

group has chosen to report about. With a newspaper as its primary resource, each group organizes, rehearses, and tapes a show complete with commercials, if desired. News shows may be as simple or as elaborate as the group chooses. All groups should work during planning and production in isolation from the others. When all the tapes have been completed, the class as a whole screens and compares the results.

The final production from each news team will be unique in spite of their abstracting news from the same resource dealing with the same events. As you can imagine, this exercise raises many points for discussion: What is news?; What is important news?; What is the relationship between the news and what really happened?; How do the people reporting the news effect the message?; How does TV effect the message?, etc.

Neighborhood Documentary

LARRY GOLDIN

There is a preference among many doing video with kids for "real-time" or "non-edited" tapes. The goal is to preserve the recorded incident just as it happened rather than producing tapes that are "filmic" in the sense that different shots are edited together in an order other than they were shot. This "video verite" school finds "filmic" a very pejorative term. Those involved in this kind of video state they are "process" and not "product" oriented. For them, editing is synonymous with distortion.

But editing is a process too. It brings to kids whole new order of perceptions, decisions and skills. We all edit our perceptions every day. We decide whose opinions to expose ourselves to and whose to avoid. For all their claims to the opposite, those doing video verite follow a similar selective process: they decide on what event to tape, how to tape it, who will be in it.

This activity is about the unavoidable subjectivity of selecting and editing processes. It involves making a historical documentary about the neighborhood in which your students live. This kind of video production is worth doing because kids often don't realize how their community has changed in respect to both the physical and social environment.

Further, kids who are members of various racial and ethnic minorities can learn about the cultural heritage which they no longer perceive in their day-to-day lives. Through interviewing old people, kids can come to see the past in real rather than mythic terms.



Mary Sheridan

The Activity

The documentary process starts with the kids deciding what they want to explore. They must find people who can give them first hand knowledge of the time or place of interest. Next, students should decide the questions that will get the information they need. Prepare kids to drop their planned questions and make up new ones when something or interest comes up which was not anticipated. The teacher should ask the person being interviewed if the crew can return at a later time since the kids often generate new questions after they have played back the tapes.

If kids have done a good job of questioning, it is not necessary for viewers to hear the questions posed on the final tape. Instead, in the edited tape there can be simple but effective sequences of people telling their own stories. The use of old photographs brings into play various researching skills. And such materials create visual excitement when comparing past to present. It is in the editing process that kids can intercut the shots of stills with the interviews while still maintaining the audio-track of the interviewee's voice. This can be done easily with a standard editing deck by transferring audio and video signals one at a time. Finally, in the editing process kids will need to write and record the necessary introduction plus statements of narration.

When the tape has been edited, a special presentation should be planned for those who were in the tape. Another screening for parents can provide the kids with further insight into the history and changes of their environment.

Teaching Suggestions

Have the students practice trying not to provide too much of an answer in the phrasing of their questions. This is a common mistake. Have kids interview each other just to discover what the process is about. The less the interviewer says and the more the interviewee says, the more interesting the tape

will be.

When kids are on the street doing interviews, have them playback the tape to the person they have just talked with. New questions and deeper responses often generate this way. Also, of course, kids can see if they got what they wanted.

Video Animation

CHUCK ANDERSON

The question inevitably arises: Can animation be created with the videotape recorder? It is virtually impossible to animate still objects with the 1/2 inch videorecorders. The continuous scanning operation of the camera negates the possibility of single frame shooting such as is done with Super 8 and 16mm movie cameras. Therefore, potential video cartoonists must look to other forms of animation, such as manipulation of objects in front of the camera. The basic rationale exists for all animation: you have complete control over whatever is to be videotaped. Here is one possibility: a variation of the ancient Chinese shadow play.



Chuck Anderson

The Activity

A story or choice of characters for improvisation is made. Two dimensional puppets are created from heavy paper or cardboard. Movable limbs are achieved by connecting figures at their movable joints by means of masking tape and thread. The puppets are pressed against a translucent, taut rear projection screen. They are manipulated by long, fixed dowels that are fixed to key points of the body. The puppets and their operators are positioned on the darkened side of the screen; the video recording camera is on the other. Movie lights at low setting heightens resolution of video images.

In-Depth Interviews

KIT LAYBOURNE

In most video programs, there are many, many activities in which kids conduct the kinds of interviews that they know so well from a lifetime of watching television. This activity forces students to experience a different kind of interview. Doing



Jeff Strickler

in-depth interviews helps bring into relief the assumptions and stylistic conventions, the strengths and liabilities of standard TV fare. It also programs students to explore the unique qualities and abilities of portable video systems.