

**The Future of Public Television**  
**The Cultural Policy Center at The University of Chicago**



**The Future of Public  
Television**

**Presented by:**  
Cultural Policy Center  
The Harris School of Public Policy  
The University of Chicago

**Transcript**  
**Day One, Session Three:**  
**An Address by Kathleen Cox;**  
**Guest Panelists Newton Minow,**  
**Lawrence Grossman & William J.**  
**McCarter**

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**John Callaway** Our next speaker is Kathleen Cox who is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Kathleen joined the CPB in 1997 and has served in a range of positions including general counsel, senior vice president, policy and executive vice president, and chief operating officer becoming president and CEO this past July. Working closely with the CPB board, she has been largely responsible for making CPB a more focused organization with well-defined goals and objectives, a work plan of specific projects and orderly internal processes. She has also helped build CPBs research and analysis capacity so that the needs of public broadcasting can be identified, assessed and addressed more systematically. In her new role, her focus turns much more external, helping to facilitate a collective and coherent vision of the future for public service media in this new digital age. Before joining CPB, Kathleen Cox spent nine years as intellectual property counsel at Bell Atlantic Corporation in Washington. During her tenure she established and headed the intellectual property group, which was responsible for all matters in this area affecting the Bell Atlantic Corporation. We're particularly happy that she can join us today because she is an alumna of the University's law school and serves on it's Board of Visitors. Would you please give a warm welcome to Kathleen Cox?

**Kathleen Cox** Good morning. I am very happy to be with all of you today for a conference which promises to have a lot of lively discussion. Thank you very much.

I'm very happy to be here and to join in this conversation about the future of public television. I am new in my role at CPB, and I will say at the outset that I would not have taken this job if I wasn't excited about that future.

As I looked over the agenda for this session, I was struck by the number of tough questions suggested for discussion - and by one

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in particular: "Where is the real power in public television?"

The range of answers listed - the stations, the state legislatures, PBS, or even CPB - suggested a quite sophisticated understanding of the highly decentralized nature of public television. And yet, the fact that the question was asked at all suggested that someone thought there should be a simple answer. But there isn't.

Power in public broadcasting in general - and in public television in particular - is spread widely, and not held by any one entity or group of entities. From the 170 or so PTV licensees, who serve 99 percent of the households in America, to the membership organizations like PBS and APTS; from the independent production community and powerhouse producer stations, to funders ranging from private corporations to the American taxpayer - the power in public broadcasting is shared across a range of disparate organizations with diverse interests and dramatically different viewpoints. For the true potential of public broadcasting to be realized, this power must be exercised in concert. And to be truly successful, it must also be shared with like-minded entities outside public broadcasting.

If this arrangement seems unwieldy to you, you are not alone. More than once, Congress has invited a CPB president up to the Hill to explain some public broadcasting transgression, only to be told that CPB had not funded the activity in question and, in any case, had extremely (and appropriately) limited influence in the decisions of stations, producers or programmers.

The truth is that the increasingly generous federal appropriation for public broadcasting - which will rise to \$400 million in FY 2007 and which CPB administers - represents less than 15 percent of the approximately \$2 billion in revenues that constitute the public broadcasting economy. But since we are the ones who cash the federal check,

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CPB is highly visible and Congress holds us accountable for our collective actions.

For those of you not involved directly in public broadcasting, let me take a moment to explain CPB's role. CPB is a private, non-profit corporation, outside the government enclave. Under formulas set by law, we administer and distribute funds to stations and producers. We also act as a heat shield, insulating public broadcasters from government efforts to exercise undue influence on editorial freedom.

CPB doesn't make the programs, or broadcast them - in fact, we are prohibited by law from doing that. We don't prepare children for school, raise public awareness about issues, or create community partnerships. But the wise use of our resources helps create the climate in which all this and more can happen.

CPB, however, is the only organization within public broadcasting positioned to look at the enterprise as a whole - radio, television and new technologies; local stations and national organizations. From this unique vantage point, we work to identify challenges, look for possible solutions, and address unmet needs.

Today, there are enough challenges and unmet needs to give us all plenty to do. Broadcasting as a whole is undergoing its biggest period of change since television first appeared on the scene.

As recently as the early 1990s, television broadcasting was available on only a handful of channels, satellite radio was just developing, and barely anyone thought that the Internet had anything to do with television or radio. Now, the predictions of transformation are finally starting to come true.

The technological change is obvious - cable, satellite, the Internet. Yet the transformation involves much more than technology. Over the past few years, there has been an expectation revolution on the part of

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audiences. Viewers and listeners now expect to exercise ever greater control, not only over what content is available to them, but over how, when, and where it is delivered. Meeting those expectations is a challenge that will consume all of us in the media world for a good long time.

Along with these dazzling breakthroughs in communication and information technologies come some critical policy issues:

- What is the unique value that makes public television worthy of public support in a multi-channel universe?
- How can we harness the opportunities presented by technology in ways that allow us to provide real service to our audience?
- And what does public service really mean in the information age?
- Each of these issues has particular relevance for public television, and I'd like to talk briefly about each in turn.

Let's turn first to what most people think of when considering public television's value - the programming broadcast by the stations. Cable competitors notwithstanding, public television continues to offer both style and substance different from that of commercial television - a positive and distinctive alternative that viewers recognize and value.

CPB recently conducted the largest audience research study in public television history. It included in-depth interviews and focus groups in eight cities across the country, as well as a random survey of nearly 1500 adults and a smaller survey of 600-plus station members.

The results were gratifying. Viewers told us that they expect public television programming to have distinctive qualities of intelligence, substance, uniqueness and variety. They expect the programming to trust the viewer and respect the audience's intelligence - to treat them as citizens, not consumers. And they expect the highest quality in everything from content to writing to

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production values. In other words, they hold us to the highest of standards.

Equally important, we also heard about barriers to viewing that kept people from seeing shows they might enjoy. Not only did their own busy lifestyles stand in the way, so did public television's limited promotion, multi-part series, and inconsistent schedule - so inconsistent that some people stated flatly that public television had not schedule at all!

There are many lessons to be learned from all of this research. We are currently meeting with both the station and the production community to translate these principles into specific actions - so that CPB can continue to support the programming that makes public television so important and valuable.

Let's turn now to the challenge of using technology in ways that improve the service we can provide to audiences and communities.

Digital television - and digital radio, too, for that matter - offer exciting new opportunities to expand our public service. Public broadcasting has been in the forefront of this effort, and Congress has provided CPB with digital conversion funding to assist stations in meeting the FCC mandate. Now, however, with the equipment in place for most stations, we are turning for the first time to digital content and services.

Last month, we announced the creation of a Digital Services Fund, which will make grants to public television to fund the first generation of these new services. We are ready to look at anything from regional public affairs multicasts to instructional and teacher development channels to the delivery of community emergency preparedness content - and lots more.

There is also an increasing recognition that to fully realize the potential of this new capability to serve communities, public broadcasting needs to form strong alliances with other community service providers.

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Some stations around the country are already well on their way with partnerships, and at CPB, we are working to expand and nurture them.

We have also recently begun a partnership of our own: working with the Institute for Museum and Library Services, we will jointly fund community-level partnerships involving public broadcasters and museums and libraries. We think this will not only lead to some interesting projects, but also to a better understanding of how to create successful collaborations.

Digital technology can also turn our ephemeral broadcasts into lasting libraries of content. CPB has already funded the creation of PBCore, a digital asset management standard that will allow us to keep track of what is in our digital inventory, much as the Dewey Decimal system helped libraries to manage in the print era. Now, how can we use those assets?

One idea that I find extremely interesting is investing in what Chris Anderson of *Wired* magazine calls "the long tail." The idea is that there are eager audiences for all kinds of movies, music and yes, television programs, that would never rise to the level of a "hit." But digital technology - free from the constraints of geographic distance, numbers of channels, and the 24-hour program day - allows us to aggregate the audiences for "non-hits" in ways that become very impressive.

Providing access to public television's enormous inventory of programming would present extraordinary difficulties - negotiating the rights, for example, would be time-consuming, complicated, and expensive. But until solutions for the mega-problems can be found, we might want to begin moving ahead in small ways, for example, by putting local content on-line.

The third question I posed earlier was about the meaning of public service in the digital age. The Public Broadcasting Act, passed in 1967, sets out goals that I believe remain even more relevant today.

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It recognizes, for example, that public broadcast services are "valuable community resources." In this era of media consolidation, public broadcasters are increasingly the only locally owned and operated media in their communities, and uniquely able to respond to local needs.

CPB has also done research around the question of how communities value this aspect of public broadcasting. We have found, for example, that people appreciate the presence of a station in their community - much as they would appreciate the presence of an art museum or a university. With regard to programming, they often don't distinguish between locally and nationally produced programs. Rather, they appreciate unique, high quality programming that is responsive to community concerns whatever the source.

And here, let me say something about locally produced programming. Prior to the conference, John Calloway asked us to consider "why there is so little local programming on public television and what can be done to remedy that very old and continuing problem."

In fact, local production is a significant activity for many stations and a major expense for the system. In 2003, for example, the system spent \$175 million on local production. This represents the largest local service expense, and, in total, was more than the stations spent on the national programming service.

Beyond that:

- 99 percent of stations devote some level of resources to local production, and 17 percent of total system employees are dedicated to local production.
- 45,000 hours of new local programming was created in 2003. The median per station was 83 hours annually.
- Some local programs have as much if not more impact than the best national shows - WTTW's Chicago Tonight is a great example. But our research found that as

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many as four out of five local shows were not appealing to audiences or widely used.

Well, what can we do? Some of things we are considering are identifying best practices for the development of sustainable local productions, or models for like-minded stations to work with like-minded stations to aggregate specific content, and then share it. But locally produced programs are only one way for localism to be expressed; localism around nationally produced programs and the acquisition of programs that are in tune with local needs are others

The Act also speaks of addressing the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities. In a nation that is on the way to becoming "majority minority," the service we provide in this regard is essential. A significant portion of CPB's programming funds goes to support such efforts.

CPB has a long-standing commitment to the five Minority Consortia and a strong partnership with Independent Television Service, who bring us stories which would otherwise go untold.

We are strongly committed to providing the best educational programming for children. We have just completed some research that will inform these efforts. In the meantime, however, we are not standing still. We have just launched a great new program called *Maya and Miguel*, which will teach English language skills to our growing immigrant population. And tomorrow, I will be announcing an initiative that will focus on history and civics content for high school and middle-school students.

Let me touch on one other aspect of CPB's public service mission. The Public Broadcasting Act specifies in part that CPB is to facilitate the "full development of public telecommunications in which programs . . . will be made available to public telecommunications entities, with strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all

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programs or series of programs of a controversial nature."

Recently, issues of objectivity and journalistic responsibility have become common topics of discussion. Some of it is driven by the media's insatiable interest in itself - leading to the endlessly self-analytical stories about what journalistic balance is, or whether it is even possible. Some of it may be related to the choices offered by new technology - cable channels or radio stations where you will hear only what you already agree with.

Whatever the underlying reasons, the fact is that broadcasters and journalists are being subjected to very close scrutiny indeed. To maintain the public trust, we must be able to measure up.

This election cycle brought us the saga of Sinclair Broadcasting, whose shareholders convinced it not to air a one-sided documentary. But important as shareholders are to commercial broadcasters, public broadcasters answer to an even higher authority. We answer to the Congress; we answer to the law; we answer to all of the public.

At CPB, we have wrestled with objectivity and balance for years. Our approach has been to focus on educating and professionalizing public broadcast's journalists. To that end, we have sponsored seminars and workshops, handbooks and guidelines. When appropriate, we have also sought to strengthen programming by funding programs that make more diverse views available.

Our recent actions, I think it is fair to say, have been controversial. But let me set out a proposition that I think we all can agree with: that public broadcasting becomes stronger as the range of views it presents grows wider.

To put it another way, public broadcasting doesn't belong to any one; it belongs to all of us. Each of us should be able to find programming there that enlightens us - inspires us - enriches us - and yes, on occasion,

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enrages us. I have no worries about our ability to do that!

Again, many thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to our discussion.

**John Callaway** Kathleen, thank you very much. We are running just a little bit behind, so we are going to take a 15-minute break. You can get your coffee in the café and please be back here because we want to resume. We will have Newt Minow and Larry Grossman and Bill McCarter with commentary on this, and then we will go to my questions and questions from the audience. I ask that we get started shortly.

One of the footnotes I will make is if you see Pat Mitchell leave shortly after noon, it is not because she is mad at us. She has got a little meeting that I know something about, that I hope is a useful and successful meeting, and she will be back. She will be with us to start off with, which, by the way, means that if you want to get your comments to her, this might be a good time to do it early.

Our first three speakers this morning have given us much to think about and much to absorb, and we thought it would be good if their talks were followed by commentary by leaders who had spent decades in the service of broadcasting and public television, people who had been around the block and had accumulated wisdom that they would share with us this morning. These men, I think, could be called the intellectual "three tenors" of public broadcasting.

**Audience-female** Well, I want to hear them sing.

**John Callaway** They're going to sing all right. Next to the end on my left is Newt Minow, President Kennedy's choice as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, author of the famous or infamous *Vast Wasteland* description of

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television, former long-time member and Chairman of the Board of Governors for PBS, and former Chairman of the Board of WTTW. Next to him is Larry Grossman, former President and CEO of PBS, former President of NBC News, and he is, along with Newt Minow, Co-chairman of the Digital Promise Project, which we will be talking about, and he maintains his work in public broadcasting. He is a trustee of Connecticut Public Broadcasting. And Bill McCarter, who I'm just getting to know, he seems like a very nice guy. You may not know, but Bill was president of WETA in Washington, before his long and distinguished run as President and CEO of WTTW Channel 11, in Chicago, and he is now president emeritus of Window to the World Communications and its three divisions, WTTW Channel 11, The Chicago Production Center, and WFMT. So, would you please give a warm welcome to our three panelists who are going to give us some commentary? (Applause).

**John Callaway** I gave Bill, Larry, and Newt a little briefing on what their roles are here, and I will tell you what I told them, and that is, I wanted them as they listened today to feel free to comment on anything that they have heard, so far, and I'm particularly interested in what they might have to say about the enhanced funding initiative that was announced here. I think it is fair to say, if I've still got my news instincts, there is a major piece of news coming out of this conference. Then I wanted them to give some thoughts, some brief thoughts on where they are. They've had a chance to sit back now and watch public television. They may watch more public television now than they did when they were running it, and get some comments on their take on how we're doing with public television, and then I want Newt and Larry to talk about their Digital Promise Project, and I've got a couple of questions related to that.

So, Larry Grossman, I think you came the furthest. Let me begin with you. What have you been hearing here today and what do you make of it?

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**Larry Grossman** Well, first of all, let me say that I have never been described as somebody who has been around the block before, and I am interested in finding out what that means. (Laughter) I also, when John started this, talked about public television being at a crossroads. Every time I come to a crossroad, my kids always say I make the wrong turn, so I'm a little nervous about where we're going from here. I thought that the three talks this morning were awfully impressive and interesting in the initiatives that they described, and as funding is clearly necessary, we will be talking, Newt and I, about the digital promise, which has one aspect of that. I think the one thing that I would urge everybody in public broadcasting to do is the same urging that I was given when I ran PBS many decades ago, which is that public broadcasting has got to come to Congress with one proposal, with one voice and all together. Newt and I have pushed with the Digital Promise Project the coalition idea, which the nonprofit world never seems to be able to do successfully. Even on the commercial side, you know, the worst competitors get themselves together when they have a common interest, and we have marshaled public broadcasting working very closely with John Lawson and APTS, public libraries, the museums, all of the public interest groups, the universities, the schools, to join in this effort and so far we have kept that coalition together and that represents a tremendous amount of power. Insofar as the future of public television is concerned.

**John Callaway** Pat Mitchell, before you go, when Larry speaks of 'one voice', is that what you're driving for with this initiative?

**Pat Mitchell** There is no question that's the goal and also-I couldn't agree with Larry more-which is absolutely essential. It is difficult because public broadcasting is probably the world's last pure democracy in that every single station has an equal vote and the stations are quite different from each other, serving different kinds of communities. And then we have

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three-to-four national organizations, each with a different agenda in somewhat different part of the nation. So, getting the 'one voice' is not easy under any circumstances.

**John Callaway** Does that fall on your shoulders?

**Pat Mitchell** Oh, no, I think it falls on the shoulders of all the national organizations, which is why the Enhanced Funding Initiative is being launched with APTN, NPR, and the CPB at the table.

**John Callaway** Very good. Now Larry, back to you. You were going to say something about your take on public broadcasting today.

**Larry** Let me be perfectly clear. We'll talk about this stuff later, which is absolutely essential. As the Chair of Connecticut Public Broadcasting, the strategic planning as to where we're going to go in the future with our digital services, but I still believe that our program service is the centerpiece of what public broadcasting has to offer. That's what people judge us all by. That's what people look at and kind of characterize public broadcasting by, and that's what is going to help the rest of the new initiatives get off the ground because they tend to be quite anonymous and terribly unfocused. And my concern is greatly, with trying to introduce this with the local effort. I was stunned, for example, or lack of it, to see that in the study part of the committee to study the American electorate, they did a study of the 2002 bi-election year and in the markets where there were base, gubernatorial, senate, and house debates 82 percent, or 81.5 percent of the public television stations in those markets did not carry a single debate. You can't say, well that's because the commercial cost is prohibitive because 84 percent of the commercial cost is not. I think in this day and age when corporate funding is really on the retreat, and it certainly is both nationally and locally, and recognizing the financial problems that the stations have, that this is the very least that

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can be done, because I think it is essential that you identify with the community, is to carry major events, of which political debates are the most major events. But as well, the major events of the community; put them on television, the events that the libraries and museums and others are holding. On a national level, I think Pat made a very important point about the need for perspective and analysis. I think that rather than take existing enterprises that come from other media and that is already have-on cable and *Wall Street Journal*-I mean those are valuable institutions, but I think public broadcasting has got to forge its own future and bring something to public broadcasting that the nation can't get elsewhere. And one thing you have, for example, is access to the Universities and the think tanks. We have a history of making stars out of the great academics: Frank Baxter, Carl Sagan, and others. We have the great political scientists and historians and economists. Somehow, we should find room in public broadcasting, both locally and nationally, to put them on the air and provide their perspective and analysis and background, which will give a whole new spin to the major complicated issues of our lives.

I think also in terms of the cultural side there is a great opportunity with all of the television channels that now exist, cable and otherwise. American drama is completely absent. Its very expensive to put on, but Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, William Dent; we have a great canon of American drama and we can get... go to a Mike Nichols or one of the other impresarios, get major box office talent, and bring old fashioned, but new drama, make them available to the nation's people, even getting them with marquee talent working to scale. I think those kinds of opportunities still exist and should be taken full advantage of so that public broadcasting captures the excitement and the show biz quality, as well as the cultural

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aspects because that is still essential to where you are going from now on.

**John Callaway** Newt Minow, did you hear anything today that you want to comment on?

**Newt Minow** I begin with a story that John told me. John Callaway, for those of you who don't know him, is the best interviewer on television, and he was training a young interviewer one day and the interviewer's job was to interview Gorbachev, and the interviewer said, "Premiere Gorbachev, if I ask you to describe the economy of Russia in one word, what would you say?" And Gorbachev said, "Good." He stopped and there was dead silence on the air. The interviewer then, scrambling, said, "Premiere Gorbachev, if I ask you to describe the economy of Russia in two words, what would you say?" He said, "Not good." (Laughter)

What I heard this morning was good and not good. What I heard was good, particularly, was Pat's talk about the vision of the future, and there was not a word in it that I would disagree with. I thought it was excellent. What I think was not good is that I don't think we realize how perilous the situation is. Fragmentation of audience is a result of the increasing number of choices. The cable/satellite has certainly decimated all of broadcasting, including public broadcasting, and really I don't think we are doing enough about it. I can't stress enough that this new Enhanced Funding Initiative is overdue. We've got to do this. One thing that is terribly missing, for example, in public broadcasting... I remember David McCullough, right after his great volume about John Adams, came to Chicago, and I was invited to a small lunch with Mary Dempsey, the head of our corporate library was there and our mayor was there. We were talking and David McCullough said, "Why isn't there a book program on public television?" We all looked at each other. Well, why don't we have a book program on public television? The only one that I understand is going on has been on C-Span. We've got to have a lively book program with a lively

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interviewer, like John, pressing the author of beyond good and not good.

**John Callaway** I accept.

**Newt Minow** But those things are missing. I am very optimistic that we're going to talk a little later about what Larry and I have been doing in Congress, but we can't think only in terms of public broadcasting. We've got to think of ourselves as part of a broader not-for-profit sector of universities and libraries and museums in which we are a partner and I think, on that basis, we can get this trust fund through Congress, and we will talk about it a little bit later.

**John Callaway** Bill McCarter, comment on anything you want to that's been said and talk to us a little about what your major concern might be about the public broadcasting that you now see.

**Bill McCarter** Not to gang up on John Callaway, of course he can certainly handle that, but Newt was telling a story. I once was listening to Johnny Carson on the *Tonight Show* a few years back and he was interviewing Bill Buckley, and he said, "Tell me, Bill, in the art of interviewing, and you know a good deal about this, who are the best talents in this country in that area?" And Buckley turned to him and said, "Well, you have to begin with the chubby fellow in Chicago." (Laughter.)

**John Callaway** Sorry, I don't think he ever used the word 'chubby', but please, let me hear.

**Bill McCarter** Recognizing the crossroads and the future terminology in the conference paper, and the many obvious issues on the plate, and we all know the competition is rapid to overlap, the on-air pledge dilemma, migration, digital upgrade, defining audiences, etc., I would urge that many of our stations reconsider a proven, but wide-open path that remains under utilized but fully in their control and responsibility; and if we could look rather seriously at this path, these other episodes of concern would come into full focus. To produce a range of high quality and appealing original

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programs for local and regional audiences that specifically connects and bonds the station to its community.

Now, there is a lot of rhetoric in all of that, but that is unintended. The words, I think, have a meaning. If these local stations, which are the intersection point... they're the core of intersection of all this material that comes down in our country; if they were to pay a lot closer attention-and I realize there are funding issues here-to public affairs issues, analyses, perspective, to local concerts and performances, documentaries, news and cultural exhibits, Kennedy programming, profiles, debates, town meetings, and indeed, a free time issue, area history, independent producer showcase, college and high school sports and using the stations, which was referred to, I think, earlier this morning in the two presentations, the stations could become an all-purpose meeting facility and community campus if you will. We have had that experience here in Chicago and it is exhilarating when it works. Now, many of the state networks are at the vanguard of doing this rather well, so an exception has to be made to that comment.

An initial goal of 10-12 hours a week of high quality local programming might be proposed, not as final, but as a specific goal; and this home-grown effort, of course, would complement PBS' other programming. If a very forceful interface is made with that local audience to the local station in many cities, in most of our cities, then indeed some of the problems we know only too well would pale in retrospect. Public television is more essential than ever. I think that was stated a couple of times today, and I will hold it at that. But I do think that's a core intersection that should be addressed very quickly and very forcefully.

**John Callaway** We will come back to that. I want Newt, either you or Larry can begin. I don't know how you would deal with your co-chairmanship of the Digital Promise Project, but

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give us, for those in the audience watching on C-Span or here in the theater, give us a couple of paragraphs on what the Digital Promise Project is and what, and more specifically for our purposes, what are the implications for public television.

**Newt Minow** In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there was a congressman, a Republican from Vermont, named Justin Smith Morrill. He was a poor, uneducated farmer, but he wanted people to have a chance for an education and he got passed through Congress, in the midst of the Civil War, a law which created land-grant colleges in the United States, so that people who were not a white male studying to be a minister or a lawyer or a doctor could go to college; he wanted farmers, he wanted women, he wanted minorities. Out of that we now have 203 land-grant colleges in the United States, which have educated more people than anybody else, any other institutions. We had an idea that there was a relevant analogy to what's going on right now, that is a transfer of federal land, something the federal government owned, to the states to create land-grant colleges. Now the federal government is auctioning the spectrum and hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent, largely by the cellular telephone industry, to buy access to that spectrum. That money now is not earmarked now for anything and it is thrown into the general budget and it is disappearing in a matter of an hour and 36 minutes. We want that money earmarked for education in the digital age, just as we've done before. Congress passed a GI Bill during WWII, we think even during the Iraq War is a time for Congress to earmark some of the funds from the auctioning of the spectrum for education, broadly defined, with public television, public libraries, public museums all having a role in it. We've had hearings in the House. We've attracted bipartisan support. We are working in partnership with public television, but my point is we've got to have a larger coalition to get this through. I believe it can be done. Larry.

**John Callaway** Larry, before you go, I know Pat has to leave us for a while and I have a

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question that I want to ask Pat and then I will get back to you on Digital Promise.

Pat, I questioned you earlier about the leadership required for this new initiative that you have announced and you talked about the varying constituencies that have to be brought together on this. My question goes back to the distribution of power. How is it that you can have a system where there are stations that, I think unless I'm overstating this, are kind of "press the button" that carry the programming, and then you have stations that do all of this work-local programming, national programming, etc., and they all have an equal vote? I, for years, wondered and I thought, "You know, someday I'm going to get a chance to talk to Pat Mitchell about this." Why don't you have something closer to the Security Council in the General Assembly? Why can't there be some weighted redistribution of power?

**Pat Mitchell** You know, Kofi Annan said that I had a more difficult job than he did because he only had 129 nations and I had 170. But you know, John, I made a decision a couple of years ago that I could either spend my time on government or I could spend my time trying to figure out how we evolved, what is our key service to the American people, which is the content we produce, distribute, and make available and the services connected to it. And I have also come to believe that our local control is increasingly an asset in today's media environment, and if you look at what's going to happen with personalized media where the control is going to get even more local, more individual, I am not as concerned about that anymore, about who makes the decisions. What I'm concerned about is just what I said many times over and our panelists have, as well. We have to get the resources to make sure that the local component of this is strong, robust, rich, and that we are not at national headquarters making decisions about whether we put on the *Wall Street Journal* or whether we put on *Fitzgerald and Timotheus*. All of them are welcome, and should be, into the

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tent. We need to have the resources to make the public square as broad as possible and then capture the one thing we have that no media institution has, which is this national political ability to do something with the national aggregation, but also to make a connection with local.

**John Callaway**           The other question before you go, which I was... somebody put me up to this, this wasn't mine, but they say, "You know Pat Mitchell was the first producer ever to hit PBS. You can't understand Pat Mitchell unless you understand that she's a producer. She makes programs happen. You can say, if you look at the fine print of PBS, that she is a distributor, but no, she is a producer", and "the question you want to ask her is..."

**Pat Mitchell**           I swear I am not a producer.

**John Callaway**           And the question you want to ask her, they said, was, "In the best of all worlds, would you like to kind of rearrange things, constitutionally, so that you were, that is, PBS was, a production unit, a dynamic production unit, yes, that did distribution?" What do you think?

**Pat Mitchell**           I do hope that my skills as a producer, especially the years I spent unemployed as an independent producer bring a sensitivity to the subject of how we widen our net and bring more people in. The question you raise has been raised many times, John, because NPR does produce, NPR does have a strong robust production unit, nationally, and therefore, has a different level of control over a lot of their programming and, most importantly, as I said earlier, rights. So, I am not sure that the answer is to turn PBS into a production unit, although I do think when it comes to news and public affairs, or news and public interest, that it would be best to have a more robust national center. I can... I think you will see as our plans for the public square, that the public square will allow, that we are going to be doing that in a different way than we've done anything in the past. It begins with a coalition of producing stations instead of each

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of these producing stations bringing their own part of the piece to the puzzle so that we can manage rights together. That's a big step forward. It's essential to do. It also begins with a national and local format from the beginning, not just a national service. It is a service that will have local producers. So, again, rather than dealing with a disruptive and total rewrite of our charter, which we would have to do to become a producing entity, we are making the changes that lead us to having more management capacity with our producers so that all of us benefit from this long tail of value to the content. It's a short answer to a long and complicated question.

**John Callaway** I understand, but thank you. Larry, come back now to the Digital Promise Project from your perspective.

**Larry Grossman** Just briefly, and continuing where I began and left off, one of the interesting things about the outfit that we have put together is that really it began with public television. It began in Connecticut when we were trying to figure out what the future should be in the digital world and I was asked to serve on the Strategic Planning Committee. We realized that here was an opportunity for public television to be a megaphone, as Bill has suggested, for local institutions in the community, the libraries and museums, public health agencies, and universities, and we began to adopt the State's assets and now Connecticut is in the process of connecting the assets so that they can put them on digital channels to develop programming out of that. So, major foundations heard about that. They asked who they needed to direct... one issue **Columbus in America Today**, which nobody focused on said, "How do we use these incredible new information technologies that have revolutionized every aspect of our society, but not education, not light-bulb learning, not training, and how do we deal with them in the public-interest sector?" Newt and I spent a year doing interviews, commissioning papers. The result now is that there is legislation on a bipartisan basis before

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both houses of Congress with respect to hearings in the Senate. We just, I must say, in this new Appropriations Bill, received a \$500,000 appropriation from Congress to pursue this effort, develop criteria with a board of directors to model this on the National Science Foundation to have a central trust fund that will amount to \$1 billion to spend a year in doing research and development for the libraries and museums and public broadcasting to deal with many of the issues that Kathy and Pat have raised: How to get operable standards? How to develop content in these new technologies, how to develop the standards of technology so that everybody can be on the same wavelength? How to digitize collections-the DNA of our society in the light of the libraries and museums and make them available to all? So, we have a proposal before Congress and it is moving along. The other interesting thing, and I'll stop, is that in the 4-5 years that we have been working on this, we have... now this has spawned over \$3 million in appropriations or grants from the National Science Foundation to do something in the new technologies using game theory on first responders from the Department of Commerce to deal with a major issue from... (who else then?

**Inaudible female voice** The Museum of Library Services

**Larry Grossman** The Museum of Library Services, to do something on Babylon and Mesopotamia to understand the origins of civilizations for kids, to help teachers explain because that's where Iraq grew out of. So this has produced, through these initiatives already, as I say, \$3 million in appropriations and grants to do the very thing that we are now exploring, and that we hope to develop. And I will just make one final point and that is, in this time of budget deficits, the money that is coming in from the options will stay with the U.S. Treasury. It is only the interest that will be spent. But eventually that interest will amount to more than \$1 million a year, if this legislation goes through, and we hope it will in the next session,

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that can be used by all these institutions to help them move into the digital age.

**John Callaway** But Newt Minow, aren't you in competition then if you want revenue from these interim options? Aren't you in competition with the Public Broadcasting Service.

**Newt Minow** No, I think we're partners and I think that what we see is that you can't sell this to Congress if you're only talking about public broadcasters. That's the main advice I would give to this new initiative. You have to broaden this coalition beyond public broadcasters to be talking with, as we are, with the museums, with the libraries, with the universities, then you will have a much better chance to get it done, so I regard it as a partnership, not an adversarial thing at all.

**John Callaway** So, in other words, you're saying that they might not ever get some kind of respective deal unless indeed they link up to this digital world that you're...

**Newt Minow** I'm an amateur student of history and you go back to the beginning of broadcasting, in the 30s, if the educational broadcasters had been able to enlarge their ranks, they would have changed the history of broadcasting in this country. Instead they started fighting with each other over minor little things and the result was that Congress paid no attention to them. That's my point.

**John Callaway** Bill McCarter, I want a follow-up question on you. I have heard you state in the past, I don't know whether you feel it's still true, but explain what you have said in the past when you have said that you feel that the system is over-built. What does that mean, the public broadcasters?

**Bill McCarter** Well, if you look around there is... a lot of stations came on line and stations keep coming on line and the population of usage goes up and the infusion of money goes down. You're going to hit a breaking point here and if all these stations have to be funded and, indeed, if they dilute one another's effect in the community, it is automatically becoming a

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very bad situation. So, over-built really sort of comes to mind. It is over-built, not in what they do or would like to do, it is over-built in terms of the assets and the revenues available to them to accept.

**John Callaway** Kathleen Cox I want to go back to the incentives to do local programming. What would you say to a person who says instead of simply sending out the millions that you have been sending out, for example, to support the conversion to digital, to stations that maybe don't much more than just kind of press a button to acquire the national programming; that some kind of... I am loathe to use the word punitive, but I can't think of a better thing, that says in effect, if you after all of these years don't start to do something in the way of significant local programming, we're not just going to send you money so that you can just push the button with more efficiency and make a digital conversion. We want you, we want to inspire you, to do more genuine local programming, even if its what Larry Grossman had said in the previous speech. Larry talks about the Lou Little approach where Lou Little was the Columbia University football coach back when they won some, and every once in a while they would just haul off and beat somebody big. They wouldn't do it every game, but they would make news a couple a times a year and Larry has suggested that these stations have to walk before they can run. What about inspiring them to do that?

**Kathleen Cox** I think that walking before you can run is a very apt way to put it. I think that if tomorrow we said your grants will be restricted unless you provide a certain level of service, level of productions, that would be a little draconian. I think the numbers that I mentioned in my address, earlier, shows there is a tremendous amount of money being spent right now in the system for local production assistance, \$175 million in 2003.

**John Callaway** But aren't there lots of stations that really aren't doing much?

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**Kathleen Cox**            There are a lot of stations who are doing local production. There may be some that are just passing through, but what I was trying to get at was the fact that before we have any kind of conditional approach to it, I think that what we can do is to work with groups to come up with those practices. How is it that *Chicago Tonight* is such a successful enterprise? What are the skill sets needed? Let's provide those things first. The other approach that we're considering is coming up with models where stations, again, that have like communities, can pool their resources and come up with programming that is not necessarily developed at the local level, but shared among a smaller group, subnational. Those are the kinds of things that we are seriously considering right now and those are the kinds of steps I'd like to take first before we get into a service.

**John Callaway**           Jerry, sorry, I want to follow up with you also. Speak a little more. I am impressed by the three million letters that came out of the issue of media concentration. That really represents something to me. What is it going to take in order to further your agenda for a trust? Will it take the equivalent of Martin Luther King, Jr., in other words, a great charismatic figure that takes this to the barricades, or what? Tell me about the politics of this.

**Jerry Starr**            That's a very difficult question. Let me... I just want make one comment about this discussion here.

**John Callaway**           Sure.

**Jerry Starr**            If you talk to local PBS member stations around the country, they will tell you that there is no percentage in producing local programs. I know WTTW is literally one of the few stations around the country that does it successfully, but they will tell you that it just doesn't add up because they can't export these shows, and if they can export these shows, they tend to be the kind that the station in my community, WQED, produces, which is period music or ice cream or music parks,

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thematic programs which you can play anywhere because they can export them and get some of their money back. But if they're public affairs shows that you may like the community to take a look at what's going on and to come up with some ideas and insights as to how we can improve our community, economically it doesn't make sense for them and they don't do it. Probably the best model of collective programming that I am aware of is when Bob **Larson** in Detroit they put together the *Nitty Gritty City Group*, and what he did was he identified large urban communities with multiracial populations around the country with similar problems and they created a pool of funds that produced programs that addressed those problems: Coming of age, school-to-job transition, gangs, drugs, and the rest. I would strongly advise you to look for Bob Larson and those people out there with that experience because you have to...

**John Callaway** You need to listen in on our Stations Panel this afternoon. You'll hear some very interesting stories about strong...

**Jerry Starr** The question is do you have strong? It is really the key question because I confess that there is a lot that is deductive to me, but the grander vision that Larry Grossman and many of them have laid out, because in point of fact all these public institutions have been under attack by many of the same forces and they all contribute to the common good in important ways-museums, libraries-and its going on in every community. Library and museum hours have been cut back and acquisitions are being cut back and public broadcasting continues to be seen as part of a larger effort to contribute to our democratic life and our cultural enrichment. The problem I have is precisely this question. How do you create the coalition or what strategy do you employ that would make this politically feasible. That's an organizing strategy. It's really very complicated and you do need people who have the background or the experience in organizing to be able to get involved in this process.

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**John Callaway** Who organized the three million letters?

**Jerry Starr** You know, that was interesting. Josh Silver is here and is really...

**John Callaway** With *Free Press*?

**Jerry Starr** Of *The Free Press*. He is better equipped to comment on that because he was closer to the process, but in point of fact, there were a number of organizations that contributed to that. But each kind of did so for their own reasons. That is, those 3 million letters represented a tremendous spectrum of groups. On one hand, you have the kind of liberal progressive organizations like *Free Press* or *Common Cause* or People for the American Way, but you also had the U.S. Catholic Conference, the National Rifle Association, and People for Better Television, Fred Kozel's group, which is now very involved in these indecency fights. Each of these groups saw a different stake in the issue of growing concentration of media ownership. Some groups saw that as giving them much more power to produce indecent programming and to survive with fines from the PBS with impunity. Other groups saw it as freedom to ignore public affairs and as pandering to the interests of the Administration in order to get more and more permission to concentrate their power. That coalition was really a strange-bedfellows coalition in many respects.

**John Callaway** Which may be the best kind.

**Jerry Starr** It can be. I know that when I met with Pat Mitchell and her staff in August to talk about the need for a coalition, to reach Congressman in their own districts, to make this apparent to them that this is not simply something that the partners of public broadcasting are picking up at the beltway, but that its really occurring around the nation, in community after community, that public broadcasting is something that everybody needs and that it's essential that Congress respond to this need. She said, you know, this coalition of *Common Cause* and *People for the American Way*, the

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*Free Press*, and *Working Assets* and *Communications Workers of America* they're great, but people perceive them as liberal or one-sided, separate, and Congress is not likely to respond to that. Can you reproduce what she called the McChesney effect, because Bob McChesney was very instrumental in founding the Free Press? I said, maybe with some of them, like the U.S. Catholic Conference because we worked with them before on some issues, but I don't think the NRA is likely to be interested in our broadcasting problems. So the answer is that we can't, for many reasons, create that kind of coalition for this effort because, primarily, this effort is to promote post-enlightenment liberal education. We are in a war and the principles of public broadcasting are new. This whole emphasis on diversity and tolerance, comparing and contrasting views, that's a liberal enterprise.

**John Callaway** So you have to hope that the notion of 'liberalism is a bad term' is overturned over a period of time and, of course-I don't think that we can discuss this any further because I want to go to the audience-and that the great-person-leadership thing would emerge over a period of time, if that's a model of leadership you even support.

**Jerry Starr** We have a lot of work to do in reframing these issues and making them understandable to the common person, and then bypassing...

**John Callaway** Larry and Newt I want to get back to all our speakers and then I will tell our microphone holders out in the audience that we are going to go to the audience in a minute. Larry.

**Larry Grossman** I don't think this is a liberal-conservative issue. I mean, I think you lay out absolutely the right themes, but for us the coalition that we have put together includes labor unions, it includes all of the public interest organizations whose boards of directors have an awful lot of clout, and it also includes companies, you know, high-tech companies and other corporations. Look at the Federal Reserve

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statements, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, what we have in this country today is the quality of our education, the quality of our training. It has become an enormous problem in terms of outsourcing and in terms of keeping our economy vital. So that this coalition spans both sides and we have, most of our support in the House, for example, from the Republican side. That's the way we've gotten the appropriations that we've already had. And I think we've got to keep this, as much as possible, in that broad spectrum.

**John Callaway**                      Newt.

**Newt Minow**                      I want to say one word about the biggest asset that public broadcasting has and that's one word, that's trust. I am the Vice-chairman of the Commission on Presidential Debates. If you watched the debates this year, you will recall that only one institution produced two of the moderators, Jim Lehrer and Gwen Ifill. If you listened to the survey that Pat talked about, public broadcasting is trusted. When I had the good fortune to bring this guy to Chicago from Washington to run our station, he established a bond, he used that word this morning, with our community and that word is trust. There is no one in this city who does not trust WTTW, and as long as you have that, you've got the most important asset.

**John Callaway**                      I think you'll hear that there are people who don't trust WTTW. Don't worry about that. (Laughter)

**Newt Minow**                      If there are, they don't want to.

**John Callaway**                      Bill.

**Bill McCarter**                      John,                      a                      point                      of clarification:                      At WTTW over the years, many years, we seldom, if ever developed an original local concept with the thought of recouping our costs through distribution and sale to other stations. Why? Because we simply knew it wouldn't happen.

**John Callaway**                      So you use operating funds.

**Bill McCarter**                      Absolutely.

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**John Callaway**            You use your pledge dollars, among other things. Yes. Okay, let's go to some questions right now. We have... Yes. Do we have a mic?

**Male voice**                Are we having people identify themselves?

**John Callaway**            Yes.

**Karen Bond**                I am a media activist and a business consultant.

**John Callaway**            And you will be on one of our panels later?

**Karen Bond**                Yes, I will. I guess it's two fold. We talked about balance and objectivity earlier, and one of the things that I am noticing, not only on the internet but through personal experience with WTTW, is that the balance and objectivity response is given, as Jerry said earlier, pretty generally and as a form of censorship in some ways. My question is if you were to find that even though it was not intended as a policy that facilitated censorship, if you were to find that in actuality it was functioning in that way and limiting the voices on public television, would you either abolish the policy or modify it and better define it so that it is not serving as a form of censorship? And I guess tailing onto that question, I have heard a lot of people talk about the mission of public television being to serve the underserved, particularly children and minorities, and that's presumably because commercial pressures require that commercial television answer to their sponsors and that they cater to the majority population because they have to make money that way. So, does PBS or public broadcasting really have a mission to ensure that the underserved are served or are you trying to serve all segments of the population equally? Are you compensating, do you view your goal as being one to compensate for the fact that the white male viewpoint is already clearly represented and there should be more of a concentration of minority viewpoints on public broadcasting?

**John Callaway**            Who wants to answer that?  
(Laughter)

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**Kathleen Cox**           Where do we begin? I will. In terms of the first question, it had to do with whether we found that, if in the cases that we found that a standard that requires objectivity and balance, in fact, was acting as a censoring policy would we change it?

I think that just assumes so many things. I am not sure of how you even arrive at the first point.

**John Callaway**       Let me just, as moderator with some personal experience and maybe Bill can comment on this, but at WTTW for example over the years, which has done all of this local programming, etc., if we did a documentary investigation of it, you could show that you had a significant lack of African-American on-air program hosts and reporters and editors and producers in a city that is 36% African-American, and I think this is the kind of thing that she's talking about, that you want to kind of work in ownership, even while the staff was doing all kinds of programming dealing with African-American issues. It may have been the leading program that dealt with the rise of power of Harold Washington, etc. I think that's what she's getting at. I can remember once saying to the staff, "I'm going to get McCarter, I'm going to call Jesse Jackson and we're going to go picket ourselves if we don't improve in this area. Do you acknowledge that, Bill, as an issue?"

**Bill McCarter**       Sorry, I have to catch a plane. (Laughter.) I think you really answered the question during the break, but I do acknowledge that it was an evolutionary one. We didn't set out to do any particular thing, but it evolved and you have points where you make corrections, in all of your programming, particularly local and, of course Black.

**John Callaway**       All right, let's go to another question over here. Yes.

**Tom Tressler**       Hi. I'm Tom Tressler with the Creative American Project. I guess I would be characterized as one of your progressive lifelong public media consumers who has retreated

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from all commercial media as completely useless and not telling the truth, and now I find I'm retreating from even your product as being overly commercial, representing a corporate viewpoint, and not telling the truth.

**John Callaway** 'Your' being PBS generally or TTW locally.

**Tom Tressler** Both. TTW as the local outlet. I'm desirous and I'm hungry and I will pay for progressive labor, environmental, women's, minority programming that challenges me and challenges the general public. I don't see it, I want to see more of it, and you guys are a pretty white crowd right now.

**John Callaway** Thank you, very much. We're going to take that as a comment. Up here. Yes.

**Joan Downs** Joan Downs, Madison, Wisconsin. Pat mentioned earlier public service television accommodating all viewers in the public square. That concerns me greatly because when you try to accommodate all voices in the public square, the ones that you lose are the quiet ones and you lose them completely. There are already, as Mr. Starr mentioned, Tucker Carlson and those types of views out there. I wanted to give a case in point. When the advent of Tucker Carlson came on, what was lost were, or at least moved somewhere else on public TV, and I have been trying to get it, is *Religion and Ethics News Weekly*. I cannot find that anywhere in any other media. Shouldn't public service TV seek to represent the underrepresented voices and seek out programming speaking to the issues of today, tomorrow, through a referred thinking lens? Where, for example, are programs on gay marriage, programs on enriching the ideas of more than two thinkers and more than two sexualities?

**John Callaway** I wish Pat were here, but couldn't she point to *POV* and certain documentary programs that get into exactly those issues?

**Kathleen Cox** Absolutely, and CPB also, as mentioned earlier, funds *Minority Consortia* and a significant amount of money goes to the *Independent Television Service*. I think it's important for people to realize that the programs

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that you see in your community are a combination of programs. I sure you realize that. PBS provides the National Programming Service, in addition to the children's programming and that is an, actually, overall a small percentage of the number of hours and programs presented on public broadcasting. The scheduling decisions are made at the local level and so to the extent that the views are not represented or there is a particular concern that the community feels should be something that is treated, you're access really should be to the public station in your community. It really is a decentralized station and the local station is there to be responsive to the community and its variability to pull from the National Programming Service, to develop their own local productions and to, otherwise, acquire programming that really will speak to the particular interest of the community. It is not really something that you can handle, necessarily, on a nationwide basis. That just is not how we are set up, nor should we be set up.

**Jerold Starr**                      When CPB was launched we had two foci.

**John Callaway**                      Citizens            for            Independent  
Public Broadcasting?

**Jerold Starr**                      Citizens            for            Independent  
Public Broadcasting, I'm sorry. One was restructuring the National Services for Public Trust; the other was to develop chapters in local communities around the country to help them to democratize the government's programming at their local PBS member stations. It has been pointed out that commentary hours for PBS are only about 10 hours a week and that at least a third of all programs on any local PBS member station are acquired or produced locally, which means there is an opportunity for people of the community to make their needs known to their local manager or program director, and to get some response to serve their local community needs. Now, having said that, it is exceedingly difficult, we get reports all over the country about some stations that are very, very resistant. There are smaller

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stations, secondary stations who have bigger budgets or alternative programming, who are much more responsive, but a lot of the big community-owned stations, they are community advisory boards. I characterize this as kind of a black hole of volunteer energy. People go to a meeting and they make their comments, but nothing ever gets done. It is exceedingly difficult to move people at the local level, and part of it is because the local programming is expensive and it doesn't add up for the local station managers to do it. So, the answer is that yes, the way the system is decentralized does present these opportunities, but it takes a great deal of effort at the local level to make them happen.

**John Callaway** Larry.

**Larry Grossman** When we say, and rather acknowledge inadequacy, and I think those are all very fair criticisms both in terms of employment and both in correlated programming, one of the terrible problems of this woefully underfunded public broadcasting is that it is expected to give particular service to minorities, particular service to children, particular service to education, particular service to the elderly, particular service in news and public affairs, focus on local community efforts so that it is all things to all people, it cannot do any of them as effectively as it could if they were reasonably funded and somewhat better organized. But it is an extremely difficult problem to define what the real issue in public broadcasting is because it has so many missions and a different one depending on where everyone's viewpoint lies.

**John Callaway** And one of the things that we're going to deal with this afternoon with the stations' panel is how some very creative people at some stations are dealing with that and how they are dealing with the new technologies, which may give an opportunity to be all things to all people, but in a different technological forum. We are running exactly 15 minutes over schedule, so here's what I would like to encourage the audience to do. Normally, you would have a

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leisurely one-hour lunch, a philosophical discussion, a couple of drinks. You're going to do that today in about 50 minutes, if you would. The café is open for you and then we will come back here at about 1:20 to hear John Lawson speak and then the station's panel, which I really want you to hear. Would you give our panel a warm thank you?