

## Public Service Media

### Emerging Findings of PSM 2009. An event jointly organised by the UK National Commission for UNESCO, Golant Films and NESTA

#### Briefing prepared for DCMS/BERR Digital Britain Team

##### *Event background*

The PSM2009 event was held on May 7 2009 by the UK National Commission for UNESCO and NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) and convergent media specialists Golant Films. It was supported by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), the market research agency FreshMinds, the South East Media Network and PACT (the Producers' Alliance for Cinema and Television) among others.

The Cabinet Office minister for digital engagement, Tom Watson, spoke at the event<sup>1</sup>, announcing the new non-transactional license for Crown Copyright as a next step to implementing the Power of Information Review in collaboration with OPSI<sup>2</sup>. The day was hosted by NESTA with the support and participation of John Kingsbury (Head of Creative Industries) and Benedict Arora (Head of Youth).

Speakers – who also participated in the extensive deliberations on a number of topics during the day – included Richard Allan (Chair, Power of Information Review Task Force), Tom Loosemore (Head of 4IP, Channel 4's Public Service Media initiative), Peter Bazalgette<sup>3</sup>, Jon Watts (Director, MTM London<sup>4</sup>), Matt Locke (Education Commissioning, Channel 4), John Newbiggin (Chair, Culture 24), John Sheridan (Head of e-Services, OPSI), Will Gompertz (Director of Media, Tate), Adrian Hall (policy advisor<sup>5</sup>), Fiona Kilkelly (Head of Interactive Media, Skillset), Charles Mills (Director, IVCA<sup>6</sup>), Paul Gerhardt (advisor to Archives for Creativity), Gerry Jackson (SW Radio Africa) and Bertrand Mouiller (Naval Media).

Other participants amongst the 55 attendees included the UK Film Council, BBC, British Museum, Arts Council, South West Screen, University of Westminster, London Knowledge Lab, the Royal Society for the Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce; Index on Censorship, University of Westminster, ZeroOne creative industries learning lab; Liverpool's cross-media centre FACT, Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, together with the student reporters from Yoodoo, international graduate students and an international Oxford University Reuters Institute journalist fellow.

##### *These findings*

This summary represents the emerging findings from the event as they are being written up. They do not represent the official position of any of the event producers or sponsors.

They are hereby presented as evidence from stakeholder engagement to DCMS/BERR as an input to the Digital Britain process and development of the forthcoming white paper.

The organisers are available to provide additional input on request to DCMS/BERR. All outputs from the event will be posed at [unescompsm2009.ning.com](http://unescompsm2009.ning.com) and the Digital Britain team are welcome to join as members to this online workspace.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOlwyK9Y7VU>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news\\_releases/2009/090507\\_poi.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2009/090507_poi.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> Founder of independent production company Endemol, now Chair of Sony Pictures Television

<sup>4</sup> Who undertook the reviews of online Public Service Content for Ofcom's second broadcasting review

<sup>5</sup> Former head of policy for games, broadcasting and digital content for DfES

<sup>6</sup> Trade body, the International Visual Communications Association, representing producers of corporate and public information

The outputs from the discussions on an internationalist UK within a global media landscape – and the relationship of the information and digital media policy to foreign policy – is the subject of a separate briefing which is being prepared at the request of the Cabinet Office.

#### *Scope – Non-broadcast Public Service Media*

Public Service Media is here defined as media fulfilling public purposes and having characteristics in line with those defined by Ofcom in their first review of public service broadcasting<sup>7</sup>.

The scope of the PSM2009 event was to consider new public service media formats. This includes formats such as:

- video on demand (iPlayer, 4oD, SkyAnytime, BT Vision);
- mobile and location-sensitive media (mobile video, audio, mapping applications);
- video and audio podcasts and streams;
- interactive activities and 'games';
- e-learning content and services;
- digital cinema<sup>8</sup>;
- social media (Facebook, Bebo, Myspace, Netmums, Studentroom);
- self-publishing platforms (blogs, wikis, Twitter, Flickr); etc.

Many speakers and participants commented that **the current Public Service Broadcasting debate was too narrow and needed to be widened to consider the range of media that can reach different parts of society and fulfil public purposes**. Examples were given of arts and cultural organisations – such as Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Watershed, and FACT – that do now publish their own content for public benefit, reaching new audiences or redefining relationships with them.

#### *Why – a review of the purposes for Public Service Media*

Participants were asked to review the revised Ofcom PSB purposes and propose changes to these in the light of a wider range of (often digital) media – consisting of tools and platforms not just 'content' – fulfilling public purposes for the benefit of citizens, society and the environment.

The minister made reference to the size of the revolution heralded by the Internet and digital technologies, comparing it to the transformation of society by the Gutenberg press. He also said that the Internet which enables every citizen to be a self-broadcaster has "profound challenges for traditional terrestrial broadcasters".

There was consensus that media are fundamental to shaping our perspectives – on the world and of other people – and an acceptance that **media habits, especially but not exclusively of young people, are changing rapidly** and live, broadcast television make up a smaller proportion of consumption. People are not stopping consuming television or radio, but they are part of a mix of media – examples were given where people were watching television at the same time as engaging online with presenters or other users.

Whilst there was perceived a need for Public Service Media in all its guises to continue to educate and inform, it was thought that digital media could especially provide not only content but also **tools that fuel creativity and innovation**. A new purpose was proposed to: **'stimulate participation with the creation of Public Service Media'**.

The minister emphasized the value to society of the information assets of the nation, commenting that we "enrich our democracy when we allow people access to information relevant to their lives".

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<sup>7</sup> See A23 and A25, *Phase 2: Meeting the digital challenge*, Ofcom, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Being increasingly used for cultural performance and simulcasts of other live events

The **releasing of public archives of content** paid for by taxpayers or license-payers for reuse by citizens and enterprises under licenses such as Creative Commons was seen as vital to achieve these ends. The creation of a **global digital public commons** of shared information was flagged as desirable by many, and an area in which the UK could lead internationally, following the announcement by the Australian government on their contribution to this last September.

The theme of Public Service Media underpinning democracy was continued throughout the day and, as one of its underpinnings, **media literacy** – citizens being able to use, understand and critically analyse media – was seen as one of the additional purposes of Public Service Media.

#### *What – compelling services and content*

Participants were asked to identify what created compelling services and content within Public Service Media.

Many speakers mentioned a change in citizens' stance to Public Service Media from being passive audience members to more **active, engaged users**. A related theme was of senior decision-makers in government and media organisations not being familiar or comfortable with digital media – **involving younger people in the development of new Public Service Media or in the governance of organisations** was offered as a way of addressing a lack of insight by commissioners and policymakers into new media or its users.

Thus a key characteristic of Public Service Media is '**engagement**', finding ways of grabbing people's attention and involving them. Interactivity such as **participatory content** was mentioned. The power of **wiki-like functionality to engage citizens in politics** was highlighted as has been used in some recent consultations.

The role of personal context – **building public service media around what motivates and interests people** – was flagged as a key factor in creating compelling services and content. This was cited as much more important than looking at technological innovations.

Some discussions highlighted consequences for quality of citizen journalists and **the need for media users to understand the quality attributes of the media they consume** (e.g. editorial guidelines, thoroughness of research etc).

There were some concerns raised by the ability for us all to select the digital media we use and the people we interact with so that we can more strongly than ever before self-select the information we use and experience less 'stumbling upon' things and people not already known to us. **We and the knowledge we hold in our society risk becoming pigeonholed.**

Search – and its ability to help us find what we were looking for and at the same time introduce us to new things – was discussed. **We need to establish an evolving strategy for the relationship between Public Service Media and providers of search.**

#### *What – creating and sharing knowledge and understanding*

This topic introduced the Reithian values of Public Service Broadcasting which were about educating the masses. Today, we have a more pluralistic, some might say democratic, view of knowledge as something that is co-created rather than passed down from on high. Some knowledge is self-knowledge – of who we are, where we have come from as a individual, family, region, nation, or other grouping by race, sexuality, previous nationality, cultural background or linguistic preference. Other knowledge is an appreciation and understanding of others who are different from us. Understanding of people who are different is a prerequisite to peace in the world, the ultimate aim of UNESCO.

The role of Public Service Media in learning reflects the new relationships between learner and teacher. **Technology should be exploited to provide for the many learning journeys for the same knowledge, adapted to individual learning styles.**

**The arts and culture provide common ground for cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration.** Open archives – from the BBC to the British Museum – facilitate new perspectives on cultural histories. Young people may often be more interested in other cultures than their own.

**Knowledge needs to be ‘curated’** to separate knowledge and understanding over opinion and noise. Trust is a major issue mentioned by many and **the skill of being able to identify what are trusted sources is now a key life skill.** The danger of the wisdom of crowds turning into the insanity of the mob needs to be managed through **encouraging the right behaviours and protecting minority views.**

We need to address **digital exclusion from these new knowledge creation and sharing platforms,** especially so as not to exclude older people who retain so much cultural and family knowledge.

If **mutual understanding** is accepted as a goal for Public Service Media, then this is **achieved through conversations** – connecting people and communications.

*How – sourcing and developing skills and talent*

The new Diploma in Creative and Media is a qualification which covers some of the skills required for convergent and public service media. Being able constantly to adapt to changing media and requirements is essential. **Mentoring with businesses is necessary to develop the necessary skillsets. Innovation labs which pull together people from different disciplines are a good way to learn by doing and create new ways of working for convergent media.**

Media skills need to be positioned as **skills for empowerment** – more than vocational skills, but as life skills – across all platforms and interest areas. We need to **broaden the people engaged in using new media** to include gardeners and childcare workers, for example, to use these tools for as yet unconsidered areas of society.

**A frequently undervalued talent in new media was that of the writer** – examples were given of their importance in interactive media generally and games and e-learning, in particular. **The combination of writing, visual and technical skills is rare but invaluable.**

*What – reflecting diversity of language and culture*

The UK is a signatory to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which seeks to strengthen the five inseparable links of the same chain: creation, production, distribution/dissemination, access and enjoyment of cultural expressions, as conveyed by cultural activities, goods and services. UNESCO is the body that leads its creation. Participants were asked to consider the role of Public Service Media in strengthening linguistic and cultural diversity.

Digital media can, and Public Service Media **should, promote cultural understanding and exchange.** Place matters less as geographically dispersed communities can be made around interests, such as sport and music which are increasingly global and collaborative.

Services can be made hyper-local as never before – the challenge remains on how to sustain local media services. **Teaching needs to help young people grasp how physical geography relates to their increasingly virtual and digitally-mediated world.**

**Diversity in media requires diversity in those working in it,** including news management across all platforms. **Recognising the diversity of histories in the UK can allow for the sharing of cultural experiences.** Storytelling is an essential part of the digital mix.

Linguistic diversity makes the world so much richer. Knowledge of foreign languages increases access to culture and history in that language. At the same time, intelligent

translation and search tools can support access for those without language skills. **Social media provide the platform to create shared vocabularies and meanings across cultures and language divides.**

*How – creating sustainable convergent media enterprises*

Participants were encouraged to develop models for sustainable enterprises operating in the convergent media space. These are still being transcribed and more information can be provided in due course.

There was a high degree of consensus that further work needed to be done on the funding and business models for public service media, not just for organisations within the third sector (per recommendation 17 of the Power of Information Review Final Report). It was felt by many that this work should be taken forward under the Digital Britain initiative and models be developed and consulted on with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, such as were represented at the event.

Many participants flagged the need to change users expectations of both online and Public Service Media as being free. In order to create sustainable enterprises to deliver Public Service Media, **the ‘culture of free’ needs to be addressed.**

It was suggested that **small and medium enterprises (SME) and micro talent** produce some of the most innovative and dynamic content and projects. Assisting these players in finding partners and sustainable business models will be important to the growth and success of these significant contributors to the UK's creative industries.

The distinction between producer and public is blurred in Public Service Media. This resulted in various models of co-ownership being floated, where **citizen users are in partnership with those producing** Public Service Media. The model is more dialogue than monologue with **assets being held in trust for the public** by public *and other* bodies, but not owned and controlled by them in the same way that archives have been historically owned and exploited by broadcasters or cultural institutions.