

American University's Center for Social Media and Independent Television Service (ITVS) Issue Report on Digital Video Distribution

The New Deal: How Digital Platforms Change Negotiations between Public Media and Independent Producers

Contact: Clark Gregor, AU Media Relations, 202-885-5935, gregor@american.edu
Randall Cole, ITVS Media Relations, 415-356-8383 ext. 254, randall_cole@itvs.org

SILVER SPRING, MD (June 12, 2006)—American University's Center for Social Media released today, at the SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival, a new report entitled, *The New Deal: How Digital Platforms Change Negotiations between Public Media and Independent Producers*. The study, co-produced with the Independent Television Service (ITVS), reveals current business practices around new digital distribution in television.

The study discovered that television programmers are asking for and obtaining rights for digital distribution, without having concrete plans for distribution on new platforms. The study recommends that producers clarify their expectations and that public television programmers clarify their plans for use of video content. The study concludes that this is an excellent time for documentarians and public media executives to work together on demonstration projects online.

"Independent producers, public TV, and the public have long had a mutually beneficial relationship," said Pat Aufderheide, director of AU's Center for Social Media. "Will the new distribution platforms—DVDs, the Internet and video-on-demand—threaten or nourish this relationship?"

Researchers interviewed more than 30 television executives in cable and public television, to discover current terms to acquire rights for video on demand, DVD and Internet distribution.

"Independents need a healthy public media, and that public media needs thriving independents," ITVS President Sally Jo Fifer. "We hope this report will be the beginning of a fruitful conversation about the future of television for the people, by the people, no matter what kind of screen it's on."

The Ford Foundation funded the study as part of its Global Perspectives in a Digital Age Initiative. Center Director Pat Aufderheide directed the research. Tamara Gould, director of distribution for Independent Television Service, represented ITVS as co-producer.

-MORE-

About American University's Center for Social Media

American University's Center for Social Media showcases and analyzes strategies to use media as creative tools for public knowledge and action. It focuses on social documentaries for civil society and democracy, and on the public media environment that supports them. The Center is part of AU's School of Communication, a laboratory for professional education, communication research and innovative production across the fields of journalism, film and media arts, and public communication.

About Independent Television Service

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) celebrates its 15th Anniversary in 2006. Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since ITVS' inception in 1991, its programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing television audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans.

To obtain a copy of *The New Deal: How Digital Platforms Change Negotiations between Public Media and Independent Producers*, visit: www.centerforsocialmedia.org or www.itvs.org. To arrange an interview with Professor Aufderheide or for more information, contact Clark Gregor, AU Media Relations, at 202-885-5935 or email gregor@american.edu.

###