

A STUDY OF THE LOCAL DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMMING PRACTICES  
OF TWENTY-ONE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN SIX MIDWESTERN STATES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A world made smaller by speeding airplanes, heard and visible through electronic media, has nurtured a public more desirous of knowing and understanding that world. One of the devices used by broadcasters to encourage understanding is the television documentary.

In their book Filming TV News & Documentaries, Jim Atkins, Jr. and Leo Willette, note that:

The documentary is television's finest hour. It combines the best of the arts of filming, production, and writing with journalism; and although many stations are not aware of it, the provocative local documentaries capture the audience.<sup>1</sup>

According to a 1965 survey many television stations are aware of the potential appeal of the documentary effort. The survey showed, "...among stations with active news departments, nearly half produced a documentary each month; a tenth produced one more often than that; a tenth produced from six to nine documentaries a year; and the rest produced one occasionally or are just beginning to get into the documentary form."<sup>2</sup>

This is principally a study of television documentary programming on a local level. It seeks to give a view of the

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<sup>1</sup>New York, 1965, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>William A. Wood, *Electronic Journalism* (New York, 1967), p. 56.

actualities and possibilities of television documentary programming in six mid-western states.

## I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of the study was three-fold: (1) to determine the frequency and length of local documentary programs shown on all commercial television stations in six mid-western states; (2) to study the programs reported as to content and structure and to classify them accordingly; (3) to determine the possibility of usage of each television documentary interchangeably by other stations.

Importance of the study. It was believed that the accumulation of such information would be of value to neophyte broadcasters interested in doing television documentary programming on a local level as well as serving as a prod to more experienced broadcasters who need a stimulus or incentive to create their own ideas. Moreover, for those broadcasters already engaged in such documentary work, the report may serve as a re-enforcing factor.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Scope of the study. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was designed to be answered by commercial television station managers in the states of Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Colorado, Nebraska and Iowa.

Because of the highly developed and lucrative television operations of both the east and west coasts, it was felt that the midwest states selected would give a more representative view

of what was being done by the majority of commercial broadcasters who are neither so monetarily endowed nor as competitively pressured to create television documentaries as their larger counterparts.

Procedure. Because of the relatively large geographical separation of the stations involved and the expense of transportation, personal interviews were ruled out, and the questionnaire method selected.

Author Pauline Young wrote:

...questionnaires...are good because they are as brief as is consistent with complete understanding of the data desired; they are important enough to be sent to important people; they use the language and the definitions of units and terms with which the average person is familiar; the possibilities for multiple interpretations are few; a minimum of time and effort is required for filling out these questionnaires; ...the data are logically grouped.<sup>3</sup>

The 1968 issue of Broadcasting Yearbook was used as a source for commercial television station call letters, managers' names and addresses. Only commercial television stations were used in the compilation of stations queried.

On September 20, 1968, sixty-five questionnaires and cover letters (Appendices A and B) were sent to the managers of the sixty-five station universe (Appendix C). Station managers were selected to receive the form because presumably they should be interested in promoting their station's policy. Return envelopes were provided the prospective participants.

The study was descriptive in that the information was

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<sup>3</sup>Scientific Social Surveys and Research (New York, 1939), p. 160.

reported as represented by the respondents. Interpretation of the possible meanings of tabulated totals was necessary in some cases in order to draw conclusions.

In addition to answering the three questions posed by the study itself, the questionnaires returned also contained information which should lead to a greater understanding of the place of the local television documentary in broadcasting.

Prospective respondents were provided with a definition of documentary programming as an aid in answering the questionnaire.

### III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Documentary. For purposes of this study documentary was defined as a creative treatment of actuality providing socially useful information to the public. Further a documentary was considered to deal with significant historical, social, scientific or economic subjects, with emphasis on factual content rather than entertainment.

Journalistic treatment. Programs which dealt with community affairs, science and technology, government and politics, among others, were considered to be of an objective or journalistic nature. The content of these programs would be presented in an objective manner.

Non-Journalistic treatment. Programs which dealt with literature and the arts, children and religion, among others, were considered to be of a subjective or introspective nature, and non-journalistic. The content of these programs would tend to create

an image in the mind of the audience supplemental to the program itself.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 1922, when American film director Robert Flaherty traveled into the Hudson Bay Territory to create a film about a walrus hunter, there was undoubtedly no thought in his mind that his film "Nanook of the North," would begin a documentary tradition that is still much alive today.

#### I. DOCUMENTARY BEGINNINGS

Flaherty made use of the naturalistic approach in filming "Nanook" and later "Moana" (1926) and "Man of Aran" (1934). Utilizing the natural scenery and everyday surroundings as more than purely backdrop to the action of a central character, Flaherty exploited those elements as part of the subject he was treating. In the films mentioned, the settings were as much a part of the story being told as were the people themselves.

It was for Flaherty then a story of man and nature. In his book, Documentary Film, Paul Rotha quoted film critic and director, John Grierson, as saying, "...it became an absolute principle that the story must be taken from the location, and that it should be the essential story of the location. His drama, therefore, is a drama of days and nights, of the round of the year's seasons, of the fundamental fights which give his people sustenance, or build up the dignity of the tribe."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>London, 1952, p. 83.

Because of the character of Flaherty himself, and the affection with which he made his films, he often ran afoul of film magnates of the day such as Paramount (then Famous-Players) and Metro-Goldwyn company. "Nanook" was quite successful and led Famous-Players to offer a contract to Flaherty to furnish a South Seas version. The result, "Moana" was commercialized by selling it to the public as the "love-life of a South Sea syren," when it was in fact the story of a Samoan ritual of manhood. When Metro-Goldwyn offered Flaherty another opportunity to return to the South Seas, he refused on the grounds that he could not work with studio supplied stars and story.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, almost fifty years ago Robert Flaherty began what documentary film makers today would probably label cinema verite, or what some might describe as "telling it like it is." But Flaherty's works were not the only ones in evidence in the twenties.

While Flaherty's documentaries depicted the relationship between man and nature and in fact presented pictures of worlds little known to the average American, the documentary films of British critic and creator John Grierson, "...characterized man's relation to his institutional life, whether industrial, social or political; and in technique a subordination of form to content."<sup>6</sup>

Of Grierson, William Bluem remarked, "He sensed the need for

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<sup>5</sup>Rotha, pp. 82-83..

<sup>6</sup>Raymond Spottiswoode, A Grammar of the Film (Los Angeles, 1959), p. 75.



the poetic quality in reality films...but insisted that poetics be used only to supplement and enhance a descriptive, socially significant film content. Persuasion was his purpose, and he set himself the task of waking both the heart and will of the British Public."<sup>7</sup>

As an agent of the Empire Marketing Board, an organization charged with promoting the sale of British products, Grierson made the film "Drifters" in 1929 telling the story of herring fishermen and hoping to show the British people how one part of the economy depended on the other for a smoothly running system. In this film, and particularly in "Industrial Britain," (1933) co-produced with Robert Flaherty, was perhaps the first hint of conflict between a film maker concerned with artistry and with reporting specifics at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

Though Flaherty was an American engaged in film-making and Grierson was apparently the first to use the term documentary in reviewing "Moana," Rotha stated in Documentary Film, that "It has become convenient to say that the American film of fact began with "The Plow that Broke the Plains," a film by Pare Lorentz. Filmed for the Resettlement Administration in 1936, this film endeavored to give the American farmer an understanding of the government's soil conservation and resettlement programs. Rotha had the following comments to make about "Plow." "As a first film it had many of the faults which we can now see were

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<sup>7</sup>Documentary In American Television (New York, 1965), p. 46

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

characteristic of the early British documentaries; over-complex editing, no human contact, a mannered commentary and, most guilty from a propagandist viewpoint, a tacked-on ending explaining why the film had been made." While these technical difficulties would seem to make the film seem less than distinguished, it should be remembered that it also showed that the documentary effort was no longer a European commodity.<sup>9</sup>

If "Plow" tried to be both art and social comment and failed, it may be said of "The River," that "...the great narrative power of film was employed to record natural phenomena in such a way that a vital social statement was advanced."<sup>10</sup> So stated Bluem in discussing the film which studied the erosion of the Mississippi River basin.

It was in the middle thirties too that American audiences became aware of a new face on the theatre screen, that of the "March of Time." Born of Time, Inc. on February 1, 1935, "March of Time" was to live for sixteen years influencing vast audiences, particularly between 1936 and 1942 when an estimated 20 million people viewed the series in more than nine thousand motion picture houses.<sup>11</sup>

Though bound in the beginning to the straight newsreel tradition of reporting the news, "March of Time" soon took lessons from its radio predecessor (of the same name) and as Rotha

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<sup>9</sup>Documentary Film, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup>Bluem, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 35, 36.

noted, "It borrows from the fiction film a dramatic method of presentation. Using partly the same naturally-shot material which is the stuff of the news-reel, and partly staged scenes with both real people and actors, it tries to present an event in relation to its background, an approach that calls for a considered restatement of facts."<sup>12</sup>

In his study of "March of Time," William Bluem recognized several points of development that made the program more than a news-reel. Bluem pointed out that in the beginning the program treated as many as six stories in the eighteen to twenty-two minutes of its duration. The number was gradually weeded down to two to four stories and in 1938 the first one-feature story, "Inside Nazi-Germany, 1938," was seen. This limiting of subject matter Bluem contended was indicative of the emphasis, the storytelling quality of the series. In his words, "This expansion of time in the reporting process was important chiefly because it permitted a journalistic style in which emphasis was divided between the inherent drama of an event and a dramatic technique of presentation."

A second feature of the film series "March of Time," revolved around its actual need to re-enact elements of history which had slipped by unrecorded by either microphone or camera. Supply of missing elements had been used to good effect in the radio version of "March" and was only appropriate on the silver screen. "March of Time," according to Bluem, "simply avowed that the news story

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<sup>12</sup>Rotha, p. 191.

was valid reportage even if certain voices and actions were staged." Assuming the "doctored" reportage was based on fact, the validity of the presentation could only be acceptable since it was a sincere attempt to present the information in a striking manner. In this regard, "March of Time" may be likened to the demised "Armstrong Circle Theatre" which made extended use of re-enactment.

The third development added by "March of Time" to the newsreel plus tradition, was the element of controversy. By its unique juxtaposition of film clips of Huey Long, "March of Time" affected a view of this man as no newsreel ever could, provoking a continual battle with censor boards from shore to shore and border to border.<sup>13</sup>

Though "March of Time" was a success, there was one factor the series couldn't fight and that was the actual march of Father Time and the events attendant to his passage. World War II arrived.

With the war came an increased interest, not unexpected, in the use of the documentary film as a propaganda tool for expressing the viewpoint of a political power. After the blitzes on London it became quite evident that the public's morale needed boosting. The GPO (Government Post Office) film unit was renamed the Crown Film Unit and began producing films that would have a wide appeal to the British people.

Apparently one of the most effective productions of this period was a film called "True Glory." It was a product of

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<sup>13</sup>Bluem, pp. 36-39.

cooperation between the British organization named above and the United States Office of War Information. "True Glory" consisted of a variety of material shot at different times and places, complicated by the task of blending natural sound with narration. In structure, "True Glory" was in effect the first "compilation" documentary which will be discussed later in part III of this chapter.<sup>14</sup>

As important as the films themselves was the distribution to the public. Concerning this, Paul Rotha remarked in Documentary Films that:

The use of the film in Britain was integrated to an extent not achieved elsewhere. In America, the volume was large enough, but there was no way--with Hollywood so firmly entrenched--of conducting official film-making as a single, unified operation. American achievement, and it was considerable, was much more an ad hoc affair. In Britain, by contrast, production was closely geared to the distribution available in the cinemas, in the Armed Forces, in the factories and through all the other non-theatrical channels.<sup>15</sup>

In speaking of the most widely publicized series, Richard Griffith commented of "Why We Fight," "They were specifically intended to give the fighting man an account of world history from the Treaty of Versailles to America's entry into World War II, since it was found that the general knowledge of the average draftee on any such subject was poor indeed." Some of the films of this series were shown to civilian audiences at home and abroad. Like "True Glory," the films of "Why We Fight" were in the compilation tradition drawing even on captured enemy film for their

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>15</sup>Rotha, p. 247.

source material. The first three films covered the time between 1918 and 1941 and were entitled "Prelude To War," "The Nazis Strike," and "Divide and Conquer." Again, the films were put together after considerable study and were furnished with a narrative commentary.<sup>16</sup>

After the war ended documentary film productions by the Office of War Information in the United States sought to show other countries how Americans lived and worked. Subjects for these films ranged from the TVA to the public school system. They also gave glimpses of both rural and city life in the United States. But these films were an end of an era in documentary works. Up to 1953 there were no great documentary films made from the standpoint of affecting a large audience as had done the war films. This is not to say no films were made, but rather to point out that those that were, were more experimental in nature rather than documentary. William Bluem best described the films of that period.

All of these films represent genuine dedication and the highest standards of creativity in film-making. Yet all of them, in one important sense, miss the mark of documentary. For despite this great activity...the social documentary, the purposive film which strives to do more than merely describe processes and functions, and seeks to reach beyond the specific needs of sponsoring or the intensely subjective aim of "experimental" film-makers--is missing.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Griffith, in Rotha's Documentary Film, p. 310.

<sup>17</sup>op. cit., p. 59.

## II. RADIO DOCUMENTARY

Almost a quarter of a century ago before television documentary began, audiences were becoming familiar with public affairs broadcasting on radio. The first radio program that really could be considered of a documentary nature was "March of Time." This series sponsored by Time, Inc. began in 1932. William Bluem wrote, "Setting a general style and approach for the later film version--and perhaps for the bulk of all subsequent journalistic documentaries--the series also sought to dramatize news events, and from the outset it used actors, rather than people actually involved in the described event,..."<sup>18</sup>

The main reason for reenacting events stemmed from the lack of technical innovations in the early years of broadcasting. In 1932 the use of audio tape and portable recorders was still roughly fifteen years away. Another reason the reenactment of events was possible was the acceptability by the audience since radio was a one-dimensional media; since no visual image was incorporated a program could still be believable when utilizing actors. Though non-documentary the radio series "Amos 'n' Andy" was a good example of the use of less than real participants; the Negro voices of the main characters were done by white actors.

"March of Time" made several kinds of impact upon both audience and broadcaster. In years that followed producers would often say, "Let's not have a 'March of Time' voice-of-doom

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<sup>18</sup>Bluem, p. 61.

narrator." They referred to the program's third announcer Westbrook Van Voorhis who was known for his resounding voice.

"The impact of the 'March of Time'--and the vistas it opened--may have been among the factors that, in the closing months of 1932, sharpened the split between the newspaper world and the broadcasting world."<sup>19</sup>

In 1939 CBS broadcast a series produced by the United States Office of Education. "Democracy in Action," described governmental processes. From 1936 to 1940 the National Broadcasting Corporation carried "The World Is Yours" a series based on the Smithsonian Institution.

Bluem felt that all such programs could legitimately be called documentaries despite the fact that most of them relied heavily on reenactment. "Like the film documentaries of that period, they attempted to present to men some idea of the world about them. They sought to change attitudes, broaden philosophies and outlooks; and, for the time being, technique remained a secondary consideration so long as a documentary intent and purpose were in evidence."<sup>20</sup>

Other interesting observations on pre-war radio documentary came from authors Sam Slate and Joe Cook. In speaking of the series "Defense for America," which began in 1941, they noted that not all documentaries were reenacted. "There were no

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<sup>19</sup>Eric Barnouw, A History of Broadcasting in the United States, Volume I; A Tower In Babel, (New York, 1966) p. 278.

<sup>20</sup>Bluem, p. 63.



prerecordings, no such things as tape, and naturally no prior editing. If you were broadcasting from a diving submarine, a moving tank, or a falling parachute...the pickup had to be instantaneous." Such originations when possible were a bonanza to the telephone company who strung miles and miles of wire for remote broadcasts.

"It was this kind of experimentation," noted Slate and Cook, "that helped make possible such shows as..."The 20th Century," "David Brinkley's Journal," and the slick documentaries we enjoy now."<sup>21</sup>

During the war, more so perhaps than at any other time, radio documentary served as a communications tool. The Office of Emergency Management produced 275 programs in the first six months of the war and informed the people of the civilian's role in wartime. By the middle of 1942 the Office of War Information had produced the series "This Is War!" which brought to a state of perfection the second-person narrative style ("you're in the cockpit--you hear the motors begin to warm up") combined with sound effects.<sup>22</sup>

By the end of the war radio had mastered the dramatic documentary approach. But the advancement of technology in tape recording and other broadcast mechanics made the use of reenactment and other semi-dramatic techniques largely a device for general information programs. With more reality in news

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<sup>21</sup>It Sounds Impossible, (New York, 1963), pp. 45, 48.

<sup>22</sup>Bluem, p. 65.

reporting being heard everyday, it became passe to listen to a staged reenactment.

In 1947 the Columbia Broadcasting System started a Documentary Unit designed to produce radio documentaries dealing with a post-war world. One of the first efforts, "The Eagle's Brood," dealt with juvenile delinquency and in addition to examining the problem, offered solutions. Bluem noted that although this documentary and others produced by the unit "represented a final departure from the heavy 'stagey' drama of an earlier time," they also supported the belief that "a dramatic plot line is a valid documentary tool..."

Post war documentary was distinguished by its lack of uniformity. Various techniques and approaches were used and were even combined as in Norman Corwin's "One World Flight," in which a combination of actuality recordings of a world cruise, were combined with Corwin's narrative style reminiscent of the "This Is War!" series.<sup>23</sup>

A series of events noted by Bluem concerning Fred Friendly was interesting in that they occurred very close to the demise of radio documentary. While with NBC in 1950 Friendly produced a show featuring Bob Hope entitled "The Quick and the Dead," a four part production on atomic energy. The program was most important because it called attention to Friendly who a year later went to CBS where, with Edward R. Murrow he conceived another radio documentary; "Hear It Now" was short lived and moved into

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<sup>23</sup>Bluem, p. 70.

television with only a title change after less than a year.

William Bluem best summarized radio documentary's rise and fall:

From experience gained in earlier experiments it had evolved an authentic and dramatic form of journalistic documentary, dealing with the crises of the world as they continued to arise. It had worked forward from dramatic restatement of fact to drama made with fact. It had presented information in a compelling form on numberless major and minor issues and problems confronting the American people. It had evolved a special combination of drama, journalism, and education in a successful presentation of history. And as it did all these things, it gave a legacy to television which had begun, by the early 1950's to assume radio's role as the dominant mass medium of this nation.<sup>24</sup>

So, radio, like film, had loaned its mistakes and successes to television to do with them what it could.

### III. TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY STYLES

With World War II over, the world changing because of the war, and with the birth of television, came the golden opportunity for the development of meaningful documentary in the American home.

The very nature of the documentary, that of revealing events in a special light, makes it a useful news tool, and for this reason the news documentary was among the first to develop to any large extent. Wilbur Schramm said of news that it was "an attempt to reconstruct the essential framework of the event...a frame of reference which is calculated to make the event meaningful to the reader."<sup>25</sup> A program narrated by Edward R. Murrow was the first

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<sup>24</sup>Bluem, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup>"The Nature of News," Journalism Quarterly, Sept., 1949,

to practice this preachment.

When CBS television fans tuned in November 18, 1951, they saw what was the first of many programs with the series title "See It Now." The weekly program from the beginning was sponsored by the Aluminum Company of America.

Fred Friendly, former CBS executive, and co-producer with Murrow, of the "See It Now" series, recalled the first broadcast in this way. "In the course of his introduction, Ed said to the television audience: 'This is an old team trying to learn a new trade.' It took us two years to learn that job." Friendly felt that the show lacked conviction, controversy and a point of view. He believed this was really supplied two years later when "See It Now" told the story of Milo Radulovich, an Air Force Officer who was asked to resign because of alleged connection with communist sympathizers.

Bluem believed the program should be given its due as the prototype of the factual, timely in-depth report on both national and international issues. According to Bluem, "See It Now" often combined what, in print, was the feature and the background story, but added the terse, spare narration of the radio style, a visual faithfulness to reality in the best tradition of film documentary, and--at the heart of their success--a probing, existence which, indeed, became news because Murrow and Friendly said it was."<sup>26</sup>

Following closely on the heels of the Milo Radulovich story was "Christmas In Korea." This program, a simple chronicle of a

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<sup>26</sup>Bluem, pp. 99,100.

war, with scene setting, and men in action and reflection set a trend at "See It Now" headquarters that continued for seven years the probing of events and thoughts and the subsequent exposure to millions of viewers.<sup>27</sup>

In the foreword to the book See It Now, Ed Murrow commented "Believing that television is in a sense an instrument of transportation, we have tried to take people places to meet people they otherwise might not have met."<sup>28</sup> But besides this geographic exposure to countries and people previously unexplored, "See It Now" brought into the American home a technique which kept the mind moving too.

In terms of production, the main contribution of this series was the "cross-cut" interview. The technique consisted of conducting full-length interviews, thereby illiciting the conviction and sincerity desired, then fragmenting them and interspersing them with other similarly prepared interviews. This device allowed shotgun treatments of answers by several people to one question, or an easily observable difference of opinion as one fragment followed or preceded another.<sup>29</sup>

But even effective production and controversial subject matter couldn't save "See It Now" from the inevitable death that comes to every television show sooner or later. The death came in July 1958, but three years earlier on May 13, 1955, Jack

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 96

<sup>28</sup>New York, 1955, p. xi.

<sup>29</sup>Bluem, p. 99.

Gould wrote in the New York Times, "That 'See It Now' is changing sponsors or going sustaining is not nearly so disturbing as the fact that television still has only one 'See It Now'." Gould later asked Fred Friendly why the show was killed, but Friendly replied that he never answered because he himself did not know for sure. A safe bet is to charge the death to complications--complications involving the rising price of television time, production costs and the difficulties in getting along with management that marked Murrow and Friendly in as evident a manner as did their professionalism. Friendly explained this aspect of the problem. "Our autonomy did not exceed that of such independent souls as Ed Sullivan, Arthur Godfrey and Jackie Gleason, but impatience with them was tempered by their high ratings and sales value."<sup>30</sup>

But as often as any given television show dies, it is followed by a replacement either good or bad. "See It Now" was not replaced with old reruns or situation comedies. CBS executive Frank Stanton gave away the network's plans for a replacement at an address at Ohio State on May 6, 1959. "Next year the CBS Television Network is scheduling regular hour-long informational broadcasts once a month in prime evening time. We will report in depth on significant issues, events and personalities in the news. In the year following, we propose to make this a biweekly and after that a weekly program, if networks are permitted to retain their present structure. We are determined to press the medium

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<sup>30</sup>Fred W. Friendly, Due To Circumstances Beyond Our Control, (New York, 1967) p. 95.

to its fullest development as an informational force as effectively and as fast as we can..."<sup>31</sup>

One could say that "CBS Reports" the new series mentioned by Stanton, was not merely a continuation of the "See It Now" series. The essential distinction was that of policy control. The new effort was a "company" show while "See It Now" had been a Murrow package. Though the policy was different, the new CBS documentary still studied the critical issues and was as often controversial as was its predecessor.

Through the years "CBS Reports" continued the tradition of biographical glimpses of important personages either through the interview method or by a compilation of material relating to the person being studied. The second tradition nurtured the continued study of events which dominated the current scene. Finally, "CBS Reports" reflected editorially on matters which seemed to need critical appraisal.<sup>32</sup>

The list of persons who appeared on the "CBS Reports" biographical presentations reads like a Who's Who of the world and includes besides noted Americans many European politicians and philosophers. A few of these were: Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller, Jawaharlal Nehru, Harold Macmillan, Walter Ulbricht and Konrad Adenauer.<sup>33</sup>

Because of the quality of the programs, particularly in

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>32</sup>Bluem, pp. 100,101.

<sup>33</sup>Norman Swallow, Factual Television (New York, 1966), p.78.

1960, "CBS Reports" was a much awarded show. In 1960 the series won every prize for which it qualified including three Peabody Awards. It was at this time that "CBS Reports" was sponsored by Bell & Howell and B. F. Goodrich. At the end of the first season for these sponsors, the network declared that since production costs were going up that each sponsor would have to pay more in turn. Charles Percy, president of Bell & Howell, was particularly unhappy about this since he had helped found the series. Bell & Howell as it happened transferred their sponsorship, and their money, to a documentary series on the American Broadcasting Corporation network.<sup>34</sup>

But while accumulating kudos for its documentary biographies, and anger for pricing out a benefactor, "CBS Reports" placed its greatest effort behind the stories which placed contemporary issues before the public eye. Whether treating the population problem, civil rights, education, labor or national defense, the approach took one of two basic forms; a balanced and impartial analysis or, more rarely, the blatant editorial statement.

The several programs that drew criticism from one group or another (usually the attacked subject) included "The Business of Health; Medicine, Money and Politics," and "Harvest of Shame." The former was criticized by the American Medical Association, the latter by large farm owners who made use of migrant help.

"Harvest of Shame" depicted the plight of the migrant worker who follows the circuit of crops to be harvested and finds himself

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<sup>34</sup>Friendly, pp. 119, 190.



moving in vicious circles of debt and degradation. Bluem commented, "'Harvest of Shame' was editorial documentary in its frankest manner. It was intended to shock, to make men aware of the deplorable conditions under which some Americans must exist, and dictated only one response--direct social action."<sup>35</sup>

Fred Friendly in speaking of "Harvest of Shame" remarked that Murrow and co-producer David Lowe, "fashioned a document of man's exploitation of man that was full of anguish and outrage. When it was broadcast on the day after Thanksgiving, 1960, it shocked millions of viewers."<sup>36</sup>

The lessons learned from the criticism of "Harvest of Shame" did not go unheeded, and most of the rest of the "CBS Reports" programs of this period reflected an impartial presentation of fact. This was not to say they did not contain just as important a message. Two programs, "The Population Explosion" and "Biography of a Bookie Joint" exemplify this impartial treatment, the latter perhaps the better.

Aside from whatever editorial comment might be made of the topic itself, the program according to Bluem attempted to provide as full and detailed a look at the subject as possible. In "Biography of a Bookie Joint" very damning pictures allowed the audience to draw its own conclusion about the illegal betting which gave a key shop more business than duplicate keys would warrant.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Bluem, p. 104.

<sup>36</sup>Friendly, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup>Bluem, p. 107.

A few months after the start of the CBS series in the fall of 1959, NBC began its "White Paper" programs. For the first transmission the network chose to tell the story of the American U2 flight which ended unexpectedly in Russia; the episode was entitled "The U2 Story."

In Factual Television, Norman Swallow noted, "It's purpose [White Paper] ...seemed at the time to be more precise, and possibly more fearless, than its rivals." Swallow continued, "Occasionally 'White Paper' without openly editorializing, has contrived that men should condemn themselves out of their own mouths by their own recorded behavior, and an excellent example of this was the film about the negro demagogue, Adam Clayton Powell." According to Swallow, Powell was depicted at two extremes, one "living it up" with the white folks and the other mingling with his constituents. Like "CBS Reports" the juxtaposition of images and speech through precise editing did constitute a form of "editorializing" even though none of the events was placed out of context.<sup>38</sup>

When "White Paper" began to go after welfare programs in general, it attracted an even vaster appreciative audience--and more criticism. In "The Battle of Newburgh" NBC examined a city manager's actions of ridding his community of welfare crooks--actions, not incidentally, that the program seemed to prove false.<sup>39</sup>

Writing of the documentary at NBC, company president

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<sup>38</sup>Swallow, pp. 79,80.

<sup>39</sup>Bluem, pp. 116,117.

Robert Kinter stated, "These programs have been television's finest hours; they are what the medium is made for." But NBC has always been careful to have full control over these "finest hours" accepting no privately produced programs.<sup>40</sup>

As noted earlier, in 1960 Bell & Howell ended their relationship with CBS and began sponsorship of an ABC documentary.

Norman Swallow wrote: "A third American network, the American Broadcasting Company, began its own major current affairs series, 'Close-Up' in the autumn of 1960, and ran it for three years."

Swallow also remarked that like NBC's "White Paper", "Close-Up" occasionally explored the subjective approach, "...and did so with a thoroughness which was new in American television..." It was also ABC who took a big step in employing the "cinema verité" team of Richard Leacock and Robert Drew.<sup>41</sup>

William Bluem said of cinema verité: "Verité establishes its claim to television in the reality program. As a 'school' it assumes at the outset that the camera is the only real reported and must not be subservient to script, to preconceived thematic statement, to plotted narrative, to someone's idea of a story--to anything, in fact, but the chronological unfolding of events. The verité thesis and the difficulties which it posed for the video news documentary was demonstrated in the early Drew productions for "Close-Up."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Robert Kintner, Broadcasting and the News, (New York, 1965) p. 15.

<sup>41</sup>Swallow, p. 80.

<sup>42</sup>Bluem, p. 123.

The most distinguished aspect of verité stems from its ability to often capture those moments of deep feeling (whether caused by the heat of an argument, a momentary lapse into reflection or just forgetfulness of the camera's presence) when the human subject is stripped of consciousness and reveals himself with all socially conditioned behavior torn away.

While the technique has its advantages, it can also create difficulties. Bluem said, "...verité has shown us also that it can nullify an essentially intellectual message--or impede, in annoying fashion, our appreciation and understanding of it."<sup>43</sup>

In 1952 a new type of documentary burst on the screen. "Victory At Sea" was the first television compilation series. Bluem noted that some would call Henry Solomon, the creator of the series, the Robert Flaherty of television, "for although working with a distinct method of cinematic presentation, he brought to his art the gentleness of time remembered and an enlarged sense of humanity--a compassion for mankind and a capacity to create expressions of this compassion in terms of the pictorial records of war's brutality." The series consisted of twenty-six episodes and after its 1952-53 run was placed in syndication and is still being seen today.

When Solomon's first series ended he maintained his crew and began the series "Project XX." From September of 1954 to April 1962 the series offered eighteen special programs, many of which were repeated in that time for a total of forty-three

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<sup>43</sup>Bluem, p. 128.

exposures. By 1964 "Project XX" had won over fifty international awards in documentary film.

Succeeding Solomon was Donald B. Hyatt. Hyatt chose as two of his subjects the old west, and Abraham Lincoln. Because both subjects were dated before the advent of motion picture photography, an obvious problem was inherent in a study of those subjects. Still photography was in evidence during those years however and knowing this, Hyatt developed the still-in-motion concept.

According to Bluem, "He began an impressive series of 'still-in-motion' productions in 1958...Hyatt examined over 25,000 prints, Daguerrotypes, and photographs of mid-19th century life in America and selected those he would need to create his 'Meet Mr. Lincoln' a program seen by over 30 million Americans when first broadcast in 1959."<sup>44</sup>

Ranking as a "first" in documentary technique, the Hyatt concept was truly a personal documentary. Norman Swallow defined the personal documentary:

By personal documentary I mean a programme, usually made on film, which is very much the individual work of its producer and/or director and which, through its imaginative handling of reality, expresses his own attitude not only to the programme's immediate subject matter but to the whole of the world in which he lives.

In speaking of such men as Donald Hyatt, Richard Leacock and Albert and David Maysles, Swallow further noted:

These are men who rarely present objective reports, preferring to express a highly subjective view...They are

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<sup>44</sup>Bluem, p. 157

concerned with people rather than things, with the "why" of life rather than the "how" of it.

In speaking of their films he said:

Above all, these are programmes whose appeal, unlike that of the routine forms of television journalism, is as much to the heart as to the mind. They are for the most part programmes of sensations rather than of thoughts, and this is why they are so personal and, when successful, so moving.<sup>45</sup>

Continuing his discussion of the personal documentary and of cinema verité, Swallow quoted John Schlesinger's statement from the Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts. "Our problem was to catch spontaneously the essence of what we had seen, allowing for the technicalities of film making." Swallow noted that this was precisely what the makers of personal documentaries claimed to be doing. Again in speaking of going beyond the subject's consciousness Swallow remarked, "Whether such attempts to catch illuminating moments of truth will succeed or fail depends of course on a wide variety of factors, They are more likely to succeed for instance if the subjects themselves are involved in a personal situation which is so vital to them that the presence of cameras and technicians is of relatively minor importance."

While Hyatt's "still-in-motion" programs were very much personal documentaries, there are several examples of other compilation documentaries which were not as personalized. The premise of the CBS series "Air Power" was that advances in aviation were reflections of advances in our world, of changing times. The 26 program series followed air progress from Kitty Hawk to the present.

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<sup>45</sup>Swallow, pp. 176,177.

Another compilation series "The Twentieth Century" was as notable as some of its competitors but for different reasons. While "Project XX" had turned out only 20 productions between 1957 and 1961, "The Twentieth Century" had produced 104. By virtue of sheer numbers this program earned an important position in documentary history.

Bluem observed that the presence of Walter Cronkite was no doubt a concession to the news documentary approach. But unlike the "Project XX" use of Alexander Scourby as narrator, the CBS show visually exposed Cronkite at beginning and end as well as throughout the program in visuals and as "voice-over."<sup>46</sup>

#### IV. NETWORK TANGENTS

No study of network documentary offerings would be complete without a glance at those programs that despite their special content or approach also fall in the realm of the documentary language.

Network derivatives on the documentary approach began in the mid-'50's with such shows as "Omnibus" in 1952, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and later by commercial interests, and "The Search" a 1954 program created by Irving Gitlin. "The Search" probed research and breakthroughs in research and scholarship at American universities. The program series tried to make science palatable to young people about to enter upon a college career. "Omnibus" began the spirit of cultural informational programming

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<sup>46</sup>Bluem, pp. 165-169.

that in later years was evident in the CBS show "Camera Three." It also earned the distinction of being the first program to make available to a wide audience one of the early film documentaries, Robert Flaherty's "Louisiana Story."

Another derivative of the documentary approach concerned what Bluem called the "notebook documentary." Contending that news stories that don't warrant headlines are often just as important, Bluem noted that often these documentaries are lumped together three or four at a time in "magazine" style. A current example of this type of documentary approach is the CBS program "60 Minutes." This hour long documentary goes so far as to structure its sets as magazine pages with headlines and bylines.

The "notebook documentary" said Bluem may also concern itself with a single report devoted to a social problem or to a personality. An example of that approach is NBC's program "First Tuesday." "First Tuesday" concentrates generally on a single subject for a two hour period the first Tuesday of each month.

A final derivative of the documentary approach was born of the human element inherent in news events. Hinted at by Bluem, this theory subscribes to the idea that there is more to a news story than meets the eye. An expanded news analysis brings forth the other people involved, the possible cause of a problem, the possible solution. That program therefore is more than news, and falling between news and editorial stand, thus becomes a documentary even though it may be only five or ten minutes in length. It is this kind of "mini-documentary" incorporated in



both network and local newscasts that is finding increased use in television today.<sup>47</sup>

#### V. LOCAL DOCUMENTARY

Beginning his discussion of the local documentary scene, author William Bluem described the rise of local documentary with statistics from a 1960 inventory of public affairs broadcasting conducted by the Television Information Office.

Based upon a survey of 562 stations then on the air, the survey disclosed that only 264 felt it necessary (or perhaps were able) to respond. Of 1,038 programs included in the final report, 83 were eliminated because they were either straight news broadcasts or syndicated programs in which stations were not directly involved. This left a total of 955 programs or series (produced by 264 stations over a period of 18 months)...of these, a great number were talk, interview or panel-discussion shows, but many were clearly identified as documentaries, in which both film and videotape methods of recording were combined.

Bluem felt that after Newton Minow's "wasteland" speech of 1961 that more stations became concerned with public affairs broadcasting. While granting that a different critical standard must be applied to a local documentary produced for several hundred dollars when also evaluating a \$100,000 network effort, Bluem felt that the accomplishments ran parallel paths. While the network documentary was best suited for effective communication to a national audience on a subject of national concern, the local documentary could offer essential complements on issues of more localized interest.

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<sup>47</sup>Bluem, pp. 207,208,212,214.

Bluem's observations on the frequency of such enlightening documentaries would seem to be born out by the findings of this study. "The local station which assiduously practices documentary programming recognizes that it cannot maintain the rigorous schedules of networks and syndicates because the problems are not only financial but human." The lack of finances and human resources would necessarily hold in some check the documentary output of a station.<sup>48</sup>

Bluem's further discussion of the local documentary dwelled on critiques of various east and west coast practitioners whom Bluem felt would make some impression in the next few years. At this stage of his study of documentary history, past and present, Bluem concluded; "No expression about television's role in relation to documentary is more germane than Hubbell Robinson's view that the medium is employed with greatest facility when it becomes 'a channel to the minds and emotions of millions.' Television, he believes, must always be measured by its success in penetrating majorities." It is to the broadcasters of the nation who wish to reach those majorities that this report is aimed.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Bluem, pp. 221-223.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

## CHAPTER III

### FINDINGS

A total of sixty-five questionnaires was sent out to commercial television stations in Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. The enumeration of stations polled in each state may be seen in Appendix C.

Of the sixty-five stations polled, twenty-four returned the questionnaire. Of the twenty-four returned questionnaires, twenty-one were complete enough to be useful in compiling statistics. Of the three which were not useful, two merely contained notice that each of the two stations had discontinued broadcasting. The third unuseable returned questionnaire contained the notation that the station was not equipped to do documentaries. In addition to the twenty-four returned questionnaires, two stations sent letters explaining that their documentary production was so irregular that completing the questionnaire was unwarranted.

Section I of the questionnaire concerned the determination of the frequency and length of local documentary television documentaries in the six midwestern states polled. In addition to answering the questions of frequency and length, results from this section provided insight as to the time of day, and the days of week the television programming was scheduled. Additionally results were obtained regarding sponsorship and promotion of the documentaries by the originating station.

Nine of the twenty-one respondents originated monthly documentary programs. Three stations answered that they originated weekly television documentary programs, and one respondent indicated a yearly television documentary program. The other eight respondents indicated other frequencies of documentary broadcasts which were: (1) never (2) two to three per year (3) infrequently (4) as need arises (5) four per year (6) six per year (7) when deemed important (8) an irregular schedule.

Those stations which listed other frequencies of television documentary broadcasts were asked to explain the infrequency or irregularity of their broadcasts. The station that answered never, stated that it was not equipped to do documentaries. This answer eliminated this particular questionnaire from consideration on other questions.

The station that indicated two to three documentaries per year noted, "Research, writing and production are very time consuming." The station that answered that television documentaries were aired "infrequently" remarked that proper documentary production demanded time and personnel which were not available. The fourth station indicating other than weekly, monthly or yearly production stated, "We produce & schedule as the need arises depending on pertinent subject matter." The station that did four documentaries per year said that cost for a weekly or monthly documentary prevented them from more frequent exposure of in-depth television documentaries.

The station that indicated the rather unusual number of six documentaries per year, stated in defending that frequency of exposure, "They cost too much to do them right and our station

can't afford it." The respondent that answered "When deemed important" explained that the cost factor for a small market and the number of topics available accounted for the answer as to the frequency of their programming of television documentaries. Finally, the station that answered "An irregular schedule" defended that answer by saying, "There is no clear cut reason for this. It depends on past station policy concerning sponsorship and the schedule of a two-man Special Projects team that also works news assignments.

To summarize the findings concerning the frequency of broadcast of television documentaries, nine out of twenty-one stations, or 42.8 per cent aired monthly documentary programs on their television stations. Three of the twenty-one stations aired weekly television documentaries, while one station or 4.9 per cent aired a yearly television documentary. The answers also revealed that the remaining eight stations aired from zero to six documentaries per year accounting for the other 38 per cent of the stations answering the questionnaire on this subject.

Answers to questions concerning the length of locally originated television documentaries revealed one station scheduled regularly aired sixty-minute programs. Nine stations ran thirty minute documentaries on a regular basis. One station ran a fifteen-minute program regularly; one scheduled a regular ten-minute program. Stations which scheduled documentary programs irregularly indicated the following program lengths: sixty minutes, eight stations; thirty minutes, twelve stations.

It is evident that nine out of twelve stations, or 75 per

cent, structure their regular documentary output on a thirty minute basis. Similarly, twelve out of twenty stations or 60 per cent, who program television documentaries irregularly utilize the thirty-minute format, while the remaining 40 per cent, use a sixty-minute format.

The questions of frequency and length having been answered, the remaining questions in the first section of the questionnaire served to give breadth and depth to other programming considerations of the stations responding.

Answers to the question "What day of the week is a regularly scheduled documentary program aired?" revealed that five of the twenty-one stations responding, or 23.8 per cent, scheduled their documentaries on Tuesdays. Six stations, or 28.6 per cent, chose Sunday for the regular broadcast of their television documentaries. The breakdown of the other days utilized may be examined in Table I, page 38.

The diversity of times during the day when individual television station documentaries were broadcast is so wide that the reader is referred to Table II for a full description. It was noted that the majority of the documentaries were scheduled between the hours of six and ten p.m. or what is considered to be prime evening time.

Eighteen out of twenty-one stations produced sponsored documentaries. Of the 85.7 per cent of the stations that sponsored television documentaries, 55.5 per cent utilized commercial "spots" within the program. On the other hand, 27.7 per cent utilized an "institutional" approach with sponsor mentions

TABLE I

DAYS SELECTED BY TWENTY TELEVISION STATIONS FOR BROADCAST  
OF LOCAL DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMS

Day of the week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Other
No. of stations	0	5	0	1	1	1	6	6*

\*Three stations indicated "No special day;" one station did not answer, and the remaining two stations replied, "various" and "Depends on what net show we intend to preempt."

at the opening and closing of the program, and 11.1 per cent utilized opening and closing announcements as well as spots within the program. The remaining 5.5 per cent of the sponsored programs varied depending on the subject matter of individual programs, and the participating sponsor.

Several questions determined the extent of promotional activities centering on the locally produced television documentary. All twenty-one respondents indicated they did promote their documentaries. Nineteen used television. Of the nineteen, fifteen also used radio and thirteen also used newspaper columns and TV Guide magazine. Thirteen of the nineteen promoted their documentaries within their television newscasts.

When asked about possible follow-up viewer surveys pertaining to their documentaries, four stations answered that they did do surveys, eleven said they did not. Six stations did not answer. Fifteen stations did not answer the question regarding promotion of future programs. Six stations answered that they did not promote future programs at the conclusion of a program just ending.

Nine of twenty stations responded that they did rebroadcast their television documentaries. Six answered that they did not, and five stated they sometimes rebroadcast documentaries. One station did not answer. The reasons offered by those stations who did rebroadcast documentary programs ranged from, "The cost of production necessitates repeated exposure," to "When deemed necessary for increased audience exposure or when requested by the public." In addition, one station reported "Recently Freedoms



TABLE II

HOURS OF THE DAY SELECTED BY SEVENTEEN TELEVISION STATIONS FOR  
BROADCAST OF LOCAL DOCUMENTARIES

Morning hours	No. of stations
10-10:30	0
10:30-11	0
11-11:30	1
<hr/>	
Evening hours	
6-6:30	0
6:30-7	1
7-7:30	0
7:30-8	0
8-8:30	0
8:30-9	0
9-9:30	2
9:30-10	0
9-10	2
10:15-10:30	1
10:20-10:30	1
10:30-11	0
<hr/>	
Other hours*	
6-10	1
6:30-10	2
7-10	1
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No answer	5

\*The four stations providing answers in this designation did not specify the actual time between the early and late evening hours they listed. The times listed do not represent 3,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  or 4 hour documentaries, but periods of time during which  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 1 hour documentaries were presented.

Foundation presented an award for documentary program 'Profile - Law Day U.S.A.' At sponsor's request this was re-broadcast May 1, 1969." It is reasonable to assume that the rebroadcast of this program included a mention of its award winning merit.

Having been provided with definitions of "journalistic" and "non-journalistic" approaches to documentary achievement, the respondents were asked to designate whether the bulk of their efforts would fall in the journalistic or non-journalistic group. The study indicated that of the twenty-one stations answering this question, fourteen or 66.6 per cent produced journalistic or objectively treated documentaries. Three stations, or 14.3 per cent produced non-journalistic or subjective documentaries, and four stations or 19 per cent produced both types.

Respondents were asked to list by title and description several examples of recent documentaries they had produced. The list of examples is found in Appendix D. Of the fifty-three titles listed by the twenty-one participating stations, thirty-two or 60.4 per cent were felt by the investigator to be journalistically oriented. The remaining twenty-one titles were deemed of a non-journalistic nature and accounted for the other 39.6 per cent of the sample titles. The titles as listed in Appendix D are divided into the two areas under discussion.

Information concerning the scope of the local documentaries' subject matter revealed that the subject matter of eighteen out of twenty programs, or 90 per cent, was covered in one program. Apparently the subject matter did not require a multiple show format. Two of the twenty respondents remarked that their

programming varied on this matter, and accounted for the remaining 10 per cent of those broadcasters who sometimes used multiple programs to cover one subject. One station did not answer this question. Those stations which indicated some use of multiple programs listed either civil rights or race relations as the subject matter which required extended exposure because of the complexity of the material. One station which conducted interviews with servicemen in Vietnam, and servicemen just returned, also used the multiple program concept.

Twelve of the twenty-one stations polled or 57.1 per cent titled their documentaries on an individual basis. Six stations, or 28.6 per cent, made use of a series title with individual program titles also, and eleven stations (some of which were included in the other two groups) made use of both techniques. That is, they had a regular series of programs and individually titled programs.

The question "If a clear editorial stand is made apparent in a documentary program does your station make provision for viewers who disagree with that stand to voice their opinions?" was confusing to some respondents. Four did not answer the question at all. Ten stations answered "yes" IF a clear editorial stand was taken, the equal time provisions of the FCC regulations were made apparent to the public. Seven stations answered "no" which apparently meant that they did not editorialize, not that they did not provide equal time for opposing views. In light of the confusion caused by this question, no valid judgment can be made on the results obtained on it.

The variety in numbers of personnel used in each of the five designated areas of documentary production, precluded presentation in other than table form. The distribution of personnel in the stations responding may be found in Table III.

The equipment used for videotaping was not as varied as that for filming. Four stations used the Ampex #2000, two used the Ampex #1200, and two used Ampex models that were not specified. A total of eight Ampex's were used in the fourteen stations answering all or a part of this question. Five stations used RCA videotape equipment and one station did no videotaping, using film only.

In view of the total number of network programs now broadcast in color, the answers to the question of the extent of color usage locally were not surprising. Sixteen of the stations answering this question, or 80 per cent, did 100 per cent of their television documentaries in color. One station, or 5 per cent, did only 25 per cent of its documentary programming in color. One station, or 5 per cent, did 75 per cent of its documentary programming in color. Of the two remaining stations who answered this question, one, or 5 per cent, did no color casting and the other one, or 5 per cent, varied in the amount of color broadcasting in its documentaries.

Respondents, in answering the question "How much time was spent in: Writing, Filming, Production?" answered in a variety of ways from an hourly to a monthly basis. In order to present those answers most clearly a table was devised to allow a total picture of the answers received. This information is contained in Table IV.

TABLE III

NUMBER OF PERSONNEL FROM TWENTY STATIONS INVOLVED IN FIVE AREAS OF DOCUMENTARY WORK

Area	No.	No. of personnel 30 minute program										No. of personnel 60 minute program									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Program conception	No.	3	6	4	2				2												1
Policy making	of stations	2	8	4	1																1
Writing		9	8																		1
Filming		4	9	2	1																1
Production		2	2	4	1	1	1	1	1												1

Note: This table should be read as follows: three stations used one person for program conception for a 30 minute program. Another example would be: nine stations used one person for writing a 30 minute program.

TABLE IV

AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT BY TWENTY TELEVISION STATIONS IN WRITING, FILMING, PRODUCTION  
OF LOCAL DOCUMENTARIES

	Hours (for 30' programs)										Days (for 30' programs)										Weeks (for 60' programs)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Writing	1				1	1	1	1			1	2	3																	
Filming								3	2	2	2	2		2								1								
Production	1			1				3	2	1																				

Note: This table should be read as follows: one station spent three hours in writing a television documentary. Three stations spent 8-10 hours in filming a television documentary. One station spent two hours in the production of a documentary.

Fifteen of sixteen respondents indicated that they used special sets occasionally in their documentary productions. Ten of the sixteen also used outdoor locations outside the station's city of license.

Fourteen of eighteen respondents answered that they did not use special talent for acting or narration. One made a definite point of not using actors apparently unaware that in the tradition of Armstrong Circle Theatre the documentary heritage could still be served. The four respondents who did employ either special talent or narrators indicated that these were often musicians or other musical talent. Two of these special talents of note were singer Marilyn Maye and commentator Alexander Scourby.

It was found that five brand names of film cameras were used by the twenty stations responding. Some stations used more than one camera and often more than one model. Thirteen of the cameras used were Auricon magnetic sound cameras. Two more Auricons were optical sound cameras. Four of the cameras were Bolex sound cameras. Two were Bolex silent cameras. There were three Arriflex cameras used and three Bell & Howell cameras, one of which was silent. One Eclair camera was employed and four of the twenty-one respondents failed to answer this question.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the current locally originated documentary programming practices of commercial stations in six midwestern states. The characteristics of the programming examined included those of frequency and length of programming as well as the structure and content of that programming. Additionally the study sought to provide guidelines for neophyte broadcasters who were perhaps unfamiliar with the possibilities and requirements of the television documentary.

A questionnaire was sent to sixty-five commercial stations in six midwestern states. The twenty-one useable returned questionnaires enabled the collection of statistics which answered the problem of the study. The following information was obtained from the questionnaire and presented in the body of this report.

1. The majority of the stations replying broadcast monthly television documentaries. This category accounted for 42.8 per cent of the stations answering. The next largest percentage of stations, 38 per cent, broadcast from zero to six documentaries per year. Some, 14.25 per cent, of the television stations broadcast weekly documentaries, while the remaining 4.9 per cent broadcast a yearly documentary.

2. Nine out of twelve stations, or 75 per cent, structure their regularly scheduled documentaries on a thirty minute basis.



The remaining 25 per cent split their structuring between ten, fifteen and sixty minute programs.

3. Fourteen of twenty-one stations, or 66.6 per cent answered that they originated journalistically oriented documentaries. Three stations, or 14.3 per cent produced non-journalistic or feature type programs, and four stations, or 19 per cent produced both types.

4. Of the fifty-three documentary titles submitted by the twenty-one respondents, thirty, or 56.6 per cent, were deemed to be of a journalistic nature. Twenty-three, or 43.4 per cent, were deemed of a non-journalistic nature.

5. The twenty-one stations used between one and ten persons to produce their television documentaries, with the majority of the stations using between one and four persons in each of five work areas.

6. The majority of the responding stations spent between one and two days in the production of their documentaries of thirty minute length.

7. Well known American brands of cameras and videotape recorders were used in the production of the television documentaries.

8. In addition to answering the specific questions posed by the study, insights into promotion and sponsorship of the documentaries were also gained. Also revealed were the use of special talent, special locations and other station practices, all of which are discussed in the text of the report.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Although the study was limited in its sample size (twenty-one useable responses out of sixty-five stations polled) the following conclusions seemed reasonable:

1. A monthly documentary would appear to allow for a state of acceptable quality while appearing with enough frequency to satisfy a continuity of programming. Stations more fully manned and equipped could produce weekly programs but there would be the chance of lower quality control.

2. The thirty minute television documentary is of sufficient length to cover the material under discussion. When it is not, either a second program of similar length, or a sixty minute program would satisfactorily solve the problem of complete discussion. The hour-long documentary would be harder to work into the present crowded network schedule that stations abide by.

3. The majority of the documentary programs being done are of a journalistic or objective nature. They deal with problems of people and cities. There is, in the minority, subject matter of somewhat lighter nature, approached in a non-journalistic or subjective manner.

4. Stations employing between one and four persons who could devote between one and two days to the exclusive production of television documentaries could duplicate the productions of the stations polled in this study, assuming the ability of the personnel was comparable to the ability of those polled.

5. Stations making use of widely available, American brand name film and videotape equipment could duplicate the efforts of the stations polled in this study.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

Sept. 20, 1968

Dear Sir:

As a graduate student in Radio-Television at Kansas State University, I am conducting a survey of area television stations to determine the amount and variety of locally originated documentary programs.

In order to satisfy the requirements for a Master's degree, the survey in which you are asked to participate will be prepared in report form and made available to you upon its completion in order that you may see in what way your fellow broadcasters are contributing to the growing public affairs field.

The ~~four~~ page questionnaire I have enclosed consists of many questions which will require only a check mark in the appropriate blank to provide an adequate answer. Others however will require some expansion and hopefully, sufficient space has been provided. As the questionnaire is designed in three sections some provision has been made for "stopping places."

I would ask that for purposes of this study a documentary be considered to be a creative treatment of actuality providing a presentation of socially useful information to a public. A definition from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences might be helpful too: "Documentary deals with significant historical, social, scientific or economic subjects, either photographed in actual occurrence or re-enacted, and where the emphasis is more on factual content than on entertainment."

This questionnaire has been sent to sixty stations in six midwestern states. The success of this study depends entirely on the response from those stations. It is with this thought in mind that I hope that your response will be a concerned one and if possible reasonably prompt. If possible too, I would very much like to see examples of your documentaries in script form.

Today television plays an important if not always inspiring role in the formation of the opinions and attitudes of its huge audience. Perhaps new directions will be evidenced in this study.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Ron Streeter  
959 South Bleckley 305  
Wichita, Kansas 67218



## APPENDIX B

## SECTION I

1. How often are locally originated documentary programs aired on your station?

Weekly\_\_\_\_ Monthly\_\_\_\_ Yearly\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

2. If the answer to question 1 is "Yearly" or "Other" why doesn't your station air documentaries more often and/or regularly?

3. What is the length of documentary aired regularly?

15 minutes\_\_\_\_ 30 minutes\_\_\_\_ 60 minutes\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

4. What is the length of a documentary program aired irregularly?

15 minutes\_\_\_\_ 30 minutes\_\_\_\_ 60 minutes\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

5. What day of the week is a regularly scheduled documentary program aired?

Monday\_\_\_\_ Tuesday\_\_\_\_ Wednesday\_\_\_\_ Thursday\_\_\_\_ Friday\_\_\_\_  
Saturday\_\_\_\_ Sunday\_\_\_\_

6. At what time during your broadcast day is a regularly scheduled documentary program aired?

\_\_\_\_a.m. to \_\_\_\_a.m. \_\_\_\_p.m. to \_\_\_\_p.m.

7. Are any of your documentaries sponsored?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

8. If a given documentary program is sponsored, does the sponsor get "spot" promotion within the show or is sponsoring on an institutional basis with mentions at opening and closing?

Spot\_\_\_\_ Institutional\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

9. Does your station utilize promotion material for a locally originated documentary program?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

10. If the answer to question 9 is "Yes" please indicate what form the promotion takes.

Spot promotion \_\_\_\_\_ (radio) \_\_\_\_\_ (tv) Written \_\_\_\_\_ (TV Guide, columns)

News promotion \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Does your station follow-up its documentary programs with:

Viewer surveys \_\_\_\_\_ Additional promotion for future programs

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. Are your documentary programs rebroadcast at a later time?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, for what reason? \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION II

Assuming at a "journalistic" approach to documentary programming would concern such issues as community affairs, science and technology (such as the CBS Reports series on Black America) and that a "non-journalistic" approach would concern literature and the arts (such as the CBS Reports on bridges, doors, chairs) would the bulk of your efforts be considered "journalistic" or "non-journalistic?"

Journalistic \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Journalistic \_\_\_\_\_

With your answer to the above question in mind, please list several documentary programs you have aired by title and date. If you feel explanation is in order concerning subject matter, treatment or any other aspects you feel noteworthy, please feel free to use the space provided.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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1. In regard to subject matter, are most programs "one-shot" productions or is treatment sometimes extended to two or more programs?
- One show\_\_\_\_\_ Multiple shows\_\_\_\_\_
2. If multiple shows are used please indicate the subject matter involved and the reason for using more than one show to cover the subject.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are your documentaries delivered under a "series" title with additional individual titles or is each program titled separately?

Series\_\_\_\_\_ Individually titled\_\_\_\_\_

4. If a clear editorial stand is made apparent in a documentary program does your station make provision for viewers who disagree with that stand to voice their opinions?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

If "Yes" please describe what provisions are made.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION III

In order to determine a basis for estimating the applicability of your documentary techniques by others, please answer the questions below concerning time expended as well as questions relating to equipment used.

1. What number of personnel was involved in:

Program conception\_\_\_\_\_ Policy making\_\_\_\_\_ (who?)\_\_\_\_\_

Writing\_\_\_\_\_ Filming\_\_\_\_\_ Production\_\_\_\_\_

Other\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_,\_\_\_\_\_

2. How much time was spent in:

Writing\_\_\_\_\_ Filming\_\_\_\_\_ Production\_\_\_\_\_

3. Were any special sets used: special outdoor locations not in the city proper?

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4. Was any special talent used for acting or narration? If so, who specifically by profession (actors, dancers) or by name if nationally known, and what expenses were entailed?

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5. What mechanical equipment was used? Please use brand names in describing cameras and other equipment.

Filming\_\_\_\_\_

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Videotaping\_\_\_\_\_

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6. Please indicate the percentage of color usage involved in your documentary programming.

\_\_\_\_\_ % color

## APPENDIX C

Colorado (9 stations)

KKTV  
channel 11  
Rush Evans  
Colorado Springs

KRDO  
channel 13  
Jay E. Gardner  
Colorado Springs

KBTW  
channel 9  
Alvin G. Flanagan  
Denver

KOA-TV  
channel 4  
Ralph Redetsky  
Denver

KRMA-TV  
channel 6  
Jack A. Schoelfle  
Denver

KWGN-TV  
channel 2  
Richard E. Jungars  
Denver

KREX-TV  
channel 5  
Robert McMahan  
Grand Junction

KOAA-TV  
channel 5  
James G. Croll  
Pueblo

KTVS  
channel 3  
William C. Grove  
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Iowa (12 stations)

KCRG-TV  
channel 9  
Edwin J. Laske  
Cedar Rapids

KWWL-TV  
channel 7  
Thomas Young  
Waterloo

WMT-TV  
channel 2  
William B. Quarten  
Cedar Rapids

WOC-TV  
channel 6  
Robert Krieghoff  
Davenport

KTVO-TV  
channel 3  
David Palen  
Ottumwa

KCAU-TV  
channel 9  
William F. Turner  
Sioux City

KRNT-TV  
channel 8  
Robert W. Dillon  
Des Moines

WHO-TV  
channel 13  
Robert H. Harter  
Des Moines

KVFD-TV  
channel 21  
Edward Breen  
Ft. Dodge

Iowa (cont.)

KGLO-TV  
channel 3  
Walter J. Rothschild  
Mason City

KMEG  
channel 14  
Robert Donovan  
Sioux City

KTIV  
channel 4  
Dietrich Dirks  
Sioux City

Nebraska (cont.)

KMTV  
channel 3  
Owen Saddler  
Omaha

WOW-TV  
channel 6  
Howard Stalnaker  
Omaha

KSTF  
channel 10  
William C. Grove  
Scottsbluff

Nebraska (9 stations)

KHAS-TV  
channel 5  
Duane Watts  
Hastings

KDVH-TV  
channel 4  
Al Brinkman  
Hay Springs

KHOL-TV  
channel 13  
F. Wayne Brewster  
Kearny

KOLN-TV  
channel 10  
James Ebel  
Lincoln

KNOP-TV  
channel 2  
Harry Peck  
North Platte

KETV  
channel 7  
Kenneth James  
Omaha

Kansas (9 stations)

KTVC  
channel 6  
Bernard Brown  
Dodge City

KAYS-TV  
channel 7  
Robert E. Schmidt  
Hays

KOAM-TV  
channel 7  
R. E. Wade  
Pittsburg

KSLN-TV  
channel 34  
Larry P. Justus  
Salina

KTSB-TV  
channel 27  
Alan Bennett  
Topeka

WIBW-TV  
channel 13  
Thad Sandstrom  
Topeka



Kansas (cont.)

KAKE-TV  
channel 10  
Martin Umansky  
Wichita

KARD-TV  
channel 3  
Don Sbarra  
Wichita

KTVH  
channel 12  
Dale Larsen  
Wichita

Missouri (15 stations)

KFUS-TV  
channel 12  
Oscar Hirsch  
Cape Girardeau

KHQA-TV  
channel 7  
Walter J. Rothschild  
Quincy, Illinois

KRCG  
channel 13  
Edward Schuelein  
Jefferson City

KODE-TV  
channel 12  
D. T. Knight  
Joplin

KUHI-TV  
channel 16  
Melvin Caldwell  
Joplin

KCMO-TV  
channel 5  
E. K. Hartenbower  
Kansas City

Missouri (cont.)

KMBC-TV  
channel 9  
Mark Wodlinger  
Kansas City

WDAF-TV  
channel 4  
Bob Wormington  
Kansas City

KFEQ-TV  
channel 2  
E. Carleton Schirmer  
St. Joseph

KMOX-TV  
channel 4  
Leon Drew  
St. Louis

KPLR-TV  
channel 11  
Mike McCormick  
St. Louis

KYTV  
channel 3  
R. L. Stifflebam  
Springfield

KSD-TV  
channel 5  
Guy Yeldell  
St. Louis

KTTS-TV  
channel 10  
G. Pearson Ward  
Springfield

Oklahoma (11 stations)

KTEN  
channel 10  
Bill Hoover  
Ada

KXII  
channel 12  
C. H. Balding  
Sherman, Texas

KSWO-TV  
channel 7  
Tom Reddell  
Lawton

KLPR-TV  
channel 14  
Omer Thompson  
Oklahoma City

KOCO-TV  
channel 5  
Ben West Oklahoma

KVOD-TV  
channel 2  
John Devine  
Tulsa

KWTV  
channel 9  
Edgar Bell  
Oklahoma City

WKY-TV  
channel 4  
Norman Bagwell  
Oklahoma City

KFDO-TV  
channel 8  
Bill Cook  
Sweetwater

KOTV  
channel 6  
George A. Stevens  
Tulsa

KTUL-TV  
channel 8  
Bill Swanson  
Tulsa

## APPENDIX D

## JOURNALISTICALLY ORIENTED DOCUMENTARIES

1. "Priority: The Grand Canyon (dam controversy)
2. "Priority: Learn, Baby, Learn (Negro education)
3. "Priority: Who Speaks for the Consumer? (spending)
4. "Priority: But Not Next Door (race relations)
5. "It's Happening Here" (local narcotics, drug problem)
6. "Cowpasture to Complex" (growth of airport complex)
7. "Street of Dreams" (revitalization of downtown street)
8. "Campus Unrest" (student demonstrations)
9. "Search & Rescue" (private plane accidents)
10. "Time to Learn Or Time to Burn?" (explanation of modular scheduling in high school)
11. "Where's the Problem?" (minority problems)
12. "Teenage Marriage"
13. "Primer on Self Protection"
14. "Primer on Home Protection"
15. "Dialogue Black & White"
16. "The E-Tax--How Much Is Enough?" (examined increase in earning tax)
17. "Downtown Revisited" (study of new building, urban renewal)
18. "Civil Disorder" (two, 2-hour programs with militant, other leaders)
19. "Kansans in Viet Nam" (three, half-hour shows)
20. "Highway Dilemma In Kansas"
21. "Spring; the Violent Season" (tornado weather)
22. "Crises In the City" (job employment)
23. "Little Dead Schoolhouse" (pros, cons of rural school consolidation)
24. "The Wastemakers" (air pollution)
25. "Make Haste Slowly" (relationship of local, state, national government and associated red tape)
26. "How To Get There From Here" (public transportation problems)
27. "CBD East" (downtown urban renewal)
28. "Profile: C.B.D." (19 live telecasts of urban renewal discussion)
29. "Fifteen Minutes From War" (Strategic Air Command)
30. "One Nation Indivisible" (racial crises in America)

## NON-JOURNALISTICALLY ORIENTED DOCUMENTARIES

1. "Not Charity, But A Chance" (Goodwill Industries)
2. "The Other Side of the Day" (analysis of night workers)
3. "Scope (Magazine of the Air)" "The Koshares Indians"
4. "Colorado's Inland Navy"
5. "Hail Suppression"
6. "Wheat Harvesting On the High Plains"
7. "The Fiesta Del Sol"
8. "Music Festival At Emporia"
9. "Purple Pride" (Kansas State University's stadium and team)
10. "The End of the Trail for the End of the Trail" (Western Heritage)
11. "Ho Ho's Who's Who At the Zoo" (children tour the zoo)
12. "Three Exhibitions of American Art" (art appreciation)
13. "Miss America in Viet Nam" (in prime time just before Miss America Pageant)
14. "Junior Achievement" (study of the program's 1st year in Oklahoma)
15. "Man With the Badge" (law enforcement)
16. "Because It Was There" (local participant's activities with mountain climbing expedition)
17. "Sandlot Summer" (study of kid's baseball)
18. "Very Special People" (blood bank needs)
19. "Walk Together" (American Field Service exchange students)
20. "Profile: Law Day U.S.A." (American legal system)
21. "Profile: Sioux City Community Theatre" (production of a musical)
22. "Equestrian Special" (study of horsemanship)
23. "The City That Love Built" (story of Boy's Town)

A STUDY OF THE LOCAL DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMMING PRACTICES OF  
TWENTY-ONE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN SIX MIDWESTERN STATES

by

RONALD J. STREETER

B.A., Kansas State University, 1965

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Technical Journalism

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

## ABSTRACT

The study was concerned with the documentary programming practices of commercial television stations in the states of Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma. The objectives were to: (1) determine the frequency and length of documentaries broadcast by these stations; (2) study those documentaries from the standpoint of structure and content, and (3) develop guidelines for broadcasters who had yet to enter the area of local television documentary production and to reenforce the work of other broadcasters who had.

A questionnaire was designed and sent to sixty-five commercial television stations in the six states, seeking answers from the most logical sources. Twenty-four questionnaires were returned of which twenty-one were useable.

The majority of the television stations originating local documentaries did so on a monthly basis. A majority of the monthly programs were designed for thirty minutes. Most of the subject matter treated in the documentaries was sufficiently limited in its scope so that only one program was required to present a complete picture of the subject matter. Stations responded that the majority of their documentaries were of a journalistic nature, that is objectively treated, like news stories. The minority programs were of a non-journalistic nature, treated subjectively, speaking "as much from the heart as from the head."

It was believed that one to four persons devoted exclusively to documentary production could, with from one to two days at their disposal, produce a documentary comparable in scope to any of the programs listed by the polled stations. This belief assumes that equally talented personnel would be utilized by the aspiring station. It may be assumed that given the talented personnel, the station that had access to readily available American brand name film and videotape equipment could also produce documentaries comparable in scope to those produced by the responding stations.