MAS Media Foundation

(MMF) Publications

How to Launch a Public Access Television Show

Contents

Launching Public Access Television in Your Chapter

Introduction

This manual is intended to be a step-by-step guide for MAS chapters that wish to launch their own media teams to carry out mass communications projects.

Media work production, as defined by MAS Media covers the following areas:

- TV production
- Video documentary production
- Radio production
- Producing print media (newspapers, newsletters, etc.)
- Web media
- Documenting the chapter and the community's activities through still pictures, video recording and writing articles (both paper and electronic).

One area that is not a part of the scope of MAS Media is preparing chapters to have their own media spokespersons to interact with

the media. This task falls within the area of advocacy. MAS Freedom Foundation has excelled in providing training and support in this area, and we encourage chapters to call on the Freedom Foundation's services and expertise for this purpose.

This chapter will only cover TV production. Future manuals will address other areas of audio/video production.

Setting up a Chapter's Media Team

The first step in producing your media pieces is to assemble a media team. The following are some general directions and tips for forming your chapter's media team.

- The minimum requirement is to have one MAS regular or active member, and three to four volunteers.
- Include at least one adult in youth teams.
- No prior media training is necessary.
- Ability to commit a reasonable number of hours for this effort (about three to five hours per week).

What is Public Access TV?

Public Access is a service offered by numerous cities around the nation to their citizens who wish to utilize the city's TV production studios in producing 30-minute or 1-hour programs. Those programs air on cable channels that cover the viewing area of the city.

Br. Haitham Nasr, a TV broadcast engineer who is a member of MAS Media core team, giving a media training session.

Fees

Most production studios charge a minimal fee to register an organization in order to utilize the studio and air programs, for example, $100 annually.

Training

The public access station usually trains your team members to become "producers" who can then use the studio's equipment to produce shows to be aired. The training is not complicated. Additionally, MAS Media can provide a more in-depth training program that goes beyond what the station would offer. We highly encourage your team to utilize both of these resources.

Restrictions

Since this service is offered by cities as a way to allow their citizens to express themselves, the public access station would only restrict the airing of foul language or indecency, as well as prohibit advocating for commercial products. Public access is generally not for commercializing or advertisement.

Types of Programming

Several types of programming can be aired through public access stations. Among them are two main categories: religious and current events. Religious programming is limited to faith groups airing their religious services or discussions. Current events programming is more general; however, in current events programming, religious subjects should be avoided if the station offers religious public access channels.

To see which cities offer PATV, you can visit the following link: http://www.videouniversity.com/pubaccess.shtml

Step-by-Step: Launching Media Production

- Form your chapter's media team *(refer to Setting up a Chapter's media team above).*

- Visit your public access TV station and register MAS as an organization that will air programs using the station. Also, register the names of the team members as "producers". You need to select a name for the show to register with the station. Fees are usually payable at that time.

- Register your team members to attend the training offered by the station. Team members may have to take and pass a test to become licensed producers with the station.

- Inquire about the available slots for airing your show. Initially, the station may have no slots, or slots offered at dead times (like 3 AM). Don't be discouraged! Go ahead and sign up for that 3 AM slot! It will only give you much needed training (with less viewers) until a better slot frees up, at which time you would have gained experience in production.

- Schedule your first airing for about one month after your team members get their producers' licenses. Usually, stations have seasons that run quarterly or semi-annually. You need to sign up for the next coming season (stations may or may not allow your group to jump in right in the middle of a season).

- Contact us via e-mail at media@masnet.org so we can provide you with assistance every step of the way. You can also sign up your team members in MAS Media's e-mail discussion list to link with other MAS producers. Additionally, we can offer conference calls so your team can learn first-hand the preparation details for your first production!

Video Equipment

As you start building your experience in video production, you will first utilize the studio's professional video production equipment that you can borrow when you need to take footage of events outside the studio. Another option is to start buying your own equipment, piece by piece if necessary. The following sections outline the types of equipment that you will need to have for video production outside the studio.

Cameras

For many years, there have been two types of video cameras on the market: analog and digital. A typical analog/digital camcorder contains two basic parts:

A typical "3 CCD" video production camera

- A camera section, consisting of a CCD, lens and motors to handle the zoom, focus and aperture
- A VCR section, in which a typical TV-VCR is shrunk down to fit in a much smaller space.

Therefore, there are two formats for camcorders: **Analogue Video (AV)** and **Digital Video (DV)**, differing in the way they record and the subsequent quality of image.

- AV records by storing variable electrical signals on magnetic tape, represented as peaks and troughs of waves.
- DV records by representing these waves in terms of on-off commands, or ones and zeros. The difference between the two is seen most sharply when you start copying images, or editing.

The variable waves of AV start to diminish in clarity and

intensity and so some parts of the picture are lost, resulting in fuzzy images and poor sound, which degrade with each copy. With DV, however, the ones and zeros may weaken but they remain ones and zeros, so there is virtually no loss of quality, even after repeated copying.

The Viewfinder receives the video image as well, so you can see what you're shooting. Viewfinders are actually small, black-and-white or color televisions, but many modern camcorders also have larger full-color LCD screens.

The Lens – The first step in recording a video image is to focus light onto the CCD using a lens. To get a camera to record a clear picture of an object in front of it, you need to be able to adjust the focus of the lens—that is, move the lens so it aims the light beams coming from that object precisely on the CCD. Just like film cameras, camcorders let you move your lens in and out to focus light. Of course, most people need to move around with their camcorders, and shooting many different things at different distances, making constantly refocusing extremely difficult. This is why all camcorders come with an auto-focus device. This is usually an infrared beam that bounces off objects in the center of the frame, and then returns to a sensor on the camcorder.

The Battery – There are two types of batteries for camcorders:

- Ni-CD (nickel cadmium), which is the older version and comes in 2-, 4- and 8-hour capacities, and
- Lithium batteries, which also come in capacities of 2-, 4- and

8-hour, and are the most modern.

Microphones

Microphones just convert a real sound wave into an electrical audio signal. In order to do so, they have a small, light material in them called the ***diaphragm***. When the sound vibrations travel through the air and reach the diaphragm, they cause the diaphragm to vibrate. This in turn will cause an electrical current in the microphone to vary, whereupon it is transferred to a mixer, preamplifier or amplifier for use. Microphones are typically classified according to how the diaphragms produce sound. Some types of which are the camera mic, the handheld, and the lavaliere mic.

Handheld Microphone

- ***Dynamic Microphones*** typically use *moving-coil technology*. Because of their hardiness, they are usually used in live performances, where mic droppage and rough handling are the norm.

- ***Condenser Microphones*** are known as *capacitor microphones*. As standards for recording improved, the quality of recording microphones had to improve to keep pace. However, just as digital recording has its detractors, the anal-ness and transparency of condenser microphones are also not universally popular. Studios usually have an array of expensive large-diaphragm condenser microphones, as each microphone would reproduce the sound in its own special way. When the correct microphone is chosen for a vocalist, the results can be extremely flattering, making the singer much better than he or she really is.

Shotgun microphone

Pickup Patterns – Microphones are made with certain applications in mind. For example, stage use, studio use or field recording use. Microphones are not always expected to pick up sound universally and from all directions. The way that a microphone picks up sound from various directions is known as its pickup pattern. There are a few standard pickup patterns:

- ❑ **Omnidirectional** – picks up sound well from all directions, and are frequently used for recording ambient and background sound. These microphones are also used for vocals.

- ❑ **Unidirectional** – literally, from one direction, good for recording individual voices in noisy locations, such as interviews, as well as picking up sound from a long distance.

- ❑ **Bidirectional** – picks up sound from two opposite directions. It used to be popular in the old days when two people would stand around a microphone and sing a duet, but now it is usually preferred to mic each person up separately.

- ❑ **Cardioid** – the most common microphones in use today. These are favored for stage use, as they do not pick up the sound from on-stage speakers or monitors so readily, thus preventing feedback. There are versions of the Cardioid pattern called **Supercardioid** and **Hypercardioid**.

- ***Lavalier Mics*** are the familiar 'interviewer's collar pin', which consists of a small, usually electric microphone worn on the chest, clipped to the speaker's clothing. Lavalier mics can be powered by batteries or phantom power, depending on the make of the mic.

Clip-on microphone

- ***Wireless Mics*** are essentially the same as ordinary microphones with a transmitter which can be in the body of a handheld mic or in a

separate belt-worn pack (Lavalier). Wireless microphones typically transmit on only one unique frequency per microphone. However, it will have two antennae on the receiver end. When the signal strength between the two antennae varies, the receiver will opt to receive the signal from the stronger antennae.

Lighting

Studio lighting is used indoors and is a must. Typically studio lighting involves the use of three or four different lights, which light the subject in different yet complementary ways. The purpose of studio lighting is to simulate natural daylight in an indoor setting. First, there is a main, or key light, that is the brightest light and is used to simulate the angle of the sun. It shines on the side of the subject. The second light is the fill light that is used to simulate reflected light found in natural outdoor lighting. The third light is the background light, which is placed behind the subject as a backlight and is used to light the background to prevent any shadows. The fourth type of light is called the hair or rim light, which is placed slightly above the subject and is used to make the subject a distinct entity from the background. Most floor stand studio lights are either six or eight feet tall, and come with aluminum light reflectors, umbrella kits to soften or remove shadows, or diffusers to diffuse the light. Light bulbs range

Lighting umbrellas

Studio Lighting

from 250 watts to 1000 watts, and are typically metal halide, quartz halogen.

Video Recording Format

- **VHS:** An old analog format also used as a consumer type of format for video equipment.

- **HI-8:** A better quality than VHS, but still analog format.

- **Digital8:** A recently introduced consumer format from Sony. Digital8 records for all practical purposes the same signal as DV, but uses cheaper Hi8 tapes and can play back old analogue 8mm/Hi8 tapes.

- **DV:** A new format being backed by manufacturers such as Sony, Philips, Thomson, Hitachi, Matsushita and others. It was the first digital recording format in the reach of consumer markets. DV uses 5:1 compression based on DCT. As such, DV coding can be thought of as something half-way between Motion JPEG and MPEG.

- **DVD:** There are various DVD recording formats to choose from, such as DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, DVD+R, DVD-RAM and DVD-RW DL. All of these have a capacity of 4.7GB with the exception of DVD-RW DL (double layer).

How to Plan a Production Episode

Production of one episode (30- or 60-minute) requires a good amount of preparation before executing the plan.

Call for a "Production Meeting" with other producers (the rest of your team). You can divide the work between producers of your team by show or by segment. In other words, you can assign one producer per show, or one producer per segment of the show.

Steps for Video Production

1) Have your Production equipment ready.
2) Shoot your Video.
3) Capture your Video.
4) Edit your Video.
5) Broadcast or Share your Video.

Your production equipment

1-1 Video Camera
1-2 Microphone
1-3 Lighting system
1-4 Tripod
1-5 Video Recorder

1-1 Video Camera

- Digital /Analog Camera.
- Camera terms :
  - View Finder/LCD
  - Battery
  - Tape Compartment
  - Lens (Iris, Zoom & Focus)
  - White Balance

Video cameras

Microphone

1-2 Microphone

- On Camera Mic
- Lavaliere Mic
- Hand held Mic
- Shotgun Mic

1-1-3 Lighting Systems

- Tungsten system
- Total/Omni system
- VIP system
- Rifa-lite system
- Camera top system
- Fluorescent system

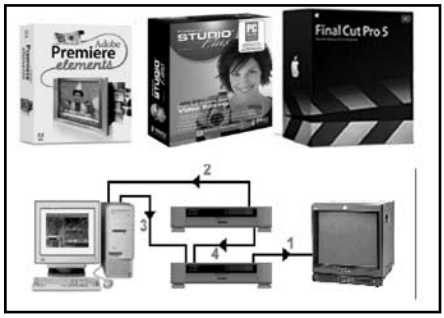
Your body is a natural tripod

1-4 Tripod

- To use a Tripod , or not to use a Tripod, that is the question
- Your body is a natural tripod.
- Proper set-up – use a wide footprint.
- Tripod Motion - Pan (side to side), or
- Tilt (up or down)

1-5 Video Recorder

- VHS format
- HI-8 format
- Digital 8 format
- Mini-DV format
- DVD or VCD format
- Data format on a Hard drive



1-6 Edit Your Video

- Selecting a Video Editing Package
- Pinnacle Studio Plus
- Adobe Premier (for Windows)
- Final Cut (for Mac)

1-7 Broadcast or Share Your Video

Formats for Sharing:

- VHS
- VCD (need Ulead system)
- DVD (need Ulead system)

For Broadcasting:

- DVD
- SP-Betacam
- DVC-Pro
- HD
- Tungsten system
- Total/Omni system
- VIP system
- Rifa-lite system
- Camera top system
- Fluorescent system

Interviewing and Writing for Radio and TV

GETTING STARTED…

Identify your topic and do some research

- **Who:** Find out who you'll be talking to…
- **What:** What is the main issue?
- **When:** When did or will it be happening?
- **Where:** Where did/will the incident occur…
- **Why:** Is there a reason? Or are you trying to find it out?
- **How:** How did it happen? Was it an accident?

Preparing to Interview

- Put together a list of at least **TEN** questions you'd like to have answered.
- Always ask open-ended questions that will keep your source talking.

EXAMPLE: What do you think about the White Sox winning the World Series?
NOT: Are you happy the White Sox won the World Series?

The Interview

- Know your subject! Make sure that you are prepared with some background information.
- Ask easy questions first. Let your source become comfortable.
- The tougher questions come last, after your source has warmed up a bit.

The Script

Three basic things to remember about script writing are:

- Use the inverted pyramid: The most important facts at the top that address the 5 W's and 1 H.
- Keep It Simple Sweetie (K.I.S.S)

- Depending on type of story, keep lead-in statements to usually no longer than 4-5 sentences.

Script Writing 101

When writing for electronic media, it is best to keep in mind that this forum is not the same as writing for print. For example, one listening to a broadcast does not see common printed formats and punctuation such as chapter divisions, subheadings, italics, bolded type, commas, semi-colons, and parentheses; therefore, the listener must interpret what the reader is saying. Nor does the broadcaster enjoy the same latitude as one who is writing a printed piece. In printed media, the reader can go back and reread a sentence. If the audience does not understand a sentence as the broadcaster reads it, then the meaning may very well be lost.

All of the grammar and writing rules for print are thrown out the window when you are writing for the ear. For instance, since narration should be delivered in a conversational style, the standard rules of punctuation sometimes aren't followed. In writing for print, ellipses (Greek for "omission") usually designate an intentional omission, or can they also be used to indicate a pause in speech, an unfinished thought, or when used at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence. In writing for broadcast, they are commonly used to designate pauses, as in conversation where complete sentences are not often used.

The overriding factor when writing narration is clarity: making the text easy for the announcer to read. Too much information complicates the issue. When we listen to someone who is speaking, information is delivered to us one word at a time. If a sentence is too complex or demands too much time, meaning can be lost or confused. During narration, voice inflections, proper phrasing, word emphasis, etc. gives the spoken word a clear edge over that which is written.

Broadcast Style

Video scripts are written in broadcast style: sentences that are short, concise and direct.

One important point to press here is that the writer and the narrator should educate themselves about common usage mistakes that can detract from your credibility. Such as the difference between further and farther, and less than and fewer than. Issues like this can be an embarrassment if a viewer decides to prove their superior "native" grasp of the English language over that of a perceived "immigrant" or minority; therefore, it would be wise to invest in an abridged grammar manual.

Script Writing Do's and Don'ts

- Scripts should be crisp.
- Facts should be checked, rechecked and checked again!
- Facts must be taut, with strong, active verbs. Clearly stated and verified facts are difficult to rationally challenge.
- The active voice is preferred over the inactive or passive voice.
- Nouns and verbs are preferred over adjectives.
- Specifics are preferred over general.
- Avoid dependent clauses at the beginning of sentences.
- Avoid jargon or colloquialisms.
- Avoid long sentences, tongue-twisting or awkward phrases, long titles, or phrases that could be taken two ways.
- One good way to lose a viewer is if a script is packed with too many facts, if the information is not clearly presented, or if the script moves too quickly or too slowly.
- Adapt your presentation to your target audience.
- Clearly voice the key concepts, where the subject is going, and

when you are going to change the subject.

- Illustrate important points.
- Allow the audience to digest before you move on.
- Attribution should be at the beginning of sentences. For example, "According to government sources…" instead of "…yada yada yada, according to government sources."
- Additionally, broadcast style dictates that letting the audience know who is speaking should be announced in the very beginning, such as: "Hello, I am Dina Awad, moderator for this session of Islamic Perspectives…"
- Once your script is written, set it aside for about a half hour or so, then pick it up and re-read it again for a fresh perspective.
- The script and any planned video should complement and strengthen each other; however, the video should be self-explanatory, without having to rely on the sound track.
- Avoid having dialogue that states the obvious. The script should not describe the video; yet it should enhance what is being shown.
- Lastly, remember, "it's not what you say, but how you say it".

Sample Script

ANNOUNCER (ANNCR):
At least 52 homeless men and women have died in Chicago over the past year.

The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless held a memorial Wednesday to remember those who died.

Ellen Sahli is with the city's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing…

VIDEOTAPE (VTR):
"We certainly agree that homelessness significantly contributes to

personal problems or prevents people from addressing their problems. That's why we have an aggressive plan to end homelessness in Chicago."

ANNOUNCER (ANNCR):
A national study found that premature death among the homeless is associated with chronic medical conditions, and not mental illness, substance abuse or hypothermia.

The Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, which handled many of the homeless deaths, found that most died because of inadequate health care.

Now It's Your Turn

Sample Exercise:
Have your team members take a couple of stories from a news website and rewrite them in broadcast format. Then, using those scripts, do a "dry-run" while videotaping to get a better feel for the camera, timing, script effectiveness, etc. After you've done this a couple of times, it will become easier and more natural. Remember, practice makes perfect.

Script Writing Terms and Abbreviations

The following are some of the terms and abbreviations used in scriptwriting:

- **LS (long shot) or FS (full shot) –** a shot from the top of a person's head to the bottom of their feet.
- **MS –** a shot from the waist up.
- **MCU (medium close-up –** a shot cropped between the shoulders and the belt line.
- **CU (close-up) –** the most desirable for interviews.
- **Two-shot or three-shot (also 2-S and 3-S) –** designates a

shot of two or three people in one scene.

- **EXT and INT –** used to indicate exterior and interior settings.
- **SOT (sound-on-tape) –** indicates that the voice, music, or background sound will be from the audio track of a videotape.
- **SOF (sound-on-film) –** becoming obsolete because of video recording.
- **VTR –** videotape, videotape recording (video and audio tape are now being replaced by computer disks and solid-state memory).
- **VO (voice over) –** refers to narration heard over a video source. It can also refer to narration heard at a higher level than a source of music or background sound.
- **OSV (off-screen voice) –** a voice indicated on the script that is from a person who is not visible.
- **OS (over-the-shoulder shot) –** the picture shows the back of one person's head and possibly one shoulder. These are also designated as O/S and X/S shots.
- **ANNCR –** announcer.
- **KEY –** the electronic overlay of titles and credits over background video.
- **SFX or F/X (special effects) –** these may be audio special effects (audio FX) or video special effects that alter reality.

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