

NDIIP Preserving Digital Public Television Appraisal and Selection Focus Groups

As part of the NDIIP Preserving Digital Public Television project, the Appraisal and Selection group felt they could make better decisions regarding appraisal guidelines with the input of a variety of users and content producers. The Appraisal and Selection group decided the best way to accomplish this was through focus groups.

Eight general categories of users and producers were defined: Historians; Librarians/Archivists; Critics; K-12 Educators; Producers; Journalists; Funders; Other Public Television Station Personnel. It was determined that each focus group should consist of between six and twelve people, to encourage individual feedback within the allotted time. The goal was to illustrate the production process through a clip reel that contained different production elements. After viewing the clip reel, focus group participants were asked for their impressions as to each element's value and use.

Focus groups were held at WGBH in Boston and WNET in New York from May to July 2005. WGBH focus groups concentrated on the long-form documentary production process while WNET demonstrated cultural programming and weekly news magazine formats in their focus groups. Both stations provided participants with either monetary or in-kind compensation for their time. Summaries of each station's findings are given below, followed by general conclusions.

WGBH conducted two focus groups, one in May with historians/professors from area universities and one in June with 6-12 grade Social Studies and English teachers. Both groups were conducted in the same manner and shown the same clip reel. The session began with a general explanation of the long-form documentary production process. Participants were given an outline and paper copies of different production elements that are produced in a traditional analog, tape based environment. Then they watched the clip reel that contained video of production elements produced in the current mixed digital/analog environment. The outline and paper copies drew on elements from *The Kennedys*. The clip reel was produced from elements used in making *Fidel Castro*. Both programs aired on the *American Experience* series.

Discussion centered on the usefulness of each production element, accessibility to elements, both video and text, and costs or fees for access. Educators in both groups already were or eager to incorporate using visual material in their classes. One of the historians/professors commented that students have begun to turn in Visual Term Papers that are mini-productions. As a means of teaching visual literacy, both groups saw the value in comparing and contrasting raw footage with edited final productions. The need for cataloging at general and specific levels was expressed by all participants. Keyword, subject and name cataloging for video elements, logs and transcripts were stressed several times. All participants advocated streaming video over the Internet as the best access. Most envisioned access through a central website that could link to regional servers, if necessary. Fee based access was not favored but acknowledged as most likely. Educators in both groups stressed the necessity for promoting our holdings. They said fees could be justified if we built constituencies with the education community. Several people were surprised at the extent of the WGBH Archives' holdings and that they were available to outside users.

The historians/professors were most interested in unique content that could not be found in books or other sources. They saw the value in using text documents to augment video. This group voiced a need for high quality resolution images to aid detailed historical research on images and in being able to compare original documents to transcribed copies. The 6-12 teachers focus group cautioned that the typical classroom contains students at varying levels of learning. It was pointed out that one kind of resource would not work for all students. Most of these teachers mentioned limited time in the classroom. What most said would be best are pre-packaged 4-5minute clips that could be incorporated into their curriculums. Links to more detailed production elements that individual students could explore were suggested. Using current educational cataloging schemes was, also, suggested as a way to match educational and curriculum needs.

Reports from each focus group are appended to this report.