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From the Editors

Training for Community Development

by **jesikah maria ross** and
Kelly L. Aiken

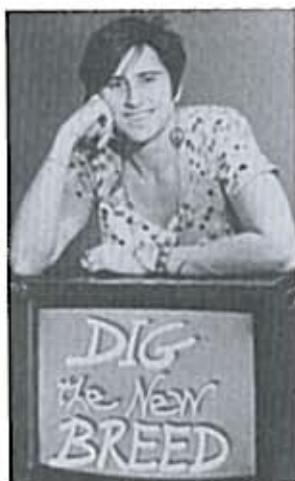
In our increasingly fragmented and media-focused society, community access centers are uniquely positioned to bring people together to share arts and culture, create public dialogue, and address local issues. Improving conditions of community life is the cornerstone of the Access mission. Community development—increasing people's capacity for civic participation, public dialogue, and integration into community affairs—is the Access goal.

Training programs are often the main avenue to operationalize our community development goals. For this reason, training is one of the most important tasks of media access centers. With 25 years of experience, Access practitioners possess a solid background in successfully teaching community members how to use television equipment. But how do we create training programs that not only build technical skills but also encourage empowerment, community engagement, and critical perspective? This issue of *CMR* explores that question by looking back over our history, consulting allied fields, and gathering reports from Access centers across the country.

We created this *CMR* to serve as a resource for helping community access centers increase the effectiveness of their training programs. Our focus is not on technology or the use of equipment. Rather, we emphasize community-building techniques and developing media communication skills to enhance participation in public affairs. Many of the articles discuss methods to achieve community development outcomes. Others offer teaching and learning strategies for designing, delivering, and evaluating training programs.

Program profiles highlight the effective training techniques currently used by Access centers in the field.

To begin, we revisit our community media history by looking at Canada's **Challenge for Change (CFC)** project and the lasting implications it has had for Access in this country. **Paula Manley** connects the past with the present by citing the importance of CFC in *The "New" Work of Access Centers: Nurturing Learning Communities*. Manley's article calls for a new direction in our work at Access centers. Her visionary thinking takes us beyond



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technical training to focus on the needs and interests of trainees by consciously building learning communities.

Based on our field experience, we realized that there are many terms in the Access vocabulary that have achieved universal acceptance but lack clear definitions and realistic application in Access training programs. We asked several

media educators to define two commonly used terms: empowerment and community organizing. **John Higgins** provides a working definition of empowerment in the article *Training for Empowerment*, and **Jesikah**

maria ross, drawing on her interview with Higgins, addresses how to incorporate "empowering moments" into Access training programs. **Todd Samusson** discusses community organizing as a central tenet of Access in *Public Access Television: Shaping Community Organizing*, offering specific ways to turn a

community-building vision into action.

Talking to trainers around the country, we discovered that many seek opportunities to develop their facilitation and communication skills. The fields of nonformal and adult education provide teaching strategies particularly relevant to their needs. In *A Trainer's Guide: Participatory Learning and Action*, **Jules N. Pretty et al.** discuss how adults learn and the essential elements of a creative learning environment. Adult educator **Laurie Lippin** contributes simple training techniques such as trust building exercises that can be incorporated into Access training programs to improve group dynamics.

In *Evaluating Training Programs*

Kelly Aiken discusses evaluation as an ongoing, integrated component of program planning and implementation. She outlines three types of evaluation and provides practical ways to gather information so as to inform trainers, trainees, directors, and even policy makers about the impact of Access centers. The evaluation case

study provided by **Chuck Peterson** describes the benefits of assessing an Access training program and the results of his center's formal evaluation.

Other program case studies with different approaches to training and community development are integrated throughout the issue. **Denise Zaccardi** tells us about a youth program in Chicago designed to address community issues through the media arts. **Linda Iannacone** introduces us to an Access outreach program for community-based organizations in New York City. **Lauren-Glenn Davitian** profiles computer training for economic development in the Northeast while **Antonia Stone** and **Peter Miller** address building partnerships around the country and conducting technology training programs for democracy and

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Training for Empowerment

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Empowerment, therefore, consists of awareness, self-recognition, and action. This awareness includes a recognition of one's self, others, and society, and the power relationships involved within each as they intersect. Through self-reflection, a person sees how these relationships affect him or her. Recognition then leads to individual and/or group action to influence the personal and social realms.

Ingredients of Empowerment Through Video.

That's the vision of empowerment that emerges from the public access, media education, and critical pedagogy literatures. Within a video production environment, the concept becomes more concrete. The definition suggests that a trainee or producer is aware of mainstream and alternative approaches to the following elements:

- the technical elements involved in program construction (e.g., audio, lighting, editing, etc.);
- the symbolic codes that are behind this program construction (e.g., close up conveys the idea of talking face-to-face with someone);
- the values and beliefs these codes represent (e.g., talking close enough to stare into someone's eyes is socially acceptable);
- media structure, including ownership, economics, program distribution, and the organization of the production team (e.g., using a traditional top-down organizational model for the production group);
- the influence of media on society, and society on media (e.g., the impact of advertising and capitalism).

The definition of empowerment also suggests that, in addition to these cognitive elements, a trainee or producer should be able to recognize that all of these elements are human constructions and can be changed. Here is where the question of self-reflectivity enters: the empowered producer is seen as someone who also is able to position himself or herself in relation to the above elements.

For example: does the producer

choose to reproduce the traditional means of video representation by consciously using established norms of video production? The rules sometimes reflect traditional values toward women, expressed symbolically. Where does she place herself with regard to these values? Does recognizing these rules and the values behind them, as well as her own relationship to the rules and values, lead her to

lobby to change them in her video program? In her daily life? In short, does the process and content learned from working with video equipment carry over into other aspects of the trainee's life?



This is the construction of empowerment that Higgins worked with in his doctoral study, **Tracing The Vision: A Study of Community Volunteer Producers, Public Access Cable Television, and Empowerment** (1994). It is worth noting that empowerment is not something that can be given to another person; empowerment is a condition that originates from within the self. In other words, no one gives you a voice; instead, you find your own voice.

Training Methods for Empowerment.

How can we advance this concept of empowerment within our training programs? One way is by using teaching techniques and training strategies that encourage what Higgins calls "empowering moments": a time when the participant becomes fully aware of a new process, new skills, or a new way of perceiving the world. Empowering moments engage people in their own dynamic learning process, motivating them to continue to learn and apply their learning outside the Access center. What are some training methods that facilitate empowering moments? Here are a few suggestions:

Create opportunities for sharing. Sharing information, stories, viewpoints,

and experiences with others who are different from you is a powerful way to gain new perspectives. Set aside time in your training for people to talk about themselves, what is important to them, what issues they are passionate about, or why they came to learn how to make TV. Hold debriefing sessions after different segments of your training for people to reflect on what they are learning and how they feel about it.

Encourage group work. Collective learning and decision making is important. It brings diverse individuals together to negotiate common understandings, forge common goals, and figure out how best to work as a team. These skills can carry over into other aspects of a participant's life. Group work provides trainees with the opportunity to meet and get to know others, feel part of a team, do something fun and different, and contribute to a project they think is important—all of which can be eye-opening experiences. Consider incorporating small group exercises or team projects throughout your workshops.

Use an integrated approach. Diverse training components accommodate different learning styles and engage participants on different levels. Combine equipment practice, critical viewing exercises, Access history lecturates, and group work in your training. Get people's hands on equipment first. Give them theory and Access philosophy later when their heads are overflowing with technical information and they are ready to learn about something other than equipment.

Show examples of nontraditional television programs. Show as much alternative media as you can to give people a sense of the possibilities outside of mainstream TV. Use examples that reflect an Access perspective. Showing and discussing video clips is a great way to break up a workshop and lets people see and feel the difference between community media and mass media.

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Facilitate one-on-one learning.

People learn primarily in one-on-one situations. To build skills, self-confidence, and interest, create ways for participants to learn from one another. In workshop settings, divide the group into pairs and have each team do an activity where individuals complete a technical exercise and then show their teammate how they did it. Outside of workshops, designate a staff person to help trainees plug into existing crews or match them up to work on other producers' shows or with "mentor producers." The opportunity to share ideas and techniques with more experienced individuals promotes empowering

"...empowerment is not something that can be given to another person..."

moments.

Living Our Mission. Higgins' study reminds us that the transformation of the world was the vision behind the emergence of public access television and that this vision was to be implemented, in part, by empowering people through our video training programs. For community

media to survive and flourish in today's changing telecommunications landscape, it is vital to demonstrate to policy makers how public access television actually facilitates empowerment and, consequently, contributes to community development. To do this, we need to articulate what we think empowerment is so that we can effectively design and deliver training programs that yield empowerment as a documented outcome. Higgins' work is especially useful here since it provides a definition of empowerment and gives us ideas on how to turn that definition into action. Reassessing our training programs and integrating methods that intentionally promote empowering moments will help ensure an effective and long-lasting approach to the social change envisioned by Access pioneers.

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Texts

Critical pedagogy is concerned with the content and process of teaching and learning. Its advocates are concerned with the connection between education and social change. Some books of interest to community access workers include: **Life In Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education** by Peter McLaren (New York, Longman, 1989).

Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change by Ira Shor (Chicago, University of Chicago Press; 1992).

We Make The Road By Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (Philadelphia, Temple University Press; 1990).

Resources

"The Origins of Public Access Cable Television: 1966-1972" by Ralph Engleman (Journalism Monographs 123, October: 1990).

Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History by Ralph Engleman (Thousand Oaks, Sage; 1996).

Public Access Cable Television in the United States and Canada by Gilbert Gillespie (New York, Praeger; 1975).

Voices

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progress. These evaluations yield both qualitative and quantitative information. Evaluation results are compiled and discussed by CTVN staff. If feasible, suggestions are incorporated into upcoming classes.

Hard Cover is an excellent opportunity for youth to work in all facets of video production. The show provides participants with production skills and community service experience. It contributes to fostering community development by encouraging disadvantaged urban youth to use the medium of television to voice their issues, find creative solutions to local problems, educate the audience, and create a better future for themselves and their neighborhoods.

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