



Except for broadcast television, every major information medium in America had its genesis in men who started out because they felt they had something important to get across. Sure, they wanted to make money, but that was almost as a by-product of unique (although not always sane) visions. Think of the early days of any medium and there's a name associated with it, not an anonymous corporate structure.

Only broadcast TV began exclusively as a marketing proposition, carefully creating psychic wants instead of servicing genuine need.

Videocassettes are probably the most hybrid medium of the century. Because they have a little in common with books, long-playing records, magazines and, of course, broadcast TV, people from each of those old media are swarming over cassettes trying to figure out where the money is. All see the new medium as the next great ship to come in, and this time *they're* not going to miss the boat.

At Raindance we sporadically are gotten in touch with people who tell us: "I want to get in on this cassette *thing*." When they extend that as their only understanding of portable video, we tell them to fuck-off, in so many words.

It's practically impossible to find anyone who is concerned about cassettes as a money proposition who also has any particular passion about the medium. Of course they see it as fulfilling a need for people who are pissed off at broadcast TV, but they see that need only as another lucrative market. While it's also their cant to say: "we know videocassettes are going to require a different kind of information (from film or broadcast TV)," not a one I've talked to knows what.

The following is a compilation of interviews in person with Jeff Reiss, program director of Avco's Cartrivision cassette system; Irv Stimler, President of Optronics Library, a software house; some phone raps with P.R. men at other companies; and information I've gleaned from other print publications.

Most of the above are playing a game of roulette (potential high return gambling), but they're betting all the numbers. Thus, they have huge catalogs which cater to every imaginable taste, or they're into marketing surveys where money, not survival information, comes first.

Why this is all important to anyone in alternate television is that we've all seized upon new media tools because we're pissed off at the way the old ones are being used. So if it looks like the new cassette tools are being co-opted, then we've got to be very careful how we cooperate.

Of course we all need money to stay alive (until we find a way to do it without money). That's not the issue. What is the point is whether or not we might be trading off short term gains for long term debilitation.

There are a few bucks around from Avco and maybe Optronics for production. Yet any of our stuff would be part of a voluminous catalog sandwiched in with all sorts of bullshit. So what the packagers get for the few bucks they're willing to pay is practically all of our legitimacy, *but as fuel for their context*.

Moreover, when videocassettes catch on, its going to be clear that the people producing especially for the medium, as all of us in videotape inherently are, are going to be the major sources of the best material: just as the LP first imitated the concert hall and then became fabulously lucrative with a true electronic form: rock music.

The hipper cassette packagers are keeping their lines open to some alternate TV people, *but why should they reap future benefits if they're unwilling to underwrite what we're doing now, which is essentially their R&D?*

On the other hand, if we can get together a tape network of people making television for survival ends, if it also becomes a financial success will it pose a threat to interests like Avco or CBS who are pumping millions into what they hope will be a proprietary medium? They are already fanatic about how they will *control* their own distribution.

So here is the scan:

CARTRIVISION is a hardware system made by Avco, a conglomerate which, as I understand it, does some defense work along with conventional films and other things. The system has been licensed to Emerson for production, but from what we've seen it's not the best piece of hardware around. Avco plans to sell the deck in a package with a TV set and later a separate playback unit, but both configurations are particularly cumbersome. Moreover, Avco has its own standard which will be incompatible with Sony and the Europeans.

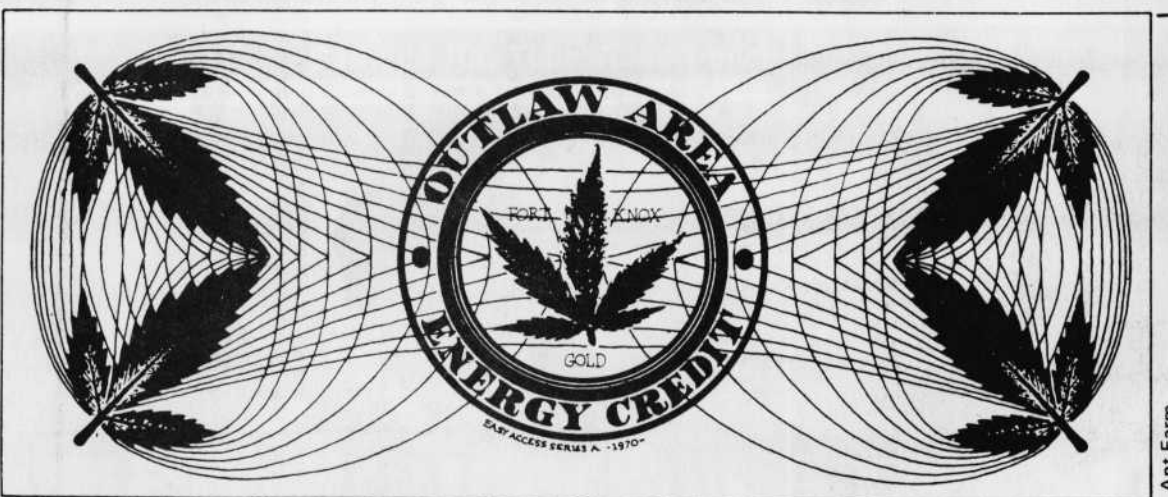
To push their hardware Avco is very heavy into programming and has compiled an enormous list of non-exclusive rights to practically every piece of old *film* around.

Jeff Reiss of Avco, their programming director, is a nice, honest guy who combines a genuine sympathy for alternate television with a sense that he's buying futures: someday it will be good business. But remember that most of Reiss' time is taken up hassling the rights to old cartoons and NFL football games, etc.

Reiss has offered contracts to three groups: People's Video Theater, Media Access Center, and The Ultimate Mirror. The PVT tape will be a compilation from their archive called "Liberation 70." Media Access has offered a tape about inflatable and domes. And Richard Rubenstein of The Ultimate Mirror is giving a lovely tape of an impromptu outdoor percussion and guitar concert on the island of Ibiza.

According to each, Avco has offered about \$200 as production expenses towards finishing Porta-Pak tape onto a one-inch master. As even \$200 is a lot of money these days, they've each accepted.

Jeff Reiss says that those three offers constitute almost all of Avco's production budget (remember they're buying pre-produced stuff) and he's certainly willing to consider other stuff. According to Ken Marsh of PVT, the contract calls for sales price as royalties.



Economic Support Systems

This is the linear version of a series of raps. Credit to participants later. The hope is that you will read, think, rewind a segment or two, and then read again. The subject (global) is attitudes with respect to economic support systems for video groups and alternative networks. The aim is to ask some of the right questions, lay down explicitly some assumptions while clearing up misconceptions: common sense and equipment glamour versus economic policy. The need is to experiment with economics *and* video information exchange simultaneously.

How do video groups generate themselves? How can they plug into existing economic support systems while seeking alternative production, distribution, and resource generation schemes. (Oops, we have to watch out for the pathology of language. There is great danger in becoming ill from the disease we hope to cure. There are pervasive properties in the existing processes—the habits and styles of thinking that can infect even *the terms for a cure*.) *What means are available for the early growth and survival of video groups or alternative networks? What can be done, resourcewise, to foster the growth of alternative networks? How can we establish a sub-economy for video groups, directly related to the big one at least in the short run, yet differently structured? How can we judge the success and balance of the new with the normal while gauging its wholesomeness and independence?*

The problem with Avco is that they're into a heavy public relations game and one day soon each of the above tape-makers is going to find himself on a press release along with old Super Bowl games. Even though people like Ken Marsh are particularly adamant that they will be returning fair money to the subjects of their tape, somehow combining the genuine legitimacy of the disenfranchised (e.g. PVT has done a lot of work with the Young Lords) with old movies and the like is more a reaffirmation of old media style than a creation of a new one.

OPTRONICS LIBRARY is a software house which has no particular system to hype although they reportedly are going to go with Philips.

The president, Irv Stimler, is former executive from MGM records. His catalog will contain software that only Optronics has rights to. Their most notable catch seems to be the movie, *Battle of Algiers*, which Optronics never ceases to publicize their rights to.

Stimler operates out of offices on 57th Street in New York and seems more in tune with how to make money out of cassettes than any particular sympathy for people who might genuinely want to get it off through video. He's not dishonest, and certainly likeable. Just business shrewd as its own end. In talking to him and scanning his company (there are only several employees including his college age son) and its board of directors (full of "names" like Clive Barnes), you get the feeling he wants nothing more than to keep his shit together to get bought out, soon.

Stimler was absolutely non-committal about front-ending any money to alternate TV producers except to say that he is willing to listen to any proposal and might ante up some money for tape. *After* a tape's made, of course, he says he would be interested.

Optronics has contracted with Global Village to produce a twelve issue video magazine, the first of which is supposed to be done in July and will be about using portable video.

VIDEORECORD CORPORATION OR AMERICA is a company up in Stamford, Connecticut around where CBS labs is located. The company's president, Dr. Stafford L. Hopwood Jr., used to work at CBS labs. Not unsurprisingly, Videorecord has selected the CBS-EVR system which is easily the worst idea in videocassette hardware (see Hardware Section).

This more or less reflects Videorecord's big name board of directors which, according to Sam Gale, the company's director of communications, "is full of men who have been involved with television for years." It includes William Bernbach, co-founder of the ad agency which bears half his name, and Eugene Rostow, now a law professor at Yale but once a member of the Johnson administration.

Gale concludes that Videorecord certainly understands that the cassette medium will demand its own software, but admits he sees no problems with using the EVR system, and absolutely finds it irrelevant whether or not production is done on film or videotape (of course, the EVR system doesn't care either).

Gale was scarcely aware of any alternate TV activity in the country, but interested, and certainly friendly to *Radical Software* on the phone, although a little paranoid about being quoted by us.

The spectacle seems to be a lot of men who grew up in radio and if they ever had any notion of the potential of TV never quite got it together to do anything to change broadcast. Primarily, Videorecord is interested in the so-called "institutional" market which means businesses and schools.

To hell with businesses, but if Videorecord tries to move material into schools then they're to be resisted because the EVR system is just too much of a rip-off to force on our kids. Videorecord is just another company, perhaps a little more competent, which thinks the way to develop the medium is to do marketing surveys.

While I'm on the EVR system, there is a group up in Boston called the American Program Bureau which is selling a package of ten one-hour shows and an EVR unit to colleges for \$3,000. APB, as it's known, handles radical speakers like Abbie Hoffman and Dick Gregory and sure enough that's what the package is all about. According to someone who's seen some of the shows: "they're like regular TV except they say 'shit' and 'fuck' and don't bleep it out."

Aside from the alleged quality of the programming, the political superstar trip is awfully dead dada/data to pump through a new medium with the potential of cassettes. If Abbie Hoffman is really into everything free and understanding media then why has he lent (sold) himself to a system which is specifically designed not to be copied (although you can get around that too)?

What's worse is the thought of some university student group putting out three grand when for the same money it could acquire a Porta-Pak, editing deck and a semester's supply of tape and begin putting out its own information instead of laying back and moaning "entertain us."

A similar potential rip-off is a company called NTS which is in New York City. They're the agents for *Channel One* and not surprisingly their package consists of two *Channel One* tapes. (The first of the two is called "Groove Tube," a raunchy, very funny satire on broadcast TV. *Channel One* has been around with that stuff for five years now and it is to what's now going on in alternate TV what say Jack Kerouac is to the so-called "counter culture": a forerunner, but also a relic).

NTS will put equipment out into colleges which includes true videotape in the form of a Sony AV3600 deck for playback, but the design is pure hype to fool the uninitiated. It is a column or monolith of monitors with the actual deck resting on the floor with a six inch clearance on top which makes it practically inaccessible. Moreover, it's hardwired-in which makes you wonder about NTS' claim that they'll solicit student tapes for what they have been hyping as their own "underground television network (UTV)."

The other part of the two show package will be a thing called "New York" which was to have been the latest *Channel One* show but reportedly folded after a few weeks even though it was launched with half-page ads in the *Village Voice* (about \$670 worth of advertising each time). The show's one accolade: "The Masterpiece of the New Video" was credited to none other than NTS. In other words, the show's own agent was telling people how good it was.

Well it was shit. It amounted to a kind of "Channel One Discovers the Porta-Pak" and consisted of two guys driving around New York and shooting a lot of tape from their micro bus. Occasionally they'd talk to someone and absolutely rip-off their information without telling what the tape was for, why they were being taped, or letting the subject see the camera.

Probably the height of the insensitivity was some interplay with winos. One asked for a quarter and Ken Shapiro of *Channel One* said he wouldn't give him the money because "I don't like you." Another piece of tape had Shapiro hassling a drunk by taking off his glasses and mimicking him. It's a long, tedious, boring self-indulgent piece of tape by a couple of guys who used to be the only game in town (with two-inch equipment) but got left behind when the Portables came out. So beware of NTS, especially if they're hustling your school. It's more of the "counter-culture" in drag. Strictly for the money.

What does that leave?

There are other companies of course, but if any of them have a genuine interest in an alternate television they haven't emerged. It's just another marketing medium to them. This was really brought home at a videocassette "conference" we attended last November.

What happened was a few hundred executives who claimed to know that cassettes will provide kinetic information, anything you want, when and where you want it; these guys in their coats-and-ties all drove fifty miles out of New York City (to Tarrytown, New York) sat in a deadly dull motel ballroom, and listened to people talk for eight hours.

So it looks like we're going to have to try and do it ourselves and not as a hard-assed marketing plan, but in a lot of different ways. And we don't have to wait for cassettes. The information is here now on reel-to-reel configurations and tape exchange and some sales even are going on now, without the videocassette "industry." And when the cassette machines do get here *we can do our own copying and distribution because that's what videotape and decentralized media are all about.*

Michael Shamberg

Needed: Basic attitudes coupled with solid practical advice on how to do. Suppose there are five people sitting around saying, "Boy, I would sure like to get into video or community television, or television as a self-educational tool." How do they get started, how do they grow and survive while finding alternative ecosound ways within the system to generate resources?

Economic problems: the first is that there will be no economics for a video group unless they can in some way generate a response prior to the need for investment (money). So far, in today's world, there have been only three sources of start-up money: welfare capitalism sources (government, foundations, food stamps); rip-off (subtle theft, direct theft, drugs); or inheritance (wealthy parents, relatives or friends who leave it to or give). The need is for some new forms of what venture capitalists call "seed money." The price of existing means (loans, direct investment in the corporation or partnership) often carry the obligation to produce along guidelines enforced (often not so subtly) by the investor. Picture a Bank of America Loan to *Video Zombies*—restrictions: no burning banks or Panther meetings.

Even with a solution to the problem of start-up money, there still remains **problem number two**: how can a video group generate the resources necessary to survive, i.e. food, equipment, tape, transfer or information, transportation, etc. Again, the classic ways are simple: be a middleman (sell other people's things to others who in turn sell them to "retail" buyers) or develop a product or service so distinct and valuable that people or institutions (CATV?) will pay to have it.

There are several grounds for concern with traditional means: the Sears-Roebuck mass-marketing approach exploits man and nature... one quickly becomes over-capitalized, over-exposed and indentured to capital. At worst the new system should be ecostatic, at best it might even shrink (as opposed to growing). The products or services must not have bad influences on the environment (information and physical), they must be sound socially and for the individual (of, by and for the people).

We need solid advice and practical recommendations. Drucker, Theobald and others talk about new economic policies, global shopping centers, the age of communication, and the age of knowledge. But it is not clear that all such thought would work when one is concerned with access to information or the restructuring of video technology.

We must watch out lest we develop a new industry with new technologies. They loom larger in Wall Street eyes than steel mills or automobile assembly plants. They capture the imagination of the money firsters. Media Access Center as a glamour stock? Exploitive speculation (making survival money the end) will result either in failure or in value-free millionaires—and we will all suffer again.

Economic Support Systems Cont.

You picks your value and pays your money. The automobile, especially the Model T, represented a major value choice of modern man. It stood for mobility, freedom, and energized the knitting together of a nation. Men moved in autos from farm to industrial town. Only freaks are walking back. Most technology and industry is experience-based rather than information-based. Edison was an experienced craftsman ("Invention is 98% perspiration," he said). But computers and television (enormously successful generators of resources until the cancellation of cigarette commercials) are early examples of the resource possibilities inherent in information. "Information is capital."

There are opportunities for survival resources (things that we can control with respect to outcome, a moral commitment, based on participation in the network). You can rip off broadcast television, film, cassettes.

Your local cable system is going to want to put out bullshit programming and will pay a video group to do that, but only that. You can work for a university TV station, etc. The university, as bad as it is, has exploitable functions: a marketplace for ideas, a source of equipment, money to support people, a generation and inculcation point for people and ideas.

One scheme for developing resources: consulting for the normal system—re hip programming. The hip/alternative network/video group system needs information right now, even if it is delivered via traditional methods. At the same time the alternate methods need development. If a hip show, for instance the Bobby Seale rap out of KQED (called "Staggerlee") comes over TV, people with beer cans in their hands will sit in their normal mesmerized state. It is not information for them, they have no control over it. But getting Bobby Seale out is important. Producing and televising such programs (for a fee) is not just a rip-off, but is important to the subculture. If a commercial station can be convinced that a show with important content can and should be delivered, the value of the show (re info for the subculture) outweighs the harm done by the way it is delivered. The alternate system is living, once again, in the cracks of the majority culture. The danger, of course, is that the alternate system will become so used to the normal system's way of delivery that they no longer search for alternative ways. The search will continue so long as there is dislike for the existing delivery systems.

In short, the need for information (at the moment) outweighs the negative aspects of delivery schemes. Hopefully, the development of alternative distribution schemes will provide "better" information. In the meantime, resources flow to alternate video by consulting: "we will use your channel, but we want to open the locks at our will." But that may well only produce nickels and peanuts, while opening up a large opportunity for straight exploitation of the subculture. In Kesey's words, "Keep away from the media, man, cause that's what done it. . . I know because I've been on the end of it so much. The media does a thing, it's like this. . . ." There is a need to be damned conscientious, to spend enormous amounts of time protecting your flanks, playing around with how to do while not being screwed. That may not be possible for video groups struggling to stay alive. Are there funds for survival or capital return in plugging into the existing system: Broadcast, Cable, Cassette and Film?

FEEDBACK INTO FUTURE ISSUES IDEAS ON HOW TO ESTABLISH THE STRUCTURE OF VIDEO GROUPS, SOCIAL ASPECTS, AND (NOT LEAST) THE ECONOMICS OF ALTERNATE MEDIA (VIDEO GROUPS, ALTERNATE NETWORKS, ACCESS TO SOFTWARE, EQUIPMENT INCLUDING NEW EQUIPMENT DESIGN). PART OF THE GROWTH OF ANY VIDEO THING MUST BE AN ACTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

The issue: What system to set up, what goes across it (or how it is used) that makes it significantly different or worthy of resource support. Cable may be an output, a way for people, tape, and feedback to come together. Maybe regional centers where people watching video can come back to those making or distributing tape. One of the problems: inaccessibility of equipment. How many people in the movement have compatible portapaks? Maybe 200 providing 5,000 people access via the Whole Earth Catalogue. Everyone has a formula for the success of things. When the telephone first started, runs one such formula, it was used locally in towns, cities and communities. But they couldn't talk to another community. So Bell developed a long line service to link the cities together. The Whole Earth Catalog success, it seems, is that it performs a service; a direct, objective, touch-free service. You read the Catalog, you mail in something, you receive and use it or read and imitate—it is possibility-expanding. It gives its readers an immediate vehicle for access and response. We all feel that about video tape, but we are yet to make it work.

Ira Schneider started this rap with Jerry Kindred and Les Rosen. Allen Rucker, Pat Crowley and Richard Raymond added most. Jerry Kindred did most of the writing.

TOWARD AN INFORMATION ECONOMY

by Paul Ryan

"There is an internally recognized beauty of motion and balance on any man-healthy planet," Keynes said. "You see in this beauty a dynamic stabilizing effect essential to all life. Its aim is simple: to maintain and produce coordinated patterns of greater, and greater diversity. Life improves the closed system's capacity to sustain life. Life—all life—is in the service of life. Necessary nutrients are made available to life by life in greater and greater richness as the diversity of life increases. The entire landscape comes alive, filled with relationships and relationships within relationships."

Dune appendix on ecology

... Been struggling with the economics of alternate video for three years now. In that time I've been involved with one rich patron, a Ford Foundation project in Newburgh, New York, various independent consultancies, and the recent New York State Council on the Arts/Video Movement Game. In most every case financial decisions have been in the hands of people other than those involved in the actual processing of information. In most instances this control has worked against the people involved. Equipment gets shuttled in and out of situations arbitrarily. The glorious turn-on gets no follow through and hopes turn to bitterness. The "if only" syndrome of powerlessness takes over. When you get mixed up with a bureaucracy, the bureaucracy can be depended on to reduce everything to its safe and sorry time grain. If there are semi-creative bureaucrats who have pet projects it's worse. Sitting on fat salaries, they play a sloppy politics of attrition—helping divide up a scene, hitchhiking on people who have been doing it without money. Because they ultimately determine where large sums of money go their ideas and say-so acquire a disproportionate weight. Among those struggling to survive in video the presence of a large sum of capital such as the original quarter million of the State Council brings out the worse of old style politics—non-cybernetic, crude and beyond repair. All this is compounded by the sheer fact of being in the city where it is near impossible to sustain networks of trust relationships. In short, the funding of video by grants thus far has been a bummer—high promise, low yield and all the time eating up people's budgets of flexibility. Nor is the grant scene self-sustaining. After a year you know your mistakes well enough to do it better and there is no bread. Newburgh left a lot of unhappy kids.

Meanwhile, back at the marketplace, Avco, EVR and friends are stockpiling information for home and cable along traditional marketing lines, treating information as capital, not understanding relevance. They continue to hype people to the glories of this bullshit so they will scream sock it to me on through the seventies and make their stockholders rich. By 1980 they will have enough audiences "pinpointed" (a term used in a Rand report on Cable) so that in effect we will move from the saturation bombing of American brain cells via broadcast television to pinpoint bombing via cable and cassette.

Where do you go? Capitalism itself is rightfully under onus with dissidents. Profit-making corporation is an instant turn-off for many of us, save those who have been "cleared" of their "money hang ups" by Scientology. Given the ecological situation, having a lot of money in a Swiss bank so you can buy the best anti-pollutant face mask just doesn't make it.

But then where do you go? As Frank Gillette, the original conceiver of Raindance would say—capitalism is like heating a house with coal. It's dirty, sooty, nobody likes it, it's a pain in the ass to manage, but it keeps the house warm until we find something better. One has only to read Norman O. Brown in Life Against Death on "Filthy Lucre" to realize the enormity of the money-dirt-excrement nexus that has been keeping our house warm. My sense of strategy as to how to move toward the polymorphously perverse resurrected body Brown calls for is by way of an information economy. The movement away from capitalism toward ecological narcissism is, at least in part, the embodying of mind infomorphs. By infomorph, I mean an organism that relates to itself and its environment in a way that respects and optimizes all possible transforms of differences that make differences. It does not identify one variable, such as profit, and attempt to maximize that variable at the expense of the whole.

Our capitalist economy renders life unidimensional—more and more the same: uniformity via homogenous quantification. By contrast an information economy thrives on variety and diversity, quality not quantity, differences that make differences. More simply stated the problem is one of how do you work in such a way that the flow of money follows the desired flow of information and not vice-versa? And how do you insure that there is enough money to do it?

There is a critical mass, a certain amount of machines and money necessary without which there is no way to manage transforms of differences. To cultivate a consciousness congruent with current complexity one must have enough quantifiable resources to pass critical thresholds and recycle what is relevant. Buddhism is beautiful but it is an oversimplification given the need for increasing the diversity of life. Spiritual riches via voluntary poverty may be a cop out. God is not transcendent, he is immanent in our experience, in this planet. We need embodiments of mind, not disembodiments. There is enough to go round. There are enough people interested in relevant communication so that we can begin to pay each other fairly for services rendered. Open accounting will help prevent some rip off. We cannot be giving it away all the time for free in dramatic gestures, while the capitalist economy packages the drama for its own development, giving not a shit for alternate culture. When someone suggested to Warner Brothers that they air Woodstock footage over network television as a serial in keeping with what would be proper electric liturgy he was told, "ah—we're making over 50 million on the movie, don't bother us with that."

We need to think our way through the horns of the profit, non-profit dilemma into an information economy. Deliberate minimization of a variable such as profit (the non-profit ethic) is as dangerous cybernetically as maximizing profit or in the purity of non-profit, but distributed throughout the biosphere in accord with patterns of relevant information flow.

In our current situation there are a number of mechanisms that disenfranchise people from their own money: insurance companies, taxes and an unresponsive government, and educational institutions which thrive on real estate and the power to certify knowledge rather than the ability to process information for people. The great virtue of the Whole Earth Catalog has been no bullshit information based on use and consequence of use. Contrast this with TV advertising that manipulates mythologies up front to trigger consumer response in subliminal ways. In the Whole Earth Catalogue the flow of money began to follow the flow of information.

InfomorphOne Organization of Ignorance

Since only the user is in a position to know what is relevant for him and how he wants to access relevance and information exchange must include the user from the beginning. Much of this happens naturally in just watching different tape and becoming aware of wanting to see more of this and no more of that.

At another level it is necessary to deal with desired information in a more coherent way. A healthy relation to the unknown is critical. Otherwise we grow rigid and die the death of explicitness and repetition. "I love Abbie Hoffman" reruns become reactionary. A mind that concerns itself too much with what it knows cannot maintain a good guessing way. Openness to the unknown is part of having a feel for what is relevant as things develop, a sense of the significant differences while there is still time to make a difference. Such access to relevancy is part of the freedom to self-correct that information economy can supply. What we don't know is an infinite resource, inexhaustibly recyclable. It seems possible to develop out of our ignorance a culture with a fullness of feedback such that we would not be recurrently faced with the choice between cannibalizing the human relations we have or solo-tripping to regions where we cannot relate to those we love nor ask them to trust.

A coherent relation to the unknown is possible through an organization of ignorance. Organization of ignorance is a research technique Peter Drucker explains in Landmarks of Tomorrow by discussing Mendelev's discovery of the periodic table of chemical elements. At the time Mendelev was working only 60 odd elements were known. Rather than trying to puzzle together the known elements, Mendelev began to ask himself what he had to know about what he did not know in order to make sense out of what he knew. He allowed the intervals, the gaps in his knowledge, to play a part in his conceptualization. In other words, he organized his ignorance.

In order to get video going on such a service, we must get the hardware to the people. Just viewing a television set and cassette playback is not enough—the need is for cameras, tape and knowledge of how to use—like learning to write. We need some bold on hardware design, a toebold into reproduction and distribution. But the alternate culture shies away from technology. Technology itself is so far a self-devouring thing. Something is designed and produced, it becomes the demand basis for something that is better. Everyone is waiting anxiously for the cassette, while buying soon to be obsolescent portapaks. Can video survive an exponential rate of obsolescence? Suppose the subculture developed its own gear, how would it avoid the cycle—clever design and distribution promotes stocks and conglomerates. Will some kind of sharing blunt the competitive edge and break the pattern? Henry Ford, Alex Bell, and James Hill had the advantage of a simpler time.

But maybe we are looking in the wrong direction for wisdom. There is recently a lot of speculation on new mediums of exchange (see the discussion of tokens in the January '71 Supplement to Whole Earth). Maybe "access" itself is a higher form of exchange. How does it work to get things done? My information favor to you today will be returned someday by you or someone else—the old blueblood trick.

Everyone is now talking about networks. It seems we need to avoid the "massive encompassing one" or "the one" that would destroy autonomy. If you begin at a particular point with an expertise (Lloyd Kahn and doming) you should work towards orienting your network around that existing interest. Avoid central systems and hierarchies. Networks are not imposed, they happen or grow. But we still need to invent or discover ways to generate the resources by which they can grow or survive. The connecting mechanism should be subtle, preserving the cells. The networks will be different and diverse-sharing, maybe, certain assumptions and says to develop, grow, have.

A recurring conviction. If it is not well done, it will fail. Things that are really good get picked up on. It is not going to happen without responsible competence. It just isn't possible to talk your way into a new kind of life that will allow everyone to be happy, a good attitude is not enough. It is necessary to run bookstores or printing presses, to work hard at generating things that are marketable and saleable if the money part of things go.

For video groups: Just because you've read Radical Software and are into the video thing, don't think people are going to hand you money out of good faith. Video groups must be other than aesthetic dandies. It is so easy to play with video, to make Dadaesque little things by intercutting off-air video with the man on the street. Video must somehow generate a new form of audio-visual information. Too many people are into turn-on television. There is so much that can be used for this purpose with no residual effect or worth. Maybe the difference is between outsider and insider—those who observe and report and those who participate in the process. Availability of easy rip-off mechanisms in video are everywhere. But to do so means selling soul, raping principles, and fouling up the energy balance.

The service of telling other people what you as a video group are doing is not that good. Media to the people and CATV raps are too often just hypes. Maybe the only service that a video group can perform on a non-personal level is to supply tapes, but then we run up against the inaccessibility of hardware problem.

It seems to come down to this: when a media or video group arises it must focus its service on its existing community, the local scene where it can actually perform a service within the limits of its energy.

What are the values and beliefs that are shared by video group and its community? In the process of creating networks, we must be very attentive to what the value is that we are sharing. Too many systems seem to have failed by attempting to match a wide variety of values to a large group. People seem differentiated in these matters—a large group of people will have only very few values in common. For most Americans to date, for instance, the value that they have held together is the need to survive economically. As we get beyond that point will social change, personal growth, learning how the world works, and educational development compel people?

If you don't dig the thing that someone else is doing with video, that's cool. They'd like to hear your complaints and consider your proposals. If they don't dig your proposal, go off and do your thing. Especially during the formative phases outside comments have heavy impact, especially if you are willing to share in the creation. But don't pick up on the business of bad mouthing that someone; just begin in another direction if your disaffection is that great. A plurality of solutions appears more viable (and possibly more healthy) than a single all-encompassing one.

Don't feed on. Input into and then use with wise selfishness if you must.

Enough philosophy. Next we'd like to deal with concrete ideas on economics, distribution, and the like—or at least the ground rules for these. If you are really interested write to Media Access Center at Portola Institute, 1115 Merrill Street, Menlo Park, California 94025.

Sample Organization of Ignorance Input

- Hour of the ocean
- Tape of CATV Projects
- Rap with Stewart Brand on Economics
- Rap with a drop out from Scientology
- Interpersonal relations in Commune
- Children in Commune
- Raps for high school kids by college kids on college
- Raps by dropout users about their experiences
- Rap with veterans returning from Vietnam
- Tape in South Vietnam
- Tape from African student on life in Africa
- Daily life tape of situationalists
- Tape on abortion in NYC
- Critiques of Bucky Fuller
- Woman's Liberation Movement raps with women on where they feel its at directed toward men
- Rap with Weathermen
- Rap with people who have left the city living in country, how they are doing
- Edited version of Keep by Frank Gillette
- Raps with people on planting electrodes in brains
- Documentation of Earth works by different artists
- Check out Whole Earth Catalogue and inputs

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ARTISTS' NEEDS

by Eric Siegel

Up until now, the video scene in America has been centered in New York City and San Francisco. It has manifested itself in the form of various video groups or as individuals.

The groups have become somewhat like clans, and in my opinion are quite closed. If you make videotapes and wish to do a good editing job . . . where do you go? Or if you wish to show your work to the public in a theater . . . where do you go?

The existing video groups here (New York) are not into editing individuals' tapes or public showings. So you are forced to join one of the already existing groups or making your own. This is a ridiculous state of affairs to say the least. I now would like to suggest the way I think the video structure should be set up:

1. A special editing lab should be set up in every major city in the world. All equipment can be kept in excellent working condition by two well-qualified people, one an engineer, the other a technician. The lab should be open 24 hours a day. The fee should be low enough for everyone to afford. Something like \$15-\$20. American money per hour. People would be able to call up for an appointment, come down and work the machines themselves if they choose or be assisted by the 2 people present.

2. A public video theater where anyone could rent time to show their tapes to a special audience or party. The theater should be able to hold at least 200-300 people comfortably. It should have a thick rug on the floor and huge video screens on the walls with a stereo high fidelity sound system. Again, rental fees should be reasonable so an individual can afford it. About \$75 per hour. The theater could be open every day. The theater would not have to worry about successful showings because its income would be from the showing fee.

This fee could vary according to the day and time. Saturday night would be the highest showing fee. Something like \$150 per hour. The artist would have to advertise the showing himself and could charge any admission he thinks he's worth. The theater would not take any gate cut so that if the artist becomes successful the artist becomes rich.

This is a reinforcing system. And a profitable one for both parties involved. Advertising could be added with the consent of the showing artist to raise extra revenue. Public service commercials could also be run, again with the consent of the showing artist.

If no one sets this system up—I shall.