

As problem solvers we are a nation of hardware freaks. Some are into seizing property or destroying it. Others believe in protecting property at any cost—including life—or at least guarding it against spontaneous use. Meanwhile, unseen systems shape our lives.

Power is no longer measured in land, labor, or capital, but by access to information and the means to disseminate it. As long as the most powerful tools (not weapons) are in the hands of those who would hoard them, no alternative cultural vision can succeed. Unless we design and implement alternate information structures which transcend and reconfigure the existing ones, other alternate systems and life styles will be no more than products of the existing process.

Fortunately, new tools suggest new uses, especially to those who are dissatisfied with the uses to which old tools are being put. We are not a computerized version of some corrupted ideal culture of the early 1900's, but a whole new society because we are computerized. Television is not merely a better way to transmit the old culture, but an element in the foundation of a new one.

Our species will survive neither by totally rejecting nor unconditionally embracing technology—but by humanizing it; by allowing people access to the informational tools they need to shape and reassert control over their lives. There is no reason to expect technology to be disproportionately bad or good relative to other realms of natural selection. The automobile as a species, for example, was once a good thing. But it has now overrun its ecological niche and upset our balance or optimum living. Only by treating technology as ecology can we cure the split between ourselves and our extensions. We need to get good tools into good hands—not reject all tools because they have been misused to benefit only the few.

Even life styles as diverse as the urban political and the rural communal require complex technological support systems which create their own realities, realities which will either have to be considered as part of the problem, or, better, part of the solution, but which cannot be ignored.

Coming of age in America means electronic imprinting which has already conditioned many millions of us to a process, global awareness. And we intuitively know that there is too much centralization and too little feedback designed into our culture's current systems.

The only pieces of public technology, for example, which are responsive to human choice are electric-eye doors and self-service elevators. Street-use patterns and building designs completely structure our experience rather than vice-versa. (*The people belong to the streets*). When you get into mass communications systems other than the telephone: not only is control centralized, but decision-making is an institutional rather than a people process.

Fortunately, however, the trend of all technology is towards greater access through decreased size and cost. Low-cost, easy-to-use, portable videotape systems, may seem like "Polaroid home movies" to the technical perfectionists who broadcast "situation" comedies and "talk" shows, but to those of us with as few preconceptions as possible they are the seeds of a responsive, useful communications system.

Videotape can be to television what writing is to language. And television, in turn, has subsumed written language as the globe's dominant communications medium. Soon, accessible VTR systems and video cassettes (even before CATV opens up) will make alternate networks a reality.

Those of us making our own television know that the medium can be much more than "a radio with a screen" as it is still being used by the networks as they reinforce product oriented and outdated notions of fixed focal point, point of view, subject matter, topic, asserting their own passivity, and ours, giving us feedback of feedback of information

rather than asserting the implicit immediacy of video, immunizing us to the impact of information by asking us to anticipate what already can be anticipated—the nightly dinnertime Vietnam reports to serialized single format shows. If information is our environment, why isn't our environment considered information?

So six months ago some of us who have been working in videotape got the idea for an information source which would bring together people who were already making their own television, attempt to turn on others to the idea as a means of social change and exchange, and serve as an introduction to an evolving handbook of technology.

Our working title was *The Video Newsletter* and the information herein was gathered mainly from people who responded to the questionnaire at right. While some of the resulting contents may seem unnecessarily hardware-oriented or even esoteric, we felt that thrusting into the public space the concept of practical software design as social tool could not wait.

In future issues we plan to continue incorporating reader feedback to make this a process rather than a product publication. We especially hope to turn the interest and efforts of the second and third television generations on college campuses, whose enormous energies are often wasted by the traditional university way of structuring knowledge, towards the creation of their own alternate information centers. (We are of the first television generation ourselves.)

To encourage dissemination of the information in *Radical Software* we have created our own symbol of an x within a circle: ⊗. This is a Xerox mark, the antithesis of copyright, which means DO copy. (The only copyrighted contents in this issue are excerpted from published or soon-to-be published books and articles which are already copyrighted.)

The individuals and groups listed here are committed to the process of expanding television. It is our hope that what is printed here will help create exchanges and interconnections necessary to expedite this process.

Please enclose information pertaining to the following:

1. Personal Biography (publishable and for use in our own files, i.e., resume type information, past activities prior to video, or simultaneous with, etc.).
2. Experimentation with video.
 - a. Why are you using video? How long have you been using it?
 - b. What experiments have you made, are you presently making, and do you plan to make with this medium?
 - c. Where do you see yourself going with video (in relationship to both hardware and software aspects)? Which are you personally more interested in developing? What are some of your overall concepts?
 - d. What do you predict for the future of videotape and TV?
 - e. How do you work (individually, collaboratively, both)?
 - f. What equipment do you use? Own? Do you plan to continue to use this, or are you planning to switch to some other? Please comment on quality and efficiency of equipment now available to you.
 - g. What equipment would you like to see manufactured?
 - h. What information would you like to obtain from other people who are experimenting with videotape in this and other countries? (Do you have any solutions, questions, or information about compatibility?)
 - i. How do you think video can best be displayed publicly?
 - j. How do you think videotape can best be used non-commercially for profit?
 - k. What kind of information would you like to see included in this newsletter?

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