

the most complex and ambitious project of the year, a documentary on Black History. Students selected the areas of the topic to be covered, chose stills from various sources, added music tracks, poems, and speeches. Re-edited until the tape became brittle, it was shown during Black History week. Then the student-producer remade the tape completely. This final tape, in spite of the technical limitations of a 1 VTR system, is more cinematic and entertaining than any instructional film, tape or filmstrip on the topic that I've seen.

### Studio Shows

Other tapes included an improvisation of a confrontation on "cutting" classes, an illustrated fashion show, Black News, spoofs of advertising, a monologue on undersea life and communication with dolphins, and vehement discussions about jobs, the future, and college.

A different type of production was aimed at integrating intensive verbal drills with the quiz show format.

Questions based on pronunciation, spelling, synonyms, antonyms and rhyming pairs of words were flashed on the monitor, a student would signal and have his answer taped. A student emcee kept up the swift pace, making it an enjoyable exercise. We noticed that if the same question were repeated in different games, the students always remembered. General knowledge and sports quizzes were also successful. Our version of Password was very popular. In particular, the sports quiz revealed stunning verbal and quantitative achievement, obvious-



Ricardo Wainsztein

ly resulting from significant outside reading on the topic, among students put off by most school work.

The year ended with a tour of the NBC studios in Manhattan, tying in our work with an appreciation of the mass media. Hopefully, some of the students are now media-literate enough to understand or even alter some of the effects of the media environment. They'd better be, because never before, as Huxley said, have so many listeners been at the mercy of so few speakers.

Video isn't a panacea for the communications needs of students, but schools, our most print-oriented institutions, must begin to work with, not against, the media to which students have tuned their senses.

## Video Catalyst

PETER HARATONIK

On Broadway a group of 10-year-olds are taping a video play in a neighborhood store. About four miles away on the Lower East Side a group of sixth graders are preparing to tape speakers at an Earth Day Celebration. Two thousand miles west, noted filmmaker Stan Brakage is using a portable video system in his discussion of image making with high school students. And in Birmingham, Alabama, a crew from a local Educational TV station is preparing for a visit from a New York filmmaker who will work with students in the production of a major local television show.

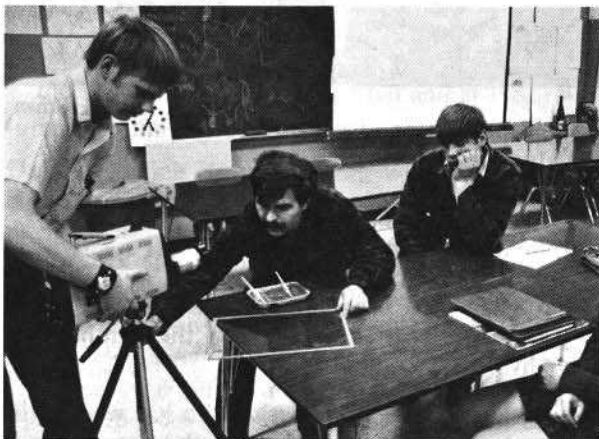
All these events have something in common besides video. They're all part of programs planned and coordinated by the Center for Understanding Media in New York. The Center, founded in 1969 by

John Culkin, is a non-profit organization which specializes in projects involving young people and the new media.

What the Center seeks to do is to plan, develop, and carry out a variety of activities which will ensure a better understanding of media in its broadest sense - to create a totally integrated program in the arts and humanities. Our work is primarily being done in three areas: teacher training, model site programs and the development of projects involving professional media artists in teaching roles. In implementing goals and programs designing these three areas are deeply integrated. For us to develop an in-school project without adequately training teachers (who in most cases are not equipped to deal with new technologies in either a practical or

theoretical manner) would be disastrous. Similarly, to bring working professionals into an educational environment without adequate supervision or training, would only cause confusion and lead to possible conflict between the goals of schools and those of an individual artist. Model projects that we design hopefully provide a way in which to adequately foster creative interchange.

Since 1969, a major emphasis of the Center has been in developing programs which use video as a tool in this integrative process of understanding all media. During the 1971-2 school year, the Center conducted a pilot program in media education on the elementary school levels, in the Mamaroneck, N.Y. Public Schools. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the year's work resulted in a major resource book, *DOING THE MEDIA*, along with the knowledge that video would play an ever increasing role in future Center activities. From the beginning, me-



Peter Haratonik

dia artist Milo Dalbey has served as full-time artist-in-residence with the Mamaroneck School System.

#### Other Pilot Programs

This initial grant led to the development of a number of on-site school projects during the following year. Thirty New York City school teachers were promised scholarships to study at the Center's 1972 Summer Graduate Institute. During the school year, the Center assisted a dozen schools in starting film and video projects funded through a grant from the New York Community Trust. The Center's role was becoming that of a video catalyst, providing expertise and basic equipment in hopes that the schools would carry on the program. In many cases they did.

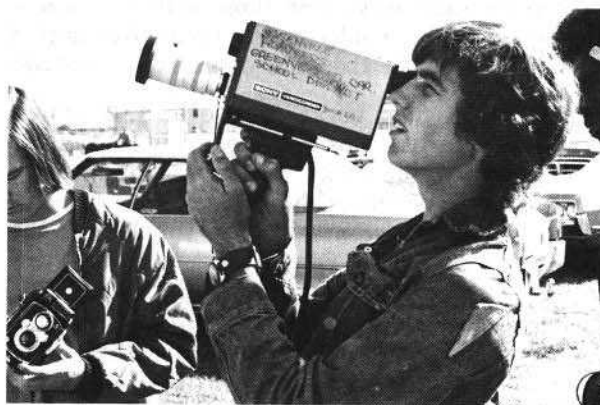
Our successes surprised us. One school in Brooklyn was able to create a Media Center which included the active use of video. A junior high school in Staten Island devoted a year to using video to explore the complexities of the political process. Other New York City schools responded well to assistance offered by the Center and countless video activities were carried out by students, parents and teachers throughout the city and at our suburban site in Mamaroneck. A part of both our city and

suburban projects was the idea that a working professional in one of the media arts could, by his or her presence, provide rich insight and experience towards understanding the impact of art and technology on our culture. A number of residencies by video artists provided schools with new inputs.

#### Artist-in-the-Schools

While we were conducting artist residencies at home, a new program was developed nation-wide. The Artist-in-the-Schools program, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Office of Education, added a film component to the work already being done in dance, poetry, and visual arts.

During the first year, three states participated through their local state arts councils. But by the summer of 1972 - one year later - close to 30 states had requested and been granted funding for residencies in film and video. The Center's role was to provide services to all arts councils and school systems involved. In the summer of 1972 more than 70 teachers and administrators representing close to 100 school systems received graduate level training in New York. Exceeding even our own expectations, courses in video production were by far the most popular. Video had obviously had an impact on schools apart from our own developmental activities. This interest has not waned in the interim.



Kit Laybourne

A recent Delphi study in futurecasting conducted by the Center is a case in point. The overwhelming consensus among a cross section of media educators was that video would be the most popular production tool five years from now, and that print materials on video would equal those available on film.

Participants from Artist-in-the-Schools sites were assisted by the Center staff in developing programs suitable to their own needs and resources. The most important factor was the pairing of an artist with each participating school system. In this process, a number of schools indicated a preference for an individual who not only had skills in the area of film production but also someone who was competent in the use of video equipment. In many cases, schools already owned thousands of dollars



Dan Edelman

worth of hardware (purchased for teacher training or use by the football team.) Occasionally, teachers of media would even find the opened boxes languishing deep in the bowels of supply closets. With a little knowledge of video, they successfully liberated them. Visiting artists reacted to available VTR gear in the same way: even those with little intention of working in video found themselves unable to ignore tools in the face of limited resources.

Since the program began, well over 150 professional media artists have participated in it. And not only have these artists provided schools with worthwhile experiences, but the program has also developed a creative new way to supplement the artists' incomes. The Center is expanding its Artist-in-the-Schools activities with funds provided by the Manpower Development Training Act of the U.S. Office of Education which are being used, basically, to increase the earning capacity of independent film and video artists.

#### Graduate Media Studies

The training of both teachers and filmmakers has been carried out in conjunction with the Center's overall development of a graduate school for advanced training in media studies. The Center entered into an affiliation with Antioch College in 1972. In the fall of 1973, the Center for Understanding Media began offering a fully accredited program leading to a degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies. Of the 100 students presently registered almost half of these are actively involved in some area of video studies. The Center, through its graduate school, is able to provide students with access to 1/2 inch video recording and editing systems, both for course work, independent studies and projects which educators wish to develop in schools. In this way, the Center's role as catalyst

is multiplied by active participation among graduate students.

#### A Case Study

Within this cursory look at the Center's activities, it might be worthwhile to provide some details about one video program that has had significant impact upon both the kids and the community they live in.

Ms. Teri Mack is a video artist who has worked in the past as a video specialist for the young Filmmakers Foundation in their Lower East Side storefront facility. Teri's decision to work in New York City public schools was based on two factors: her desire to become more actively involved in the New York community in which she lives and her wish to develop a close working relationship in a school that has active community participation.

P.S. 75 in the heart of New York's multi-ethnic West Side, is one of the open corridor schools assisted by Lillian Weber and the City University of New York's Open Education Workshop. The bi-lingual facility has sought to involve as many aspects of community life as possible. One such group from the area, the Teachers and Writers Collaborative, has worked in the school for the past three years developing creative writing workshops. As part of this program, video was added two years ago as a means of dramatizing short plays and poems.

Teri's work is supported through the cooperative efforts of both the Teachers and Writers Collaborative and the Center for Understanding Media. Teri describes the program as follows:

"This is P.S. 75's third year with videotape, but its first with a full-fledged video special-

ist. As the person experienced with both the limitations and the potential of the portapak, I am responsible for training as many people as possible to use it, scheduling our single portapak's use and most important, working closely with kids, helping them develop ideas for the production of quality videotapes. . ."

The Open Corridor environment gives Teri the chance to have kids come together in loosely-structured groups, meeting in the comfortable, carpeted surroundings of a quiet room made available to them. But the classroom environment is not always conducive to the free, creative use of the medium. As Teri points out:

"In a formal classroom, video is used in a highly structured manner. There's little opportunity for experimentation and in an attempt to have every child participate, no one child is able to get an intense video experience. We work outside the classroom, in our own space, the auditorium, on the street, or in someone's home. We work with flexible hours, depending on what the situation calls for. Obviously, the school's support is essential and at P.S. 75 we have such support."

Deciding which classes to work with is not an easy choice to make. Obviously, an outside specialist like Teri has only limited time and if the program is to work she must concentrate her efforts with only a few kids. This leads to the problem of how to generate school-wide interest and support. In Teri's work, she has developed some ideas:

"There was an obvious need to train teachers who were interested but a workshop that began at the beginning of the school year failed because of my lack of understanding of the tremendous demands upon a teacher's time and energy. It became necessary to individualize instruction, training them during their free periods."

And so, the teachers of an open corridor school become involved in the process of individualized learning themselves. Teri also works with other school personnel - paraprofessionals, and specialists - to give them video expertise so that they may use the medium in their work in remedial reading, drug counselling or art.

#### Training "The Community"

It has been noted that the community plays an important role in day-to-day activities at P.S. 75 and as a group, were actively brought in to the video program. Teri recalls:

"At the first parents' meeting of the year, I announced the start of both afternoon and evening video workshops. In spite of heavy work and family demands, people signed up. The equipment was made available to be used overnight and on weekends by parents to make documentaries about the school."

This aspect of the program has been the most significant change over previous years. The parents are now pushing for the continuation of P.S. 75's video project without the need for outside support of specialists or free equipment loan.

As part of the community outreach program, cable television is used extensively to broadcast tapes produced in the school. P.S. 75 now has a weekly TV show going out over the public access channel of both of New York's cable systems. Every Thursday at both 2 PM and 7 PM, kids and their parents get the opportunity to watch neighborhood documentaries, video plays written and produced by kids and countless other variations of TV formats. For those who don't have cable, viewing is done in the school cafeteria and parents gather at each other's apartments for viewing.

Teri's unique relationship to the school is a significant factor. As she puts it,

"I am not part of the school system, I am not a "teacher". I am not a specialist hired by the school board. I'm an outsider and the kids sense this difference. Yet, I am, at the same time very much a teacher - someone who wants to help kids learn and collaborates with them in that process, someone who makes a lot of demands on them. It is important for kids to be around adults who are alternatives to both teachers and parents, adults they can talk to, be friends with and learn with."

For us, the P.S. 75 experience has been a marvelous example of how various elements of a community can work together to create learning situations that otherwise would not have been possible. Teri's work is not a guaranteed aspect of the school's curriculum. It can never be assumed that the funding will be available to continue the program. But with



Peter Haratonik

Teri's role as catalyst, it is hoped that the community and school will find its own way to continue this project which they feel is important.

### Bridging the Media Gap

We at the Center are constantly drawn between two poles: at the same time that we are very conscious of our role in the creation of a new field, we also must be even more conscious of ways in which to serve that field. As video specialists, we seek to expand our knowledge and to explore the full benefits of the technology's potential. We want to make ourselves smarter. Yet, as video educators, we must continually face new generations of video

learners who have the same problems and ask the same questions as everyone else beginning video.

As we can, we will continue activities which promulgate media studies in educational settings and assist those individuals and groups who have creative inputs to render. There is lots to do in this emerging field. As John Culkin, Director of the Center for Understanding Media said: "Anything that helps the child to understand and control the media environment is a good thing. Any way the media can help the child to define himself and his relation with others is a good thing."

## Inner-City Video

JON DUNN

The Communications Experience, an E.S.E.A. Title I project in Philadelphia public and parochial schools, designs its projects to increase understanding of and competency in the basic skills of our culture and also to equip teachers to play an important part in this process. These basic skills go far beyond language and quantitative competency and include a broad range of basic communication skills such as media competency (the ability to decode and encode signals in mass media and environmental media) and understanding human interrelationships. These basic skills enable students to begin to deal effectively with themselves as valuable human resources and with the ever pervasive electronic/technological environment. It is often pointed out that children entering school today will be under the age of 35, in the year 2001. So that an additional, indispensable skill becomes the ability to deal effectively with the profound changes in the basic structures of our society.

It is hardly accidental that the artist-educators who comprise the staff and consultants of The Communications Experience all see themselves moving toward a less specialized vision of the world. It is not simply a throwback to a Renaissance mind set, but a phenomenon that recognizes the nature of the rapid changes within our culture that demand extreme flexibility and adaptability among those striving to retain their humanity amid a growing technocracy. The recognition of these concerns is hardly limited to this group. On the contrary, educators and social scientists throughout the world have voiced with clarity and vision the need for this kind of viewing of the future. The programs of The Communications Experience confront these concerns and attempt practical learning strategies.

In working toward our goals, we deal with a number of media tools including video. Film, photo-

graphy, audio tape, radio, synthesizers, maps, newspapers, cities, towns, woods, clothing, language, group interaction analyses, and institutions are other media through which we work to prepare teachers and students and ourselves to deal with our multiple worlds.

Let me sketch out a few examples of how The Communications Experience has used video over the past five years:

- Fifth grade students studying the urban environment have videotaped its institutions in action (hospitals, police, sports clubs, businesses, etc.) One high point was a tape of a Mayor Frank Rizzo press conference. One young interviewer asked, "Is there any connection between your appointment of Joe Rizzo as fire commissioner and his being your brother?"

- A drug program in which addicts see a film and then explain, in front of video cameras, what they saw. The tape is played and they question what they saw. They then tape that playback session and play it back. Insights begin to pile up as the cycle



Jon Dunn