across the United States to build a national network of ethnic media to share content and form partnerships on projects that will resonate with their targeted audiences. New America Media's newswire streams work from its own writers, media publications and broadcasts, with content from more than 700 partners into one subscription-based service.

"Our mission is to diversify the public forum at a time of unprecedented diversity in the country and bring voices and ideas that would otherwise not be heard," says Close.

Part of Close's challenge in working with ethnic media is bringing them together for journalism development workshops so they can witness the potential power of their sector and diminish their suspicions and rivalries. She is working with 10 ethnic media publications, each of which is investing in multilingual polls, sampling opinion on national and international issues among non-English-speaking minority populations.

The National Minority Consortia, part of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, works with African American, Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native American filmmakers and producers to create culturally varied programming that appeals to broader audiences.

As an example, the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) created a Hurricane Katrina Web site that reflects a black perspective on the catastrophe. With a Ford grant, NBPC formed a partnership with NPR, which aired its special Katrina coverage. But getting more minority voices on the air remains an uphill battle.

"The sad fact is that nearly 30 years after this organization started, we are still looking at a very small percentage of PBS hours devoted to the programming we support, less than one in 50 broadcast hours in prime time," says Jacquie Jones, president and CEO of NBPC.

Looking for ways to get more ethnic voices in the 2008 presidential campaign, National Minority Consortia members are working on a yearlong election initiative, which started in November 2007. The project will produce audio and video content for public radio and TV Web sites, such as NPR, "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" and the "Tavis Smiley Show."

Offering Global Perspectives

Coverage of international news by the U.S. media is shrinking. According to a 2007 study by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, at Harvard, the number of foreign bureaus operated by U.S. news organizations has fallen. "The television networks were the first to make cuts; as cable news cut into their audiences, ABC, CBS, and NBC shuttered a number of their bureaus in the 1980s," the study said. Yet NPR has added bureaus, notably four in Africa, a continent that is largely ignored by the mainstream media, and international news now comprises more than one-third of NPR's output.

"By expanding our foreign coverage, we have expanded greatly our awareness and capacity," says Kevin Klose, NPR president. "We look at the world differently than we did five years ago. Our coverage is much less U.S.-centric."

Some of the most intriguing public service media programming focusing on international news comes from Link TV, the first nationwide, 24-hour television channel dedicated to explaining global perspectives to American viewers. "The mission of Link TV is to connect Americans with the world by engaging, educating and motivating viewers to take action," says Kim Spencer, Link TV's president. Established in December 1999, Link TV reaches 29 million Americans through satellite television and an even broader audience by streaming programs on its Web site. The channel produces 180 hours of original programming in a 12-month period with the remainder acquired from independent producers.

In April 2007, Link TV premiered six original documentaries, including "Nobelity," which looks at the world's most pressing problems through the eyes of nine Nobel laureates, and "Gitmo: The New Rules of War," which ex-

"We have expanded to fill the void of international perspectives on American television, where audiences only hear foreign news through sound bites, if at all."

amines the interrogation practices at the U.S. Guantanamo Bay detention facility. In a nationwide audience survey of viewers who watch the channel an hour or more each week, 40 percent said they changed their perspective on an issue because of something they saw on Link TV. Twenty-seven percent said they became more involved in a political activity and 17 percent were motivated to donate their time or money to a cause, says Spencer.

Link TV is also the force behind the pioneering half-hour daily news program, "Mosaic," which features selections from TV news programs produced throughout the Middle East and translated into English. "Mosaic," which won a Peabody Award in 2005, can be seen worldwide on satellite TV or on the Web after a show is broadcast.

"'Mosaic' allows you to see one Middle East story covered from different angles," says Jamal Dajani, who started the program six years ago and now serves as Link TV's director for Middle Eastern programming. "Mosaic" includes television news broadcasts from selected countries and regions. These news reports are regularly watched by 280 million people in countries throughout the Middle East.

"With all the new satellite technology, one thing for sure is [that] pluralism has been created on the air. For years, some dictatorships tried to silence the masses. Now there are no longer any borders," Dajani says.

Ford also supports OneWorld.net and OneWorld TV, launched in 2000 and 2002, respectively. They are multipurpose Internet sites that use Web resources to promote human rights and democratic values by offering news, commentary and criticism in a variety of languages.

Since 2005, Independent Television Service (ITVS), another Ford grantee, has funded more than 50 programs from more than 40 countries through its international division. The resulting documentaries help compensate for all-too-rare opportunities to view public affairs TV programming about international issues.

"These programs bring to viewers seldom-seen perspectives that range from Colombian children to Bulgarian villagers to the first woman in India to publicly announce her HIV-positive status," says Sally Fifer, president and CEO of ITVS. "We have expanded to fill the void of international perspectives on American television, where audiences only hear foreign news through sound bites, if at all."

"Documentaries have this unique power to make people feel for other people," Fifer says. "If we could stir that kind of understanding and empathy and interest on public broadcast television, we could capture the imagination of Americans to be more interested in and knowledgeable about international affairs."

STEVEN RUBIN

Support for Public Service Media

Over the past 55 years, the Ford Foundation has provided $448 million in support to public service media. The foundation's recent signature effort, "Global Perspectives in a Digital Age: Transforming Public Service Media," was launched in 2005. The five-year, $50.5 million initiative—Ford's largest investment in public service media in a quarter century—is making grants to 14 nonprofits.

Public Television System	millions
Public Broadcasting Service	$10.00
Independent Television Service	5.00
Sundance Documentary Fund	5.00
National Minority Consortia	1.75
WGBH	0.50
Public Radio System	
National Public Radio	7.50
Public Radio International	2.50
Public Radio Exchange	1.50
Public Radio Capital	2.00
New Public Media Ventures	
OneWorld US	1.25
New America Media	2.00
Link TV	4.50
Policy and Sustainability	
Center for Social Media	3.00
Nonprofit Finance Fund	4.00
Total	**$50.50**

Building Audiences

What good is improved programming if no one tunes in to it? Building audiences and making public radio more widely available are essential for growth and innovation.

Public Radio Exchange (PRX) has developed an online marketplace that distributes independent radio programming. Its Web site, started four years ago, is based on the recognition that most informative radio features are heard once and then archived. PRX provides a central database where material is catalogued and made available for purchase by other public radio stations or for the public to hear for free. The Exchange, which already has 12,000 radio pieces on its site, helps independent producers reach wider audiences.

"This makes it easier for producers and stations to make money and to extend the life of the radio work they have already created," says John Barth, PRX's managing director. "One of the things I'm amazed at is there are pieces from 2003 and 2004 that are still being licensed. That means we've built a living catalog that has some real value."

While PRX strives to expand the reach of quality radio programming, Public Radio Capital (PRC), another Ford grantee, is a leading adviser in the planning, acquisition and financing of new public radio channels.

"There is such an appetite for public radio," says Susan Harmon, a managing director of PRC, founded in 2001. "It is based on the idea that more public radio engenders more programs and more audience. The bigger the audience, the more they will donate and businesses will continue to support public radio."

For example, PRC negotiated the purchase of an AM station in Denver, allowing Colorado Public Radio to create a two-channel network of news and classical music. Within 18 months, Colorado Public Radio had increased its audience 24 percent, donations rose 28 percent and membership grew by 34 percent.

"To be able to reach a broader and more ethnically diverse audience, public radio needs more stations in each market."

PRC also works on projects to reach out to more diverse and younger audiences in an effort to expand public radio listening beyond its largely white audience. In early 2007, the Milwaukee public school system wanted to sell WYMS-FM, a taxpayer-supported jazz station. PRC helped Radio for Milwaukee, a group of investors, negotiate a contract to operate the station, which will feature local guests and music more reflective of Milwaukee's ethnic diversity.

PRC also works frequently with Radio Bilingüe, a nonprofit radio network that is the only national distributor of Spanish-language programming for public radio. PRC recently helped the Fresno, Calif.-based company acquire a new station in northern California to extend its service in Spanish and English.

"To be able to reach a broader and more ethnically diverse audience, public radio needs more stations in each market," says Mark Hand, a PRC managing director. "If you just have a single public radio station in the market, it tends to be the more traditional public radio news and information. If you have a second or third station, especially with a lot of the great content produced these days, then you have more opportunity to develop programming that will bring in new audiences."

Money Matters

One of the biggest challenges facing public service media is financial stability. Public broadcasting depends on the ups and downs of individual donors, corporate grants and federal funding. As a result, the work of the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) in New York can be critical.

Most public media enterprises need to rethink their business and funding assumptions and create new business models attuned to the digital age, says Clara Miller, NFF's president. With a Ford grant, NFF is investing $4 million over five years to help public media organizations negotiate business challenges and adopt financial plans that will help them sustain operations and grow. Link TV and the National Black Programming Consortium are two Ford grantees that NFF is assisting with business strategies and expansion plans.

"From a business point of view, these are extremely diverse organizations," says Miller. "They all share an absolutely explosive business environment, because technology is changing moment by moment. NFF will help the groups better understand their business models and develop promising new or nontraditional business forms that will be shared with the national public service media community."

Miller's goal is to change the way managers think about financing in the nonprofit media world. "We are looking at what we need to learn about the changing environment that will help us deploy funds better in the future to accomplish the mission of public media."

Partners in a Changing Industry

A new generation of public service media leaders gathered recently in Silver Spring, Md., for their fifth Ford-sponsored meeting. The group of nearly 50 included representatives from PBS, NPR and Public Radio International, which, like NPR, provides programming to local radio stations around the country. But most of those in attendance represented relatively new types of public service media, including Public Radio Exchange, New America Media, National Black Programming Consortium, Link TV and ITVS. The group, most of them Ford grantees, spent two days together, sharing ideas and strategies to re-imagine the future of their industry.

In the midst of a new media revolution of changing technology and shifting audience expectations, public media must once again innovate. Ford's $50.5 million investment provides risk capital for new ideas and new arrangements that harness the power of mass media for the public good and ensures that public media remains relevant to new audiences.

"We placed our bet on a new generation of public-minded media pioneers," says Alison R. Bernstein, vice president of the Ford Foundation's Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom program, which houses its media work. "Let's see where they will lead us." ■

A conversation with PBS CEO Paula Kerger.

Public Comment

ROBERT SEVERI

When Paula Kerger was named president and chief executive officer of PBS in January 2006, she said she was looking forward to the opportunity to "realize the full promise of this medium" because public television's "greatest days lie ahead." More than half a century ago, the Ford Foundation invested in that promise and was instrumental in the development of public broadcasting. Over the decades, the foundation has continued to support the sector, most recently funding several significant efforts Kerger has championed: establishment of the PBS Foundation; the launch of PBS World, a digital public affairs network; and a major diversity initiative. A public broadcasting veteran, Kerger spent 13 years at the Educational Broadcasting Corporation and Thirteen/WNET in New York before joining PBS. She talked with Ford Reports about her key priorities.

How do you define public media?

Paula Kerger: I define public media as media that strives to serve people, not profit from them. That's exactly what we do at PBS, each and every day.

We live in a world where media are everywhere. Not only are there 500 channels on the television dial, but we have video monitors on our ATMs, at gas station pumps and airport baggage carousels—even in bathroom stalls. And in every case, these media are being used as advertising tools.

That isn't what we do in public television. We exist to use media as tools for teaching and learning, and we don't measure our success by the number of products we sell but by the number of minds we open and the number of lives we touch. It's why when you turn on your local PBS station, you see programming that you won't find anywhere else, whether it's an educational children's show, a documentary, an independent film or a performing arts special.

How has this definition of public media evolved since the creation of public broadcasting in the middle of the last century?

Today, PBS is more than public television. Our content is online and on iPods and cellphones. We're going where our viewers go. But no matter what method we use to deliver our programs and services, the word "public" will always come first in our name. That will always shape what we do.

What about content? There are so many channels providing all kinds of material, some of it similar to what people have been traditionally able to get from PBS.

Well, it's funny. A&E was created as an arts channel. Well, A&E's principal program now is [syndicated episodes of CBS's] "CSI." Bravo was created as the next iteration of a great arts channel. Their principal programs are a couple projects that I think are great. One is "Project Runway" and the other is "Top Chef," which are very creative. But it's a little different kind of art. I think what has happened with some of the cable channels is they're still driven by the marketplace. When you start out with a profit motive, it does take you down a slightly different path.

The other thing is access. When you think about channels like HBO, it's in a fraction of American households and so [the question is] should documentaries only be available to those that can afford premium cable television?

The other thing that makes us different and unique is that in most parts of the country it's the only local television left. I've traveled a lot in the last year in this job and I have looked at a lot of stations that are, in fact, the only local broadcaster left. And I think it has profound public service implications to not have someone that's on the ground, in a community, worrying about the issues of that community and reporting on them.

You went through some challenges with the Latino community over Ken Burns' "The War" documentary and the lack of representation of Latino veterans. Can you talk about that?

[Ken Burns'] original construction of the film was to focus the story of World War II from the perspective of four towns. It wasn't a deliberate oversight, it's just that [no one featured] from those four towns happened to be Latino.

I met with the organizations because, again, we're public broadcasting. And Ken did the same. It was his decision to

go back and to produce some additional content, because he realized that he had a great documentary and that he could enrich it further.

For me it has been an interesting process. The work that comes out is stronger. I think Ken certainly would be the first to admit that. Working with a filmmaker, it's really important for us in public broadcasting to listen to communities, but it's also important for us to maintain the integrity of the filmmaker. At the end of the day, this needed to be his decision. Our role at PBS was to stand beside him. And I think that he's made a wonderful decision.

From my perspective, the thing that has been important about this whole experience is that it has given me an opportunity to develop relationships with organizations that I think, moving forward, will only make public broadcasting stronger in terms of really representing the multiplicity of voices in this country.

How has the experience with "The War" affected your thinking about diversity at PBS?

Diversity is a really big issue for me moving forward. It's an issue for me at PBS and in public television across the country. We're looking at several different things.

We can focus on PBS as an organization to make it a more diverse organization. But that is not going to, I think, move public television fully in the direction that it needs to go. In order to do that, we need to also look at our public television stations around the country. The leadership of those public television stations, both in terms of the staff as well as the boards. We need to look at the producing organizations that we work with. We work with a lot of producing stations who in turn work with a lot of outside producers. How do we really begin to pull our commitment to diversity through the entire enterprise of public broadcasting? How do we really think about having public television diverse both in front of the camera and behind the camera? That's the way that I've thought about it.

You came from running a local station in New York. Now that you're at PBS, how has your local experience informed what you're doing now?

Profoundly. I think it's why I have had, in some respects, an easier time in this job than my two predecessors. I have a bit more credibility, in some respects, with the managers of the stations because they know that I've walked in their shoes. They know that I have worried about how to put a budget together, how to put a schedule together, how to go out into the community and raise money, how to build partnerships. My two predecessors both were very smart people, had really great experience and I think intellectually really understood the nature of public broadcasting. But I think for this moment in public broadcasting, to have someone who has actually been involved on the ground level gives me a different understanding of the enterprise. I have a different sense of where the opportunities are.

You had some success in New York with fundraising. Can you talk about the PBS Foundation and raising money for PBS?

The money is the biggest challenge. When people ask me what is the thing that keeps me up at night, it's the money. We get 15 percent of our funding nationally from the federal government and then we have to raise the rest. I think, in some respects, it's made us more creative in really trying to figure out how we knit all of our money together and also how we implement the work that we do.

PBS up until two years ago did not have a foundation. Our stations raised money at the local level, but we never had a way of raising philanthropic money at the national level.

(Ford has provided two grants to the PBS Foundation for start-up and general support.)

How have the demographics of your audience evolved over the years?

We have a very large audience of under 5, and we have a very large audience that's over 50. We do mirror the [racial/ethnic] demographics of the country. I think there is a perception by some that we appeal to a certain type of audience, and that's not true. We get Neilsons like everybody else. We do a lot of demographic overlays and look very carefully at who we're serving because we are here to serve all Americans. But we're somehow missing the 5 to 50 group.

I'm convinced that we have a lot of programming that is of interest to a wider audience. For example, for the last three seasons "Frontline" has been available in streaming video form. A lot of younger people are accessing "Frontline," a lot of college kids.

How will you define success during your tenure in this position?

I want public broadcasting to make a [transition] into the new digital age and to be a vital part of the communities that we serve, and I want to ensure that our stations are there. At the end of the day, if we can cross over and think about our work, not just as traditional broadcasters and not just as sort of nice public television, but as really critical pieces of our community, as catalysts, facilitators, then I will feel that I've been successful. ■

About PBS

- Founded in 1969, PBS is a private, nonprofit corporation whose members are America's public television stations
- Provides programming to 355 noncommercial stations serving all 50 states, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa
- Reaches 99 percent of American homes; 73 million people in 46 million households watch public television during an average week
- Awarded more Daytime Emmys for its children's programming over the past decade than any other network. "Sesame Street," has won 117 Daytime Emmys, more than any other program in Emmy history
- Recently partnered with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to launch the MediaShift Idea Lab (www.pbs.org/idealab), a group blog featuring 36 wide-ranging innovators reinventing community news for the digital age

Visit www.pbs.org to learn more about PBS.

Three countries, three journeys toward developing diverse media offerings.

Raising New Voices

Five years ago, Kenyan television viewers—accustomed to reruns of foreign soap operas and uninspired local programming—began tuning in to an entirely different kind of show. It was called "Tazama!" ("Look!"), and it featured young Kenyan journalists airing investigative reports on everything from political corruption to health problems caused by polluting industries to an illegal land grab near Nairobi. "Tazama!" journalists fanned out across Kenya to produce compelling stories, including one segment in which a reporter visited a counseling center to be tested for HIV/AIDS. The camera rolled as the journalist—who had never been checked for HIV—experienced a bad case of nerves during the test, then euphoria when the results came back negative. Looking into a hand-held camera, reporter Angelo Kinyua told viewers, "I was very nervous, but I did it, and so can you. Go and get tested today."

"Tazama!" is one of several high-quality, low-cost, locally produced shows that are transforming television in Kenya and helping to strengthen its young democracy. In the last decade, the Ford Foundation has supported grantees around the world who are helping to strengthen media across a wide spectrum—from newspapers to documentary films, to community radio stations—in societies grappling with the stresses and benefits that befall evolving democracies. In recognition of each country's unique circumstances, grantees across the globe are experimenting with a variety of projects that utilize both arts and media in their efforts to create space for public expression and dialogue.

Ford is currently supporting international media work in roughly 10 countries. These include Vietnam, where the foundation funds documentary film projects; Egypt, where it underwrites an exchange program for journalists with the West; and Mexico, where it works with press organizations on media ethics and safety issues.

Activities in three particular countries offer vivid portraits of the accomplishments and challenges faced by local organizations working on media initiatives:

In Brazil, organizations are addressing major institutional issues, such as concentration of media power in the hands of political and economic elites; in Kenya, local groups are pressing for more high-quality indigenous programming and better training of journalists; and in Russia, work continues to search for nuanced ways to support freedom of expression in an increasingly authoritarian milieu.

Democratizing Brazil's Vibrant Media


ANDRES STAPFF/REUTERS/CORBIS

After emerging from a military dictatorship 22 years ago, Brazil is a young, thriving democracy with a vibrant media sector no longer hobbled by censorship and government control. But the challenges facing the Brazilian media are significant and deep-seated: The nation's media are largely controlled by a few families and politicians; the country lacks national public radio and television networks; the press and TV overwhelmingly reflect the concerns of the power centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the country's southeast; and television sometimes broadcasts programming that some observers characterize as racist, homophobic or misogynistic.

"Our focus is to support the movement to democratize the media in Brazil and to help make the discussion about an adequate media policy in the new era of technological convergence a priority," says Ana Toni, the Ford Foundation's representative in Rio de Janeiro. "We do not have a problem of freedom of expression. Most of Brazilian media is privatized, and there's a huge concentration of power in the hands of few. We are looking at the power of these players and its effect on plurality, diversity and regionalization."

Ford's Rio office has focused its efforts in several areas, including supporting organizations and university departments that monitor and analyze the media. One of the most active media watchdogs in Brazil is Intervozes, a leading organization of journalists that monitors the murky world of media ownership in Brazil and campaigns against discriminatory programming.

Intervozes, a Ford grantee, won a major victory in 2005 when it took legal action against Rede TV, which broadcasts shows filled with anti-gay slurs and aired a program in which men strike women whom they suspect of infidelity. Intervozes filed a complaint against Rede TV in federal court and, after initially defying a judge's order, the network was forced to fund and broadcast 30 programs on human rights issues in Brazil.

"We felt that TV channels should know that they just can't do whatever they want," says Joao Brant, a journalist who is one of six Intervozes coordinators. "We want to preserve freedom of expression, but it has to be in keeping with other human rights. This was a yellow light to TV networks telling them that they have to follow basic rights in the constitution."

Intervozes also is working to ensure that Brazil's emerging digital TV networks include public-access channels, and the group is campaigning to give poor and marginalized segments of Brazilian society a greater voice in the media. A small number of families and conglomerates control nearly all of Brazil's broadcast media, but licenses are also dispensed by committees in the federal legislature—frequently to their fellow lawmakers. Media ownership is often hidden, but estimates suggest 10 percent of the 513 members in Brazil's Chamber of Deputies directly own media licenses, which is forbidden by law, and almost 40 percent are indirect owners, with licenses held by relatives.

"Media licensing is very connected with politics," says Brant. "We have a very strong private sector in the media without a counterbalance of public media. We don't have any fresh air coming from community media or public media. Big media talks about having freedom of expression in Brazil, but it's really only freedom of expression for that small group that controls 88 percent of the media. There's not freedom of expression for 180 million other people."

Joining Intervozes in the effort to broaden access is the Media Observatory, which has brought legal action to bar Brazilian legislators from granting media licenses to other lawmakers. Alberto Dines, Media Observatory's chief editor, calls ownership of media companies by politicians "the original sin of the Brazilian press." This issue, and virtually every other aspect of Brazilian media, is dissected on weekly television and radio programs produced by the Media Observatory, as well as on its Web site, with the goal of nudging the state of Brazilian media out of the shadows and into the open.

Paulo Teixeira, a member of Brazil's Chamber of Deputies, says the main achievement of Ford-supported grantees was to help open up the closed world of the media and act as a catalyst for democratization and reform. As Teixeira puts it, powerful, privately owned media companies no longer "swim alone in this lake." For example, he says, old-line media interests have resisted opening up radio and television airwaves to smaller, community-run stations. But now local groups are pushing old-line media interests to create smaller community-run radio and television stations, both digitally and on traditional broadcast bands.

"We have new technology in our country and a new government," says Teixeira. "I think we have a chance to change the laws and to democratize communications in Brazil and to give people in our society more and more access to the media. Now there is a real opportunity for change."

Training a New Generation of Kenyan Journalists


WENDY STONE

When Polly Renton, a young documentary filmmaker from England, arrived in Nairobi seven years ago, Kenya's independent media had only recently emerged from a period of control and repression. Her timing was fortuitous. The media community lacked standards, experience and infrastructure, and the Ford Foundation was looking for ways to nurture its development. The goals were lofty—create high-quality local television programming, train a new generation of journalists and develop a set of professional and ethical standards—but Renton had the background to help address them. With the foundation's support, she began recruiting aspiring journalists, many from poor areas, and teaching them the fundamentals of documentary filmmaking. She taught the young trainees to pick gripping narrative subjects and film with a sense of gritty urgency. They left their tripods behind, following people through their daily lives.

The result was "Tazama!," the show that has been captivating Kenyans with compelling stories such as the reporter being tested for HIV/AIDS. "Tazama!" is now the second-most popular show on Kenyan television, behind Kenyan

TV News, attracting 4.5 million television viewers and radio listeners—more than 10 percent of Kenya's population of 36.9 million—each week. The show has also been the training ground for more than 100 Kenyan reporters and filmmakers, two of whom have been named CNN's journalist of the year in Africa. "Tazama!" reporters, wearing the show's signature blue polo shirts with green collars, are now recognized by many Kenyans who have taken to the show's hip, street-smart tone.

"It has made it possible for Kenyans to interact with a fairly wide range of opinions and views.

It has put on the public agenda many issues that otherwise would not have been there."

"Tazama!" is not the only program changing the television landscape of Kenya, which began to emerge from years of dictatorship and misrule in the late 1990s. Medeva TV, Renton's production company, extended its national reach five years ago with "AgendaKenya," a lively public affairs talk show in which audience members ask pointed questions to politicians, academics and public officials. The show's power was on display two years ago when, in advance of a referendum on a proposed new constitution, "AgendaKenya" broadcast four consecutive prime-time shows highlighting the document's flaws. Voters rejected it.

Even soap operas are influencing civic dialogue. "Makutano Junction" has attracted large numbers of viewers who tune in to see characters struggling with timely issues such as the sexual rights of Kenyan girls.

In a developing democracy, such shows have an impact disproportionate to their relatively modest budgets. "I worked on big-budget documentaries in the United Kingdom, and I don't feel that any of that work comes close to having the impact that this work does," Renton says.

When Medeva TV launched "AgendaKenya," Renton feared the audience, wary after years of dictatorship, would not speak out. She needn't have worried.

"The audience on 'AgendaKenya' has been spectacularly brave and articulate," she says. "In the U.K., politics is often about schools or taxes, but here politics is life and death. It's about whether you have access to justice or food or get caught up in some tribal skirmish."

Renton is confident that shows such as "AgendaKenya" and "Tazama!" are contributing to building a more open, democratic society. "For Kenyans it's like a slow drip where you realize that your voice counts, that you're allowed to hold elected officials accountable, that maybe after seeing a story about someone from a tribe that you never really liked, that you can change how you feel about that tribe," she says.

Medeva's programs have had a significant impact on Kenya, and helped create a more robust media. "They have demonstrated the creative energy and potential that exist in the region and have shown that social, political and cultural issues could be addressed in a creative, aesthetic way," says Tade Aina, who serves as representative for the Ford Foundation's Eastern Africa Office in Nairobi.

"It has made it possible for Kenyans to interact with a fairly wide range of opinions and views. It has put on the public agenda many issues that otherwise would not have been there," says Tom Mshindi, former CEO and managing director of Kenya's second-largest media conglomerate and now the managing director of a major media company in Uganda. Among the topics being more openly discussed in Kenya, Mshindi says, are political corruption, tribalization, governmental transparency and women's rights.

Walking the Tightrope in Russia

JEREMY NICHOLL/POLARIS

While the media in countries such as Kenya and Brazil have recently been moving in a more democratic direction, the environment in Russia is more precarious. After a period of post-Soviet freedom in the 1990s, Russia's media has been subjected to increasingly authoritarian control by the Russian federal government in this decade. The retrenchment is challenging, not only because of the sensitivity of supporting freedom of expression in Russia, but also because the Kremlin has grown increasingly hostile to foreign foundations and nongovernmental organizations, some of which it accuses of being agents of Western governments. Tensions escalated in the spring of 2007, when Russian authorities shut down the Educated Media Foundation, formerly known as Internews.

"Right now, the prospects for a free and independent press in Russia are not promising, so we have chosen to work primarily on issues of tolerance and diversity and direct our media grant making in that direction," says Steven Solnick, the Ford Foundation's Moscow representative, who has worked off and on in Russia since the 1980s. "We have tried to find some ways to create more protected space for the development of media professionals, to find different ways to strengthen professional journalism and diverse modes of expression."

Ford's media program began in earnest in the late 1990s when it funded an Internews effort to revive the country's storied documentary film tradition, which had atrophied with the breakdown of the state film system in post-communist Russia. Through a documentary film project, Internews supported the completion of 34 unfinished films. It also distributed hundreds of documentaries from Russia and around the world to more than 360 regional television stations across the vast country.

In 2000, the Ford Foundation underwrote a successor program called Open Skies–Culture for the New Millennium, which financed writing and production of six documentaries by leading Russian filmmakers. The documentaries on subjects ranging from the Russian poet Andrei Bely to early Soviet filmmakers, won numerous international and Russian awards and were broadcast on Russian national television.

"Documentary films in Russia were in a very dire situation," says Grigory Libergal, programming director of the Open Skies project. "The production of Russian-produced films was stalled because the main source of financing was

the state and the state was out of money. Documentaries had disappeared almost completely from TV. Open Skies was very successful and groundbreaking and other projects followed suit. Now documentary film production in Russia is flourishing."

"Right now the prospects for a free and independent press in Russia are not promising so we have chosen to work primarily on issues of tolerance and diversity."

The foundation has also supported organizations working to expand and improve cultural coverage by Russia's regional newspapers and television and radio stations. The Union of Media and Culture, a Russian nongovernmental organization, sponsored national competitions for cultural coverage, helped create 10 regional newspapers and magazines focusing on culture, held seminars for cultural reporters and editors, and has set up a method for regional television stations to exchange reports on cultural and social issues. The foundation also partially underwrote a program to train radio journalists at Moscow State University. Today, the foundation is supporting production of a series of documentary films on Russia's indigenous populations.

For now, the foundation's media programs will continue in Russia, with the same objectives—to nurture a variety of voices in an increasingly monolithic environment, Solnick says. Although the path the foundation must navigate is more complex than those in Brazil or Kenya, a common theme of media programming is adapting to the reality on the ground.

"Our goal has been to support a plurality of voices, whether by supporting documentary filmmakers, training journalists in cultural diversity or training radio reporters," Solnick says. "We're impressed with the work our grantees are doing in difficult circumstances with limited resources."

Three Evolving Media Sectors

The media climates in Russia, Kenya and Brazil are dissimilar, but they all reveal the importance of developing and strengthening journalistic enterprises and spaces for free expression. As these nations transition, the presence of healthy media institutions is a vital element of their success.

The programs the foundation supports aim to strengthen professional standards and ethics, but more important, they promote media networks that analyze and discuss pressing issues and present the diverse faces and stories essential to enlightened discourse.

"There's a real hunger among people to see themselves in the media, and these projects create an opportunity to introduce critical social issues and dramas that people are struggling with in their daily lives," says Orlando Bagwell, the Ford Foundation's director of Media, Arts and Culture. "We see both the arts and media as creating that kind of space for free expression." ■

THE PUBLIC SQUARE IN A DIGITAL AGE
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Alliance for Community Media
Represents over 3,000 public, educational and governmental organizations and community media centers.
www.ourchannels.org

Benton Foundation
Grant-making entity committed to demonstrating "the value of communications for solving social problems."
www.benton.org

Center for Digital Democracy
Working toward "an electronic media system that fosters democratic expression and human rights" through research, advocacy and outreach.
www.democraticmedia.org

Center for Social Media
Part of American University's School of Communication, showcases and analyzes strategies to use media as a tool for public knowledge and action.
www.centerforsocialmedia.org

Columbia Journalism Review
Publication of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism that encourages excellence in journalism.
www.cjr.org

Committee of Concerned Journalists
Consortium of journalists, publishers, media owners and academics dedicated to maintaining journalism as a public service.
www.concernedjournalists.org

Consumer Project on Technology
Project of the Center for the Study of Responsive Law and Essential Information that explores issues surrounding access to knowledge and technology.
www.cptech.org

Consumers Union
Publisher of "Consumer Reports" magazine and advocate for a fair and equitable marketplace for all consumers.
www.consumersunion.org

Electronic Privacy Information Center
Public interest research center that monitors privacy and civil liberties issues surrounding new media.
www.epic.org

Free Press
Nonpartisan organization working toward a more democratic and diverse media system through education, advocacy and action.
www.freepress.net

Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media
Network of foundations, organizations working in the media field, and private donors that encourage support for public interest media.
www.gfem.org

Independent Television Service
Gives a voice to underrepresented communities around the world by supporting film projects from independent producers and engaging in creative risks to advance important social issues.
www.itvs.org

Institute for Justice and Journalism
Housed at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication, encourages news media coverage about social equity and justice issues.
www.justicejournalism.org

Internet Governance Project
Housed at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, a consortium of scholars that develops recommendations for Internet public policy, cyber security and global governance.
www.internetgovernance.org

Intervozes
Brazilian-based association for journalists dedicated to ensuring freedom of expression and giving marginalized groups a greater voice in the media.
www.intervozes.org.br

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
In addition to supporting community development, Knight has invested nearly $300 million for excellence in journalism and freedom of expression.
www.knightfdn.org

Link TV
Self-described "television without borders" introduces viewers to global perspectives on news, cultural events and foreign affairs.
www.linktv.org

Media Development in Africa
Kenyan NGO, commonly referred to as MEDEVA, encourages aspiring journalists to make socially responsible television and radio programming.
www.medevatv.com

Media Access Project
Nonprofit, public interest law firm promotes public interest media and safeguards the rights of nonprofits and advocacy groups in the telecommunications landscape.
www.mediaaccess.org

National Black Programming Consortium
A leader in the development and advocacy of new technologies, tools and platforms for media producers of color.
www.nbpc.tv

National Public Radio
Producer and distributor of noncommercial radio that provides more than 130 hours of original programming and reaches 26 million Americans each week.
www.npr.org

New America Media
Resource from Pacific News Service that works to strengthen ethnic media in the United States and give voice to the communities it serves.
www.newamericamedia.org

The Paley Center for Media
Formerly the Museum of Television & Radio, its collection of 140,000 programs from some 20 countries covers nearly 100 years of television and radio history.
www.paleycenter.org

Pew Research Center
Provides information on the issues and trends shaping the world. Three projects—Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Project for Excellence in Journalism, and Pew Internet and American Life Project—consider the state of media.
www.pewresearch.org

Poynter Institute for Media Studies
Media school serving journalists and journalism organizations in professional development and leadership growth.
www.poynter.org

Prometheus Radio Project
Central to the development of community radio stations, facilitating public participation in FCC's regulatory processes and promoting an equitable and diverse media.
www.prometheusradio.org

Public Broadcasting Service
Founded in 1969, the noncommercial television enterprise provides more than 73 million people each week with educational and enriching on-air and online programming.
www.pbs.org

Public Knowledge
Public interest group expands access to information and defends copyright and information policies, intellectual property and Internet protocol.
www.publicknowledge.org

Public Radio Capital
Managing partner of the Public Radio Fund that is dedicated to promoting opportunities for media ownership.
www.pubcap.org/fund/index.php

Public Radio Exchange
Online distribution site for public radio that has revolutionized the way independent radio is programmed and acquired.
www.prx.org

SavetheInternet.com Coalition
Webby-winning activist organization helps ensure Internet freedom and works to protect net neutrality.
www.savetheinternet.com

United Church of Christ's Office of Communications
Promotes an equitable media that offers a voice to diverse people and ensures equal access to information.
www.ucc.org/media-justice

Youth Media Council
Builds grassroots media activism and brings together youth and minority groups to fight stereotypes and bias in the news.
www.youthmediacouncil.org

Freeing Speech

Efforts to Protect and Promote Academic Freedom in Perilous Times

DAVID BUTOW/CORBIS

BY ALISON R. BERNSTEIN

Encouraging greater access to higher education for deserving students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, and ensuring that curriculums reflect the diversity of human experience have been longstanding priorities for the Ford Foundation. But in the wake of 9/11, the war in Iraq and the war on terror, a third challenge faces university-level education: the growing threat to academic freedom from within the academy and outside it.

Threats typically come in times of political polarization like the McCarthy era and are especially prevalent during wartime. In 1915, as World War I engulfed Europe, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) formally articulated the concept of academic freedom. By 1940, when American involvement in a second world war loomed, AAUP expanded its principles governing academic freedom: Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and publication, freedom in the classroom to discuss their subject and freedom to speak or write as citizens without institutional censorship or discipline.

In 1949, the Gaither Report, a seminal study that charted how the Ford Foundation could most effectively put its resources to work for human welfare, also highlighted threats to academic freedom in times of heightened national security. The report warned that "military sponsorship of academic research and military interpretation of secrecy regulations" could undermine academic rights.

But with these rights also come responsibilities and obligations. As Bates College President Elaine Hansen noted in a 2005 address: "The concept of academic freedom

does not merely protect one's right to offer controversial statements or offend … but also obliges scholars and officers of educational institutions to remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances … Hence, at all times, they should strive to be accurate, show respect for the opinions of others and make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution."

Defending Academic Freedom

In response to the complex contemporary terrain in which academic freedom must be understood and protected, the Ford Foundation launched a major new initiative, "Difficult Dialogues: Promoting Academic Freedom and Pluralism on Campus," a national, competitive grants program that highlights the foundation's continuing commitment to preserving academic freedom. In deciding in 2004 to launch this $3.5 million program, the foundation was making a decision that would affect not just one campus, but influence the sector as a whole.

The Ford Foundation staff began thinking about Difficult Dialogues in late 2003. The foundation in 1990 had launched a Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI), which gave colleges and universities grants to address issues involving racial, ethnic and gender differences on campus.

The letter recognized that the Internet heightens and inflames opinions off campus and also argued that threats to academic freedom and pluralism cannot be combated by student affairs staff alone.

The initiative had roots in 1980s efforts to address racial bias on campuses, but it was not only about the changing demographics. It also focused on faculty engagement with a more diverse population, largely through curriculum reform and innovation.

CDI has been credited as one of the first philanthropic efforts to spotlight the educational benefits of campus diversity for all students in terms of curriculum offerings and faculty development. It was taken up by several national higher education associations, most notably, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, which continues to make diversity a priority in its programming.

Encouraging 'Difficult Dialogues'

Difficult Dialogues borrowed three philanthropic tools from CDI: A letter from a distinguished group of higher education leaders encouraging college and university presidents to work innovatively; a request-for-proposals framework instead of pre-identification of institutions to support; and relatively small grants of money per campus. (The foundation did not believe that big infusions of funds were necessary, but, rather, that university presidents needed some catalytic support to make diversity a more powerful priority on campus.)

Difficult Dialogues updated these approaches in significant ways. With a new group of higher education leaders, the letter on academic freedom and pluralism was written. The letter, co-signed by the Ford Foundation's president, borrowed some language from the past but focused on new challenges. Most important, instead of sending the letter and grant guidelines to 300 four-year residential colleges and universities as CDI had done, more than 2,400 two- and four-year degree-granting institutions were invited to compete for funds. It was the largest invitation involving higher-education grant making in the past three decades.

The letter marked a new approach in seeking deeper engagement by campus leaders. Phrases like "growing religious intolerance" and "attempts to silence individuals, faculty and students alike" extended the concept of academic freedom to engage students as well as faculty.

Projects in Action

At **Portland Community College** in Oregon, the Interactive Theatre program wrote and performed six new plays highlighting discrimination based on religion, sexual orientation and other forms of bigotry. More than 1,600 students attended the performances.

www.pcc.edu/resources/illumination

As part of the Transforming Community Project, a five-year examination of the role of **Emory University** in slavery, segregation, integration and the civil rights movement in Atlanta, two summer seminars were held for faculty to learn about this research and design new syllabi.

http://transform.emory.edu/participate/index.html

The project at **Mars Hill College** in North Carolina focuses on religion, sexual orientation and race. Three campus groups personify these themes: evangelical Christians, gay and lesbian students and their friends, and African Americans. These issues and constituencies have been sources of tension on campus. Faculty and student leaders are trained to engage students in critical conversations on these matters. These dialogues are designed to build active listening and civil discourse skills and are occurring in classrooms and in residence halls.

http://difficultdialogues.org/projects/marshill.php

The **University of California, Irvine**, which has recently been the site of conflict between Jewish and Muslim students, hosted a series of speakers, conferences, radio shows and other public events focused on the Middle East. Three related courses were developed and taught, including, "Imagining the Future: Israel and Palestine in the 21st Century."

www.vcsa.uci.edu/difficultdialogues

Other language focused on faculty responsibility, pointing out not just the rights of faculty but also the obligations "not to exploit students, coerce their views or display a demonstrable lack of competence in their discipline…" The letter recognized that the Internet heightens and inflames opinions off campus and also argued that threats to academic freedom and pluralism cannot be combated by student affairs staff alone.

An Astonishing Response

Of the 2,400 university presidents who were sent invitations, an astonishing 700 replied with proposals—more than one in four institutions had responded. The response made clear the initiative had tapped into a widely shared concern over promoting pluralism and academic freedom on campus. After the final proposals were reviewed, 27 institutions received $100,000 grants and another 16 received $10,000 grants.

In the spring of 2006, the foundation asked Dr. Harold Wechsler, a respected historian of higher education at New York University, to analyze the final Difficult Dialogues proposals. His findings:

- Most proposals reflected a reactive stance: A hostile environment or specific incident typically produced a difficult situation on campus.
- Most campuses lacked adequate outlets for articulating and confronting sensitive issues, especially religious commitments.
- Proposals addressing religious strife predominated—especially hostility between Muslims and Jews and between evangelical Christians and gay students.
- Most proposals did not target the most ideologically entrenched or politically committed students. Instead, many applicants suggested dialogue is particularly difficult for "sheltered" or "protected" students, who remain silent for the most part.
- Proposals from public colleges and universities tended to speak of a deep "ambivalence when contemplating the place of religion in their curriculums."

Early Lessons Learned

Most Difficult Dialogues projects have only one year under their belt so it is too early to offer extensive claims about lessons learned. Still, a few tentative observations are worth making:

- Institutions that sought foundation support recognized to an unprecedented degree the central value of protecting the academic freedom of faculty.
- The notion of "dialogue" instead of "debate" suggests there is no final resolution over campus differences but, rather, serious, respectful explorations into divergent perspectives. One of the most pressing inquiries that faculty must address is how to reconcile the certainty of belief with the empirical dictates of scholarship.
- Colleges and universities are more deeply embedded in the broader society than ever before. They are entwined with business, government, industry and the military in ways that could be hardly imagined 50 years ago. The new technologies make campus conflict instantaneously known worldwide and frequently misunderstood by those who wish to bring down ideas or people with whom they disagree.

Campuses Ill-Prepared for Conflict

In short, whether it was the Middle East conflict, gay marriage, the challenge to science teaching posed by faith-based beliefs or religious intolerance, Wechsler's analysis of the proposals revealed that campuses were under-prepared and unskilled in conducting difficult dialogues, let alone learning from them. In addition, the mere presence of students' religious beliefs and practices posed new dilemmas, especially for public universities. William Sullivan, a scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, noted, "To live in America is to live in a religiously charged atmosphere, and that includes colleges—whether they like it or not."

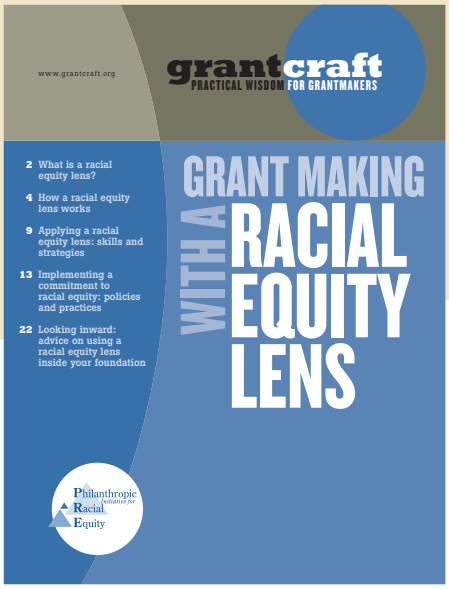
Beyond grappling with religious expression in the classroom, the Difficult Dialogues proposals also revealed that faculty need to engage the wider public in discussions focused on the meaning of academic freedom itself. Too often, academic freedom principles have been twisted to defend the freedom of students not to hear views that might cause offense, and the focus has become freedom from hearing rather than a freedom to express controversial perspectives.

At this first stage in the life of the Difficult Dialogues initiative, Ford is supporting efforts on 43 campuses, encouraging campus leaders—faculty and administrators alike—to defend academic freedom aggressively. But the foundation is convinced that grant money will not prove to be the most important factor in determining whether these projects succeed. Rather, the cumulative effect of helping university presidents, general counsels, faculty and trustees amass the political will and moral clarity to make the defense of academic freedom their priority may turn out to be the initiative's most important and lasting legacy.

Alison R. Bernstein *is vice president of the Ford Foundation's Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom Program. This essay is adapted from a speech she delivered at the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education.*

For more information on the Difficult Dialogues Initiative visit:

»www.difficultdialogues.org



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www.grantcraft.org

Visual anthropologist Zamzam Fauzanafi, left, with teens and families at a school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Filmmaker Offers Youth a Voice

Zamzam Fauzanafi is using film as a tool to empower and educate young people in his native Indonesia. His interest in film grew after his father's death when he realized the power of the medium as a means of communication, representation, growth and healing. Zamzam earned a master's degree in visual anthropology at the University of Manchester in England through the Ford Foundation's International Fellowships Program. Since graduating he has developed into a visionary leader, working with young people in rural and urban communities through two nonprofits he established. His programs in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, help youths from marginalized communities express the realities of their daily lives and explore the issues they face. A filmmaker and education coordinator, Zamzam is helping young Indonesians embrace multicultural understanding through art and dialogue.

The International Fellowships Program was designed with people like Zamzam in mind. It offers graduate fellowships to a new generation of promising leaders in communities that lack access to higher education. It gives them the tools to solve problems they know first-hand. And it empowers them to return home and change lives in the places they care about.

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AMI VITALE

Timbuktu Manuscripts

Preserving West Africa's Rich History and Literary Tradition

Located at the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in present-day Mali, Timbuktu was once a major center of academic and religious learning, attracting Muslim scholars from around the world. By the late 16th century, the city began to decline. Gradually, the Niger River changed course and the city lost its hold on trade and the wealth that accompanied it.

The city has been listed as an UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1988. Today, researchers are working to recover the rich West African history of this "lost city," preserving more than 700,000 ancient manuscripts. Written in an ancient form of Arabic, these manuscripts provide a detailed record of the daily and scholarly life of Timbuktu from the 12th century onward. Scholars hope that these treasures will offer greater insight into African history and culture.

The fragile manuscripts, recovered from Timbuktu and surrounding desert areas, are being studied, catalogued and preserved with the support of the Ford Foundation. They document everything from Islamic law and medicine to sermons and folk tales. The time-worn pages are wrapped in leather and wood covers, some adorned with intricate decorations or elaborate calligraphy. Many have been held for ages in private collections; some were handed down by families, generation after generation. It is not known how many have been lost or stolen.

Since 2000, the foundation has given more than $800,000 to preserve the rich heritage of Timbuktu. The support ref ects the foundation's long-standing commitment to maintaining the diversity of human wisdom and building global awareness of intellectual and cultural legacies. Ford-funded grants have supported the electronic archiving of the manuscripts; a joint South African and Malian project run by the University of Cape Town to develop research resources and train post-graduate students in the preservation process; and production of a documentary film that follows South African and Malian researchers as they translate, analyze and conserve the historic texts.

»www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/project/index.html

»www.fordfound.org/publications/ff_report/view_ff_report_detail.cfm?report_index=432

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