

As we go to press, Sterling-Manhattan Cable announces the formation of a free access studio for production of video tapes. Portable video recording equipment as well as editing facilities will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Its location will be announced in the near future. Hopefully, this example will set a precedent for other cable stations around the country.



I have mentioned in this article some of the areas in Public Access which need work. Obviously, most of these areas will require funding, sometimes not very much, to get the job done. In addition, the following are only some of the other ways in which Public Access might be assisted:

1. Video access centers staffed with people to teach non-professional, non-commercial groups and individuals who wish to do their own Public Access videotaping how to use portable half-inch equipment. The center would need to be equipped with half-inch cameras and recording decks (total cost of each set-up: about \$1300 with discount), videotape, and a part-time repair person to keep the equipment up to cable-use standard. Expenditures for testing and repair equipment and rent would also be necessary.
2. Literature on how to use half-inch video equipment, simply written and illustrated, so that it would be useful to people with a wide range of educational backgrounds, with specific instructions for cable-use.
3. A Spanish-English version of the same.
4. A "spot" advertisement on commercial television, informing people that Public Access exists for their use and viewing, and how they can use it. Also bus and subway posters in cities, bus-stop and train-station posters in the country, with the same information. Newspaper display ads carrying use and viewing information.
5. A research project, to be updated at intervals, on techniques for improving the use of half-inch over the cable. The project should include a survey of all cable companies using half-inch on their own originating stations, and it should set up a system for the ongoing exchange of such information. There should be an inexpensively printed handbook of the research results, sent out to everyone involved with Public Access.
6. Franchise acquisition. If a number of foundations could pool their resources to acquire a franchise, then set about to establish a model cable system with fully developed Public Access facilities, that system could greatly influence the development of CATV as well as Public Access.

These suggestions just scratch the surface of the ways in which funding could be creatively integrated into the Public Access situation.

An involvement with Public Access really is an involvement with change. Some foundations have been debating the question of whether or not to directly involve themselves with making changes in our society. But it would seem that the question is not realistic. In reality, life IS change, and a live society is continuously changing. There is no way NOT to participate in the process, hence the question should be: what do we want the meaning of that change to be? Or: who are we who make these changes?

Technology is really nothing—a piece of equipment lying around—until somebody picks it up and uses it. And it is what we choose to do with it, which is to say, WHO we are who use it, which determines the effect of our technology upon us.

Cable technology has within it the possibility to hasten along a day when "big brother" is indeed "watching you", aided by a total system of two-way, individual access cablevision—into our homes, our bank accounts, our business transactions, where every TV set cablecasting the football game in the local bar can be transmitting our conversations and actions as well.

It also has the capacity to let us talk to each other, people who, in an earlier time, might not have been able to understand each other or to care, who might have been too frightened to listen to each other face-to-face.

We have a chance to witness the excitement of our own beings, our own lives, REAL people, not plastic people, with words we really mean coming out of our real mouths.

Do we want it? We can have it. Of all the promises of cable television, it is the most immediately realizable. It is here—but to grow it must have our commitment.

