

The Impact of Digital Technology on Documentary Distribution

by

Nicole Marie Nime

A thesis submitted to the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Media Arts
Royal Holloway, University of London

2012

Declaration of Authorship

I, Nicole Marie Nime, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Nicole Marie Nime

Date: 30 May 2012

Abstract

The Internet and digital technologies have created an opportunity for documentaries to find new audiences; however, documentary's capacity to overcome the challenges that the online market presents and achieve sustainability is not yet understood.

This study brings together research in the areas of new media and documentary in order to comprehend and assess the significance of the growing overlap between the two. Focusing on documentary distribution post-2000, in the United States and the United Kingdom, the thesis examines how the online market has influenced both the culture of documentary and the economic structure of the methods used to distribute documentary films. This involves an exploration of the rise of digital media in relation to its impact upon the film industry and a historical review of the changes that have occurred within the documentary marketplace. The core analysis takes the form of a case study approach that sets out to identify trends in documentary distribution and generate insights into the new models that both documentary platforms and filmmakers have employed. What this research suggests is that documentary distribution via the Web requires a new framework for thinking about how films reach audiences and generate revenues. In particular, it indicates how audience engagement from the onset of production can help documentaries overcome challenges in the online market. In line with participatory media trends, the research confirms that distribution has become more than just a mechanism for content dissemination and that, in the digital age, distribution has developed as a social phenomenon, which expands through ongoing public involvement and innovation. However, the research also indicates that alternative distribution strategies that rely upon leveraging communities must be uniquely adapted to each project and its particular core audiences. This means that there is no singular, overarching theory or replicable model that characterises the online distribution process for documentary films. Thus, the thesis adds to our knowledge of the diverse ways in which documentary has inhabited the social space offered by new media while anchoring existing theories of 'social media' within specific contexts.

Acknowledgements

Preparing this thesis has been a monumental task and I owe my gratitude to many people who have helped me through this process. The following individuals and institutions deserve a special mention and my deepest appreciation for their help and guidance.

My supervisors, John Hill and Victoria Mapplebeck, have been my pillars of support. John's wisdom has guided me through the pitfalls of this research while Victoria's enthusiasm has instilled in me the confidence to persevere through the challenges. My meetings with them were always enjoyable – thanks to their shared good humour and kind approach to delivering criticism. Working under their expert supervision has been an unforgettable learning experience and a privilege.

Thank you to everyone at the Department of Media Arts at Royal Holloway for contributing to my learning, with special thanks to John Ellis who offered me the rewarding opportunity to guest lecture on one of his undergraduate courses. I am extremely grateful for the financial support of the Thomas Holloway Scholarship as it was, without a doubt, what made it possible for me to come study in the UK. The additional funding the Research Committee offered to help with my travel expenses invaluable contributed to my field research.

I also would like to thank the University of London's Central Research Fund for providing me with a generous travel allowance to attend Sheffield Doc/Fest and the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in 2008. My experiences at these events have been critical to my studies and have led me to meet so many inspiring filmmakers and industry professionals that it is impossible, in this short space, to list them all.

In particular, my thanks are due to the DocAgora team: Amit Breuer, Cameron Hickey, Neil Seiling, and Peter Wintonick. My conversation with Neil at Hot Docs proved to be a pivotal moment. I felt instantly welcomed into the club and have benefitted greatly from collaborating with this remarkable group of 'docmedia' specialists.

Additionally, I am indebted to Liz Rosenthal for the opportunity she has given me to work with her and the amazing team at Power to the Pixel. The people I have met through this organisation have inspired my research in immeasurable ways and my experiences at the London Forum over the past five years have been deeply rewarding.

I must acknowledge that I might not have developed an interest in this topic if it had not been for Peter Broderick. I am grateful to Peter for offering me my first permanent job when I moved to Hollywood. Working alongside him gave me unique insight into the distribution process and opened many doors of opportunity, including the chance to work at Breakthrough Distribution with Jeff Rosen, to whom I am also indebted.

I cannot forget to thank my family, including my brother, my sister, and a couple of great-uncles who were particularly supportive. My deepest appreciation is due to my wonderful parents, Wanda and Ed Nime. They have been a constant source of love and encouragement from day one. Their supreme belief in me has inspired me to pursue my dreams and earn my PhD.

Finally, to my husband, Johann Bazzali – I dedicate this thesis to you.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Table of Contents	6
List of Tables	9
List of Figures	10
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
1.1 Researching Documentary Distribution	11
1.1.1 The Distribution Dilemma	11
1.1.2 Defining Documentary	13
1.1.3 Industry Insights	16
1.2 Theoretical Perspectives	22
1.2.1 New Media and Network Ideology	22
1.2.2 Economic Paradigms	26
1.2.3 Digital Culture Debates	32
1.3 Research Investigation	37
1.3.1 Research Aims	37
1.3.2 Boundaries and Scope	39
1.3.3 Overview of Chapters	42
Chapter 2: Methodology	48
2.1 Introduction	48
2.2 Research Strategies and Design	50
2.2.1 Inherent Challenges	50
2.2.2 Quantitative Research	54
2.2.3 Qualitative Research	56
2.2.4 Desk Research	58
2.2.5 Field Research	61
2.2.6 Action Research	65
2.2.7 Case Studies	67
2.3 Conclusion	72
Chapter 3: The Digital Revolution	74
3.1 The Age of Independence	74
3.1.1 The New Digital Order	74
3.1.2 The Advent of Affordable Filmmaking	75
3.1.3 The Rise of Social Networks	81
3.2 The Move Towards On-Demand	85
3.2.1 The History of Home Video	85
3.2.2 Shifting Release Windows	91
3.2.3 Digital Projection	97
3.2.4 Everything Online and On-Demand	100
3.3 Conclusion	104

Chapter 4: The Documentary Market	109
4.1 Documentary's Situation in the Marketplace	109
4.1.1 Niche Appeal	109
4.1.2 The Origins of the Industry	111
4.1.3 Market Expansion	118
4.2 Documentary in Public Spaces	127
4.2.1 A Golden Age on the Silver Screen	127
4.2.2 The Appeal of Non-Theatrical for Nonfiction Films	135
4.2.3 Festivals as Platforms for Distribution	140
4.3 Developing Industry Trends	146
4.3.1 Exploiting the Educational Market	146
4.3.2 Hope for Home Video Online	150
4.3.3 Broadcast in a Cross-Platform Context	155
4.3.4 Cross-Platform Challenges	158
4.4 Emerging Distribution Models	164
4.4.1 Direct and Hybrid Approaches	164
4.4.2 Reaching and Engaging Communities	170
4.5 Conclusion	181
Chapter 5: Distribution Platforms	186
5.1 Introduction	186
5.2 FourDocs: Channel 4's Forgotten Failure	188
5.2.1 Channel 4's Documentary Tradition	188
5.2.2 Commercial Changes and Challenges	191
5.2.3 The Critical Masses	196
5.3 Current TV: Democratised and Commercialised	201
5.3.1 A Current Approach to Documentary and TV	201
5.3.2 Current Content Challenges	204
5.3.3 The Current Reality	209
5.4 SnagFilms: User-Distributed Documentary	213
5.4.1 Designed to Embed and Spread	213
5.4.2 The Value of Filmanthropy	219
5.4.3 The Limits of Snag	225
5.5 VODO: Making Piracy Pay	228
5.5.1 The Potential of Piracy	228
5.5.2 A Free-For-All Film	231
5.5.3 From Pirate to Patron?	233
5.6 Conclusion	238
Chapter 6: Films and Filmmakers	240
6.1 Introduction	240
6.2 Robert Greenwald: Distribution Without Distributors	242
6.2.1 Greenwald's Brave New Idea	242
6.2.2 Guerrilla Freedoms and Grassroots Distribution	246
6.2.3 Challenges for Greenwald's Model	249

6.3	<i>The Age of Stupid: Campaigning Through Crowdfunding</i>	255
6.3.1	Independent Origins	255
6.3.2	A Collaborative Effort	258
6.3.3	Carrying on the Campaign	266
6.4	<i>Life in a Day: YouTube's Audience Activity</i>	270
6.4.1	Big Players, Big Platform	270
6.4.2	Inspiring the Masses	273
6.4.3	A Global Distribution Solution	276
6.5	Conclusion	280
Chapter 7: Documentary Distribution in the Digital Age		283
7.1	Distribution as a Social Phenomenon	283
7.2	The Changing Role of Distributors	287
7.3	The Challenge to the Filmmaker	290
7.4	The Influence of Active Audiences	294
7.5	The Economics of Documentary	296
7.6	Conclusion	299
Chapter 8: Conclusion		302
8.1	Research Review	302
8.2	The Value of Distribution Knowledge	307
8.3	Documentary Changes and Challenges	310
8.4	Directions for Further Research	312
8.5	Closing Thoughts	314
Reference List		316
	Works Cited	316
	Films and TV/Web Programmes	337
	Websites	344
Appendix A: The DocAgora WebPlex		347
A.1	Introduction	347
A.2	Partnership Support	350
A.3	Goals for the WebPlex	351
A.4	Research Methods	353
A.4.1	Initial Design and Development	353
A.4.2	Key Features	359
A.4.3	Outreach and Response	361
A.5	Barriers to Success	364
A.6	Conclusion	367
A.7	References	368
Appendix B: Box Office Source Data		369
Appendix C: Field Research		385

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Key Distribution Sessions Attended at Industry Events	53
Table 2.2	Key Data Sources for Case Studies	71
Table 3.1	The Windows System for Studio Films	91
Table 4.1	Top Grossing Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 1990 to 2010	129
Table 4.2	Top 20 Theatrical Distributors of Documentary Films in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010	131
Table 4.3	Number of Documentary Films Released in UK Theatres, 2005 to 2010	135
Table 4.4	Box Office Market Share for Documentaries Released in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010	136
Table 4.5	Estimated Number of Documentaries Released Worldwide, 2000 to 2010	136
Table 4.6	Sundance Films Listed in Top 50 Grossing Documentary Films Released in US Theatres	144
Table B.1	Documentary Films Grossing at Least \$1 Million at the US Box Office, 1990 to 2010	369
Table B.3	Documentary Films Released in US Theaters, 1990 to 2010	372
Table C.1	List of Field Research Events	385
Table C.2	Key Qualitative Interviews	400

List of Figures

Figure 4.1	The Windows System for Documentary Films	127
Figure 4.2	Number of Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 1990 to 2010	129
Figure 4.3	Revenue for Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010	138
Figure 4.4	Average Maximum Number of Weekly Engagements for Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010	138
Figure 5.1	FourDocs Website from 2005 to 2007	192
Figure 5.2	FourDocs Website from 2008 to 2009	193
Figure 5.3	4Docs Website in 2010	198
Figure 5.4	Current Website in 2005	203
Figure 5.5	Current Website in 2006	205
Figure 5.6	Current Website in 2007	205
Figure 5.7	Current Website in 2008	206
Figure 5.8	Current Website in 2010	206
Figure 5.9	Current Website in 2011	209
Figure 5.10	SnagFilms Virtual Movie Theater	215
Figure 5.11	SnagFilms Film Page (Sample)	217
Figure 5.12	SnagFilms Homepage	218
Figure 5.13	SnagLearning Film Page (Sample)	224
Figure 5.14	SnagLearning Homepage	225
Figure 6.1	<i>The Age of Stupid</i> Crowdfunding Reward Scheme	260
Figure 6.2	<i>The Age of Stupid</i> Cash-Ometers	260
Figure 6.3	<i>Life in a Day</i> Video Explorer	276
Figure 6.4	<i>One Day on Earth</i> Video Archive	278
Figure A.1	WebPlex Login Page	354
Figure A.3	DocAgora WebPlex Homepage	359
Figure A.4	WebPlex Rating Feature (Sample)	360

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

You cannot solve a problem from the same consciousness that created it.
You must learn to see the world anew. — Albert Einstein

1.1 Researching Documentary Distribution

1.1.1 The Distribution Dilemma

Documentary has fallen into a period of crisis. It also has embarked upon an era of growth. The digital age has engendered this paradox. The Internet has opened new avenues of exhibition, causing mainstream media institutions, which traditionally have monopolised access to audiences, to progressively lose control of their most valuable assets. It also has created the opportunity for filmmakers to instantly distribute their work to global audiences and develop direct relationships with these individuals. Essentially, the Internet has challenged the long-established function and value of traditional distributors by making distribution cheap, easy, and personal. Although the Internet has generated many opportunities for documentary filmmakers who have the necessary skills to exploit its networks, it has not functioned as a panacea for all long-standing distribution challenges. In fact, the Internet has created an entirely new set of distribution challenges, which require a new mindset, and skill set, to overcome. Generating revenue from any single documentary in the ever-growing online catalogue of content is virtually impossible without having an innovative plan for audience engagement and the resources of a well-networked distributor. Profit is a tough pursuit and does not come from simply putting content online. Promotion is essential. Such challenges have made it difficult for documentary to demonstrate its potential to generate sustainable revenue growth in the online market. The crisis for documentary extends across traditional outlets as well. The recent evidence of financial growth at the box office has been

largely misleading, obscuring the reality that few documentaries have succeeded in this market. In the television market, which has effectively sustained the nonfiction film industry, documentary has fallen into decline due to public service broadcasters' budget cuts and growing pressure to cater to commercial interests. Although online distribution has created opportunities, documentary's economic viability in this market remains largely in question. Ultimately, documentary not only has experienced a crisis of economics, but it also has experienced a crisis of change, which has driven forward-thinking filmmakers and distributors to innovate in an effort to uncover distribution models that work in the context of the Web.

These changes happening in documentary have augmented the need for academic inquiry into distribution. Studies of documentary have rarely considered questions of economics or what impact digital technologies and the Internet have had upon documentary's capacity to reach audiences. In order to advance research in this field, it has been necessary to expand academia's restricted gaze on documentary film texts and bring into view documentary's political economy. By moving beyond discussions of ideology and form and examining the unexplored intersection between documentary distribution and digital technology, this research has introduced a new set of debates about documentary that focuses on the developing economics and culture of documentary on the Web. The Web's capacity to provide access to global audiences has fostered the need to uncover new distribution models that enable documentary to generate attention and revenues and, ultimately, achieve sustainability in the converging marketplace. As documentaries become more commercially oriented, it becomes increasingly important to examine their modes of distribution and consider how they might be successfully exploited, both within and outside the established industry systems. This chapter begins by defining documentary, then carries on to review relevant literature, before detailing the research aims, scope, and structure of this thesis. This research uniquely positions documentary distribution within the society that supports it, suggesting that distribution should be understood as more than a fixed mechanical operation of delivering content to consumers and instead recognised as

an evolving social process, which thrives through consumer involvement in project funding, development, and promotion. Although it is commonly recognised that digital technology and the Internet have fostered participatory culture, understanding how this development has impacted documentary has required moving beyond exploring general theoretical claims and instead focusing on examining specific evidence. Ultimately, this approach has revealed that distribution becomes, in essence, a 'cause' that people support when it is carried out through the active involvement of a community – comprised of distributors, filmmakers, and audiences.

1.1.2 Defining Documentary

In order to begin this exploration of documentary distribution, some consideration had to be given to the meaning of 'documentary'. When John Grierson first applied the word 'documentary' to Robert Flaherty's film *Moana* (1926), he spoke of the film's 'documentary value', using the word as an adjective rather than a noun or term of classification. Within a few years, Grierson began using the word to describe the product of nonfiction filmmaking and assigned it his landmark definition of 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Chanan 2007a: 27). Somewhat of a paradox, Grierson's definition implies that documentary is more than just the raw footage gathered in the field – it demands some amount of creative assembly in order to merit its name. Like any art form, documentary requires authorship. Its 'authored' quality is what carries documentary beyond the realm of news coverage and allows it to have cinematic appeal. Although many practitioners and scholars have made efforts to define documentary, Grierson's description remains one of the most popular and enduring, applying to a wide range of works, from the films of Humphrey Jennings to those of Michael Moore. Another important characteristic of documentary, which Grierson observed, is its general lack of commercial value. Documentary has often relied upon sponsorship, which has linked it to the ideas of education, propaganda, and social reform. According to Grierson, 'documentary was developed on the thought that it was not there necessarily for entertainment.

Occasionally it has been in the entertainment business but only incidentally' (Sussex and Grierson 1972: 26). Ultimately, documentary's development as a non-commercial property has challenged its sustainability and reinforced the notion that documentaries are not entertainment, in the conventional sense of the word.

Documentary is a complex genre. So complex, in fact, that it may not merit being called a genre. If fiction is not considered a genre, then why should nonfiction, or documentary, be? In truth, documentary is so widely encompassing that the term 'genre' may too narrowly define it. Paul Arthur (2005: 20) argues that, rather than considering documentary a genre, 'a more sensible approach would describe it as a mode of production, a network of funding, filming, postproduction, and exhibition tendencies common to work normally indexed as "documentary"'. Although Arthur's interpretation of 'documentary' arguably offers a more accurate understanding of it, many scholars choose to study nonfiction filmmaking within the framework of a genre. Bill Nichols writes, 'we can consider documentary a genre like the western or the science-fiction film' (2010: 21). Alan Rosenthal and John Corner devote an entire section in the book they co-edited, *New Challenges for Documentary* (2005), to exploring 'Documentary as Genre'. Because documentary is commonly classified as a genre, it makes sense to refer to it as such. However, accepting documentary as a genre is much easier than defining it as one. Barry Langford, in his book *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond* (2005), suggests that 'documentary is on the face of it inherently anti-generic'. He bases his observation on the fact that reality does not harbour generic forms. Therefore, as Langford argues, 'true' documentary must aspire to a status 'beyond genre' (Ibid.: 258). Langford asserts that all documentaries could never fit within the traditional boundaries that define the genre because it is impossible, or at least inaccurate, to generalise the full gambit of characteristics that documentaries exhibit. Because documentary can span a broad range of narrative possibilities and has no singular agreed definition, interpretation of its genre characteristics tends to hinge almost exclusively on the belief that documentary must capture, in essence, real life. Nichols explains that the challenge in defining 'documentary' comes from the fact

that ‘the definition of “documentary” is always relational or comparative’ and suggests that documentary is largely understood by contrasting it with what it is not – fiction, experimental, or avant-garde filmmaking (2001: 20). Outside of those boundaries, documentaries can literally be about anything. Even films with fictional components and strongly subjective viewpoints (including all of Michael Moore’s nonfiction features) can be unquestionably defined as documentary, as long as they predominantly reflect reality. More importantly, what makes heavily fictionalised films, such as *The Age of Stupid* (2009), qualify as documentary is, quite simply, public agreement. The idea that a film is a documentary when the majority of people regard it as such echoes Andrew Tudor’s description of genre as ‘what we collectively believe it to be’ (1974: 139). All genres, including documentary, are difficult to define. All genres, including documentary, are what people collectively believe them to be.

Tudor’s definition of genre has served as a good basis for defining documentary in the context of this research. As documentaries have adopted more fluid and diverse structures, expanding onto new platforms and extending in new narrative directions, public agreement about what documentary *is* has necessarily changed. Jane Chapman concurs, ‘Today documentary is so diverse and diffuse that the genre is hard to define’ (2009: 8). David Hogarth suggests there is a need for ‘a flexible definition of documentary to suit the social, cultural, economic, and technological circumstances in which it now operates’ (2006: 14). According to Stella Bruzzi, there has been a return to a ‘more fluid definition of documentary’ (2006: 5). Following this trend, I have decided that any content widely classified as documentary is, without question, documentary. Although there have been challenges to this rule – for example, *I’m Still Here* (2010) was widely referred to as a documentary before it was revealed that its main subject, Joaquin Phoenix, was acting his part – in general, trade publications such as *Variety* and *Screen International*, networks such as Channel 4 and Current TV, and websites such as IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes, use the term in ways that match public perception. If the public recognises content as documentary, then it makes sense to consider it as

such. Dirk Eitzen concurs that accepting public consensus is simply the ‘best way to define documentary’; yet in making this claim he also mentions the major fault in such a definition, which is: ‘saying that documentaries are whatever people commonly take them to be tells us nothing at all about what, specifically, people commonly *do* take them to be’ (1995: 83). My oversimplification of this complex debate is not to declare that this approach is the *right* way to define documentary; rather, it suggests that belabouring the question of what constitutes documentary, in an effort to narrow its inherently vast scope, serves little function in my exploration of how documentaries are distributed in the digital age. Since many documentaries now have cross-media elements that extend beyond the feature format, films are increasingly defined not only by their content but also by the means through which audiences receive and interact with that content. Consequently, understanding how distribution works for documentary is now as important as analysing the content contained in its form. As the mediums and technologies employed to display and deliver documentary have expanded, so have the boundaries by which the genre is defined. Adopting a fluid definition in this research has been a useful way to avoid perpetuating the ongoing debate about the meaning of documentary, which has already been considered at length by both practitioners (e.g. Grierson 1966, Vertov 1984) and theorists (e.g. Nichols 1991, Renov 1993).

1.1.3 Industry Insights

Many scholars have written about documentary, yet very few have considered its modes of distribution. The vast majority of literature has focused on aesthetic, textual, or political aspects of documentary and ignored critical economic questions, which can help explain its niche status. Highly influential in the field, Bill Nichols has done much to help theorise documentary, particularly in his books *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (1991) and *Introduction to Documentary* (2001, 2010), but his focus has remained almost entirely on documentary texts and history, with little consideration for what role distribution methods play in determining the economic success and cultural significance of nonfiction films. Alan

Rosenthal offers a rare early ‘industry’ perspective in his book, *The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making* (1972), which mentions aspects of distribution within its case studies. Yet Rosenthal’s observations are dated and do not build to a theoretical understanding of distribution. Other researchers in this field who have considered the topic of distribution – such as Keith Beattie (2004, 2008), Stella Bruzzi (2006), Michael Chanan (2007b), and Jane Chapman (2007, 2009) – have primarily referenced it anecdotally and have rarely ventured beyond discussions of the broadcast market. Acknowledging themes that are central to thesis, Jane Chapman’s book *Issues in Contemporary Documentary* mentions how ‘the balance of power between filmmakers and audiences is changing’; however, by her own admission, she does not ‘engage in a general study of the impact of the Internet and the digital revolution on documentary’ (2009: 3). Instead, Chapman examines ‘contemporary documentary’ in a rather classic manner, investigating ‘how far these aspects of change, important and dramatic as they are, impact upon the issues that are traditionally addressed in documentary studies’ (Ibid.). Although she does evidence recent films and suggest how digital technology has affected key issues, such as ‘truth’ and ‘ethics’, Chapman does not consider distribution in her theoretical conclusions. Giving more attention to the topic, Thomas Austin and Wilma de Jong’s *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices* (2008) presents essays from four different authors in a section entitled ‘Digital and Online Documentary: Opportunities and Limitations’. Although these chapters explore the impact convergence has had upon documentary, they do not focus on the central question of documentary’s economic sustainability in the online market. While some other documentary texts, such as Richard M. Barsam’s *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (1992), Erik Barnouw’s *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (1993), and Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane’s *A New History of Documentary Film* (2006), highlight aspects of documentary distribution in their historical accounts, they have left many gaps to fill, particularly with regard to the emerging online market. These texts have been essential resources in the historical overview of documentary distribution included in Chapter 4, but they have not provided support for the

debates about documentary economics and culture on the Web, which new media literature has more effectively informed (see Section 1.2). Prior to this research, very little knowledge about distribution had been established within the field of documentary studies.

Although no academic text has been published on the expansion of documentaries on the Web, Thomas Austin's *Watching the World: Screen Documentary and Audiences* (2007) has given some consideration to the expansion of documentaries in the cinema. The bulk of Austin's book is built upon the case studies of 'classic' documentary films, which include *Etre et avoir* (2002), *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003), and *Touching the Void* (2003). With a primary interest in documentary audiences, Austin uses questionnaires to conduct qualitative analysis of viewers' responses to these films and considers how this data relates to the specific film text and wider theoretical debates. In the process of developing his arguments, Austin provides some discussion of marketing methods and what motivated audiences to go see these three films, yet his emphasis on viewer sentiment, rather than release strategies, prevents him from developing a theoretical perspective on documentary distribution. Austin largely overlooks the political economy of screen documentary, except in the first chapter, which explores 'Continuity and change: the documentary boom' (Ibid.: 12-33). Particularly relevant to my research topic, this chapter provides general insight into the recent growth of the documentary market. Austin observes that the 'boom' began circa 2003 to 2004 and that it happened both in the US and UK. He also notes that American documentaries were typically the strongest financial performers (Ibid.: 12-13). Although Austin (Ibid.: 17) writes, 'Distribution and exhibition strategies are crucial in connecting filmmakers and audiences, and they have to be scrutinised in order to gain a clearer picture of the boom', he does not make it his mission to explore this critical area of research, beyond the general overview he constructs in this chapter. Nevertheless, Austin's text has informed this research by highlighting the need to better understand the changes that have taken place in the documentary market by answering key questions, such as: can documentary sustain economic success in the

theatrical market, how has the Internet contributed to the apparent growth in the documentary market, and what cultural effects have accompanied documentary's expansion onto the Web? Ultimately, *Watching the World* is noteworthy because it unconventionally examined documentary outside the boundaries of broadcast; however, its narrow and theoretical focus on documentary audiences, rather than distribution methods, has suggested the need for further exploration of how the market for documentaries has changed as a result of the Web and what impact this has had upon the economics and culture of documentary.

Amy Hardie has also explored the topic of documentary audiences through the Docspace initiative she established in 2000. Gathering data between 2002 and 2007 (in the UK, the Netherlands, Spain, and Austria), Hardie sought to answer the question: who are the documentary audience? (2002a, 2008). Her research explored audience demographics and sentiment towards documentary, in an effort to demonstrate the existence of 'an untapped audience for documentaries on the big screen'. Hardie's use of an 'inclusive definition of documentary', which declares that 'anything that wants to call itself a documentary is a documentary', reinforced the decision to adopt such a definition in this research (2002a: 9). The findings of Hardie's study largely support the assertion that there is an 'untapped audience' and suggest that this audience is comprised of people who chose to watch documentaries in the cinema based on their 'subject matter'. This critical insight indicates that documentary audiences are, overall, very diverse. Yet, for any given film, audience members share a common interest in that film's topic. This quality gives documentaries 'core audiences', which differ from general audiences because of their ability to be targeted.¹ Kees Ryninks, whose work with the Netherlands Film Fund informed Hardie's research, suggests, 'The subject matter is to documentaries what a movie star is to feature films' (2006: 5). Hardie's conclusion that people choose to see documentaries due to their interest in the topic supports the idea that

¹ The term 'core audience' was popularised by Peter Broderick (2004) in his early discussions of hybrid distribution.

documentary's niche qualities offer it a 'subject' advantage, which most independent fiction films lack. Essentially, documentaries have the potential to have strong appeal, but only to limited audiences — those with a shared specific interest. The Internet has provided the means to identify and reach these widespread audiences efficiently. Reflecting upon documentary, Hardie (2002a: 5) observed that '[d]igital technology and e-cinema are beginning to make it possible to rethink the ways in which these films reach their audience.' A decade later, digital technology has revolutionised the process of distribution so profoundly that it is not just 'possible' but now 'essential' to consider how documentaries reach their audiences.

Outside of documentary studies, research that examines the political economy of the film industry has been somewhat easier to find. However, most of the literature published focuses on Hollywood, with little attention given to independent films and virtually nothing specifically pertaining to (or even mentioning) documentaries. Some post-digital texts that contribute useful industry insights include: Frederick Wasser's *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR* (2001), which provides a narrow, but in-depth, analysis of the videocassette recorder's impact upon the film industry; Barbara Klinger's *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (2006), which offers an analysis of audience engagement with home entertainment formats and systems; Paul McDonald's *Video and DVD Industries* (2007), which adopts a rare industrial perspective on how the video formats of VHS and DVD have impacted upon the global markets; and *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (2008), edited by Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko, which presents essays on aspects of studio film distribution that include discussions of emerging ancillary markets and intellectual property debates. Additionally, two very recent texts that consider industry issues from the angle of independents are: Angus Finney's *The International Film Business: A Market Guide Beyond Hollywood* (2010), which addresses a wide gap in research by investigating emerging distribution methods for independent films, and Finola Kerrigan's *Film Marketing* (2010), which extends beyond the traditional Hollywood debates about marketing to consider how independent filmmakers are competing for attention in

the online marketplace. Kerrigan's discussion of how DIY (Do It Yourself) filmmakers 'are finding ways to build up international audiences for their films' gives much needed academic consideration to an often overlooked group within the film industry (Ibid.: 54). Most notably, in Chapter 10, entitled 'The Impact of Technology on Film Marketing', Kerrigan addresses a range of topics relevant to this research, including: convergence, piracy, and social media (Ibid.: 193-209). Here, she considers the 'new breed of filmmaker/marketers' – individuals who maintain an 'authentic nature' and involve audiences in their work, in an effort to uncover new ways to create 'sustainable filmmaking' (Ibid.: 208-09). Many of the documentary filmmakers I have met with and referred to in my research are part of this new breed, which demonstrates the changing value and demands of being 'independent'. Although they offer little discussion of documentary, these industry texts have been particularly informative in my investigation of the digital revolution, covered in Chapter 3. Researching the political economy of the film industry has revealed that documentary maintains a marginal position within the wider media marketplace; concurrently, it has also revealed that literature about distribution has rarely included documentary in its discussions. Consequently, there is a need to develop knowledge in this space.

As the politics of film distribution play a vital role in determining what films people watch, it is quite surprising how few film scholars have considered, or even mentioned, the distribution process in their analyses. Michael Quinn (2001: 51) suggests that, although exhibition and reception have gained 'a great deal of attention' from historians, the area of distribution has been 'seriously underresearched'. Research that explores how film distribution has developed within the industry could have, as Quinn acknowledges, 'the potential to revise, if not transform, some widely held beliefs in cinema studies' (Ibid.). Similarly, Raymon Lobato argues that the focus on textual analysis within film scholarship has left an enormous gap in studies of 'distribution and circulation' (2007: 114-17). The recent expansion of digital technologies has augmented the need to develop knowledge in the area of distribution. Prior to digital and online developments, distribution had

limited theoretical significance. As films were completed prior to their entry into the marketplace, the primary functions of distribution, to reach audiences and generate revenues, were seen to have little connection to film form, content, or meaning. However, in the digital age, distribution has become part of the creative process, demanding consideration and planning from the onset of development, which has allowed public engagement to happen at a much earlier stage. In an online context, distribution can literally determine the shape of films and how audiences view them. The network technology of the Web, which delivers content to individuals on-demand, has inspired a greater level of user-engagement than has previously been possible through traditional modes of distribution. As a consequence, distribution has become an increasingly 'social' process, which happens through person-to-person sharing and ongoing exchanges between content creators and consumers. Ultimately, understanding how documentaries are distributed online, and how they are able to use the Web to engage audiences, is as important as understanding the styles, structures, and themes apparent in their linear forms.

1.2 Theoretical Perspectives

1.2.1 New Media and Network Ideology

The theoretical foundations of new media were laid out decades before the rise of digital technology and the Internet, in the writings of pre-digital visionaries, such as Marshall McLuhan and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who anticipated various forms of global networking and digital culture. In his seminal work, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), McLuhan declared, 'The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village' (Ibid.: 31). Although hyperbolic at the time, McLuhan's characterisation of a 'global village', united through electronic technology and the widespread sharing of information, has become a fitting metaphor for the digital culture that has developed on the World Wide Web. McLuhan's suggestion that society was moving away from an

individualistic culture (brought about by print media) and reconfiguring into a 'tribal' culture (brought about by electronic media) is an idea that has been echoed and expanded upon by recent digital thinkers (i.e. Jenkins 2006, Shirky 2008). McLuhan developed his theories of media further in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), which, as the title suggests, argued that media are 'extensions of man', offering new capabilities that shape both individuals and society. In this context, all media are social media (albeit of varying degrees), calling for user participation and the spread of information. Expanding upon this idea, McLuhan defined media as either 'hot' (enhancing one sense and requiring low levels of participation) or 'cool' (enhancing multiple senses and requiring high amounts of participation), categorising media as such based on their levels of definition (or resolution) and how easily they are understood. By considering media on the basis of user involvement, McLuhan anticipated the rise of interactive media.

Some theorists, including Raymond Williams (1974: 129-32) and Hans Mangus Enzensberger (1982: 67), have criticised McLuhan for adhering to technological determinism by failing to consider the cultural, political, or social context in which media develops. Because new media do not dictate how they are put to use, nor do they automatically lead to certain developments, technological determinism's validity as a theory has been widely disregarded. Enzensberger wrote in his article 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media', first published in 1970, that '[a]nyone who expects to be emancipated by technological hardware, or by a system of hardware however structured, is the victim of an obscure belief in progress' (1982: 58). Enzensberger rightfully recognised that electronic media's 'mobilizing power' does not come from the media technology itself, but from those who use it (Ibid.: 47). The theory outlined in this article, which suggested that '[t]he contradiction between producers and consumers is not inherent in the electronic media' (Ibid.: 59), laid the groundwork for later debates about convergence and participatory media. In recognising how electronic media allow for 'mass participation in a social and socialized productive process' (Ibid.: 48), Enzensberger seemingly predicted the kind of open forum of public discourse that has appeared on the Web. As

Enzensberger suggested, the more people use electronic media, the less power the 'bourgeoisie' has to censor them (Ibid.: 51). Ultimately, McLuhan and Enzensberger's early theoretical writings, which anticipated the restructuring of the mass media and the development of participatory culture, have set up the arguments about digital media that later theorists have developed and this study has tested.

'New media' is a term often used to describe digital content, which exists in malleable and non-tangible formats and travels through the space of the Web. Lev Manovich, one of the first scholars to extensively theorise new media, effectively delineated the field when he published his influential work, *The Language of New Media* (2001). In this text, Manovich defines what constitutes new media as: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding. Collectively, these properties characterise computer-mediated content, which is essentially what the term 'new media' refers to within the pages of this thesis. Unlike McLuhan, who saw media as extensions of man, Manovich saw media as extensions of other media, logically evolving from one to another. Recognising a new era in communication, Manovich observed, 'We are in the middle of a new media revolution – the shift of all of our culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication' (Ibid.: 43). A somewhat overstated observation in 2001, just one decade later, Manovich's claim stands well-supported by the rise of the digital revolution (see Chapter 3). Manovich emphasised his point, arguing that the new media revolution is remarkable not only because it has affected all stages of the communication process, from acquisition to manipulation to distribution and storage, but also because it has affected all types of media – text, sound, still images, moving images, etc. (Ibid.). Essentially, computers have united all separate forms of old media, so that the various recording and playing platforms (typewriter, radio, tape recorder, television) can all be replaced by one or a series of applications within the computer. New media's numeric coding gives them fundamentally different properties from old media, allowing for near infinite ways to manipulate the series of 1s and 0s that represent a digital artifact and alter its

form. New media are also stored and indexed within relational databases, allowing users to easily navigate and search content, potentially averting a linear approach to viewing. Because of the advanced collaboration and realtime tools offered by the Internet, users can now provide feedback and work virtually with each other on projects of common interest. These relatively recent developments have established higher levels of audience interaction around media projects, which have, in turn, facilitated the growth of participatory culture. Manovich acknowledges this trend, writing, 'as we shift from industrial society to information society, from old media to new media, the overlapping between producers and users becomes much larger' (Ibid.: 119). As more people participate in the exchange of new media, the boundaries between filmmakers and audiences become less obvious. This study builds upon the themes evident in Manovich's work by considering how the development of new media has allowed for greater participation in documentary and how the economics and culture of documentary have changed as a consequence.

Now that media products can be exchanged virtually, via computers, information is often as valuable as physical goods. In his book, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (1973), Daniel Bell anticipated that society would abandon its industrial focus to become increasingly organised around the exchange of information and services. Digital technologies and the Internet have facilitated the arrival of the 'post-industrial' era for the media industries. New media have proven to be malleable and have reinforced the development of a culture oriented around services rather than products. Because new media are highly accessible and frequently open to participation, they are commonly linked to the principles of free access (see Section 1.2.2) and democratisation (see Section 1.2.3). As Chapter 3 discusses, digital technology has offered widespread access to tools that allow people to create and disseminate high-quality content, while the Internet has provided the means for an unlimited choice of content to be made instantly available anywhere in the wired world. How far this content can spread depends on the strength and openness of the networks that form the basis of the World Wide Web. Reinforcing this idea and furthering post-industrial debates, Manuel Castells

published a trilogy between 1996 and 1998 called *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, in which he suggested that since information and knowledge have always been central to societies, the real breakthrough for modern culture has been the development of networks. Castells (Ibid., 2001, 2005) has written extensively on what he calls 'the network society' and argued that networks have enabled informationalism to replace and subsume industrialism. The flows of information within this 'social structure' are largely controlled by the bonds between individuals, which ultimately determine the overall effectiveness of the networks. Essentially, networks are powered by interpersonal communications, which facilitate the spread of information from one individual to another, around the world. Castells (2005: 8) has characterised 'the network society' as 'a new, efficient form of organization of production, distribution, and management that is at the source of the substantial increase in the rate of productivity growth in the United States, and in other economies that adopted these new forms of economic organization'. Having no geographical limitation, the network society has allowed for the expansion of a global economy (2001: 168). Eliminating the overhead of physically manufactured and transported goods, the Internet's digital delivery platforms have offered cost-effective means to promote media products and sell into worldwide markets. Consequently, distributors have been able to use the Web to solicit and spread documentaries (see Chapter 5) and filmmakers have been able to use it to fund and develop documentaries (see Chapter 6). By facilitating these kind of activities, online networks have allowed distribution to become increasingly social and service-oriented, which has, in turn, created the need to develop new business models for documentary in this context.

1.2.2 Economic Paradigms

The Internet has had dramatic effects on how the film industry operates, yet the field of film studies has largely failed to consider this development in its theoretical debates. As the Internet has developed 'as a technology, medium, and social space', academic response to this phenomenon has lagged behind (Cavanagh 2007: 1). The

relative lack of academic writing on new media topics has created an opportunity for popular digital thinkers, who publish their ideas on blogs and in bestsellers, to gain credit for advancing theory in this field. As these writers, some of whom I discuss in this chapter, write for the mainstream market, they often adopt a familiar voice and express evangelical perspectives. Despite their zeal, their insights about the economic and cultural effects of the Internet and digital media have greatly aided in the development of an appropriate theoretical framework for this research. Kevin Kelly, who co-founded *Wired* magazine in 1993, wrote an insightful book called *New Rules for the New Economy: 10 Radical Strategies for a Connected World* (1999), which argues that 'communication is the economy' (Ibid.: 5). The distribution of digital media is one form of communication, which fuels this new economy. According to Kelly, 'This new economy has three distinguishing characteristics: It is global. It favors intangible things – ideas, information, and relationships. And it is intensely interlinked. These three attributes produce a new type of marketplace and society, one that is rooted in ubiquitous electronic networks' (Ibid.: 2). There is space for documentary in this new economy, but its value, as Kelly implies, is largely dependent upon how much communication it generates. The more connected a documentary film becomes within this global network system, and the more discussions it fosters, the greater potential it has to generate revenue and compete in the commercial markets. While commercial agendas have never been a fundamental part of the documentary tradition (as they have been, for example, in Hollywood), the growing need to find new sources of funding and new outlets for distribution has driven filmmakers to explore the Web in search of alternative, sustainable solutions. Ongoing communication forms the basis of these new models, strengthening the link between filmmakers and their audiences.

By eliminating the barriers that once blocked distribution, digital technology and the Internet have enabled essentially everything to become available to everyone anywhere in the world. One theory that highlights this development is Chris Anderson's interpretation of the 'long tail'. First described in a 2004 article published in *Wired* and then later expanded into the book, *The Long Tail: Why the*

Future of Business Is Selling Less of More (2006), the Long Tail theory illuminates how the growth of niche markets has redefined the shape of business models. Essentially, the long tail of products in low demand can, collectively, make up a market share that is bigger than any one major 'hit'. Anderson expands on this idea, suggesting that direct access to a mass global audience via the Web has created the possibility of new revenue streams for independent artists and smaller niche distributors by removing one of the major barriers of traditional retail models – the need to find local audiences. According to Anderson, in a pre-Web world, 'not enough local demand equals no store' (2006: 163). However, on the Web, it is possible for products to attract consumers one-by-one, through a virtual connection, rather than having to surrender to the 'tyranny of geography', which requires appealing to enough people in the same location to justify distribution. The Internet has created an opportunity for documentary filmmakers to find larger audiences for their films by reaching beyond the boundaries of territory, into previously inaccessible markets, to uncover untapped audiences. This expansion of the marketplace has created greater revenue opportunities for older documentaries, which can be made accessible to new audiences via the Web. As Anderson argues, the extending growth of the long tail has led to a shift away from the small number of hits (mainstream products and markets) at the head of the demand curve and a move toward the vast number of niches in the tail. Anderson observes, 'In an era without the constraints of physical shelf space and other bottlenecks of distribution, narrowly targeted goods and services can be as economically attractive as mainstream fare' (Ibid.: 52). Because digital delivery incurs few manufacturing and distribution costs, documentaries have the potential to find small, yet sustainable, revenue streams in the online market with virtually no risk of financial loss.

However, the problem with Anderson's discussion of the Long Tail theory is, as Kelly suggests, that he builds his argument primarily from the perspective of an aggregator and fails to explore the limits the long tail imposes on individual artists. Kelly (2008c) argues that the long tail does not benefit creators because, 'Economically, the more the long tail expands, the more stuff there is to compete

with our limited attention as an audience, the more difficult it is for a creator to sell profitably.' Ultimately, the long tail only produces meaningful economic value when niche items are sold in aggregation. For independent artists to make a living, they must find a way to move up the long tail and establish a position somewhere closer to the head of the curve. In his article, '1000 True Fans' (2008a), Kelly suggests that artists need to build a loyal following of one thousand 'true fans', those who will buy essentially anything and everything that artist produces, in order to generate enough income to make a sustainable living. He bases this figure on the assumption that a 'true fan' would be willing to spend one day's wages (which he estimates to be one hundred dollars) each year to support the artist. Although documentary filmmakers are unlikely to inspire a following that would offer such significant financial endorsement, it is possible that certain films could attract a following of one thousand true fans or more, particularly if they are linked to a cause (see Chapter 6). Yet for this model to work, it requires developing a direct relationship with audiences. As Kelly suggests, direct connections deliver direct profits, with no loss of revenues to middle men. The potential for filmmakers to build and maintain personal audiences for their work, and distribute directly to their fans, is purely a product of the digital age. As more filmmakers have endeavoured to build their own followings, a paradigm shift has taken place, which has helped to establish a new social contract between those who make documentaries and those who watch them. Evidence of this change has been documented in the rising success of crowdsourcing models (see Chapter 6). Many of the examples used in this thesis serve to evidence Kelly's point that niche audiences can generate sizeable rewards if they are serviced directly.

The availability of free media on the Internet has made it difficult for distributors to create business models that profit in the online space. Consequently, the Internet requires new ways of thinking about how content can generate revenue. Some digital theorists, including Chris Anderson, argue that value can emerge from offering goods and services for free. Following up on ideas presented in *The Long Tail* (2006), Anderson explores the potential of such economic models in his article

'Free! Why \$0.00 Is the Future of Business' (2008), which he subsequently expanded into a book called *Free: The Future of a Radical Price* (2009). Anderson develops the argument that businesses can profit from giving away certain things for free. The Internet has supported the growth of gift economies, which occur when freely shared products and information create value for the greater community. The user-edited online encyclopedia Wikipedia is commonly cited as an example of a gift economy (Anderson 2009: 20, Lessig 2008: 155-62). Although not exactly within the boundaries of a gift economy, due to their capacity to support piracy, peer-to-peer networks evidence the growing culture of sharing. By offering everyone (or at least those who understand how to use the technology) free global access to one another's digital media files, peer-to-peer networks force distributors to compete with free. Because the costs involved in blocking access to digital goods can be prohibitive, it makes sense to explore how 'free' models might be employed to generate revenue. For documentaries, free distribution commonly is funded by advertisements (e.g. SnagFilms, see Chapter 5). Yet such a model demands that a film receives hundreds of thousands of views before it generates noteworthy revenue. Another alternative that has emerged is the 'freemium' model, which allows everyone free access to some amount of content with the hope of inspiring a fraction of users to pay for advanced services (typically access to a more extensive, advertising-free catalogue). The music industry has demonstrated freemium success with the streaming platform Spotify, which has gained more than ten million registered users in Europe (of which 1.6 million have become paid subscribers) and launched its US service in July 2011 (Sisario 2011). However, the film industry has yet to achieve such success with a comparable platform. Distributors typically oppose models that offer content entirely for free, favouring standard pay-per-view and subscription plans, yet *free* remains very popular with consumers. In Anderson's words, 'Charge nothing for a product that the incumbents depend on for their profits. The world will beat a path to your door and you can then sell them something else' (2009: 43). However, for documentaries, even when they are offered for free, it seems unlikely that 'the world' would rush to watch them on the Web – at least not without having

substantial hype and effective outreach efforts to draw attention to them.

Kevin Kelly acknowledges this critical point when he writes that money ‘follows the path of attention’ (2008b: 9). Exploring this idea and the potential of ‘free’, Kelly published an article called ‘Better Than Free’ in 2008, releasing it online just prior to Anderson’s ‘Free!’ article. While Anderson concentrates on *why* free business models work, Kelly offers practical paradigms for *how* free business models can be implemented. According to Kelly, the Internet is ‘a copy machine’, which guarantees that ‘[e]very bit of data ever produced on any computer is copied somewhere’ (Ibid.). Copies, therefore, become the central currency of the digital economy. Yet as Kelly explains, ‘these copies are not just cheap – they are free’ (Ibid.). As the Internet allows copies to flow freely, circulating forever, it creates an impossible problem for those seeking to control intellectual property. Rather than fight the system and put a price tag on digital goods, Kelly argues that people should invest their energy in generating financial value through other means. In Kelly’s words, ‘When copies are free, you need to sell things that can not be copied’ (Ibid.: 3). Although similar to Anderson’s argument, Kelly’s discussion more clearly suggests how freely released documentary films might find financial sustainability in the digital age. The list of eight ‘uncopyable values’, which Kelly outlines in his article, identifies various ways artists can generate revenue from free. Referring to these qualities as ‘generatives,’ because of their need to be grown or cultivated, Kelly includes only things that cannot be reproduced and that are ‘generated uniquely, in place, over time’ (Ibid.: 4). Kelly’s list includes: *immediacy, personalisation, interpretation, authenticity, accessibility, embodiment, patronage, and findability*. These generatives effectively characterise qualities apparent in emerging online business models and are reflected in many of the examples cited throughout this thesis. Some of these generatives, in particular ‘embodiment’ (e.g. special event screenings) and ‘patronage’ (e.g. crowdfunding), are evident in the case studies in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. As the case studies suggest, employing generatives can be challenging and often requires innovation. Kelly acknowledges that the eight generatives ‘require a new skill set’, indicating that although distribution may be easier on the

Web, making money from it still requires a certain amount of skill and effort (Ibid.). The prevalence of free content on the Web has devalued all content, making it more challenging than ever for documentaries to compete in the marketplace. As these theories all suggest, the Web does not support the economic paradigm of 'scarcity'; therefore, successful 'selling' of documentaries online demands generating value through alternative means.

1.2.3 Digital Culture Debates

The Web's value as a content delivery platform emerges not only from its capacity to facilitate low-cost distribution but also from its ability to enable greater audience participation in the filmmaking process. In his book, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (2006), Yochai Benkler considers how small individual actions can be combined to generate significant outcomes through networks. Benkler regards the Internet as a user-driven platform, not merely a medium for distributing content. Unlike traditional media outlets, no one can control all the content on the Internet. The Internet is simply too vast and its networks are too developed to regulate content in an old-fashioned manner. As a consequence, the 'networked information economy', governed by decentralised individual actions, is the context in which business operates on the Internet. Benkler centres his argument on what he refers to as 'social production', a product of collaboration via networks, which 'first and foremost harnesses impulses, time, and resources that, in the industrial information economy, would have been wasted or used purely for consumption' (Ibid.: 122). The ability for people to effortlessly create and share digital goods, without the need for an institution to manage the development or distribution, has disrupted traditional business models. As more socially produced substitutes enter the market, incumbents who produced information goods, which may have once monopolised the market, have had to adapt their business strategies to satisfy new consumer demands (Ibid.). As Benker argues, this has led consumers to adopt the role of users who, through more active and productive behaviours, have integrated themselves into the production process

(Ibid.: 126). The involvement of 'users' in the creation and dissemination of documentary content has become an apparent trend in the new business models of the digital age (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). The activities that users perform have demonstrated material value for both filmmakers and distributors while the rise of user-generated content has indicated a deeper public engagement with documentary. As distribution has become more social in nature, it has demonstrated that audiences can offer value not only through their capacity to consume content, but also through their ability to aid in the creation and dissemination of content.

The manifestation of participatory culture has created new challenges and opportunities for documentary distribution. Exploring related ideas, Henry Jenkins examines the relationship between 'media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence' in his book, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). In this text, Jenkins broadly defines convergence as 'the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (Ibid.: 2). By enabling people to actively seek out new information and make connections across a range of content on the Web, convergence has encouraged the spread of participatory culture, which 'creates buzz that is increasingly valued by the media industry'. Such social sharing has led consumption to become a 'collective process' (Ibid.: 3-4). Avoiding the claims of technological determinism, Jenkins suggests that the power behind the Web has not emerged from its technology but, rather, from the ways people use its technology to spread information. Convergence has created opportunities for people to discover documentaries and engage with them more deeply, in a cross-platform environment. As documentaries have entered the digital domain, many have grown to become more than just films, extending into interactive web series, user-generated content sites, and even live events. The topic of cross-media (or transmedia) documentary, intriguing as it may be, extends far beyond the scope of this research. Consequently, convergence, in the context of this thesis, relates more often to how online platforms have worked to engage audiences

in documentary instead of how new media technology has affected the documentary form. It is clear that in the space of the Web audiences have been able to develop deeper personal connections to documentary. As Jenkins argues, convergence has made it easy for fans to personalise content and contribute to media culture, which, in turn, has pushed mainstream media to expand its horizons and consider how fans can creatively add value to products and services. Developing systems that harness user-generated content without exploiting the users has been a challenge for online platforms (see Chapter 5). Often, when audiences' expectations have not been met or their contributions are somehow abused, they become alienated and criticise or abandon the platforms they once supported. Consequently, platforms that rely upon user-generated content have had to adapt to a new paradigm that gives audiences, more than executives, control over the media – in effect democratising the mainstream media markets.

The distinction between audience and creator has become increasingly blurred in the era of digital. As content has moved online, viewers have become users who can play an important role in documentary filmmaking, helping to finance, produce, and distribute films. Clay Shirky explores the meaning of the trend of mass participation in his book, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (2008). Through social media (Web 2.0) technology, the Web has gained a powerful potential to facilitate group action and allow individuals to collectively create and influence society in ways that previously had been impossible. The Web has also allowed communities to form around content, which happens more naturally when the content is associated with an issue or cause (see Section 4.4.2). Campaign-style documentaries, which rally people together to create social or political change, have benefitted from organising fan followings that not only support the films but also support relevant causes (see Section 6.3). Additionally, these grassroots groups have offered documentary filmmakers the hope of sustainability, by demonstrating the capacity to provide essential financial, creative, and promotional support. Remembering Kevin Kelly's (1999) point that the online economy is built upon conversations, it can be understood that the greater the

number of people assembled around a documentary project, the further news spreads about it, and the more opportunities it has to generate revenues. The Internet has not only facilitated the spread of news from person to person, but it has given every single person the means to communicate with the entire world. As Shirky writes, 'The media landscape is transformed, because personal communication and publishing, previously separate functions, now shade into one another' (2008: 81). Although the Web has offered everyone who can find the will and means to make a documentary the exhibition space to show it, it has also fostered greater competition within the marketplace. Instead of a small number of decision-makers preselecting, and thereby limiting, what the public sees, the Web operates under the mantra of 'publish, then filter' (Ibid.: 81-108). As all media can exist online, the key challenge for documentaries is gaining visibility. Web 2.0 technologies can help focus public attention by allowing users to tag, comment, rate, and share content. Through these collaborative filtering activities, people can help others find what is most relevant online and thereby influence what media become mainstream. In this democratised environment, rather than relying upon one institution (i.e. broadcaster) to provide temporary access and visibility, documentaries can benefit from employing multiple platforms to enable permanent access and maximum visibility.

Most of those who write about participatory culture argue for the value of non-professionals' engagement in online discourse. It is rare to encounter critics who warn of the damage that may result from a culture controlled by amateurs. Andrew Keen stands out because he has gone so far as to write an entire book that considers the problems of public discourse on the Web, giving it the provocative title: *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet Is Killing Our Culture and Assaulting Our Economy* (2007). Keen often has been cited in debates about participatory culture for the precise reason that he represents an opposing view, which seldom has been echoed or supported by others. Keen's hyperbolic analysis of participatory culture centres on one key point of contention: how the rise of the masses threatens the established culture of authorities and experts. Seeing value in gatekeepers, who approve and

deny the exposure of content to the public, Keen argues that, '[Web 2.0] democratization, despite its lofty idealization is undermining truth, souring civic discourse, and belittling expertise, experience and talent [...] it is threatening the very future of our cultural institutions' (Ibid.: 15). Keen's portrayal of 'cultural gatekeepers' as honest experts who ensure high-quality content reaches the masses seems highly idealised given how so many of these long-established 'experts' (or media executives) have favoured mediocre, formulaic productions, which have pandered to mainstream interests, over innovative and culturally rich educational programming. Nevertheless, Keen's argument about the Web's overpopulation of low-quality creative content has raised a valid question about the future of documentary online. Now that millions of people have uploaded 'documentary' content onto the Web, through popular sites like YouTube, might professionally produced documentary films struggle to compete in this crowded, democratic space? When people have been given the choice of watching whatever they want from YouTube's vast catalogue of content, they have more commonly favoured viewing random sequences of short clips, which often include such novelties as cats playing pianos and dogs sleepwalking, over watching full critically acclaimed feature documentaries, made available for free on the same platform. Under the Web's ideology of 'publish, then filter', the public often promotes what has generated the most intrigue, not necessarily what has provided the most enrichment. Without public support, documentaries are in danger of being lost in the 'endless digital forests of mediocrity' that Keen describes (Ibid.: 3). However, this public support does not need to come from services and institutions (i.e. broadcasters, festivals, distributors, etc.) that have a tradition of generating audience interest in nonfiction films. Instead documentaries can be promoted by consumers, who effectively curate content they like through their use of social media and collaborative filtering technologies. What this suggests is that as long as documentaries can reach a small community of engaged supporters, curation and promotion can happen naturally.

1.3 Research Investigation

1.3.1 Research Aims

This chapter has introduced texts that have informed this study and has suggested how new media literature can help to fill the existing gaps in knowledge about documentary distribution. Exploring this body of literature has illuminated some themes that support this study's research aims. Firstly, the development of networks and new media has fostered the growth of a global market that generates value from the sharing of information. This rise of the network society, as Castells (1996) refers to it, has facilitated a post-industrial shift away from the manufacturing of products and towards the offering of services. Secondly, in this networked environment, the economic models that have supported the traditional media industries have become largely ineffective. As Kelly (1999, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c) and Anderson (2004, 2006, 2008, 2009) suggest, since the Web allows media to be freely copied and shared, value is best extracted through means other than simply selling content. Thirdly, in order to gain the capacity to monetise transactions on the Web, it is essential to develop a practical understanding of digital culture and the participatory activities it has inspired. As Benkler (2006), Jenkins (2006), and Shirky (2008) have all suggested, since audiences can be involved much earlier in the content creation process, they can offer longer-lasting value and deeper commitment to projects. Ultimately, what these trends point to is the need to view distribution as more than a simple system for delivering content to consumers and instead understand it as a complex social phenomenon, which prospers through ongoing consumer engagement and individually tailored approaches.

Distribution as a social phenomenon is best understood not as a broad theory but as specific reality, which develops differently for each project. There is a need to move away from the tendency to define grand theories, such as 'the global village' or 'the network society', and to begin to develop a more precise theoretical understanding of how distribution functions in the era of digital. Jenkins (2004: 235) observes that contemporary digital theory commonly looks 'to the past (for

antecedents) and to the future (for the fulfilment of utopian promises) but rarely at the present (for crude prototypes of what is to come)'. This study has investigated the present, gathering empirical information on emerging online distribution models, in an effort to develop an understanding of how documentary might achieve sustainability in the future. The texts discussed in the literature review have served as the basis for this thesis' theoretical inquiry into documentary distribution and introduced some of the vocabulary needed to explore its central debates. However, developing a theoretical understanding of documentary distribution in relation to this body of literature has been challenging because so much of what has been written on digital culture is wide-ranging. Although theories by definition are general (Ibid.), linking together many ideas into one explanation, there is a need to refine new media arguments to become more specific and more clearly pinpoint the realities, rather than merely generalise about the possibilities. A central aim of this thesis has been to sharpen the principal ideas inherent in these broad theories by developing a specific notion of distribution as a process that increasingly relies upon public engagement. This study sheds new light on the impact of digital technologies by carrying out specific research on the economics and culture of documentary online. Examining distribution in this context has given colour to the debates about new media and has offered a nuanced perspective of the opportunities that digital theorists have championed.

As this chapter has established, the question of how digital technology has impacted documentary distribution has not yet been academically explored. By considering how the rise of new media has influenced broadcasters and platforms (see Chapter 5) and allowed filmmakers to rely upon direct access to audiences as a means to successfully produce and distribute their films (see Chapter 6), this investigation has answered the question: how have the economics and culture of documentary distribution developed in the digital age? Because of the contemporary nature of this topic, a survey of the development of digital (see Chapter 3) and the documentary market (see Chapter 4) has been included so as to aid in the interpretation of the findings and establish a pattern of change throughout time.

Adopting a historical framework has better equipped this research to maintain its relevance in the years to come. Rather than emphasising changes in documentary *form*, this investigation has specifically questioned what impact digital technologies have had upon the economics and culture of documentary *distribution*, asking: how has the role of distributors changed, what new challenges do filmmakers face, and what influence do active audiences have in the distribution process? As the literature review suggested, there is a well-established understanding that the mass adoption of digital (Web 2.0) technologies has reshaped the media industries, providing filmmakers with the means for cheap, worldwide distribution and audiences with the means for more personal, lasting engagement with projects. However, sustainability in the online market remains a key concern and the true economic potential of these emerging business models has not yet been fully understood. In order to understand how documentary might find sustainability online, it has been essential to investigate how the overall market for documentary has developed over time and what challenges new media encounter in this expanding space. By positioning this investigation within the broader context of the film industry, this thesis has developed an understanding of how narrowly targeted documentary films can get made and seen in the oversaturated, highly commercial online marketplace.

1.3.2 Boundaries and Scope

Within the broad spectrum of documentary distribution, this research has concentrated on the developing online market for documentary films. Although the Internet clearly offers the means to deliver documentary films to wider audiences, the methods documentaries employ to generate revenues via the Web remain fraught with difficulties. By identifying the barriers that have kept documentaries from reaching online audiences, and recognising what innovations have afforded them a better chance to do so, it is possible to begin to understand the economics of documentary online. Commonly affiliated with public broadcast television and educational exhibition, documentaries have seldom been regarded as money-

making products. Traditionally, the biggest audiences for documentaries have been found on television, where the general public has been able to watch them free of charge. However, the trend for audience fragmentation, which is widely evident on the Web, has challenged the sustainability of the broadcast model for documentary funding and distribution. Despite these challenges, evidence of growth in other areas of the documentary market has suggested that new opportunities have emerged. For instance, several documentary films have successfully crossed over into the mainstream market and generated remarkable financial returns at the box office. Although the Web has not played an obvious role in the success of films such as *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *March of the Penguins* (2005), and *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), it certainly has facilitated word-of-mouth buzz and aided in the marketing campaigns for these films, allowing them to reach beyond 'd-word' aficionados and cross over into the realm of mass audience appeal. But high-grossing documentaries, of which there are only an exceptional few, have not been the focus of this investigation. Instead, this research has identified and explored lesser-known success stories, which have not made millions at the box office, in an effort to understand how innovation and the Internet might enable documentaries to generate value and extend their audience reach. By considering these alternative success stories, along with a few telling failures, it has become possible to imagine how the documentary industry might survive, and potentially even thrive, in the digital age.

This thesis has addressed the development of documentary distribution in the context of the digital revolution; therefore, the time frame has necessarily remained contemporary, primarily focusing on the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the Internet began to establish itself as an important platform for media distribution. The parts of my research that have extended further back in film history primarily have helped to establish a contrast with this recent period, which extends through 2011. In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the documentary market during this time frame, I needed to limit the scope of my research to certain territories. I chose the United States and United Kingdom as my

focus, not only for reasons of personal familiarity, but also because, when compared to other territories, the US and UK have attracted some of the largest audiences for documentary and have produced some of the most financially successful documentary films of all time.² Opportunities for documentaries in these two markets are similar enough to examine together; however, upon closer inspection, it is apparent that each fosters a different attitude and approach to distributing documentaries. For example, the US demonstrates more opportunities for documentary exhibition in cinemas, while the UK, by comparison, provides more opportunities for documentary exhibition on television. However, the discussion in this thesis does not focus on these contrasts, but rather considers these two markets in union, as they blend into one another across the global space of the Web. Because of these intentional territorial limits, any generalisations about audience behaviour and distribution patterns come from my understanding of the norms that are evident within these two cultures. Additionally, when addressing these regions, it has often made sense to consider them jointly, only distinguishing one from the other when the argument has called for such clarification. Although it would have been useful to study other countries, and I have occasionally referenced examples outside these regions when appropriate, a fully comprehensive investigation of the global marketplace for documentaries has not been the intention of this research.

As explained earlier, documentary embodies a broad range of subgenres and styles and my definition of 'documentary' has not explicitly excluded any of these formats from the discussion. However, television documentary programmes, which are commonly tailored to fit within broadcasters' programming schemes and schedules, have been intentionally overlooked in an effort to focus the discussion on feature documentary films. The term 'feature documentary' represents the kind of films that play at festivals and in cinemas, which typically have a cinematic style, strong narrative structure, and length of seventy minutes or more. Although discussion of the theatrical market has been included in Chapter 4, it has not been

² Any reference to dollars (\$) implies US currency, unless otherwise noted.

the main focus of this thesis. Because the majority of documentaries have failed to reach audiences on the big screen, it has been important to also consider the ancillary markets for documentary, particularly home video, television, and online. As broadcast remains the most valuable outlet for feature documentaries, it has also been included in the discussion; however, as many scholars have addressed documentary's place on television (e.g. Kilborn and Izod 1997, Beattie 2004), I have chosen not to engage in these debates and instead have referenced documentary in this context only to address how new modes of cross-platform exhibition and audience engagement have redefined and challenged the broadcast market. As a consequence, I have necessarily included some discussion of what could be called 'new media documentary'. Strikingly different in form than traditional feature documentaries, new media documentaries reach audiences primarily through the Web, often involving them in elements of production, distribution, or exhibition. Although sometimes they are accompanied by a feature film, most often new media documentaries have fluid formats, informal narrative structures, and cross-media components that evolve over time. Extending my research into this area has allowed me to consider the significance of new media trends, including the move towards interactivity, user-generated content, shorter formats, cross-platform release strategies, and other modes of consumption that have emerged within the developing market for documentary films. Ultimately, the inclusion of new media documentary in this thesis has allowed for a more complete understanding of how the documentary genre and industry have diversified and evolved in recent years.

1.3.3 Overview of Chapters

In this chapter, I have established that the area of distribution has been largely overlooked within the field of documentary studies. Therefore, this study has drawn from new media literature and gathered new empirical data to develop knowledge in this space. In an effort to reveal how documentary distribution has been impacted by the expansion of digital technology, this thesis has been logically organised so as to first provide the necessary background information, then examine the evidence,

and finally interpret the findings. By outlining the research methods chosen before considering how the digital revolution has developed and what impact it has had upon the various markets for documentary, this thesis establishes the foundations required to support its central case studies. These case studies of new platforms for documentary and filmmakers who have used the Web to engage audiences with their films help to reveal the growing importance of innovation in the distribution process and how the Internet has permitted greater audience involvement in all steps of the documentary process. Following on these examples, the thesis culminates in a discussion of the findings and their theoretical implications. Ultimately, this thesis has been organised into eight chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology employed in an effort to clarify and justify the data sources used and the approaches taken. In addition, there is some discussion of the main research challenges, which establishes the difficulty of building knowledge in a field that is continually changing and lacks transparency. The lack of knowledge in this space demanded that the study be exploratory in nature and rely upon the use of multiple methods. These circumstances also dictated a predominantly qualitative approach, which gathered information both from online sources and field research. In addition, this chapter includes a detailed discussion of the case study approach, which has been central to this study. By revealing the rationale for the methods employed, this chapter provides critical background information, which both supports the remainder of the thesis and offers guidance to anyone working to further knowledge in this space.

Chapter 3 chronicles the advent of digital technology in an effort to bring the history up to date and establish how the digital revolution has both hindered and helped the development of the film industry. Digital has had an enabling effect on the independent sector by making filmmaking an affordable pursuit, distribution an easy achievement, and promotion a social enterprise. New delivery formats have contributed to a rise in revenues in the home video market, while convergence has threatened to collapse all release windows into one global on-demand space. Hollywood has reacted with fear to these changes while independents have worked

to uncover ways to use digital to their advantage, gaining more control over their work and greater influence in the market. Digital projection has significantly reduced the cost of releasing films into the theatrical market and allowed for a greater number of films to appear on the big screen. However, the biggest expansion of exhibition space has happened on the Internet, where online platforms have given everyone direct access to audiences and audiences access to content on-demand. This overview of the digital revolution, in conjunction with the previously discussed body of new media literature, creates a necessary context in which to frame the subsequent in-depth analysis of the documentary market.

Chapter 4 analyses how the market for documentaries has developed, focusing on the distribution models that have traditionally sustained the industries in the United States and the United Kingdom. Pulling from key academic texts, this chapter highlights important events in the history of documentary distribution, establishing a contrast with the previous chapter by illustrating how documentary's niche qualities have influenced its modes of delivery. An exploration of documentary in the theatrical market is built upon the compilation and analysis of box office data derived from *Variety* box office reports (see Appendix B). Although there has been evidence of growth in all sectors of the documentary market, cuts in funding have restricted the critical broadcast market, positioning an economic crisis at the core of the industry. This commissioning crisis, along with the growing trend of audience fragmentation, has prompted media corporations, and independent filmmakers, to consider alternative approaches as a means to uncover new, sustainable models.

Chapter 5 introduces case studies that explore how the Web has developed as a platform for documentary. It offers four examples of online platforms for documentary content and considers to what extent they managed to expand their audience reach and inspire viewer engagement. Through exploring the distribution models of Channel 4's FourDocs, Current TV, SnagFilms, and VODO, the difficulties of attracting online audiences' attention and making money from documentary content on the Web are illuminated. The example of FourDocs demonstrates the

challenge of nurturing an online community for documentaries, as Channel 4 eventually abandoned this innovative user-generated content platform and replaced it with a largely static resource website. In the case of the cross-platform network Current TV, commercial pressures contributed to its abandonment of the user-generated model it once employed to fill one-third of its television programming slots. For SnagFilms, an online distributor of free documentaries, its expansion into video-on-demand and fiction film distribution suggests the Internet does not support niche distributors and advertising-based revenue models do not support documentary. Finally, in the case of VODO, the online distribution platform that harnesses peer-to-peer networks, the prospect of asking audiences for voluntary donations is unlikely to pay off, unless a new social contract is developed between filmmakers and their audiences. The number of falters in this field implies that generating value from online content by engaging with audiences is not an easy task to manage, even for corporations.

Chapter 6 presents three case studies that explore how documentary filmmakers are using the Web to communicate with audiences and using audiences to support their films. The first case study, which explores the alternative distribution strategies of Robert Greenwald, shows how audiences can help filmmakers eliminate their dependency on distributors by building a massive mailing list and reaching out to those individuals for support. The second case study, which explores the crowdfunding and campaign strategies of *The Age of Stupid* (2009), demonstrates how audiences can help filmmakers eliminate their dependency on commissioners by helping to fund films. The final case study, which explores how user-generated videos were harvested through YouTube in an effort to create the collaborative documentary *Life in a Day* (2011), illustrates how audiences can help filmmakers eliminate their dependency on production crews. Together, these examples highlight the growing trend for audience involvement in all aspects of the filmmaking process and evidence the theory that distribution is developing as social phenomenon. Each case study illuminates a wide range of ideas that all point to the central argument that by engaging directly with their audiences via the Web,

filmmakers can gain vital support, from funding to production to distribution, which can enable them to continue making documentaries.

Chapter 7 builds upon ideas explored in the literature, history, and case studies by tying together the evidence and the arguments in a way that clearly articulates the theoretical contribution of this thesis. Starting from the premise that distribution has become a social phenomenon, the chapter explores the consequences of this development as it relates to three key groups within the industry: distributors, filmmakers, and audiences. Distributors, perhaps, have suffered the most in this revolution as they have followed behind the technology, losing their influence over both filmmakers and audiences. Filmmakers have had both gains and losses, as distributors (or gatekeepers) no longer stand in the way of audiences, yet audience attention has become increasingly harder to gain. Those who have gained the most have been audiences, who now have the capacity to personalise media consumption and participate in the process of media creation, all at essentially no cost other than their time. As a result of this democratisation of the industry, documentary has become a process that demands, or at least benefits from, participation. While online distribution may have yet to provide the kind of revenue returns needed to sustain the industry, developments in this space have given the documentary the opportunity to reach and appeal to wider audiences.

The conclusion of this thesis, in Chapter 8, reviews what has been accomplished through this study and reinforces the key findings. At first glance it may seem that technology has greatly aided documentary distribution by making films more accessible to audiences; however, the overwhelming amount of competition in the marketplace has made it more difficult than ever to focus public attention on films that lack commercial appeal. In the context of on-demand programming, documentaries are overshadowed by more commercial content. As broadcasters effectively lose their power as curators of content, a greater effort is required to bring attention to documentary films and help them fulfil their public service missions. The convergence of media has created a new notion of what documentary is and how this form reaches its intended audience. Manifesting from

these developments in new media is documentary's increased capacity for audience engagement and impact. Mapping these changes helps to uncover answers to the critical question of the future financial sustainability of documentary films.

Although it is still too early to know precisely what economic models will support documentary distribution on the Web, this study suggests that the solutions will develop from social interactions.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This research relied upon a variety of methods and sources to examine distribution and consider how digital technologies have affected the political economy and culture of documentary. I have included this methodology chapter in order to clarify the processes used to collect the information contained in this thesis and offer some assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. This chapter was necessarily placed after the introduction so as to justify the approach (and sources) used to gather the information provided in all subsequent chapters. The questions surrounding this research topic were answered through a phenomenological approach, which involved searching for knowledge and understanding in the everyday world, using a variety of desk and field research data collection methods. Consequently, my research methods were primarily qualitative, exercising a 'set of interpretive activities' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 6) to investigate the phenomenon of distribution within the framework of documentary and the digital revolution. Throughout this study, I employed a combination of description, analysis, and interpretation – identified by Wolcott (1994: 49) as the 'primary ingredients' and means through which data is organised and presented in a qualitative study – to develop my conclusions. As no notable studies have been published that address my research topic, my inquiry was necessarily exploratory in nature. I developed my research questions to explore what impact digital technologies have had upon the economics and culture of documentary distribution, and asked: how has the role of distributors changed, what new challenges do filmmakers face, and what influence do active audiences have? Ongoing observation, both online and in a real world setting, expanded my knowledge and informed my methodological choices. In order to achieve a holistic understanding of documentary distribution in this context, my

research adopted a triangular conceptual framework, which took into consideration the relationships between and perspectives of distributors, filmmakers, and audiences. Having been myself a member of all of these groups, I had an intrinsic understanding of what challenges and opportunities existed for each of these key players, who together formed and governed the documentary industry. Ultimately, studying the challenges of distribution within its industrial setting has made it more likely that the knowledge contained in this thesis can be practically applied, extending the value of this research beyond its theoretical contributions.

A primary aim of this research was to gather information on new media as it related to documentary, in an effort to develop knowledge in the area of distribution. As the previous chapter established, there has been little discussion in the field of media studies about how methods of distribution work for documentary or what impact digital technologies have had upon this part of the filmmaking process. Distribution, beyond the confines of television, has seldom been explored through academic inquiry. As digital technologies have allowed distribution to become a dynamic and cooperative process, the need to incorporate distribution into academic discussions about documentary has grown. The nature of this study demanded a contemporary setting. Consequently, it was important to first establish a historical foundation that could offer both a means for comparison and an appropriate framework for contextualising new media debates. Drawing from media studies literature helped me build a case for digital's democratising effects upon the overall film industry (see Chapter 3) while mining texts about documentary allowed me to construct a narrative that revealed how the genre's marginal position in the marketplace has been reinforced by its methods of distribution (see Chapter 4). This historical framework provided a critical foundation for examining the case studies and developing the theoretical debates, which grew out of the literature review, in an effort to present the new evidence and ideas that have formed this thesis' original contribution to knowledge.

Because my research aimed to build new knowledge in a largely undiscovered area, it was necessary to strategically consider at the start not only what data I needed but also where I could find this information. Through extensive cross-comparison, both online and in the field, I identified which websites, specialist press, industry events, and leading experts could best enhance and support my research. I have gathered information from the most reliable sources available in order to assemble the most accurate and comprehensive analysis possible. As this research centred on emerging developments in the documentary industry, it called for an inductive approach that, rather than testing an existing theory, analysed real world problems and aimed to develop new academic understanding, offering the once primarily 'mechanical' process of distribution new legitimacy as a subject of theoretical inquiry. To develop these ideas, my research explored both the social and industrial environments surrounding distribution and considered how documentary functioned in this context. Although this research was driven more by practical rather than theoretical aims, the evidence gathered has suggested a new way of thinking about distribution. In the digital age, distribution has moved from being a formulaic mechanism for licensing and selling content to become a dynamic social process, which has influenced both the economics and culture of documentary. Ultimately, the complexity and breadth of this topic demanded a strategic approach to inquiry, which involved synthesising and interpreting multiple sources of data in order to answer the questions central to this thesis.

2.2 Research Strategies and Design

2.2.1 Inherent Challenges

New media embody change, meaning that there is always something 'new' to discover in this rapidly evolving field. Consequently, contemporary analysis becomes quickly outdated, typically offering an understanding of how things used to be, and what limitations used to exist, not long ago. To address these challenges, I

aimed to establish a strong historical foundation and refrain from speculation in order to preserve my research's value and potential significance as a published work. In order to understand this recent dynamic phase within the documentary industry, I had to rely, in part, upon information revealed in the trades and press. Whenever possible, I cited data from established news outlets, written by professional journalists who must adhere to a set of standards, instead of 'amateur' reporters who write for enthusiast blog sites, which lack the same degree of accountability. Yet, in this niche area of my study, blogs proved to be an important way to gain information that was unavailable through news organisations, which rarely covered stories related to documentary distribution. Therefore, it was sometimes necessary to reference articles published on credible blogs (i.e. *GigaOM*, *The Wrap*, *Wired*) to support factual information in my thesis; however, I never used these sources, or any news articles, as a basis for my theoretical debates. For those purposes, I relied upon new media theorists, whose writings are discussed in the literature review provided in Chapter 1. Developing theory in this space required that I critically realign my own understanding of my topic, as the technological boundaries that originally framed my research were ever-expanding. Much has changed in the past five years. For instance, in 2007, the DVD format still had strong appeal and the quality of web video was mediocre at best. Five years later, disc sales had dropped significantly and video-on-demand, mainly through subscription services like Netflix, had become a critical source of revenue in the home video market. In the same time span, crowdfunding became a popular new approach to financing documentary projects and social media became an essential means of promotion. Drawing information from a wide range of sources helped ensure that I did not miss critical developments and that my research remained both comprehensive and up-to-date.

Another challenge I needed to address in my research was the lack of transparent reporting and business models. The film industry has a well-established history of secrecy, which has made it difficult to find reliable sales data (see Wasko 2004: 229). The distribution sector, in particular, has rarely made financial accounts

public. This problem has been further supported by the widespread practice of issuing non-disclosure agreements, which filmmakers commonly have been required to sign when they license their work to a distributor, ensuring that the terms of their contracts (including upfront and residual payments) remain confidential. Ultimately, the lack of access to this valuable data has led to an incomplete understanding of the economics of distribution and a failure to determine the best business practices for documentary. The inability to access financial information, from either filmmakers or distributors, was an obstacle I encountered in this investigation. In the research I have done speaking to distributors and listening to their presentations at industry events and festivals (see Table 2.1 and Appendix C), I have witnessed a general inability (and potential unwillingness) to clearly answer questions related to company financials. Commonly in the Q&A sessions, when speakers were asked about expected revenue returns from their respective platforms or services, the responses given were ambiguous – along the lines of ‘it varies case-by-case’. This pattern of evasion made it difficult to get a concrete sense of how financially successful online business models were. Often when distributors did disclose specific information, they cited their most favourable examples instead of discussing those documentaries that failed to achieve distribution success. This proclivity is understandable given that distributors naturally aspire to promote their own businesses; however, selective reporting can create misperceptions within the public about what can typically be achieved through these outlets. Additionally, in the informal interviews I had with filmmakers (and the discussions I observed in the online forums of The D-Word), I noticed a general unwillingness to share financial and contractual information publicly. The prevalence of such reticence influenced my choice in research methods and led me to avoid formal interviews as a means of gathering information. This demand for secrecy has hindered the growth of the industry and made it difficult to develop collective knowledge about distribution.

Table 2.1 Key Distribution Sessions Attended at Industry Events

Event	Year	Session Title	Key Companies Involved
IDFA	2007	The Ever Evolving Documentary Market Place	Films Transit Int.
Power to the Pixel	2007	Audiences and Digital Distribution; Is Theatrical Dead?; The New Distributors	Emerging Picture, Tribeca Film Institute (Reframe), UK Film Council, YouTube
Sheffield Doc/Fest	2007	DigiDocs 360: Doc 3.0; DigiDocs 360: Emerging Revenue Models?; DigiDocs 360: What Does the Future Look Like?; Distribution in the Digital Age; Financing Docs that Cause Change; Self Distribution and the Online Opportunities	Autlook Film Sales, Babelgum, BBC, Cactus 3, Channel 4, Current TV, Films Transit Int., Fortissimo Film Sales, FourDocs, Green.tv, ITVS, PBS (POV), Submarine, Sundance Institute, TVF International, WGBH Int., Women Make Movies
BRITDOC	2008	Have You Seen This? The Digital Distribution Panel	Cinetic Media, Jaman, VICE
Hot Docs	2008	Doc Forecast: The Next Five Years; How Online Platforms Will Save Creative Documentary; Short Circuits: Trends in Docs in the Digital Docspace; Who is Who in Digital Docland	AOL True Stories, ARTE, Babelgum, Cinelan, Films Transit Int., GlassBOX Television, Ithentic, ITVS, Magnolia Pictures, MySpace
IDFA	2008	The Market Place: From MG to DIY	Participant Media, Women Make Movies
Power to the Pixel	2008	The New Exhibitors	IndieGoGo, MovieMobz, Onlinefilm.org, Tribeca Film Institute, YouTube
Sheffield Doc/Fest	2008	Distribution - That Old Chestnut; My Tube Your Face; Theatrical Documentaries R.I.P.?; What's Happening in the US Documentary Television Market	A&E Television Networks, Autlook Film Sales, Bebo, Discovery Europe, Endemol Digital Media, First Hand Films, ICA Films, Indie Films, IndiePix, National Geographic Television, PBS (POV), Travel Channel, UK Film Council, Women Make Movies
Hot Docs	2009	Distribution for a New Era	7th Art Releasing, Autlook Film Sales, Louise Rosen Ltd., ro*co Films International, Ruth Diskin Films Ltd., Wide Management, Zeitgeist Films
IDFA	2009	Financing and Producing: Starting Smart; Seize the Future: The Cutting Edge of Distribution	ARTE, Deckert Distribution, Paradigm Consulting, Women Make Movies
Sheffield Doc/Fest	2009	Documentary Filmmaking: Making a Sustainable Living; New Business Models; Working Your Film	Cactus 3, Channel 4, IFP, Working Films
Sheffield Doc/Fest	2010	Digital Documentary Distribution: How, Where, and Why to Host Your Film Online; The Good, The Brand, and The Ugly	Al Jazeera, Babelgum, BBC, Joining the Docs, Mercury Media, SnagFilms, VBS, VICE, UKTV
Sunny Side of the Doc	2010	Branded Content, A New Partner?; iPad and Applications; Meet the Distributors; Show Me the Money; The New Distribution Conundrum (Distribution On-Line)	Akamedia, Apple, Autlook Film Sales, BBC, Current TV, DailyMotion, Danish Film Institute, Eagle Rock Entertainment, Fortissimo Film Sales, France Télévisions, Mercury Media, MSN Europe, Upside Television, YouTube

2.2.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research, which uses a systemic approach to process numeric data, can be a useful way to assess growth in the documentary market. However, the lack of available aggregate sales data (and the challenge of gathering accurate financial figures from many individual sources) meant that quantitative methods were only practical in one part of this investigation – the theatrical market. To understand the recent theatrical documentary ‘boom’, I used quantitative analysis to evaluate data related to revenue and number of engagements for documentary films released in US theatres. Analysing box office data was an efficient means to chart the level of financial success and audience reach that documentary films achieved in this market over the past two decades. Unlike most other financial information related to distribution, box office data traditionally has been made public and reported in the trades. Having access to a complete archive of weekly US box office reports through the *Variety* website gave me the opportunity to conduct original analysis on this seldom examined sector of the documentary market. In January 2010, I collected week-by-week box office figures for all films released theatrically in the United States over the period of two decades, from 1990 until 2010. I then used Excel software to isolate the ‘documentary’ films and analyse this data, which both evidenced the growing trend for more documentaries in cinemas and demonstrated the overall limited penetration and financial return documentaries have achieved in this market. The primary quantitative analysis was produced from source data, visualised in the tables and figures in Chapter 4, and summarised in Appendix B. In addition, on a two occasions, I included tables of secondary data I collected from alternate sources. For Table 4.3, I reported data on documentary’s performance in the UK theatrical market, which was taken from the UK Film Council’s *Statistical Yearbook* publications, and in Table 4.4, I presented information on the box office market share for documentaries in US theatres, which I gathered directly from *The Numbers* website. Drawing from these secondary data sources helped me save time and fill small gaps in my analysis of the theatrical market for documentaries.

Another data source I used for quantitative analysis was the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Widely regarded as a go-to source for industry information, IMDb offered a comprehensive global listing of films, which I used to estimate the number of documentaries released, as reflected in Table 4.5. To gain a general idea of the number of feature length documentary projects produced each year between 2000 and 2010, I selected 'Documentary' under the 'Genre' category on the IMDb website and then chose to refine by 'Year'. I then went year-by-year through the list and counted the number of feature documentaries that were between seventy minutes and one hundred and fifty minutes long. I necessarily subtracted the films that were less than seventy minutes to eliminate the multitude of shorts and television programmes and excluded those that were over one hundred and fifty minutes to eliminate multi-part documentary series. Because of the likely inclusion of some television documentaries and the invariable exclusion of some feature documentaries, I considered the results I produced to be an approximate minimum count of the total documentary features produced worldwide. Ultimately, the value of these estimates depended upon the validity of the information entered into IMDb. As for any collaborative Internet database, it was likely that a small number of entries were misclassified, duplicated, or omitted. I observed this dynamic dilemma on IMDb when I went to check the data I collected at a later date and noticed that the number of films per year had increased from my original count, suggesting that new entries had been added for old films. Regardless of these limitations, the data evidenced my argument that far more documentaries were produced each year than the theatrical market could accommodate. In addition, IMDb was used as a data source for Table 4.6, to determine which films out of the top fifty documentaries at the US box office had premieres at Sundance and which distributors were responsible for releasing those films. Internet searches and the Sundance Film Festival website were used to cross-check information for this table. Ultimately, quantitative analysis was a useful approach to understand the scope of the theatrical market for documentary films and offer clarification regarding documentary's success on the big screen. Although this research did evidence documentary's

growth in the theatrical market, it also illuminated the narrow limits of its financial success in this space. Such factual clarity would have been difficult to establish purely through a qualitative approach. This analysis, although time consuming, was required to create an accurate understanding of documentary's recent 'boom' in theatres and offer reason to consider how the online environment might offer a more suitable and economically favourable exhibition space.

2.2.3 Qualitative Research

Because my research questions called for a phenomenological approach, qualitative methods were central to my research design and allowed me to become the primary 'tool' for conducting this investigation. Rossman and Rallis (2003: 4) observe that qualitative researchers gather data 'from people and places and from events and activities' in an effort to find answers to their questions in the 'real world'. In relation to this, they define qualitative research by two unique features: 'the researcher is the means through which the study is conducted' and 'the purpose is to learn about some facet of the social world' (Ibid.: 5). In investigating the 'social world' of documentary distribution, my research questions stemmed from my desire to build upon the prior knowledge I had gained while living in Hollywood and working in the independent film sector, for both distribution strategist Peter Broderick and Breakthrough Distribution. The distribution success stories I encountered through these activities led me to begin my postgraduate studies with the sense that I would discover sustainable economic models for documentary online. I aimed to produce applied research that would extend beyond academia and benefit those working in the industry. My learning process aligned with Rossman and Rallis' observation that qualitative researchers 'become part of the process, continually making choices, testing assumptions, and reshaping their questions. As the inquiry process grows from curiosity or wonder to understanding and knowledge building, the researcher is often transformed' (Ibid.: 4-5). My transformation emerged through developing the capacity to look beyond the success stories and recognise that the majority of documentary films were struggling to

connect with audiences and generate revenues. In order to draw accurate conclusions, it was important that I consider not only the exceptional examples, which were often discussed, but also reflect upon the common cases, which were widely ignored.

My phenomenological approach demanded that I situate my research within the industry setting and allowed me to examine distribution from an insider's perspective. This did not mean that I abandoned my role as a researcher but rather that I immersed myself in organisations and events that contributed to my understanding of my research topic. Consequently, I have been involved in many activities that developed my knowledge of new media technology and the documentary industry. During my first two years of study, I worked remotely for the US company Breakthrough Distribution. Managing the outreach for three different documentary projects, I conducted research to identify core audiences and contacted relevant organisations to develop affiliate partnerships and generate direct sales. Through this work, I experienced firsthand the challenge of self-distributing documentaries by building their audiences one individual at a time and personally developed some of the skills needed to manage this process. Additionally, since 2007 I have been involved with Power to the Pixel, a London-based new media consultancy and training company, and worked as a member of the team that put on its 'Forum' events at the BFI London Film Festival. The work I have done with this organisation, from writing blog posts and documenting think tank sessions to marketing events and building social media followings, has had a profound influence upon my research and put me in close contact with key experts in the field, some of whom I have referenced in this research.

In addition, to build my knowledge of the documentary market, each year I participated in key industry events, including: BRITDOC Documentary Festival (UK), Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival (Canada), IDFA - International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Sheffield Doc/Fest (UK), and Sunny Side of the Doc (France). I selected these events because they exclusively catered to documentary and had the capacity to draw an

international population of experts. I developed a cycle of attendance that meant I returned to many of the same events, year after year, so that I could more easily recognise trends and change taking place within the industry. Conducting field research at these festivals and markets required a significant amount of time and travel; however, the presentations and panels I attended at these events filled a critical role in my research development and ensured that I remained continually informed of the latest case studies and innovations. While at these events, I arranged meetings and interviews with individuals who provided information that contributed to this research. Fitting in with Wolcott's (1992) research framework, interviewing (*enquiring*) was one of the three primary modes of data collection I employed. This and the other two key modes, studying materials prepared by others (*examining*) and participant observation (*experiencing*), helped me to shape my case studies, which remained at the centre of my research. Detailed explanations of these methods are provided in the following sections.

2.2.4 Desk Research

This study involved an extensive process of desk research, examining what Hodder (1994: 393) calls 'mute evidence', or 'written texts and artifacts'. As the Internet was central to the topic of this investigation, it was a logical starting point and efficient means of uncovering a wide variety of data sources. This flexible method of documentary analysis contributed to a richer understanding of my topic than I could otherwise have gained if I only had examined newspapers, journals, academic texts, and other 'material' sources. This desk research involved the careful study of a variety of digital artifacts easily found online, including: industry reports, consultancy documents, think tank output, forum discussions, presentation slides, publicity materials, conference summaries, social media sources, online videos, and websites. Often my research demanded that I go beyond simply 'reading' documents to actively test out certain artifacts. I most notably adopted this approach for the Chapter 5 case studies, which involved trying out various website functions so that I could understand how the platforms worked and be able to describe and

analyse them. In addition, I used RSS (Really Simple Syndication) technology to instantly aggregate information from websites such as *Variety*, *IndieWIRE*, and *Screen International*, delivering up-to-date data regarding film sales, financing strategies, and marketing trends straight into my email account. These industry news sources enabled me to fill gaps in my research by illuminating case study examples and revealing industry sentiment and trends. To remain immersed in the developing theory, I subscribed to blog feeds of new media authors, including: Henry Jenkins, Kevin Kelly, Lawrence Lessig, and Clay Shirky. I used Google Reader, a Web-based news aggregator, to conduct daily searches, which I then scanned for new developments in this field. I employed keyword searches using a various combinations of the following terms: crowdfunding, digital, distribution, documentary, film industry, innovation, and new media. I also used these keyword combinations in my academic literature searches carried out via Google Scholar, but the results proved to be far less fruitful. This constant review of relevant data on the Web was central to my approach and enabled me to explore the discourses relating the development of documentary distribution in the online space.

Because of the contemporary nature of my topic, I had no choice but to depend upon the Internet to facilitate my desk research. In my experience, the most useful source of information specific to documentary distribution has been The D-Word's online discussion forums. The D-Word started in 1996, when filmmaker Doug Block began blogging about the process of making his documentary, *Home Page* (1999). However, when the film went into distribution, The D-Word's focus broadened as it emerged as a space for community discussions on a wide range of topics related to documentary filmmaking. In 2007, the website underwent a major redesign, which was supported entirely through a fundraising campaign from its members. Over the past decade, The D-Word has attracted over 8000 registered users, of which more than 3800 are 'professional members' who work in the media industries.³ The site is free to everyone and offers both public forum topics and

³ See The D-Word website. Available at: <http://d-word.com/page/About> [accessed on 15 September 2011].

members only forum topics, which feature discussions about documentary festivals, industry events, budgeting, marketing and distribution, etc. The website has tag and sort features to help users find information; however, the archive is so vast that it can take hours to filter through the long lists and bits of conversations in an effort to draw general conclusions about a topic. I mined The D-Word to develop my knowledge of certain distributors and distribution practices. I also monitored the 'Distribution and Marketing' forum on the site on a weekly basis, keeping a log of any information I found relevant to my research. I noticed that requests for opinions or factual information about standard terms of contract for distributors rarely got answered within the forum space. When other members did respond to such requests, they generally suggested furthering the discussion over the telephone, where the information could remain undocumented. Since my observations took place in the members' only space of the site, ethical questions related to privacy deterred me from directly evidencing specific arguments with information gleaned from The D-Word forum. Nevertheless, this research method inspired my investigation and informed my understanding of issues of importance to the community. In addition, observing the ongoing discussion in The D-Word forums also helped me informally triangulate and challenge my own conclusions about the state of documentary distribution. To a lesser extent, I also monitored discussions on Doculink, which started in 2001 as an email listserv and support network for documentarians. Like The D-Word, Doculink is free to join; however, members communicate to each other through its Yahoo Group and email, rather than through a dedicated website. I reviewed the daily emails I received and occasionally searched for information through the Yahoo Group to supplement my research on the D-Word. Ultimately, this unconventional form of desk research, carried out through the Web, has been an immensely valuable way to understand distribution trends and observe how documentary professionals have developed systems to offer support and guidance to one another while strengthening their global community.

2.2.5 Field Research

This study balanced desk research with field research so as to, through triangulation, verify and increase the credibility of the information obtained. According to Wolcott (2008: 47) field research, or 'fieldwork' as he describes it, 'can be subdivided into two major activities: participant observation and interviewing'. This section reviews how I used both of these activities as a means to gather information in the field. Participant observation is a qualitative research method often used by anthropologists to obtain ethnographic understanding of people in a natural setting. Gans (1999: 541) observes 'participant observation' has broadened in scope and has been combined with other qualitative empirical methods to fit under the heading of 'ethnography'. Although my study was not 'ethnographic' in the purest sense (focusing more on industry rather than individuals), my conceptual framework led me to consider how digital technologies had changed the process of documentary distribution for distributors, filmmakers, and audiences. My attendance at festivals allowed me to engage with these three (increasingly overlapping) groups and gain a sense of how the documentary industry, and the community that sustained it, functioned. Participant observation allowed me to develop a 'greater understanding of the phenomena from the point of view of participants' (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002: vii). It demanded, to some extent, that I experience that which I was studying. This method was most apparent in the various professional roles I filled working within the industry. Although I have yet to gain first-hand experience of distributing my own documentary films, many of the activities I took part in developed skills that I have written about in my research. For example, my work on the DocAgora WebPlex (discussed in the next section) allowed me to experience the difficulties of launching a platform for user-generated content. My outreach work for clients of Breakthrough Distribution enabled me to experience the challenges of building a community of supporters for a documentary film. My work as the webmaster for Power to the Pixel demanded that I become deeply engaged with social media, in order to successfully launch the company's Twitter and Facebook pages, and learn how to use these tools to build a following of

thousands. My involvement with Power to the Pixel's London Forum gave me access to experts and provided a rich source of knowledge in the area of innovation, affording me the opportunity to experience (and transcribe into reports) several days worth of discussions at the annual think tank sessions. My ongoing work with Power to the Pixel and my regular attendance at documentary industry events kept me immersed in my topic of study and gave me ongoing access to industry experts, expanding my personal and professional networks and allowing me to recognise patterns and changes in rhetoric about distribution.

One way I carried out participant observation, as DeWalt and DeWalt (Ibid.: 4) characterise it, was by 'using everyday conversation as an interview technique'. Such an approach to gathering information was particularly useful in this study. Wolcott (2008: 47) suggests that interviewing (in the broadest sense) can include 'casual conversation'. As details about distribution have traditionally remained confidential, an 'informal' approach was a useful means to attempt to uncover such heavily guarded information. My awareness of filmmakers' non-disclosure obligations and distributors' promotional agendas dissuaded me from investing in formal interviews as a research method. Like Wolcott (Ibid.: 57), I was aware that formal interviewing could be time-consuming and often unsuccessful in producing the desired or intended output. Therefore, I favoured the unstructured and efficient approach of informal interviews. Robson (2002: 282) describes the *informal interview* as 'where one takes an opportunity that arises to have a (usually short) chat with someone in the research setting about anything which seems relevant'. This approach worked particularly well in instances when distributors and filmmakers were on a tight schedule and I was only able to ask a few questions after their presentation or film screening, capturing a few key ideas in my notes. Occasionally in these situations, when I felt it would be helpful, I inquired about continuing the conversation in a more formal setting. Typically such suggestions were politely turned down or discreetly avoided. Fontana and Frey (2005: 699) observe that 'response rates continue to decline, indicating that fewer people are willing to disclose their "selves" or that they are so burdened by requests for interviews that

they are much more selective.’ This appeared to be the case for my research. However, when opportunities presented themselves, I did take time to conduct some formal interviews (see Appendix C), partially through the work I did for Power to the Pixel. The general aim of these interviews was to inform my knowledge on a number of topics relating to online distribution and was not for the purpose of gathering hard data in the form of questionnaires or statistics. Consequently, these interviews were individually tailored with open-ended questions. The interviews usually lasted about a half-hour and were conducted in person, over the phone, via instant messaging, or through email. Responses were documented by handwritten or typed notes and sometime audio recorded. Five of these interviews were edited and published on the Power to the Pixel website, either in a question and answer format or adapted into a blog article. Two of these interviews were designed to inform specific case studies – my interview with Andrew Mer, vice president of content partnerships at SnagFilms and my interview with Jamie King, founder of VODO, informed case studies included in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4 and Section 5.5). All interviews were exploratory and they generally sought to fill gaps in knowledge or confirm facts that I had collected through desk research and participant observation. Each interview was different and tailored to the individual, generally allowing participants some freedom to extrapolate. Unlike those whom I informally interviewed, the eight individuals I conducted semi-structured interviews with were all aware that an interview was taking place and that the information they provided could be attributed to them and was likely to be published in some format. In many cases, I also held informal interviews with these experts, usually as an in-person follow-up conversation. For ethical reasons, all of the information gathered through informal interviewing has been kept confidential and has not directly appeared in this thesis, at least not without referencing an alternative public source as evidence.

My field research was both labour intensive and highly rewarding. Although it required that I travel long distances, often at my own expense, and dedicate a significant amount of time – I spent over sixty days conducting field research (not

counting the extensive work I did for *Power to the Pixel*) – the breadth of knowledge it produced made it an entirely worthwhile pursuit. Field research offered a vital way to triangulate the information I gathered through my desk research by granting me the opportunity to make personal observations and conversational inquiries, which I documented in my field notes. The luxury of a networking setting meant that industry experts and filmmakers were naturally at ease and willing to speak more freely, without feeling the need to self-consciously censor or revise the information and opinions they shared, than they otherwise may have been in a formal interview setting. The comfort and community such networking environments created allowed me to speak to many more people than I could have encountered outside of these events and afforded me deeper insight than I likely could have elicited through more formal styles of interrogation. In addition, it allowed me to speak with professionals who may not have been available for formal interviews. However, my informal approach to interviewing also presented a challenge by giving me very little control over the research situation, as I had to react to and interact with others spontaneously, making it difficult to always be comprehensive in my note taking. Field research allowed me to develop my knowledge in the area of distribution, helping me to understand the changing social dynamics of the documentary industry from an insider's perspective (see Appendix C for a list of events attended). Ultimately, participant observation and informal interviewing were useful because they enabled me to blend in with the natural activities of the events I attended and collect data discreetly, without the formality and subject self-consciousness that often arises from on-the-record discussions. As Burgess (1990: 5) suggests, doing field research is 'not merely the use of a set of techniques but depends on a complex interaction between the research problem, the researcher and those who are researched'. Immersing myself in the documentary community helped me gain a better first-hand understanding of the cultural and economic developments affecting distributors, filmmakers, and audiences as they adapt to the challenges and opportunities that had emerged within the realm of distribution.

2.2.6 Action Research

My research has always been driven by my personal ambition to inspire positive change within the documentary industry. Therefore, from the onset, I had a plan to develop a practical research element that would serve as a data source while also demonstrating how online interactions could enhance documentary distribution. Although not perfectly classified as such, this online 'experiment' was guided by principles of action research. Action research is, as Stringer (2007: 8) describes it, 'a collaborative approach to *inquiry* or *investigation* that provides people with the means to take systemic *action* to resolve specific problems'. Most commonly used in education, action research is often envisioned as a cycle of 'look, think, act' that calls for revision and retesting in order to formulate better solutions to the problem at hand (Ibid.: 8-9). The research I carried out never managed to engage the documentary community in the research process to the extent that it could rightfully be called 'action research'; however it did possess, in essence, the key characteristics, which Stringer (Ibid.: 11) identifies as: *democratic, equitable, liberating, and (life) enhancing*. This research (see Appendix A) sought to solve the problem of the need for transparency in the industry by facilitating the open sharing of information in a collaborative online database. Prior to the Internet, the only way to gather information about distributors was via word of mouth. Information rarely got documented, which put distributors at an advantage and gave them little incentive to improve their services or offer better contract terms. Although lack of transparency remains a problem, the Internet has challenged this status quo, giving filmmakers new ways to effectively uncover information about distribution methods. I intended to facilitate the growth of knowledge in this space by developing an online tool that would help aggregate this hard to access information for my research and open it up to the wider community. According to Stringer, action research's 'primary purpose is as a practical tool for solving problems experienced by people in their professional, community, or private lives. If an action research project does not *make a difference*, in a specific way, for the practitioners and/or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objective' (Ibid.: 12). My research

began with the clear intention to make a difference by inspiring cooperative action within the documentary community, which ultimately aimed to produce a greater collective knowledge of documentary distribution.

This project began in my first year of study, when I devised a plan to create a resource that, through wiki technology, would allow the public to aggregate and evaluate information about distributors. My hope was that documentary filmmakers would contribute to this resource and use it to inform their decisions about how to best distribute their films. In order for it to be successful, the website needed to be simple to use, easy to understand, and simultaneously open and transparent. It was important that anyone could contribute information, which I could verify, if necessary, through email follow-up, and that no one was required to admit his or her true identity when posting to the site. Given that I had never before developed an online database, I was not exactly sure how I would manage to build this site — until I came into contact with DocAgora. At the 2008 Hot Docs festival in Toronto, I established a research partnership with the Canadian-based think tank organisation, DocAgora, which promised to provide the funding and resources needed to carry out this project. DocAgora had already been awarded over Can\$100,000 in funding and had mapped out a framework for the WebPlex, which would establish a dynamic online knowledge base for the documentary community. Since my idea fit into a corner of DocAgora's bigger plan, we decided to form an alliance. For two years, I worked continuously with the DocAgora team to develop this wiki database of information for the documentary community. In working on this project, my goal was to create a tool that could make the distribution process more transparent by collecting hard to find data (and opinion) on documentary distributors and allowing users to rate their services. I managed the design and data collection for the distribution arm of this site, gathering information on more than 380 distribution entities from online databases and company websites. I have included more details on this process in Appendix A.

When the DocAgora WebPlex launched in 2009 at an event at Hot Docs, it became open to user-generated entries and ratings. It was my hope that members of the documentary community would participate in the site, sharing information and opinions, which would allow me to use a mixed methods approach to quantitatively analyse the data provided and qualitatively analyse the online comments and behaviours of the community. The WebPlex was constructed within the frame of an action research methodology, whereby I would learn from the process of creating the WebPlex and adapt it to better suit the needs of the documentary community. This design was important because it gave my research the chance to extend beyond academia, while directly demonstrating how technology was creating an impact upon documentary distribution by facilitating the growth of collective knowledge. Unfortunately, development delays and funding limitations stopped me from being able to revise the site design and user-engagement in the WebPlex was too low to generate enough meaningful data to afford primary analysis and qualify my research as 'practice'. Nevertheless, the WebPlex offered a valuable lesson in the challenges of engaging an online audience and inspiring users to make the effort to share personal information for the benefit of the greater community.

2.2.7 Case Studies

The data collection methods discussed in this chapter all served to inform a series of in-depth case studies, which are at the heart of this research. Merriam (1998: 33) observes that case studies are 'a particularly suitable design if you are interested in *process*'. Studying the process of distribution through case studies allowed me to effectively explore the complex and convergent nature of online platforms and scrutinise innovative examples of documentary films. Yin (1984: 23) defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This definition describes what makes case studies unique from other research methods and why they are often used to examine complex subjects. A benefit of case studies is that they allow

for detailed examination, aiming 'to illuminate the general by looking at the particular' (Denscombe 2007: 36). I was able to incorporate a wide spectrum of evidence (including news articles, video recordings, interviews, direct observations, etc.) to form a comprehensive and accurate understanding of my subjects. Case studies comprehensive nature means that they tend to be 'holistic' and their value comes from 'the opportunity to explain *why* certain outcomes might happen – more than just find out what those outcomes are' (Ibid.). Yin (1984: 9) suggests that for 'how' and 'why' questions, the case study is a particularly suitable method of inquiry. By offering insight into *why* some online platforms were failing to engage audiences and *how* some filmmakers were succeeding in this endeavour, my case studies confirmed in practice the theory that ongoing innovation and audience engagement are key components of successful online distribution. I have taken the time here to expand on the logic and approach I have used to construct these case studies in order to enhance the credibility of my research.

Although case studies are an excellent way to gain in-depth knowledge of a specific subject, they must necessarily be selective in number. Consequently, I took care to curate my case studies so that they individually presented unique, specific insights while also sharing commonalities that allowed them to collectively offer a broader understanding. Fundamentally, each case study needed to have a strong connection to documentary and be about a 'hot' topic, frequently appearing in articles and discussions relevant to documentary distribution. Beyond these criteria, the elements that linked my case studies together were two key ideas (innovation and audience engagement) explored from two different perspectives (distributors and filmmakers). When I started this research, I was primarily interested in how filmmakers were successfully self-distributing their films using the Web. Consequently, Robert Greenwald, who was well-known for his alternative distribution methods, was the first case study chosen. Following the rise of crowdfunding, I decided to examine *The Age of Stupid* (2009) so as to explore its economic model and build upon the themes I had developed through examining Robert Greenwald's methods. The final film example, *Life in a Day* (2011), was a late

addition to this 'films and filmmakers' series. I selected it to replace another 'crowdsourcing' case study I had previously written about *RiP: A Remix Manifesto* (2008), which I was inclined to omit because it diffused my central themes by raising tangential questions about copyright control. *Life in a Day* naturally carried on from the previous two case studies, supporting the developing arguments and hinting at the potential collaborative future of documentary. This trio of case studies fit coherently together, allowing me to explore the growing relationship between filmmakers and their followers in an effort to understand how audience participation in the funding, production, and distribution process might provide sustainability for documentary.

I used a similar method to select the other set of case studies (contained in Chapter 5), which examined four different services that supported online documentary distribution. I began with FourDocs because, when I started this research, it was lauded as a unique user-generated platform for documentary and gateway for new talent to enter the professional industry. Choosing my next case study, Current TV, allowed me to build upon the user-generated themes and explore how cross-platform distribution was evolving and engaging audiences. The third case study, SnagFilms, was chosen in order to explore how a free online platform, which exclusively distributed documentary films, could compete for audience attention and generate revenue. The fourth case study in this section, about VODO, was included to help bridge the two case study chapters and build upon ideas about free distribution and patronage, which were introduced in the previous case study. As a collection, these case studies aimed to show how the process of distributing documentaries has changed in recent years and what cultural and economic effects this has had. In order to comprehend the outcomes of these four platforms and understand if they have produced sustainable models for documentary, I had to look critically at how they functioned, by exploring and testing their technology and measuring it against other similar platforms. Trying out a variety of online distribution services better equipped me to examine my chosen case studies and consider to what extent they were able to serve their audiences and

filmmakers. When I started examining these cases, each one inspired optimism about the future of documentary on the Web. Although I did not know what the outcomes would be, I chose these case studies expecting they would prove to be successful examples of platforms for documentary. Over my years of observation, as I integrated new evidence into the case studies, it became clear that each one of the platforms had significant challenges to overcome in order to inspire online audiences to watch and support documentary.

To construct my case studies, I pulled from a variety of sources and analysed different types of data (see Table 2.2). Websites were a critical way to understand these case studies and it was essential that I thoroughly navigate through them, testing their features, and monitoring their changes using screenshots to capture images of them. I used the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (which allowed me to see how webpages appeared on a given date) as a way to verify observations I had made previously about site design and user engagement. Within the platform case studies in Chapter 5, many of the figures are images I pulled from this reliable online archive. The Wayback Machine was a useful way to review the evolution these online platforms underwent over time. In addition, I also used the Web as a source for news articles and video recordings. Reviewing videos of presentations I had attended was a useful way for me to validate information I had collected in my field notes and gather verbatim quotes. This was particularly relevant in the case studies on *The Age of Stupid* and VODO. As previously discussed, interviews helped to inform my research and I had many opportunities to question people directly associated with these case studies, usually after I saw them speak at industry events. As many of the experts spoke at multiple events, I was able to cross-reference the information they provided to monitor their facts and stories, checking for repetition and incongruencies. It was critical that I took careful notes so that, when called for, I could verify and expand upon such information through Internet searches and informal interviewing. With very few exceptions, I have refrained from referencing directly from my field notes and instead found online sources (interviews, videos, web pages, etc.), which supported my observations, to cite as evidence. My method

of combining personal observation (and occasionally interviewing) with desk research allowed me to validate the information and strengthen the reliability of my case studies.

Table 2.2 Key Data Sources for Case Studies

Case Study	Sources of Information
FourDocs: Channel 4's Forgotten Failure	FourDocs Website; Internet Archive's Wayback Machine; Self Distribution and the Online Opportunities (Sheffield 2007); The ABC of Factual Commissioning (Sheffield 2007)
Current TV: Democratised and Commercialised	Current TV Website; Internet Archive's Wayback Machine; DigiDocs 360: Emerging Revenue Models? (Sheffield 2007); Current TV (Sheffield 2007); Making Content for the Web and TV (Power to the Pixel 2008); Current TV Presentation by Emily Renshaw-Smith, Director of Viewer Created Content (Royal Holloway 2008)
SnagFilms: User-Distributed Documentary	SnagFilms Website; SnagLearning Website; Meet the Experts (IDFA 2009); Semi-Structured Interview with Andrew Mer, VP of Content Partnerships (2010); Digital Documentary Distribution: How, Where and Why to Host Your Film Online (Sheffield 2010)
VODO: Making Piracy Pay	VODO Website; Panel: Have You Seen This? The Digital Distribution Panel (BRITDOC 2008); Distribution Case Study: <i>Steal This Film</i> (Power to the Pixel 2008); Adventures in P2P (Power to the Pixel 2009); What Filmmakers Can Learn from Pirates (Sheffield 2009); Semi-
Robert Greenwald: Distribution without Distributors	Brave New Films Website; Brave New Theaters Website; <i>Wal-Mart</i> Website; <i>Iraq for Sale</i> Website; Distribution Case Study: Brave New Films and <i>Iraq for Sale</i> (Power to the Pixel 2007); Adventures in Online Distribution [Audio Recording] (BRITDOC 2007); Lance Weiler Interview with Robert Greenwald [Audio Recording] (2006)
<i>The Age of Stupid</i> : Campaigning through Crowdfunding	<i>Age of Stupid</i> Website; IndieScreenings Website; DigiDocs 360: Emerging Revenue Models? (Sheffield 2007); <i>Age of Stupid</i> (Sheffield 2007); Panel: Brave New Finance (BRITDOC 2008); Distribution Case Study: <i>Age of Stupid</i> - A Global Release Campaign (Power to the Pixel 2009); <i>Age of Stupid</i> : A Masterclass with Franny Armstrong (Sheffield 2009); Case Study: A Guide to Crowd-funding - <i>Age of Stupid</i> [Video] (2009); Making Change: An Introduction to Advocacy-Driven Distribution (Sheffield 2010)
<i>Life in a Day</i> : YouTube's Audience Activity	<i>Life in a Day</i> Website; <i>One Day on Earth</i> Website; Live Stream of Sundance Premiere and Q&A (2011); Kevin Macdonald: <i>Life in a Day</i> (Sheffield 2010)

The seven case studies I chose to include in this thesis effectively highlight what I have identified to be key points of interest and challenges that the industry has faced. Each case study was chosen with a slightly different logic, and as I wrote more case studies, the criteria for inclusion shifted as I considered how each one served to compliment the others. Thinking about my selection in this way supported cross-case analysis and allowed me to draw more general conclusions than typically common for case studies. As case studies commonly represent exceptional cases, they are often challenged on the basis of generalisability (Yin 2009: 15). However,

when considering the case studies in my research collectively, recurring themes emerge that help counteract this criticism. Furthermore, in choosing this set of case studies, I was less interested in establishing representativeness than I was in having case studies that illustrated certain points. Additionally, by including chapters on the digital revolution and the documentary market, I was able to effectively contextualise the case studies and provide more comparative evidence. In these other chapters, I used abbreviated examples to support the overall narrative and build a broader understanding of the industry. I had no difficulty finding examples as the Internet provided me with easy access to many seemingly worthwhile cases. However, even for these brief vignettes, it was essential that I took care to crosscheck the facts using multiple sites and, whenever possible, personal inquiry. Although it was easy to separate evangelical opinions from factual observations and measured criticism, it was not always easy to know if (and what) information had been strategically omitted from the data I could gather online. Ultimately, it was important to weigh all the information I found online against my own observations in the industry, in order to see what, if anything, was missing.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology for this thesis, which drew from a combination of desk research, field research, and case study analysis as a means to develop knowledge in the area of documentary distribution. It has discussed the rationale behind the variety of approaches used for this study, reviewed the research design, explained the data collection methods, and described the selection of case studies. The exploratory nature of this study required that I maintain a degree of flexibility in my methodology. As I learned along the way, I necessarily had to adjust my approach. This pattern was particularly evident in the two years I spent developing the WebPlex. By experiencing the challenge of generating data through this research project, I gained a deeper understanding of the themes inherent in my findings and the value of planning a study that relied upon a variety of research

methods. Throughout this chapter I have stressed the need to use multiple methods, or triangulate, my research. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 5) suggest, my use of such an approach 'reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question'. However, triangulation also gave me the reassurance that I was not overlooking information that might critically influence my analysis. It was important that I use different data sources and approach the research problem from different points of view – through a conceptual framework of distributor / filmmaker / audience – in order to create as complete a picture as possible of the 'social world' of documentary. Furthermore, triangulation helped me to reduce the risk of personal bias, which is an inherent challenge in qualitative studies. Ultimately, I am confident I have achieved this measured distance because the conclusions I have arrived at were not the ones I had anticipated (or intended) to find.

CHAPTER 3

The Digital Revolution

3.1 The Age of Independence

3.1.1 The New Digital Order

Digital technology has made the spread of content uncontrollable. When the film industry began, its dependence upon celluloid as a delivery format confined film screenings to public spaces. For the first fifty years of cinema, projecting films onto big screens was the only way to deliver them to the public. Then, in the 1950s, television extended access to audiences by allowing films to enter people's homes. The concept of home entertainment expanded in the 1980s, when VCR technology gave consumers their first taste of on-demand media. However, it was not until the 1990s, when digital technology linked media viewing to personal computers, that the possibility of consuming films anywhere and spreading content everywhere became a conceivable reality. This transformation in technology, frequently referred to as 'the digital revolution', has threatened the economic stability of the film industry by allowing perfect copies of films to be freely shared across the Web. Unlike film and analogue video that exist as physical transcriptions of images, digital recording transforms the information in front of the lens into a series of zeros and ones, which form a pattern of relationships defined by mathematical algorithms that are readable by computers. When grouped together, these information bits allow computers to directly reveal the recorded images by algorithmic conversion. Consequently, when copied, digital signals remain unaffected by the kind of distortion or degradation that analog formats experience. Because every detail is either recorded as a one or zero, each time a digital image is copied, even if it is a copy of a copy of a copy, it will be strictly identical to the original (McKernan 2005: 16-18). Furthermore, digital's numeric building blocks make media malleable,

allowing anyone with the appropriate software to take a video clip or sound recording and transform it into something new. These properties inherent in digital media have altered not only the shape of 'films' but also the shape of the industry that releases them.

The digital revolution has challenged the film industry's long established business models by giving consumers greater control over media and giving novice filmmakers easier and cheaper access to movie-making equipment, which has enabled them to independently create and release media into the marketplace. Through charting the rise of independent filmmaking and the development of digital distribution, this chapter establishes a historical context that bolsters the theoretical arguments of the overall thesis and provides a foundation for exploration into the documentary market, carried out in Chapter 4. Because so little research has addressed the digital revolution's impact upon documentary distribution, I have examined the broader film industry in an effort to draw out information relevant to documentary. This historical analysis has overlooked the origins of the film industry in favour of highlighting the growth it has experienced in the digital age. This chapter begins by exploring the nature of digital media and the economising effects it has had upon the filmmaking process. The core of the chapter investigates how digital technology has influenced the industry's markets and release patterns and what significance these changes have had in terms of how films connect with audiences. Ultimately, the digital revolution is a widely encompassing topic that is best explored in broad industry context, which can then suggest the overall patterns and challenges that exist within a specific niche market, such as documentary.

3.1.2 The Advent of Affordable Filmmaking

Throughout cinema history, the film industry has depended on celluloid to record and release films – at least up until the last decade, when digital staked its claim as the film format of the future. The history of digital is relatively brief. Although video has been around since the 1950s, digital recording formats did not appear until the late 1980s, when Sony succeeded in its efforts to digitise video tape recording and

introduced the world's first component digital video tape recorder (VTR), the DVR-1000 (D-1), in 1987. Following-up on the D-1, which appealed mostly to large television networks, the Digital Betacam, a 1/2-inch component digital VTR that offered better quality at a lower price, was launched by Sony in 1993. Shortly after the creation of broadcast Digi-Beta, consumer digital video (DV) cameras entered the market and the mini-DV standard was set. Before the mid-1990s, filmmakers *either* needed to manage cumbersome film equipment in order to capture high-quality images *or* sacrifice the quality of film for mobility by choosing to shoot on video. Digital eliminated the 'either/or' debate by introducing lightweight cameras that could record high-quality images. However, the first digital cameras released on the market were very expensive, costing in excess of three thousand dollars, which, at the time, was enough of a financial barrier to keep DV technology beyond the reach of most consumers and amateur filmmakers (Leitner 1996). Naturally, prices steadily declined year after year and by the end of the 1990s, digital video had become a popular format for recording documentary productions and had appeared in numerous low-budget feature films. However, this transition to digital was not without resistance as audiences, filmmakers, and distributors did not universally accept and appreciate the digital difference, particularly when digital images lacked the clarity that celluloid film images embodied. Now, in an age when (to the average consumer eye) features shot on digital are hardly distinguishable from those shot on 35mm film, it is easy to forget that this 'revolution', which made digital technology ubiquitous, did not happen overnight. Ultimately, the digital revolution gained its momentum not only from the development of better quality and more affordable hardware devices but also from the development of people's willingness to embrace and use digital technology in the production and distribution of films.

Digital not only helped filmmakers lower production costs by enabling them to operate with smaller crews, but it also offered greater recording freedom, which was particularly valued by documentarists who gained the freedom to abandon their shot lists and leave their cameras rolling in hopes of catching great moments as they happened. As a consequence, an impromptu style of shooting became

characteristic in many low-budget films of the 1990s and gained advocacy in the Dogme movement. On 20 March 1995, at a film conference in Paris, two Danish directors, Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, announced their 'Vow of Chastity' and launched Dogme 95. This avant-garde experiment with filmmaking essentially gave fiction films a 'documentary feel' by (fraudulently) defictionalising invented narratives (Kirby 2009: 18-20). The Dogme movement gained momentum and in 1998, Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* (1998) showed in the main competition at the Cannes Film Festival, along with Thomas Vinterberg's *Festen* (1998), which ultimately shared the festival Jury Prize that year with another film. Shot on mini-DV stock, but transferred to 35mm for projection, these low-budget films were the first of their kind to gain such critical acclaim. Their success signified a major breakthrough in the industry's transition to digital. Many early low-budget digital films, including *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), adopted an unrefined style of filmmaking in part because the digital format, in its infancy, had an aesthetic that practically demanded it. Filmmakers who used digital video could compensate for poor image quality by embracing the novelty of the documentary style, resurrecting the spirit of cinema vérité while remaining on the forefront of technology. This raw approach to filmmaking attracted significant attention and created some controversy, but ultimately it proved popular enough to help establish digital as a credible recording format and encourage its further adoption by the industry. However, digital remained largely a format for documentary and independent fiction features during this time. It was not until 2002, when George Lucas released *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones*, that an all-digital feature film demonstrated the capacity to be as visually spectacular and successful in cinemas as its celluloid counterparts. As attitudes changed and technology became more affordable, the gap between professional and amateur filmmaking closed, creating new opportunities for ultra low-budget films to enter the marketplace.

Another milestone in the digital revolution happened in the area of post-production, through the development of consumer editing systems, which made the process of filmmaking an economical and accessible enterprise. In 1982, Lucasfilm

introduced the EditDroid – the first ‘non-linear’ video editing system. This development, which eliminated the need to scroll forwards and backwards through film or video to edit together a sequence of clips, marked the dawn of digital editing. The EditDroid failed to make it to the market, but its design paved the way for Avid Technology’s popular Media Composer. The industry initially challenged the Media Composer’s value, debating whether using a computer would actually slow down the editing process instead of aiding it. But as computer capabilities increased, so did the practicality and demand for non-linear editing systems (McKernan 2005: 24-25, 111). With its graphical interface, Apple’s Macintosh computer, released in 1984, introduced the possibility of desktop edit suites. Subsequently, in 1999, Apple fulfilled this potential with the introduction of Final Cut Pro, a consumer rival to the expensive industry standard Avid edit suites. By the end of the 1990s, offline editing had become the industry norm, causing features shot on 35mm to undergo a digital intermediate process, whereby the film stock was digitised, then edited and finally output again to 35mm as a film (Willis 2005: 3). Once filmmakers could digitise footage, they could more easily alter narrative structure and use post-production effects to support the story creatively. According to Willis (Ibid.: 7-8), an apparent shift in independent filmmaking began in the 1990s, when filmmakers, enchanted by the new possibilities, placed a greater emphasis on post-production editing and special effects than they did on cinematography and lighting. Since filmmakers could afford to spend more time in post-production, editing began to inform the filmmaking process as it became common practice for filmmakers to digitise footage during production, then adjust their shooting schedules to accommodate their evolving narrative needs. Although these non-linear systems required a substantial financial investment when they first appeared on the market, they invaluablely offered new creative possibilities, allowing filmmakers to alter, edit, and animate footage in ways that were once unimaginable and prohibitively expensive. Ultimately, digital technology in post-production helped to inspire the low-budget movement by reducing the amount of time and money required to finish a film, making filmmaking a more widely accessible and appealing pursuit.

New styles and structures surfaced as artists rearranged the old mechanics of filmmaking into the new art of digital cinema. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, technology rapidly improved and once unaffordable tools dropped in price. One example of the kind of experimental filmmaking that emerged from this new access to digital editing technology is the feature documentary *Tarnation* (2003). Breaking traditional norms with his ultra-low budget film, Jonathan Caouette demonstrated how anyone with access to an iMac might take a hodgepodge of digital media and transform it into an internationally acclaimed feature documentary. Experimenting with Apple's iMovie software, Caouette digitised home video tapes, answering machine recordings, and family photos that he had compiled since he was eleven-years-old. Shaping these elements into an autobiographical account of the last two decades of his life, Caouette created an intimate portrait of a dysfunctional family. Critics applauded the film at both the Sundance and Cannes Film Festival, and it went on to play in art house theatres and have its release on DVD. At the time, the film's success was groundbreaking, particularly given Caouette's estimation that (not counting the computer he already owned) he only spent \$218 to make the film (Salamon 2004). In an article in *USA Today*, Caouette commented, 'This literally went from my desktop computer to a worldwide distribution deal in less than a year. It's really something of a miracle' (Acohido 2005). Caouette's success delineated the jump from low-budget to no-budget filmmaking. As the cost of filmmaking radically decreased, the industry saw a marked increase in experimentation with narrative forms and a growing number of filmmakers who felt free to take creative risks with little fear of financial loss. Caouette launched his filmmaking career, at least in part, due to the novelty of his approach. Had he made *Tarnation* five years later, the film likely would not have drawn the same amount of attention on the international festival circuit. Within a matter of years after *Tarnation's* release, it became commonplace for independent films to be modestly self-funded and assembled on home computers. Although the proliferation of digital tools has inspired more diverse forms of storytelling, the effects of this growth have not been entirely beneficial.

As a greater number of people consider themselves to be 'filmmakers' and produce no-budget films, the market has become oversaturated with amateur content, making it almost impossible for any homemade documentary, no matter how original and compelling, to stand out from the rest. The flooding of the marketplace with low-budget productions has created a crisis in independent cinema whereby the supply of feature films now largely outweighs audience demand to see them. This dilemma has been well documented in the press (see Hernandez 2008, Thompson 2008, Cieply 2011). It seems unlikely that this situation will improve for niche films given that they must not only compete with new releases but they must also compete with the infinite backlog of content that is now readily available to all on the Internet. Unarguably, digital technology has played a prominent role in the development of this super-congested marketplace. Yet the core of the issue has not arisen from the technology itself but rather from the massive number of people who have employed digital media and tools and created new content. The emergence of this participatory culture has contributed to what Leadbeater and Miller (2004) have called the 'Pro-Am Revolution'. This 'Professional-Amateur' uprising has developed as a combined result of professional digital technology becoming accessible to amateurs and the Web giving 'Pro-Ams' the ability to easily distribute their work globally. Consequently, professionals have encountered far greater competition in the marketplace. Yet the economy has not grown enough to support this new population of skilled individuals. Despite their obvious talents and passion, Pro-Ams typically fail to make enough money to sustain professional careers and frequently only gain recognition, not income, for sharing their work on the Web. For many Pro-Ams, the freedom to pursue their passion is reward enough. For others, the hope of making a living pushes them to develop skills in other areas, such as marketing and distribution, that enable them to appeal to audiences via the Web and circumvent gatekeepers, all in an effort to turn their passion into paid work.

3.1.3 The Rise of Social Networks

The development of social networks has been critical for independent filmmakers, giving them access to the tools they need to personally market their films and engage audiences in their work. When Tim Berners-Lee first designed the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, he imagined it would be built through public collaboration. He mapped out a plan that required people to not only read and create web pages, but also add to and amend the web pages of others. However, because the popular browsing software of the time only allowed for reading and presenting web pages, the Web could not reach its collaborative potential until many years later (Gauntlett 2004: 6). Although the preliminary design of browser software was a key factor in the limitations of early user interaction on the Web, it posed a much smaller hurdle to overcome than the underdeveloped network technology of the time. Low bandwidths made it difficult to transfer large amounts of information. Consequently, it was not until the arrival of broadband that the Internet became a viable video distribution platform and popular collaborative workspace. This second phase of Web development, commonly referred to as Web 2.0, led to an expanse of online interactivity and offered the ability to ‘harness collective intelligence’ on the Web (O’Reilly 2005). Although the Web 2.0 movement grew over the course of several years, it officially gained its title in October 2004, with the inaugural Web 2.0 Conference. Around that time, a burst of interactive websites surfaced, offering the public opportunities to alter and influence content on the Web in unprecedented ways. A rapidly growing number of users took part in this cooperative movement, building online identities and networking on a variety of social platforms. These new spaces enabled individuals to form communities, share media, and express themselves to the world – it heralded the popularity of user-generated content and ‘social media’. Sites like MySpace, Flickr, and YouTube are just a few of the hundreds of platforms that launched during this time. Through these new media outlets, anyone could easily publish writing, images, and videos on the Web, creating a cacophony of human expression and a deluge of new knowledge. Millions explored the limits of these Web 2.0 platforms, transforming

what once operated as a predominantly read-only resource into a global interactive forum. This surge of public opinion and shared information on the Web has been debated as both the primary advantage and dilemma of the Web 2.0 phenomenon (see Section 1.2.3). Because it has become easy for anyone to contribute content to the Web, the amount of content available has become almost infinite, making it difficult for any one film to stand out; yet as Web 2.0 has fueled the problem of an oversaturated market, it has also proposed a solution – harnessing social media to build distribution networks and filter through content on the Web.

Since the introduction of Web 2.0, the word ‘social’ has been popularly linked to the Web. The Social Web has emerged as a dynamic space that enables anyone to contribute and filter through content in highly efficient ways. Prior to the Social Web, only publishers had the power to decide what material deserved public attention. Now, user activities play a large role in determining content value on the Web. Voting features and collective averaging enable users to quickly understand public sentiment. Tagging allows archives to become indexed. These systems of classification, called folksonomies, result from tagging and give people not only an efficient way to organise their own content, but also the means to find relevant content, which others have tagged. These kind of social tools have created powerful collaborative filters on the Web, which sort through the ever-growing amount of content available. This shift away from a ‘read only’ Web to a ‘user-generated’ Web has given birth to what Yochai Benkler (2006) calls ‘the networked information economy’ (see Section 1.2.3). Benkler argues that, as people move from passive recipients of ‘received wisdom’ to active participants in public debates, ‘They can check the claims of others and produce their own, and they can be heard by others, both those who are like-minded and opponents [...] It opens the possibility of a more critical and reflective culture’ (Ibid.: 130). Network technology has not only allowed individuals to efficiently compare one service or product with others, but it has also enabled people to come together to collectively build repositories of knowledge and culture. One of the most remarkable characteristics of this kind of collaborative effort is that the millions who help organise information or generate

content on the Web usually do so by their own initiative, without compensation. 'Commons-based peer production', as Benkler (Ibid.: 60) describes it, is evident in projects like Wikipedia and open source software. The Social Web has fostered greater cooperation among widespread groups of people and presented an opportunity for filmmakers to extend their networks and gain support for their films (see Chapter 6). This online social context has made the process of consuming documentaries a shared experience.

Increasingly, social networks have been used as a basis for promoting documentary films and expanding audience engagement. In the example of Nanette Burstein's *American Teen* (2008), which premiered in competition at the Sundance Film Festival, the team behind the documentary built a Facebook page with rich, dynamic content aimed at attracting the film's core audience of teenagers. The film followed five small town Indiana high school seniors as they moved towards graduation. Each of the teens had his or her own Facebook profile, which linked to the fan page that hosted videos from their journey to Sundance. By opening up the story, and making the characters accessible to online audiences, the producers were able to build and engage a significant fan base for the film, well before it was released (Facebook 2008). Likely due in part to the film's demonstrated fan following, Paramount Vantage acquired the film during the festival for a reported two to three million dollars (Zeitchik and Goldstein 2008). Because building a Facebook page does not require any programming skills, documentary filmmakers have been able to increase their film's online presence and generate public interest in it without needing specialised skills. Beyond Facebook, films can utilise 'embed and spread' items, which allow Internet users to share contents with others, to facilitate viral promotion. Trailers are the most commonly shared items, however widgets (see Section 5.4) can create more meaningful engagement. For example, the marketing team behind the documentary *The End of the Line* (2009) created a widget that enabled people to conduct a search that told them what species of fish were listed as endangered and what ones were safe to eat. This application had five hundred installs on Facebook, along with 219,000 impressions (Shooting People

2009). When films offer these kind of social media extensions, they also offer audiences greater means to engage with and promote their stories. Social media tools enhance the value of films by making it easy for people to instantly connect with content and become more personally invested in it. Even a function as simple as 'liking' a film's Facebook page can establish a bond with viewers that lasts far longer than the experience of watching the film does. Evidence suggests that the majority of independent filmmakers understand the need to use social media to promote themselves and their films. The ITVS Digital Survey (ITVS 2011), which gathered responses from 1017 domestic and international producers, found that eighty-five percent of producers said they used Facebook as a tool to engage with audiences (Ibid.: 14). This study also uncovered that those who used social media the most (seven to ten hours per week) also reported the largest earnings of 'digital revenue' (Ibid.: 5). Social media's ability to allow filmmakers to have a direct influence over their films' profits gives filmmakers a reason to protect their digital rights. As ITVS's research showed, about two-thirds of US producers retained their 'new media' rights on their most recent project (Ibid.: 12). There seems to be a general understanding that, even though online distribution generates relatively little money at the moment, this market is still in its infancy and is certain to expand and likely to return far greater profits. The hope is that someday the Internet will offer filmmakers a way to distribute their films directly to niche audiences, without the need to innovate or put significant personal effort into marketing. Online marketing certainly has become easier to execute as a result of network technology, but it still remains an undertaking that most filmmakers cannot successfully manage by themselves. Not surprisingly, the main distribution challenge filmmakers feel they must overcome is 'promotion/marketing' (Ibid.: 15). Participation in social networks can create a deeper connection with audiences, but for social networks to generate money, there must be a cultural shift that encourages people to directly support the films and the filmmakers they connect with online, either through paying for films or by making voluntary donations to the creators. As it stands, social networks primarily function as a means for promotion and have not yet

developed as revenue mechanisms.

3.2 The Move Towards On-Demand

3.2.1 The History of Home Video

The industry's transition into the digital age has been marked by a rise in consumer power, which became apparent well before the Internet – with the advent of the VCR. Characterising the move towards on-demand media, the VCR inspired a revolution in home entertainment when it entered people's living rooms, forever transforming their viewing habits along with the movie industry's business practices. First invented by Sony in 1965, then adapted by JVC into the VCR format in 1976, the videocassette recorder did not become a household fixture until the 1980s. Prior to the advent of the VCR, consumers' access to movies was limited to the predetermined screening times at the cinema and on television. The VCR allowed television programmes to be copied, enabling anyone to freely preserve, review, or share programmes with others. The VCR also gave people choice, freeing them from synchronising their viewing times to the schedule of programming on television and allowing them to select films to watch at home. Not only could people determine when and which films to watch, but they could also interrupt their viewing experience by stopping, fast forwarding, freezing or rewinding a movie, thus fundamentally affecting its narrative flow (Keane 2007: 21). By demonstrating a cultural shift towards greater consumer power, the VCR helped establish the concept of 'on-demand' entertainment. According to Anderson (2006: 199), 'The result was a transition from *pushed* media (whether pushed onto the airwaves or into the local theaters) to *pulled* media.' Propelled by audience demand, pulled media had massive consumer appeal and created the need for widespread access to VHS copies of films. Consequently, an infrastructure of video rental stores quickly spread through suburban areas, inspiring people to develop the new habit of renting movies. As Anderson (Ibid.) argues, video rental stores extended the long tail,

offering consumers an increased abundance of choice and rewarded them with lower costs and more selection. Additionally, the emergence of the home video market created an economic shift that moved beyond the standard cinema profit model of 'one person, one ticket' to create a pricing system that allowed for multiple people and multiple viewings. Ultimately, the VCR was an important technological step towards instant access and the business models that accompanied it helped reveal a correlation between the industry's ability to make films widely accessible and its potential to return high profits.

Despite consumers' enthusiasm for the VCR, the idea that people could own films and watch them repeatedly, whenever they wanted, faced substantial resistance in Hollywood. When the VCR first appeared, the major studios failed to see its profit potential, and some even reacted with hostility towards the idea of distributing films on videocassettes. Their fear stemmed from the belief that films should be leased, not sold – allowing distributors to retain control of their property and all revenue streams associated with screening it. Leveraging this power allowed distributors to determine when and where each film was shown and ensure that revenues were rightfully paid to them for each screening. Initially, consumers purchased VCRs in order to record programming and the studios made an effort to stop this activity by filing a lawsuit. However in 1984, around the time VCRs reached a critical mass in the United States, the US Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Sony Corp. of America v. Universal City Studios, Inc.* (also known as the 'Betamax case') that the use of VCRs to record programs for time shift was 'fair use' and not in breach of copyright. The economic impact of this decision was minimal as, by that point, the studios had witnessed how releasing VHS recordings (at first in rental and then in retail) could generate significant revenue (Bettig 2008: 198-99). Revenues grew as distributors developed strategies to capitalise on their back catalogue and began pushing more and more films into home video, cable, broadcast and foreign markets. Still investing in films' domestic theatrical releases for promotion, distributors saw a greater value in 'ancillary markets'. As a consequence of this shift in strategy, the value of video distribution grew so that, by

the end of the 1980s, the combined revenue for both rental and retail videos surpassed that of either the theatrical or television markets. Wasser (2001: 4-11) estimated that during this time, video sales accounted for as much as forty percent of film studios' revenue. Such massive growth in income alleviated fears that this new market was cannibalising other markets, such as cable and theatrical. The emergence of home video helped transition the film business towards a more sustainable model that did not need big theatrical hits to ensure profit and instead allowed distributors to reap reliable revenue streams from older and less popular films.

Following the videocassette's fueling of the movie rental market in the 1980s, the digital versatile disc (DVD) gave the retail market the goods it needed to flourish in the 1990s. Similar to the CD's replacement of the cassette tape, the DVD's replacement of the videocassette enabled people to use the computer as a platform to consume media, thus strengthening the link between computers and televisions. Already accustomed to the choice and flexibility that viewing videocassettes offered and the disc format of the CD, consumers quickly adapted to using DVDs. Perhaps because of the DVD's similarity to the CD, more consumers adopted the habit of repeat viewing and began curating their own collections, which enabled many older films to find new audiences and generate significant revenues (Rombes 2005: 97). However, DVD players (as opposed to videocassette recorders) were initially conceived as playback devices and did not feature a recording function. As people began watching films on DVD, they still needed to rely on the VCR to record programming. Rather than upgrading to the DVD player and abandoning the VCR entirely, during this transition phase consumers owned and used both technologies. Despite the initial sacrifice of a recording function, the DVD format had numerous benefits, which inspired its rapid mass adoption and a subsequent growth spurt in the home video market. Instead of having a cumbersome two-hour tape, people now had a slim DVD that, with the help of MPEG compression, could contain a full-length film plus bonus features on one side. DVDs offered more viewing outlets as they could be played on a computer, game console, or DVD player (Friedberg 2002:

34-36). DVDs also provided viewers with a greater cinematic experience, producing higher quality sound and picture. To cater to audiences' increased appreciation for aesthetics, the widescreen format was resurrected and home theatres became increasingly popular. Beyond the technical benefits, DVDs developed a navigational format, which functioned similarly to websites, providing access to information through special features (Keane 2007: 25-26). Although videotape could be roughly paused, DVDs could be frozen on a particular frame of film, providing a crisp still image and giving the viewer the chance to conduct a detailed investigation of the frame. Supplementary material on the disc could also be designed to cater to fans who wanted a deeper understanding of the film or the process involved in making it (Rombes 2005: 99). For all these reasons, the popularity of the DVD grew as consumers grew to appreciate the new ways in which they could understand and view movies. Ultimately, the DVD provided a high-quality package for digital media files, giving films a tangible worth, which inflated their perceived value enough to entice consumers to want to own, not just rent, them.

When DVDs became the main delivery format for home video, both the retail and rental markets became enormously lucrative. However, profits in the home video market inevitably declined as people found ways to extract the digital files from these discs, which resulted in copies of virtually every film ever made appearing in peer-to-peer file sharing networks across the Internet. Consequently, DVD sales have entered into a period of decline that forewarn the format might not ever revive (Barnes 2009). In 2006, DVD sales still brought in half of the revenue studios generated from most of their movies, but growth in the DVD market has since halted and per-capita spending in the US has been steadily declining ever since that peak. Reports have concluded that consumers stopped buying DVDs because they felt the price point was too high (Grover 2005, Belson 2006). The industry has since significantly reduced the price of DVDs and launched Blu-ray discs hoping that the premium format would renew consumers' interest; however, the results have been less than spectacular (Barnes 2009). With such steep decline in sales, companies have started to scale down their home video operations. In 2010, Sony

cut its work force by 450 people (Fritz and Eller 2010). In the UK, although the effects have manifested at a slightly slower rate, the same doom has been forecasted, as evidenced by the collapse of popular DVD retailers Woolworths and Zavvi (Grover 2005). Video rental stores have suffered similar consequences, not only losing business to piracy but also to online competitors. Once a leading figure in the home video market, the rental giant Blockbuster experienced serious financial losses and cutbacks, resulting in the closure of hundreds of its rental stores and the company eventually filing for bankruptcy in September 2010 (Fritz 2009, McCarty et al. 2010). Blockbuster was largely defeated by Netflix, a subscription-based service that started in 1999, which allowed customers to order DVD rentals online, receive them in the mail, and post them back with no late fees. Offering a wider selection of films at a lower cost, and with no required trip to the video store, this model had massive consumer appeal. Although popular today, Netflix initially faced the challenge of persuading consumers to adopt its new rental model. Netflix's chief content officer, Ted Sarandos commented, 'Our biggest expenditure is getting people to understand our system of a fixed-fee subscription rental without late charges' (Taub 2003b). As consumers adjusted to Netflix's online delivery system, they helped popularise a new subscription model for home video distribution on the Web. Netflix's rapid growth quickly transformed the market and inspired Blockbuster to develop its own online rental service in 2004 and subsequently eliminate its late fee policy (Lessig 2008: 124). The movement of key home video suppliers onto the Web has called for the development of new business models that more strongly catered to consumer demand for greater choice and flexibility.

Advancements in digital distribution technology have expanded the home video market into the realm of video-on-demand (VOD). This trend has been evident in the case of Netflix, which, in 2007, launched its 'Watch Instantly' service, offering subscribers online streaming access to more than one thousand movies and television shows (Helft 2007). As Netflix expanded its streaming catalogue, it developed an unlimited 'streaming only' plan that initially cost only \$7.99 per month. According to its reports, Netflix has had more than one-third of its new

subscribers sign up for the streaming only plan. With over 20 million subscribers and a pattern of continual growth, accumulating more than 7.7 million net new subscribers in 2010, Netflix has become one of the most popular solutions to online film distribution in North America (Schonfeld 2011). The success of Netflix's streaming service appears to foretell the end of the DVD format and a promising future for VOD. This trend for access rather than ownership is reflected in a report from *IHS Screen Digest*, which has predicted that, in US online movie market, Internet VOD revenue will surpass electronic sell-through for the first time in 2013 (IHS 2011). Ultimately, these new revenue streams have grown substantially in recent years, but 'they have come nowhere close to making up for the decline in disc sales' (Horn et al. 2009). However, because the cost to stream films and deliver digital downloads is near zero, the profit potential for VOD is far greater than for DVD, which is burdened by manufacturing and shipping expenses. Subsequently, the consumer cost to watch a film on VOD should be somewhat less than the cost to watch a film on DVD. However, the industry has not yet made this logical adjustment as VOD rental and purchase prices are at least equivalent to (and often higher than) DVD rental and purchase prices. From a consumer perspective, inflated VOD pricing seems unfair. This perception is based on cases such as Redbox, a US-based service that positions vending machines stocked with DVDs in public spaces, including grocery stores and shopping centres. Redbox offers new release rentals for as low as one dollar per day, which is almost four times cheaper than the typical VOD rental fee. Subscription services like Netflix have more appeal than pay-per-view VOD because they allow consumers to watch as much content as possible, on either VOD or DVD, for one set price. This model allows consumers to try out unfamiliar films without incurring any loss other than their time. Premium films, including new releases, have the potential to work in a pay-per-view context, but lesser-known films likely have a better chance to find larger audiences with subscription services. Ultimately, consumer behavior, more than corporate profit strategy, determines the economics of the VOD market.

3.2.2 Shifting Release Windows

New consumer consumption habits call for media institutions to adapt their release patterns to better provide content on-demand; yet the industry has, overall, been slow to meet such demands, as executives have widely adhered to the belief that altering traditional release windows would adversely affect profitability.

'Windowing' is a system that the film industry utilises to maximise its profits, releasing the same content at different times on different platforms. In the Hollywood system, a film will typically begin with a theatrical release in cinemas. Then, approximately every three to four months, the film will enter another market. The main markets, or windows, for studio films are: theatrical, home video (both rental and retail), pay-per-view, pay television, and free television (see Table 3.1). These 'release windows' support a tiered pricing model in which the film cost essentially decreases inversely with the length of time the film has been made available to the public. Although the duration of the windows has shifted some over time, the order of the windows has remained largely intact (Park 2003: 3; Kerrigan 2010: 98). Hence, when the Internet demonstrated its capacity to deliver long-form video content, the studios, in their efforts to utilise the new delivery platform, favoured an economic model that protected the existing window structure, in particular, the lucrative home video (DVD) window. Instead of offering digital downloads in the home video window, at the same time as DVDs, the studios delayed digital releases by several months, placing them in the same market as pay-per-view.

Table 3.1 The Windows System for Studio Films

Platform	Format	Pricing	Duration	Time Delay after Theatrical Release
Theatrical	Projector screening	One-off admission	2-4 months	n/a
Home video	DVD, Blu-ray	Rental and retail sale	Indefinite	4-6 months
Pay-per-view	Cable, satellite, Internet	Pay-per-view	2 Months	8 months
Pay television	Cable, satellite	Monthly subscription	18 months	12 months
Network television	Broadcast television, cable	Advertising-supported	30 months	30 months
Syndication	Broadcast television, cable	Advertising-supported	60 months	132 months

Adapted from Currah (2006: 451) and Kerrigan (2010: 159).

As an additional measure, designed to protect revenue generated from windows, studios ensured that when films were delivered to personal computers, they only existed for a finite rental period, which ended when the attached digital rights management (DRM) software would self-destruct the delivered files. DRM technology was designed to enable rights holders to manage the intellectual property aspects of digital distribution and ensure the exchange of payment for receiving digital goods. Another way to see the issue is, as Shirky (2001: 27) articulates, 'In the analog world, it costs money to make a copy of something. In the digital world, it costs money to prevent copies from being made.' However, one limitation of DRM is that it prevents people from using content in the ways they could when films were distributed in a physical format (by stripping consumers of their freedom to loan films to friends or watch them on multiple players). Because of such drawbacks, many people oppose the use of DRM (Sander 2002: 67). In an article for the *Guardian*, digital activist and author Cory Doctorow (2007) explains DRM's inherent dysfunction:

DRMs are often designed by ambitious, well-funded consortia, with top-notch engineers from every corner of the industry. They spend millions. They take years. They are defeated in days, for pennies, by hobbyists. It's inevitable because every time you give someone a locked item, you have to give them the key to unlock it too.

Although Doctorow believes that 'DRM products make buying media less attractive', the studios and distributors that employ DRM value the (albeit weak) barrier it throws up to thwart piracy (Ibid.). From the perspective of the rights holders, it is possible to imagine how just one file, transferred from user to user, will translate into a collective chain of lost revenues. However, by restricting consumer access to digital film commodities, the studios have incentivised audiences to find DRM-free digital copies through other means, most notably via peer-to-peer file sharing (Waterman 2001: 13). The problem is, as Currah (2006: 452) articulates, that 'the studio model does not make it easier or even more attractive for consumers to acquire films over the Internet in a legal format'. In part because of the studios' failure to develop a consumer-friendly model for releasing films on the Internet, the VOD market has been slow to achieve its revenue generating potential.

Media corporations have shown a pattern of resisting change, which is evident in the studios' initial aversion towards the 'day-and-date' distribution paradigm. The first publicised instance of this strategy of simultaneous cross-platform releasing occurred when Todd Wagner and Mark Cuban released Steven Soderbergh's feature film *Bubble* (2005) in cinemas at the same time that it debuted on DVDs and online. The industry's reaction to this radical model, witnessed by journalist Anne Thompson (2006) at the ShoWest exhibitors convention in Las Vegas, created a 'clearly a hostile environment'. Thompson observed that Wagner and Cuban 'represent what exhibitors fear most: the collapsing of the theatrical release window'. By challenging the long-established windows framework, Wagner and Cuban suggested that the online market could overlap with key ancillary markets – home video in particular. The studios refused such an overlap, systematically withholding films from the VOD market until after they released them on DVD, with the fear that VOD might cannibalise this market and lead to less control over content and further loss of revenues. Currah (2006: 459-460) suggests that the success of the DVD format blinded studios to the possibility of Internet-based video distribution. Fear of losing this lucrative revenue stream has made it difficult for the studios to determine where to position VOD with respect to the home video window. Declining DVD sales have given the industry a reason to consider adapting its model. Although the theatrical market still rarely overlaps with others, many studios have begun releasing films on DVD and VOD at the same time. For example, in August 2009, Sony tested its first simultaneous DVD and VOD release and has subsequently shifted the model to offer certain films on Internet-enabled televisions and Blu-ray players before they are released on DVDs (Arango 2009, Garrett 2009). Additionally, there has been an apparent trend in the shortening of the release window between theatrical and DVD, which has likely been part of studios' efforts to combat the decline of DVD sales (Corcoran 2011). As these release windows shift, they necessarily need to be redefined. This kind of market convergence suggests that the traditional windows structure cannot easily accommodate online distribution and prompts the industry to develop new

strategies that generate profit through simultaneous cross-platform releasing.

The industry's reluctance towards online distribution has stemmed, in part, from a fear that releasing in this market will reduce other revenue streams. Yet evidence has shown that the more platforms a film is available on, the more its publicity increases, and the greater revenue potential it has. Tiffany Shlain's short film *The Tribe* (2006), which is described on its website as 'an unorthodox, unauthorized history of the Jewish people and the Barbie doll', was released for free on the Sundance shorts website after its premiere at the festival. When *The Tribe* screened at the Tribeca Film Festival a few months later, Sundance briefly removed the film from its website. Shlain observed that 'sales really dropped' and claimed that 'showing it for free actually helped sales'. Her assumptions appear to hold some truth because, when the film reappeared on the Sundance website, sales increased again (Kirsner 2007b). Matt Dentler, head of programming and marketing for Cinetic, a rights management agency, argued a similar point at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009. Dentler suggested that there is money to be found in digital distribution and 'it doesn't cannibalise'. He used the Academy Award-winning documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984) as an example. When Cinetic put the film on iTunes and Amazon VOD, it became the most popular documentary rental on iTunes and the most popular independent film rental on Amazon VOD for a 'good month or two'. When Cinetic put the film on Hulu, an advertising-based online video platform that enabled free viewing, the feature documentary held number one status on all three sites. Dentler argued that 'consumer taste' allowed the film to achieve success in multiple outlets at the same time and that people are willing to pay the premium to not be bothered by advertisements (CinemaTech 2009). In an interview for *Home Media Magazine*, Ted Sarandos, chief content officer of Netflix, observed that every time consumers are offered a new technology (such as streaming), 'the money they spend on entertainment keeps rising'. Sarandos asserted that, even if online distribution does cannibalise some distribution windows, the added benefit outweighs the losses and in total 'it will grow the revenue an independent filmmaker can make on any given film' (Gil 2010). The

threat of the Internet cannibalising ancillary markets appears to be somewhat of a myth and an illogical reason to block films from online distribution.

The Internet has created opportunities to experiment with release patterns and maximise returns across multiple platforms. For example, Magnolia Pictures, owned by Wagner and Cuban, experimented with the release of *Freakonomics* (2010), a documentary based on the similarly titled bestselling book. The film appeared as a digital rental (made available on Apple's iTunes, Amazon Video On Demand, and major cable providers' VOD offerings) before it appeared in US cinemas on 1 October 2010. Rental rates were high (\$9.99 for standard definition and \$10.99 for iTunes HD – more than twice the typical price for most films rented through these outlets) and only granted consumers twenty-four hours to watch the film. This strategy aimed to reach audiences that might be interested in the film but were not in close proximity to one of the art house cinemas where it was screening (Lawler 2010). The novelty of releasing the film on VOD before its cinema release helped to generate significant publicity for the film, which ultimately debuted on the Top 10 iTunes film downloads. It maintained that position for several weeks, although, according to Rampell (2010), 'Magnolia declined to give exact numbers.' In the same article, Eamonn Bowles, president of Magnolia Pictures, explained that the company encountered resistance from cinemas, which have a bias against showing films that are, or shortly will be, available on VOD or DVD due to their fear of lost profits. Although the film only took in \$117,678 at the worldwide box office in the span of nine weeks (with a widest release of twenty theatres), according to Bowles, *Freakonomics* did not suffer from the effects of cannibalisation.⁴ Bowles stated, 'Releasing online means more people are exposed to the film. We get more support from cable advertising: it enhances DVD awareness and the buy rate.' The validity of Bowles observations is limited by the inability to measure what impact this strategy had on the overall expected income for *Freakonomics*. Ultimately, such an

⁴ See Box Office Mojo for revenue and production figures. Available at: <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=freakonomics.htm> [accessed 4 December 2011].

expensive (\$2.9 million production budget) and highly publicised documentary (based on a widely recognised book) proved to be a financial disappointment at the box office; therefore, it is conceivable that the early online release may have actually deterred ticket sales. Regardless, Magnolia has continued to organise 'pre-theatrical' releases for some of its titles – releasing films on VOD up to one month prior to their theatrical release – challenging the studios' theatrically-led model of distribution (Gruenwedel 2011b). The novelty of these new release patterns has brought substantial attention to those films that employ them; yet this attention has not necessarily translated into greater profits for the films or suggested that instant online access to new releases is the best approach.

Simultaneous cross-platform releasing can benefit documentaries by allowing them to extend their audience reach during the time when their press coverage and public interest are at their peak. The Sundance Channel employs this strategy with its VOD service, Sundance Selects, which makes films available on cable TV systems while they screen in movie theatres (Kay 2009). This kind of simultaneous releasing allows films to maximise the benefits from marketing expenditures while generating revenues across multiple platforms at the same time. Such new strategies are founded on the hope that, although the masses may not be willing to pay to see a documentary in the theater, some interested individuals might be willing to pay to watch documentaries in their homes if given easy, instant access to them. Certainly the public push for on-demand content means that films are appearing more quickly in the online market. In some ways this threatens the vitality of the theatrical market and gives some merit to Andrew Keen's question: 'When a movie is available on the Internet as soon as it has been released, why go to the extra inconvenience and cost of seeing it in a local theater?' (2007: 121). There are many obvious answers to this question; however, these arguments are most compelling for big budget studio films that offer a high level of spectacle and entertainment, tending to evoke a sense of a shared experience. For smaller films, the draw is potentially weaker and it seems quite possible that, when given the choice, many people would prefer to stay at home and watch independent films and documentaries on the Internet instead of

making the effort and paying a premium to see them in the cinema. Many independent filmmakers and distributors recognise this challenge and have worked to make the theatrical experience a special event, helping to foster discussions about the film and justify the effort audiences must make to go to the cinema. Despite all of the apparent challenges, the theatrical market is the least threatened by the digital revolution simply because, as all other markets converge onto the Web, an evening at the movies still retains its inherent value as a social experience.

3.2.3 Digital Projection

The most significant changes in the theatrical market have come from digital screening. Digital projection emerged as a 'revolutionary' technology in 1999, when its widespread adoption seemed imminent (Belton 2002: 103). Acland (2008: 97) refers to this date as 'year zero'. This was the year George Lucas's *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* (1999) screened digitally, inspiring the press and industry to embrace the idea that the entire film process, from production to post-production to exhibition, could be done digitally. According to Belton (2002: 103), the dominant perception at the time was: 'film was dead; digital was It'. However, in the years that followed, digital conversion of cinemas remained a complex and slow process. Industry battles over technology standards (in particular, compression rates and delivery formats) and who should pay for projectors delayed the adoption process, despite digital projection's obvious long-term cost-saving advantages (Lieberman 2005, Pariser 2006: 43). According to Swartz (2005: 1), the process of distributing films, by shipping film prints to cinemas, has cost the global film industry as much as one billion dollars annually. With film prints typically costing over one thousand dollars each to produce, digital conversion would literally save the studios millions of dollars for every wide release (Taub 2003a). Hardie (2002b: 31) writes, 'When a 35mm print is involved, a rule of thumb is that a feature will not go into profit for the producer until ten thousand seats have been sold.' Digital lowers the break-even point dramatically, affording a better chance for niche content to return a profit in the cinemas. For cinema owners, switching to digital requires spending around

\$60,000 on each new projector. Given the unfair cost-saving advantage for the studios and the fact that most screens already had perfectly functional 35mm projectors, cinemas have been slow to invest in digital (Grossman 2009). However, key advantages such as better quality images and greater scheduling flexibility have given cinema owners reasons to seek agreeable compromises. In the US, three major cinema chains have come together to form the Digital Cinema Implementation Partners (DCIP), which has helped facilitate digital conversion by organising a scheme that has asked studios to pay cinemas a 'virtual' print fee to help defray the costs of new equipment (McClintock 2008). The UK Film Council's Digital Screen Network (DSN) allocated twelve million pounds to equip around 210 cinemas (240 screens) with digital projection equipment (DCMS/DBIS 2009). According to a count by *IHS Screen Digest*, the number of digital screens worldwide is now more than thirty-six thousand, a total that grew by more than one hundred twenty percent from the previous year (Fuchs 2011). As a growing number of screens go digital, the theatrical market has expanded in new ways, allowing for greater flexibility in film programming and the implementation of innovative release strategies.

The benefits of digital screening go beyond simple economics. Digital cinemas have become arenas for watching sporting events, concerts, or moments in history, such as election results or the Academy Awards. Films can be linked to live events, as projectionists can easily switch over from a live feed to a digital file. Additionally, digital has enhanced the potential for different versions of the same film to be released in quick succession. For documentaries, which now no longer need to be finished to a 35mm print, this means they can be revised, updated, or expanded quickly. For example, *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* (2011) was re-released just weeks after its 11 February 2011 opening, embellished with forty minutes of new footage. A second version, which was apparently re-edited 'based on fan suggestions', encouraged fans to return to the cinema for a second viewing and helped the film become the number one grossing concert documentary of all time, beating out *Michael Jackson's This Is It* (2009) (Ditzian 2011). Ultimately, there was even a third version of the film, which debuted with the *Justin Bieber* DVD release

(Vena 2011). Although the desire for additional revenue was likely the main motive for releasing multiple versions of the film, there are other reasons why documentaries benefit from digital screenings. Unlike fiction films, which often closely adhere to a script, documentary films have more fluidity in narrative, allowing them to be amended to reflect different aspects of the same story, while still remaining true to reality. Documentary stories naturally expand beyond the confines of their finished products and merit different perspectives. Digital also affords the opportunity to experiment with releases and quickly adjust the number of screens to match audience demand. In the case of *Justin Bieber*, digital screens made it economical for Paramount to give the film the widest-ever weekend release for a documentary, opening it on 3118 screens. Such a daring wide release strategy, which used multiple versions of the film, would have been risky, costly, and impractical to execute in the days of film projection.

Digital projection has provided the flexibility necessary for experimentation, without the worry of significant financial loss, thus giving documentaries a better chance to attain financial success in the theatrical market. Digital projection is still far from being universally adopted; however, this transformation in cinema appears inevitable because of the clear advantages it offers. Digital has enabled 'shorter run times, wider or more selective openings, and flexible release calendars' (Acland 2008: 101). The main benefit for audiences has been the ability to watch better quality projections, but as Belton (2002: 103) argues, digital cinema is hardly revolutionary as it fails to offer interactivity or a substantially different cinema-going experience. Although other platforms (particularly television) have embraced interactivity as a new means for reception, cinemas have done little to exploit the possibilities digital provides. One example that suggests the untapped potential of digital screens is the Brazilian company MovieMobz, which offers a cinema-on-demand service that allows people to schedule movie screenings in their local cinema through voting online for films and programmes they would like to see (Lima 2008). This democratic approach to cinema booking does not ensure that more documentaries get into cinemas, but it does enhance the opportunity for niche films

to reach audiences and suggests that, in the future, producers of low-budget films may be able to, somewhat effortlessly, directly deliver their films to cinemas without the aid (or incurred cost) of a distributor. Audiences, in turn, may be granted greater power to influence the selection of films playing in their local cinemas. All of this is not to suggest that the theatrical market will become less competitive. The finite number of screens naturally places a limit on the number of films that can be scheduled in any given week and marketing power certainly remains a key factor in determining the success of each film. Nevertheless, digital has the potential to influence the selection of films projected, giving a greater number of films the chance to screen in cinemas and enabling more diverse kinds of screenings to take place. It is too early to predict how digital cinema will change film culture, but digital's capacity for interactivity suggests that participatory culture may eventually extend onto the big screen.

3.2.4 Everything Online and On-Demand

Although the industry quickly embraced the idea of digital projection in cinemas, it cautiously approached the idea of digital distribution on the Internet. Content owners feared piracy and saw video sharing portals as potential havens for the illegal copying of valuable intellectual property. Video-on-demand proved to be a disruptive technology that revolutionised standard industry practices by challenging the business models of traditional delivery channels, thus jeopardising the profitability and vitality of established industry sectors. Not since the introduction of the videocassette recorder has a new technology posed so much threat to the financial security of the entertainment industry (Zhu 2001: 273). The ubiquity of video streaming makes it easy to forget that online viewing is a relatively new phenomenon. Even as late as 2006, the movie industry experienced serious problems developing the technology of movie download services such as CinemaNow and Movielink (Pegoraro 2006). As a result of these failures, and the industry's inability to create a common online delivery platform, iTunes has gained headway and established itself as the dominant digital retail outlet for movies in the

US (Amel 2011). The trend towards on-demand content has driven more media corporations onto the Web, leading them to search for ways to generate revenues while they adapt their business practices in radical ways. For video rental companies, such as Blockbuster, developing online services has become necessary to compete in the market. For broadcasters, putting their content online, and developing strategies to share content across various platforms on the Web, has helped counteract declining viewership numbers.⁵ Although studios have not entirely embraced digital delivery as a means of delivering films, audiences have eagerly adopted digital delivery as a means of consuming films and other content. The migration of media onto the Web has created a wider market, giving people instant access to a broad range of content choices. This saturation of the marketplace has, in some ways, devalued 'professional' media by fostering the default expectation that, on the Web, content should be free. This expectation has also encouraged a cultural shift, in which amateur content is allowed to compete with professional content for mass audience attention, as is evident on YouTube.

The user-generated video phenomenon, which YouTube has largely facilitated, has broadened the scope of popular entertainment. With its slogan 'Broadcast Yourself', YouTube has helped cultivate a user-generated Web, while making online video consumption part of mainstream culture. In 2005, when YouTube launched, video streaming had been present on the Web for years but no single, popular platform existed that supported user-generated video contributions. YouTube had mass appeal because of its simple, integrated interface that enabled users to upload, manage, share, and view videos without advanced technical skills or high bandwidth levels (Burgess and Green 2009: 1). The site quickly set the standard for the kind of features online viewers came to expect from a video platform: free distribution, online community interaction, and user-generated content all contributed to the immediate popularity of the site. Initially, what set

⁵ For example, YouTube has developed content partnerships with the BBC, Disney, Turner, Warner Bros., Channel 4, and Channel 5, among many others (Ariño 2007: 119).

YouTube apart was the community it created, which it built by allowing users to connect with each other as friends and embed videos in other websites or share them via dedicated URLs. The site also created ensembles of videos based on search terms that inspired users to explore more deeply and watch sequences of videos, instead of just one. By providing a rating system and view count, YouTube helped users understand what others in the community valued (Cheng et al. 2008: 229-230). The success YouTube experienced in its first year of operation was so remarkable that it prompted Google to purchase the site in 'a stock-for-stock transaction' that was worth \$1.65 billion. Since it acquired YouTube in October 2006, Google has steadily built strategic partnerships with professional content suppliers. Although professional content, such as music videos, often takes the lead in the 'most popular' and 'most viewed' categories on YouTube, Snickars and Vonderau (2009: 11) observe that 'the long tail of content generated by amateurs seems almost infinite, and that sort of material often appears to be the "most discussed"'. YouTube's highly engaged community is what gives the platform its value and makes it an essential online space for the promotion, distribution, and sometimes even creation of documentary films (see Section 6.4).

As new digital devices and the Internet have enabled media to move online, they have also made content highly portable and interactive. Smartphones allow media to fit inside a pocket and grant users the freedom to watch films and programmes virtually anywhere. Still in its infancy, the mobile Web promises to fill everyone's free hours with entertainment and connect them more deeply to the content they consume. This constant access, through devices such as Apple's iPhone, has increased the demand for content designed for mobile platforms. Responding to this need, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) created an application for the iPhone that enables users who download the software to tap into 'the NFB's mammoth library of documentaries' and stream them on their phones (Broida 2009). This service, which anyone can use for free, helps people discover documentaries that they might not otherwise have come across, while helping the NFB expand the value of its archive. Filmmakers have also used mobile applications as a way to

independently deliver their films to audiences. Finnish filmmaker Kimmo Kuusniemi distributed his documentary *Promise Land of Heavy Metal* (2008) as a stand-alone iPad app, which bundled the 52-minute documentary, photo galleries, and a digital booklet together as a downloadable mini-software package that sold for two dollars (Kung 2010). Mobile media can also be used in cross-media extensions, which work to engage audiences more deeply with a film and its associated issues. For example, the documentary *Waiting for 'Superman'* (2010) launched an iPad application, called 'Super School', that worked as a social gaming companion to the film, helping audiences learn about problems in the US public school system and take action to resolve them.⁶ Whether aiding distribution or promotion, mobile applications have become an increasingly important way to extend audience reach and add value to films.

Digital formats have created an abundance of media and the Internet has made it possible for worldwide audiences to uncover items of interest in this massive catalogue of content and then watch them on-demand. As a consequence, the industry now must cater to consumer demand. This transformation from push to pull media has been gradual, as each delivery device – from VCRs to DVDs to online platforms – gave users more control over the content they consumed. As all content has moved online, distribution has become increasingly democratised, allowing audiences to choose from a seemingly infinite selection of new and old films. Anderson (2006: 24) characterises this long tail phenomenon stating, 'For the first time in history, hits and niches are on equal economic footing, both just entries in a database called up on demand, both equally worthy of being carried. Suddenly, popularity no longer has a monopoly on profitability.' Digital delivery offers niche content, like documentaries, the opportunity to compete in a global online market that can literally encompass all the media in the world. As the Internet is not governed by the same rules that limit traditional retail and exhibition (and the films that are designed for these markets), it can accommodate the full spectrum of the

⁶ See 16 March 2011 press release. Available at: <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/03/prweb5167414.htm> [accessed 15 September 2011].

documentary genre. Because reproduction costs are close to zero and there is unlimited shelf space, digital delivery has granted documentaries the same access to online audiences that mainstream Hollywood films have. However, this opportunity does not guarantee them equal attention. For example, Amazon's Instant Video service, which offers more than one hundred thousand titles to rent or purchase, only lists one hundred of them as bestsellers; not coincidentally, these tend to be the titles users first see when they visit the Instant Video homepage (Rowinski 2011). Unpopular content has little chance of rising up in the ranks without some promotion to increase consumer awareness and sales. Ultimately, the challenge in online distribution is no longer how to make films available, but rather, how to make them visible. New methods of marketing, including the use of mobile applications to extend the value of films, are helping to solve this problem. However, as the long tail of content infinitely expands, the amount of time consumers have to spend watching content remains limited, ensuring that as the market becomes progressively more competitive, popularity becomes increasingly more critical to financial success.

3.3 Conclusion

While this chapter has explored how the digital revolution has reshaped the film industry, it has also demonstrated that the change, which has taken place over the past few decades, has unfolded more as an 'evolution' rather than a 'revolution'. As Jenkins (2006: 13-14) suggests, when new media emerge, they do not displace old media but instead merely shift their status and functions by introducing new technologies. In establishing this understanding, Jenkins does not define media as 'delivery technologies' (i.e. celluloid film, VHS tape, DVDs), which are tools used to access media, but instead considers each 'medium' as a means of communication (i.e. cinema, television, the Internet). Because media continue to co-exist, Jenkins argues, 'convergence seems more plausible as a way of understanding the past several decades of media change than the old digital revolution paradigm' (Ibid.).

Through highlighting key events and effects of 'the digital revolution', this chapter has shown how the process of convergence has changed the culture of film consumption. As digital technologies have made filmmaking far more accessible and affordable, the industry has experienced a rise in the number of filmmakers and witnessed a greater diversity in their approaches. This expansion has contributed to the rise of the Pro-Am (Leadbeater and Miller 2004) and participatory culture, which has, in turn, produced a marketplace that is saturated with non-professional content. In this competitive media environment, attracting (and maintaining) audience attention online demands some amount of interactivity and targeted promotion. Social networks have facilitated promotion and deeper audience engagement by enabling conversations to develop around content. Despite the argument that the new economy is built on conversations (Kelly 1999) and evidence that suggests that filmmakers can financially benefit from social media engagement (ITVS 2011), successful film profit models that generate revenues through social networks have not yet materialised. Although digital helped the home video market become immensely profitable in the early 2000s (with the popularisation of the DVD format), it has also subsequently challenged the industry's profit viability by threatening to collapse its structured windows system into a boundless online space. In the cinemas, digital projection promises to save the industry money and allow for more creative alternatives to traditional theatrical releasing. However, digital technology has affected very little cultural change within the theatrical experience, failing to inspire interactivity to spread to the big screen. As the Internet develops as the main channel for media distribution, media consumption increasingly becomes on-demand. Ultimately, these developments in the digital revolution have given consumers more control, both over media and the marketplace.

Although the digital revolution has provoked a great deal of excitement among evangelists, who see enormous potential in the open platform of the Web, it has created just as many challenges as it has opportunities. Despite digital technology's capacity to enable more people make films and get them seen, it has not, by any stretch of the imagination, created a democratic system of distribution.

Nor has it systematically rewarded talent or become the sole inspiration for greater creativity, innovation, or self-expression. However, the Internet has helped documentary by opening up new spaces for exhibition and means of engagement. It has enabled content to spread effortlessly across platforms, allowing people to distribute films almost as easily as they consume them. This expansion of the online market has also given access to different kinds of audiences with different tastes. These online 'noisy and public' consumers, as Jenkins (Ibid: 18-19) characterises them, are active, migratory, and socially connected. Such qualities suggest that audiences have far more to offer films than just payment or their attention. Business models that enroll audiences as participants, rather than passive consumers, recognise that the boundaries that separate distribution from the other stages of filmmaking (financing, development, production, marketing, etc.) are no longer in play. In a networked environment, distribution becomes increasingly interconnected and social. This suggests that the earlier audiences become engaged in the filmmaking process, the more they can help facilitate distribution. However, despite the possibilities social media offers, how to bring together and engage fragmented audiences on the Web remains a significant challenge that both independents and media corporations must overcome.

The segmented market, which allows distributors to charge different prices for essentially the same product packaged in different forms, is virtually impossible to maintain in the context of the Internet, where all content is presented on-demand in the same digital form. As the literature review in Chapter 1 suggested, a debate exists around the idea that society is transitioning from the manufacturing of goods to the providing of services (see Bell 1976, Hill 1998: 95-96, Rifkin 2000). The Internet has helped to create this post-modern reality, and digital media have emerged as emblems of it. This is not to say that demand for tangible goods no longer exists, but rather that, in the media industries, such items (in particular, DVDs) have lost much of their intrinsic and commercial value over the past decade. Anderson (2006: 147) suggests that consumers still rely on traditional retail for the majority of their purchasing. However, the circumstances have changed for the media industries as

people's desire to own content in physical containers has since declined and, in the process, so has the tangible value of media. Therefore, in order to better cater to consumers' urge to buy 'things', the meaning of 'things', in the context of new media, must encompass far more than just tangible objects. Downloadable applications, such as those that can be purchased through Apple's App Store, have given a new shape to digital goods, and consequently a greater potential value. Although DVDs have provided a critical revenue stream, the disc delivery format is certain to one day disappear. The difficulty of assigning value to digital goods is one of the film industry's biggest challenges and a great hindrance to the development of the online film market. The film industry has been slow to establish new sources of revenue in the online market primarily due to focusing on the problems rather than the opportunities. The lack of progress in this area suggests a need to think creatively about potential solutions and move beyond traditional approaches to monetising media. As Kevin Kelly (1999) discusses, since digital content can be freely shared, its price point is set at zero; consequently, value must be generated through other means, such as providing services. Enhancing content's findability or allowing for greater personalisation are two ways the industry might create better business models. Enhancing the experience of a product, by allowing deeper levels of interactivity, can also create value for consumers. As Monica Ariño (2007: 116) articulates, the development of active consumer behaviours 'illustrates the central role that the user – rather than the provider or the device – is meant to play in a convergent environment'. Ultimately, audience demand, more than technology or tradition, is dictating the shape of the new media industry.

Debates about the digital revolution have shifted focus over time. In the 1990s, the emphasis was on convergence and how media corporations should adapt to a multi-platform media environment. Terry Flew (2009: 3) argues that media organisations, and the professionals that are affiliated with them (i.e. producers, advertisers, journalists, etc.), assumed that they would continue to function, even if the tools they used and the work they did changed. Two decades later, much bigger issues have emerged, with potential outcomes that greatly endanger established

media corporations and those who work for them. Flew (Ibid.: 13) states, 'The issue that faces all traditional 20th century mass media is whether a basic paradigm shift has occurred in how people are expecting media content to be accessed, distributed and consumed.' However, I would argue that the debate is no longer *whether* a paradigm shift has occurred, but rather, *how* this paradigm shift can be managed to the greatest benefit of everyone involved. The Internet has abolished the absolute control of those who once governed distribution. As digital has threatened the hierarchical structure of the industry, it has also created confusion about how the distribution landscape will transform if the traditional institutions that once managed the marketplace could no longer financially sustain themselves. This research has considered how everyone, from filmmakers to distributors to audiences, has had to adapt to changing distribution patterns and what benefits and drawbacks this culture shift has created for documentary. As Shirky (2008: 107) explains, 'Many institutions we rely on today will not survive this change without significant alteration, and the more an institution or industry relies on information as its core product, the greater and more complete the change will be.' The digital revolution has proven to be both empowering and destructive. Although the rhetoric tends to suggest that the Internet will solve all challenges associated with distribution, the reality is that circumventing roadblocks is, in many ways, as hard as ever, while competition within the commercial marketplace has reached a new peak. Understanding the effects of the digital revolution upon the film industry has established a necessary foundation for my targeted investigation into what impact these changes have had upon the documentary industry, which unfolds in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

The Documentary Market

4.1 Documentary's Situation in the Marketplace

4.1.1 Niche Appeal

Documentaries are niche by nature. They appeal to audiences with specific interests and tastes. This niche appeal is why virtually every Hollywood film, even those panned by critics, will outperform almost any highly acclaimed documentary at the box office. However, over the past decade, documentaries have become, at least in certain instances, part of mainstream entertainment and have demonstrated exceptional financial success at the box office. According to Austin (2007: 18), 'advertising and publicity campaigns have certainly played a significant part in bringing documentaries to the attention of audiences. And there are signs that both exhibitors and distributors are increasingly demanding "fast burn" ticket sales from documentaries, much as from fiction films.' Documentary's triumph in cinemas has been unprecedented, which suggests that a shift has taken place within the industry that has made documentaries more marketable. No simple answer can explain what inspired this growth, but Michael Moore and the Internet certainly had some involvement. With the back-to-back successes of *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), Moore proved that documentaries could entertain mass audiences and generate massive profits in cinemas. His engagement with fans through the Internet has helped him gain success at the box office and a certain celebrity status. The Internet has opened up new means of publicity for documentaries, as blogs and social networking sites have allowed people to recommend films to hundreds, if not thousands, of others simply by clicking a button. Yet even with all the growth and increased hype surrounding documentary, it still has maintained a niche status, which has limited its success in the mainstream market. This niche status is exhibited by the fact only a small subset of movie-going

audiences is willing to pay to see documentaries in cinemas. This population is comprised mostly of highly educated individuals who have a special interest in a film's topic or a desire to be informed (Hardie 2008). For that reason, no matter how 'big' documentary films become, their audiences remain inherently niche.

To understand documentary's rise in popularity, it is important to examine not only how nonfiction films arrived on the big screen and what might have influenced their latest comeback, but also to consider why documentaries have historically been challenged to succeed in the mainstream film market. Most academic research in this field examines documentary in the context of television, likely because TV broadcast has been, by far, documentary's largest venue and source of income. However, commercial pressures have challenged documentary's sustainability in the broadcast market, which has encouraged documentary's expansion into alternative markets, including festivals, educational, non-theatrical, home video, and online. In order to understand how these outlets serve documentary, it is important to consider them in a historical context. Understanding how the documentary industry evolved helps to answer many questions, including why theatrical distribution is still largely unattainable for the vast majority of documentary films. History also explains why British documentary filmmakers, who receive substantial support from broadcasters, rarely organise theatrical or non-theatrical releases and rely upon television as the primary vehicle for their films. Additionally, history suggests why in the US, where documentaries rarely gain government sponsorship, filmmakers appear to have a stronger drive to ensure their films exploit all markets and are more inclined to take on the burden of distribution themselves. The different UK and US cultural contexts, which have evolved separately over the past century, have determined how documentaries are distributed in these two territories today. In both cultures, a greater variety of documentaries are reaching audiences than ever before, through a greater variety of means. Ultimately, positioning this research in a historical context helps ensure that its conclusions are better able to endure the ephemeral challenges inherent in such a contemporary topic of investigation.

4.1.2 The Origins of the Industry

Documentary's presence in the early days of cinema was somewhat incidental; however, its marginal position in the development of the international film industry was largely determined by the studios. When nonfiction films first took to the screen with the Lumières in 1895, they were little more than recorded action. In fact, the first films of the Lumières were not documentaries but 'actualities' – brief recordings of daily life. In an article for *The New Yorker*, Louis Menand (2004) explains that 'early documentarians were not journalists. They were, by cinematic standards, scarcely even filmmakers. They were businessmen.' Menand suggests that Louis Lumière, the first person ever to charge admission to screenings, thought cinema was a mere novelty that had no future. As cinema became increasingly 'spectacular', audience demand for this new form of entertainment grew. The film industry developed rapidly in the US over the next decade and subsequently coalesced, in December 1908, into the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), a conglomeration of ten international production companies that would, in essence, determine the shape of the film industry. Within a few years, the MPPC established a standardised distribution system, which offered exhibitors a regular series of releases and the potential to screen longer films, along with their standard series of shorts (Quinn 2001: 38-39). Around this time, the MPPC worked to industrialise the production and distribution processes of cinema in an effort to both regulate and control the industry, responding to 'the needs of the small-theater exhibition market, whose increasing demand for films could not be met by the haphazard production and distribution approaches common at the time' (Ibid.: 41). This restructuring of the early industry established a set of business practices that both the studios and cinemas adhered to for almost a century, which essentially eliminated any flexibility within the exhibition systems that might allow independent films and feature documentaries to receive widespread theatrical releases in cinemas, in both the United States and worldwide.

Around the same time, the newsreel emerged as a fixture in cinemas and offered the public a regular serving of nonfiction content. Released twice a week to

US motion picture houses, these ten-minute ensembles of news footage, introduced in 1911, remained largely intact and unchanged for more than half a century (Fielding 2006: 3). As the earliest form of filmic journalism, newsreels were an important step in the development of the documentary feature and demonstrated some of the distribution challenges inherent in factual films. Raymond Fielding suggests that exhibitors 'seldom failed to express their reluctance to run controversial news material as part of what they considered an exclusively entertainment enterprise and to edit out such material at will' (Ibid.: 148). Such censorship degraded newsreels, but the format gained an elevated position when governments began using these films to spread propaganda during World War I. The British, who had used films in their recruitment efforts prior to entering the war in 1914, subsequently set up the War Propaganda Bureau, aiming to spread a pro-war message to wider audiences. The films created during this time were either intended for historical record or for immediate public exhibition. Often, trucks carrying projectors facilitated screenings when commercial cinema owners, who saw little value in such content, would refuse to release the films in their venues (Barsam 1992: 29-33). Similarly, when the United States entered the war in 1917, the US government set up specialised media departments and employed the film industry to disperse propaganda and information about the war, helping to fuel public interest. US theatres exhibited short instructional films along with their main spectacles, enabling the government to gain the support of the American public as well as additional resources for the war, such as new recruits and money (DeBauche 1997: xvi). Despite the government's support for newsreels, cinemas only screened them as sidebar attractions to fiction films, which widely dominated the market during this time. Because the war had hindered production in Europe, the US film industry, in particular Paramount, took advantage of the opportunity to increase the number of fiction films produced and supply them to worldwide screens. Under the assumption that propaganda films were not as universally appealing as escapist entertainment, the studios largely abandoned the production of nonfiction films as they expanded their global dominance (Barnouw 1993: 41). Although government

support for newsreels kept the 'documentary' format in production, propagandist aims created challenges for the distribution of these films in commercial venues and inhibited the potential for the nonfiction film to emerge as a popular form of entertainment.

Prior to the 1920s, most films exhibited in cinemas were shorts and it was not until 1922 that the first feature documentary appeared on the big screen. As historical accounts reveal, *Nanook of the North* (1922) almost failed to get distribution after being systematically rejected by every distributor that previewed Robert Flaherty's intimate portrait of the life of the Inuit people. Only the French company Pathé agreed to take on the film and subsequently opened it at the Capitol theatre in New York on 11 June 1922. According to Erik Barnouw's account, the film experienced 'immediate success' and most critics 'found it a revelation' (1993: 42). With the help of a significant amount of positive press, *Nanook of the North* sold an impressive number of tickets, both at the US box office and abroad, giving documentary 'a financial legitimacy it had not had for years' (Ibid.). Flaherty's success earned him international recognition and a blank cheque offer from Paramount to cover the production of his next film. As a consequence, Flaherty went to the remote islands of Samoa and produced *Moana* (1926). Unlike *Nanook of the North*, this film about traditional life on a Polynesian island was void of blizzards and conflict. Unimpressed with Flaherty's sophomore work, Paramount offered to test the film in six 'tough' cities. Flaherty knew his specialised film would not likely appeal to mainstream cinema audiences, so with the help of supporters at the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures and the Hays Organization, he gathered mailing lists from magazines and lecture societies and sent out thousands of leaflets to target 'latent' audiences, in an effort to mobilise non-habitual moviegoers to see his film. As a result, the film surpassed Paramount's expectations and generated a reasonable return at the box office; however, Paramount still found *Moana* unworthy of a general release (Rotha and Ruby 1983: 72-74). *Moana's* inability to generate significant box office returns 'virtually ended Flaherty's association with big-studio Hollywood' and dampened studios enthusiasm for documentary features

(Barnouw 1993: 48). In an attempt to establish support for specialised distribution, Flaherty later made a proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation to create a permanent organisation that could do for any 'worthwhile "offbeat" film from any part of the world what had been done for *Moana* in the six tough towns'. Although the board saw value in this plan to exploit latent audiences, Flaherty's vision ultimately never materialised (Rotha and Ruby 1983: 81). In those days, the studios simply did not have the means for, or the interest in, providing documentaries with the specialised support they needed to succeed at the box office. The studios' demand for all films to generate profits in cinemas created a barrier for documentaries to enter the market and made it difficult for Flaherty to continue making his films within the studio system.

While Robert Flaherty worked to persuade the studios in the United States to fund and distribute his documentaries, in the United Kingdom, a Scotsman named John Grierson persuaded the government to support his films. For his first film, *Drifters* (1929), Grierson and Stephen Tallents, the Secretary of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), persuaded the Treasury department to provide the EMB with the funding to make a film about a small fishing village. The EMB, which was founded in 1926 to 'promote the marketing of the products of the British Empire', used the film as a means to fulfil its mission (Ellis and McLane 2006: 59-60). The film, which premiered alongside Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) at the London Film Society on 10 November 1929, was, according to Ian Aitken (1998: 10), 'very different from the straightforward publicity film which EMB officials had expected. It was a poetic montage documentary, which drew heavily on the filmmaking styles of Sergei Eisenstein and Robert Flaherty, and on Grierson's understanding of avant-garde aesthetics.' Although Grierson recognised the value in publicly funded documentaries, he also experienced the drawbacks of working within a sponsorship system. In his final interview, Grierson pointed to these challenges when he spoke about documentary stating, 'It's always been related to government sponsorship, and to those sponsors who saw the value in using it to illustrate their interests or create loyalties of one kind or another' (Sussex and Grierson 1972: 26). Grierson's

perception of documentary's function is dated and narrow, yet his position reflects a still relevant understanding of its strong ties to public service, which Grierson himself helped establish in the UK.

After the success of *Drifters*, Grierson, motivated by a more expansive political agenda, bypassed the opportunity to direct another film and instead became the 'creative organiser' at the EMB, thus gaining greater influence in the industry and building his reputation as the 'father of documentary'. Just one year after *Drifters'* release, Grierson assembled a crew of untrained recruits and shaped them into the productive EMB Film Unit, which effectively launched what came to be known as Britain's documentary film movement. Cunning in his operation, Grierson found the funds necessary to enable his team to make the kind of films he valued, while shielding them from the bureaucratic control of the government (Barnouw 1993: 89). In order to circumvent any restrictions the EMB imposed, Grierson primarily secured commissions from external organisations (Aitken 1998: 11). However, a shift took place when, in 1933, after the EMB's demise, the GPO film unit took over and launched 'an almost unprecedented program of state support for filmmaking'. According to Barsam (1992: 81, 95), Grierson's 'leadership was undoubtedly the single most important influence on the development of the British documentary film' and the GPO film unit became 'the founding organizational source of "documentary film" as we know it today'. Grierson not only helped secure the resources necessary for the production of short documentary films, but he also helped make sure the films had necessary means to reach their target audiences throughout the whole of Great Britain. In fact, to the disappointment of some of his film directors, Grierson 'resisted' theatrical distribution and did nothing to convince reluctant exhibitors to programme documentaries. Recognising that the individuals who would most appreciate the kind of films he produced existed largely outside mainstream cinema-going audiences, Grierson led efforts to develop 'an elaborate system of nontheatrical distribution, including travelling cinema vans that brought films to audiences everywhere' (Ibid.: 96-97). With access to relatively reliable and inexpensive 16mm sound projection equipment, Grierson was able to secure the

resources necessary to manage the distribution process and ensure that the films he produced reached, what he saw to be, the large and important audiences that existed beyond commercial cinema (Swann 1989: 16). The work Grierson did to promote documentaries in rural communities helped solidify documentary's public service tradition, while also contributing to the marginalisation of the genre, positioning documentaries firmly outside mainstream theatrical spaces in the UK.

Because of Grierson's non-theatrical efforts, documentary films produced in the UK remained, albeit somewhat peripherally, in the public eye; however, in the US, with lack of community and public support, nonfiction film in the early 1930s virtually vanished from the market. Alan Rosenthal (1972: 4) argues that the climate for early documentary filmmaking in the US was 'the complete antithesis' of the UK, which evoked a 'sense of group purpose working towards a common aim and a long period of sustained sponsorship by the government and its agencies.' Rosenthal illuminates the key difference: 'In place of the group purpose and long-term sponsorship, one sees the individual film maker struggling with his solitary concept as best he could' (Ibid.). Flaherty's great effort to promote *Moana* demonstrates the general lack of support at the time. Because documentaries in the US rarely received government funding (a circumstance that persists today), filmmakers had to depend upon the support of a few philanthropic foundations and contributions from individuals, frequently affiliated with the arts. Studios continued to reject the potential commercial value of nonfiction films and focused almost entirely on fiction filmmaking, causing documentary production during this time to be 'limited and sporadic', with producers making little effort to overcome the challenge of distribution (Ellis and McLane 2006: 99). During this time, the non-theatrical system in the United States was not adequately equipped to promote releases and the few documentaries that managed to enter the mainstream market only showed 'in art-type theaters in a few big cities' (Ibid.). It was not until the late 1930s (when the United States Film Service emerged) that the non-theatrical market in the US 'became a recognizable entity' (Ibid.: 179). This progress began when, under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, movie critic Pare Lorentz convinced Rexford

Guy Tugwell, head of Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration, to allow him to produce 'Films of Merit' (a phrase he used instead of the d-word) to help move forward government agendas. As a consequence, he directed his first documentary, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* in 1936; however, unlike Grierson, Lorentz naively did not consider how the film would be distributed. So, although the film received glowing reviews, it was not widely seen at the time. For his next film, *The River* (1938), Lorentz developed a distribution strategy that put the film in more than five thousand theatres and positioned it in the nontheatrical market, helping the film get screened regularly in schools and on public television. These two successes allowed Lorentz to persuade the Roosevelt administration to establish the United States Film Service in 1938, in order to make films that promoted government agendas (Ibid.: 80-86). However, as Lorentz was more of an individual filmmaker than a 'creative organiser', the industry he helped to establish remained largely competitive and never achieved the 'sense of collective endeavor' that existed at that time in the UK (Ibid.: 98). Ultimately, these early contrasting histories of documentary in the US and UK have influenced the practices towards documentary funding, production, and distribution that exist in both of these territories today.

Largely due to government propaganda agendas, both the UK and US experienced a sharp growth in documentary production during the period of World War II. In the United Kingdom, the government centralised documentary production under the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and 'a massive expansion of the opportunities and activities' for documentary filmmaking took place as a result of the war (Swann 1989: viii). Elizabeth Sussex, in her book *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary* (1975), cites World War II as the peak of British documentary achievement and speculates that, although it is difficult to assess the impact that propaganda films had, some short documentaries may have reached audiences of more than twenty million people (159-160). Emphasising the importance of documentary during this time, Sussex cites evidence of growth in the commercial market, which had several 'very successful' documentary releases and enormous expansion within the 'nontheatrical scene' during the war (Ibid.). In the

United States, documentaries experienced similar success as the government formed a temporary alliance with documentarists and provided substantial funding for factual and propaganda films, which provided information about happenings in the war zones to the general public, as well as to those in the service. Through the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, Hollywood became involved, helping to facilitate the production and distribution of legendary war programmes, such as Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* (1943-45) newsreel series. The films of this era helped educate the population and typically drew high attendance at the cinema, where money was sometimes collected from the audience for war relief. However, this successful partnership between the government and the film industry ended abruptly after the war, when most of the governmental agencies that had brought these films to the public were abolished or limited to producing highly specialised instructional films (Rosenthal 1972: 5, Barsam 1992: 216-17). When the war ended in 1945, so did government sponsorship, and documentary entered a challenging period of decline in both the UK and US. Of the few exceptional documentaries of this time, including Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948) and Sidney Meyer's *The Quiet One* (1948), most were only made possible by industrial or private sponsorship (Rosenthal 1972: 5). History suggests that documentary thrives in a political context, particularly during times of war, when curiosity about world affairs is high and people are more easily inspired to take action.

4.1.3 Market Expansion

New technology has often aided the development of documentary, and in the period after World War II, it was technology, in the form of television, that helped save documentary from its apparent demise. Barsam (1992: 311) refers to the period between 1947 and 1951 as a 'critical juncture in the history of mass communications' because it was during this time that 'television began to replace the motion picture as the major communications force of the second half of the twentieth century'. Although television technology was invented two decades prior, TV sets only became valuable when they could exhibit a regular stream of varied content, which

broadcasters ultimately came to supply. Hence, the public's immersion in television did not begin to take shape until 1946 in England, with the re-launching of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) television service, which had been tested before the war, and until 1948 in the United States with the emergence of network television. The transition from newsreels, which were the primary way the public viewed motion picture accounts of current events, to broadcast news stories happened 'quite radically' as television 'quickly established itself as the major provider of news and current affairs coverage' (Kilborn and Izod 1997: 172). Audiences' need for news created a demand for more documentary films. Consequently, documentary's form shifted in this new market, losing much of its cinematic design as it necessarily became more cost-effective and quick to produce. As Rosenthal (1972: 4-5) argues, 'In retrospect it is easy to see that the early 1950s mark a watershed in the development of documentary in England and the United States.' It was during this time, that the BBC established its Documentary Department, with Paul Rotha as the head of it from 1953 until 1955. Meanwhile, in the US, the National Educational Television (NET) began in 1953 – later succeeded by Public Service Broadcasting (PBS) in 1970. The NET, which received funds from the federal government, became a key channel for documentary, often showing programs from the UK and acquiring independently produced documentaries (Ellis and McLane 2006: 181). During this period of expansion, documentary largely abandoned the big screen as it filled the space of television.

As broadcast channels developed, they created a steady demand for new content and spurred what some consider to be 'a golden age' for nonfiction film. According to Barnouw, 'As the television screen began to rivet the attention of men everywhere, its potentialities as windows on the world seemed limitless' (1993: 212). Documentary scholars frequently romanticise the opportunities provided by the advent of television. Kilborn and Izod (1997: 20) write, 'Few would question the significant, some would say life-saving, role that television has played in the continuing development of documentary.' They carry on to define television as 'the single most important formative influence in determining the types of documentary

that are produced and the forms in which they appear'. Barsam (1992: 242) attributes television's rejuvenation of the nonfiction film to its ability to offer 'sustained sponsorship' and encourage a creative group atmosphere of people dedicated to a common journalistic purpose. These qualities are characteristic of the UK industry, and, as Barsam notes, also feature in the success of the early British documentary movement. Yet television offered filmmakers far larger audiences than Grierson's non-theatrical exhibition efforts ever did, by allowing direct access into the homes of millions of viewers who could, once the initial investment in a television set was made, essentially watch films and programmes for free (Ibid.: 281, 311). In the UK, the need for documentary programmes prompted broadcasters to develop commissioning systems that both created competition for funding and also made it easier for filmmakers to gain access to production resources. Public service broadcasters maintained remits that valued educational and cultural programming, ensuring documentaries were given primetime slots in their schedules. However, in the US, no such remits or sponsorship systems existed to support documentaries. On commercial channels, when television time went unsold, networks used business-subsidised films to fill the spots and the channels became saturated with this kind of content. According to Barnouw (1993: 221), when competing against commercial programming, it was rare that nonfiction films sponsored by non-profit entities achieved 'comparable distribution'. However, the mainstream markets were not entirely closed off to documentary films, as David L. Wolper demonstrated during this time. Wolper worked as an independent, outside the networks, and notably self-financed a documentary about space missions, called *The Race for Space* (1958), which became the first made-for-television documentary to be nominated for an Academy Award. At the time, networks rarely broadcasted documentaries that were made outside of their own in-house production units; however, Wolper was able to persuade individual stations, including both independent and network affiliates, to pay for the right to air his film. Its one-week run in April 1960 was a huge financial success and helped establish 'a substantial American television syndication business' (Ellis and McLane 2006: 187-88). Ultimately, Wolper and his team made

fifty-eight documentary specials and twenty documentary series (with a total of 347 episodes) for television, making Wolper 'more successful than any other documentarian in history' at making money in the business (Ibid.). However, Wolper remained a rarity as most independent documentary producers in the US barely made enough money to cover production funds, let alone turn a profit.

Unlike in the UK, where there was a rich tradition for documentaries on television, in the US, the lack of funding stunted the industry's growth and created the need for filmmakers to develop alternative solutions to support their vocation. Competition and financial woes are well rooted in the American documentary tradition, which has been established primarily by enterprising filmmakers, who have secured production funds through whatever means they could. Estimating that, at the time, the cost of filming a documentary feature, such as D.A. Pennebaker's *Monterey Pop* (1968) or Frederick Wiseman's *Hospital* (1970), was in the region of \$50,000 to \$200,000, Rosenthal argues that 'even if a network showing can be arranged, the return is miniscule' (1972: 16). As a result of the need for greater financial returns, several film cooperatives were established exclusively to distribute nonfiction films but, according to Rosenthal, 'They have not, however, been very successful in making the distribution of the feature length documentary a paying position' (Ibid.). Films may gain exposure from university screenings, but it is unlikely they will generate a significant financial return from exhibition in this market. For those directors, such as Pennebaker and the Maysles brothers, who have taken on the task of distributing their films through art houses and independent cinemas, Rosenthal claims, 'This is haphazard but has possibilities. But even with the growth of art houses, it is still an uphill fight' (Ibid.). Rosenthal suggests that the path towards production was more clearly delineated in the UK than in the US, where highly competitive grants have been the primary source of documentary funding. These circumstances have favoured filmmakers with established track records and, according to Rosenthal, 'The odds aren't great, but occasionally a newcomer slips in' (2005: 168). In the UK, as Rosenthal explains, 'One cannot really exist outside the BBC and independent television system, and it is extremely

difficult for even the most highly talented individual to break in' (Ibid.: 13). Many of the same obstacles confront filmmakers in these two industries today; although the number of opportunities to screen documentaries has substantially increased, the funding to make them generally has not.

Outside of broadcast, the market for documentary films has historically been very limited. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, a number of US distributors built small but lucrative businesses based on renting or selling 16mm prints to educational institutions. These prints typically rented for one hundred dollars or sold for eight hundred dollars in 1976. One decade later, the mass adoption of the VCR shifted this model and these expensive prints were replaced by videotapes that retailed for around twenty-nine dollars. This economic loss disrupted a formerly stable industry that had sustained a group of distribution companies, which in turn had sustained a group of filmmakers (Ellis and McLane 2006: 259). Remediating this situation, these distributors established a system of educational pricing, which essentially sold the same consumer cassettes to institutions at much higher rates. Because these institutions had trusted relationships with their suppliers, and were used to paying high prices for 16mm film prints, very often they continued purchasing their cassettes from catalogues rather than trying to locate them in retail outlets. In many cases they did not have the option to buy videotapes in retail as educational distributors typically demanded that the films they acquired not be released in the home video market during their period of licence. This not only ensured that distributors had exclusive control over their acquisitions but it also ensured that those films did not sell any copies to individual consumers. Nevertheless, documentary filmmakers often signed contracts with educational distributors with the belief that these distributors could best support their films' specialty needs and exploit their niche market. As a consequence, many documentaries were only made publicly available on VHS to institutions that paid

the educational licence.⁷ However, as the new format of DVD gained popularity, home video distributors broadened their supply of content and some began carrying documentaries as part of their roster of films. Yet it was not until 1999, when Steve Savage and Susan Margolin formed Docurama, that the industry gained a home video label exclusively dedicated to documentaries (Dawn 2004). Although the VHS and DVD formats created greater access into the home video market, the challenge of reaching audiences kept many filmmakers from releasing their documentaries into this market or using home video formats as a means for alternative distribution.

While the opportunities for releasing documentaries in the educational and home video markets remained somewhat limited during the 1980s and 1990s, growth in the broadcast sector, particularly in the US, expanded the overall market for documentaries at this time. The increasing number of television outlets gave a new generation of videomakers, who had the capacity to instantly and cost-effectively produce images without the need for special lighting or a production crew, the hope that their work might be seen (Barnouw 1993: 286-87). As more people began to engage with the documentary form, the industry grew, albeit on the periphery of the larger global film industries. Video enabled guerilla documentarists to reach into people's homes, through public access channels, and bypass network and cable gatekeepers (Ibid.: 340). For professional filmmakers, the development of cable and satellite technology expanded the market by inspiring both the growth of privately owned commercial television networks and new thematic specialty channels. Although during this time, '[d]ocumentaries and other varieties of nonfiction programming became more widely distributed than ever before', the budgets allocated for this kind of content remained limited (Ellis and McLane 2006: 260). Subsequently, with more space on television and less available funds, the broadcast market became increasingly commercialised. Largely driven by ratings-obsessed scheduling, television often relegated documentaries to the late hours of

⁷ Even as late as the mid-2000s, documentaries were seldom released in the home video market. This is reflected in Michael Chanan's (2007b: 13) observation that video stores are 'beginning to stock a few independent documentaries'.

the night or the off-peak summer season (Chapman 2009: 10). Ellis and McLane (2006: 294) observe that as a result of the remarkable growth within the television market for documentary, '[p]oint of view, investigative, and artful filmmaking often went by the wayside as cable channels scurried to fill endless hours'. The conservative and commercial choices of the commissioning editors or programmers, who tended to shy away from films that took an unpopular political stance, led them to favour factual programs with mass audience appeal rather than 'serious' documentaries. The unfortunate reality remains, as Barsam (1992: 377) points out, that 'overall, nonfiction programming on television is largely determined by commercial, rather than aesthetic, considerations'.

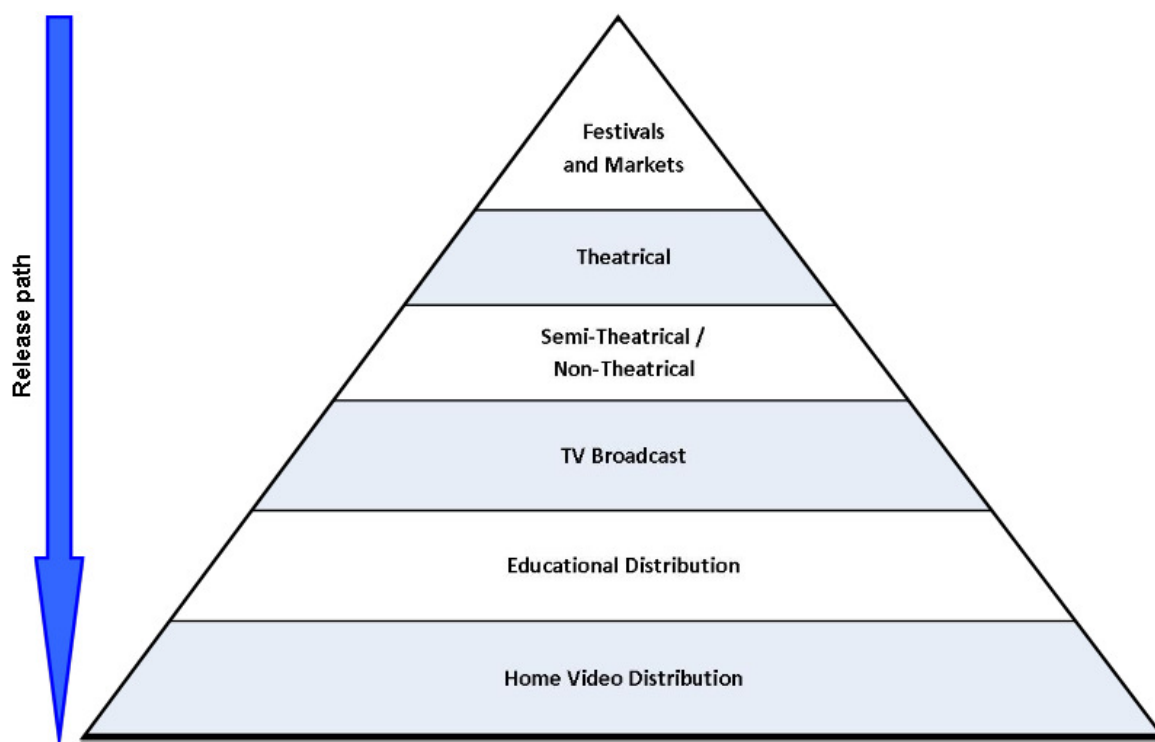
In the UK, the commercialisation of documentary in the broadcast market has been evident in the case of Channel 4, which in 1993 gained the duty of selling its own advertising, prompting Channel 4's Independent Film and Video department to abandon its workshop sector, which had until that point provided training and resources to support regional independent filmmaking (Hill 1996: 108). This change also likely factored into the full closure of this department, which happened in 2000. According to the department's first commissioning editor, Alan Fountain (2007: 30), Independent Film and Video had the 'explicit role' of working with 'alternative makers', and, as a result, Channel 4 'enabled many radical voices to find space' (Ibid.: 37). During this time, Channel 4 emerged as a cross-platform pioneer, launching the UK's first live Web documentary, Victoria Mapplebeck's *Smart Hearts* (1999), which enabled audiences to interact online with a couple whose marriage was falling apart, while their lives were being streamed via webcams on the Internet. However, as Raban (1998: 44) observes, this radical time in Channel 4's development was nearing its end as Channel 4's 'long standing commitment' to promoting 'diversity of aesthetic form' was largely called into doubt when it switched to a twenty-four hour broadcasting schedule and 'displayed an increasing tendency to ghettoise expanded work into the dark zones of post-midnight transmission'. Chanan (2007b: 6) claims that television's concern with remaining neutral and not upsetting the 'assumed consensus' has placed limits on the

documentary genre. In some respects, television has broadened the scope of the genre by changing public perception of what qualifies as documentary; yet, overall, the growing pressure for commercial appeal has hindered the diversity of documentary within the broadcast space. These commercial limitations have redefined the economics of the industry and negatively impacted distributors who license documentaries. A notable example is Jane Balfour Films, a highly regarded UK distributor that represented about fifteen hundred documentary programmes, of which around seventy were feature films. After seventeen years in the business, Jane Balfour shut down her operations in 2000. Recognised as 'a sign of the times', the closure of the company was a direct result of the changing distribution landscape. Jane Balfour summarised the change, stating, 'Instead of selling programs for \$40,000 or even \$4,000, you're selling for \$400 and you're doing all the same work' (Brown 2000). This decline in payments for quality documentary programmes was largely a product of rising competition in the marketplace. The outcome was, as Balfour explained, 'The market for quality, independent programs – not made for ratings – totally decreased. The fact is, our sales plummeted' (Ibid.). The collapse of both Channel 4's Independent Film and Video department and Jane Balfour Films illustrates a larger shift within the industry – the move to distribute more commercial content with popular appeal, in an effort to remain economically sustainable.

Documentary has rarely been thought of in the context of how to make money, but as the industry has evolved, the political economy of documentary has become an area that demands critical investigation. From early on, documentary established its position on the fringes of mainstream entertainment, seldom regarded as valuable or as enjoyable as Hollywood productions. Documentary's marginal status is clearly evidenced by the newsreel, which, according to Fielding (2006: 197), 'was doomed economically by its own system of exhibition, which guaranteed that it would never be placed in a position where it could compete with feature productions as a separate and distinct motion picture attraction'. This was the status quo for documentary up until the arrival of television, which enhanced

the genre's public visibility and esteem. Over the past decade, as digital technology and the Internet have reshaped all major means of distribution, documentary has gained status in the mainstream market. Although not entirely aligned, the studio release model (discussed in Chapter 3) provides a relevant framework for examining the documentary market. As Lobato (2007: 117) suggests, art cinema (which includes documentary) follows a relatively similar pattern of distribution. The main differences with art cinema are the increased importance of festival releasing and the prominence of non-theatrical/semi-theatrical releasing, which often replace theatrical releasing. Also, television broadcast – which can be public (BBC, PBS) or pay (HBO, Sundance) – is prioritised over the home video market, which is sometimes preceded or eclipsed by educational releasing (see Figure 4.1). Moving forward, this chapter explores issues associated with distributing documentaries in each of these release windows. The brief historical overview that opened this chapter has highlighted important pre-digital developments in the documentary industry so as to establish a contrast for the rest of this chapter, which focuses on the current context of documentary distribution and exhibition, primarily from year 2000 onwards. The commercial growth of documentary has become most apparent during this time, as evidenced by the rising number of documentaries that have earned substantial profits in the most competitive market of all – theatrical.

Figure 4.1 The Windows System for Documentary Films



Source: Zimmerman, D. (2008) *The Marketplace: From MG to DIY*. IDFAcademy. 23 November [presentation]. International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Amsterdam: IDFA.

4.2 Documentary in Public Spaces

4.2.1 A Golden Age on the Silver Screen

Although documentary's growth has occurred within all distribution windows, it is the theatrical market that most distinctively reflects the 'documentary boom' of the past decade (see Arthur 2005, Horton 2005, Mintz 2005, Rich 2006, Lal 2007, Macnab 2008). The years between 2000 and 2010 have seen more than three times the number of documentaries distributed in US cinemas than in the decade prior (Figure 4.2 illustrates this upward trend). The manifestation of a string of box office success stories in the 2000s arose out of the expansion in the broadcast market for documentaries, which began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Barsam (1992: 358-59) acknowledges 'the enormous growth in the quantity and quality of international nonfiction production', stating that 'the total numbers are extraordinary' and that

the quality of the 'production standards are outstanding'. Barsam also mentions that 'there has been an increasing success of nonfiction films in the nation's commercial theatres', hinting at the beginnings of what would manifest, one decade later, as an influx in public attendance at theatrical documentary screenings in the United States. Prior to the turn of the millennium, television served as the main outlet for documentaries and theatrical documentary releases remained rarities and seldom received widespread acknowledgement in the press. Then in 2002, United Artists broke records and made over \$20 million at the box office with *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and just two years later Lionsgate released the first-ever blockbuster documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), which made well over \$100 million in the US theatrical market alone. Around this time, *Winged Migration* (2003) and *Super Size Me* (2004) also brought in more than \$10 million each in ticket sales, helping to raise expectations about documentary's profit potential in the theatrical market. Such breakthroughs at the box office are a post-2000s phenomenon. Of the top ten grossing documentaries released in US cinemas in the past two decades, nine of them occurred between 2000 and the start of 2010 (see Table 4.1). This new potential for documentaries to generate high profits at the box office seems to correspond to an overall increase in public interest in nonfiction films. Recent scholarship has acknowledged radical growth in the theatrical market for documentaries. Michael Chanan (2007b: 3) calls documentary's comeback 'the most unexpected turn in cinema over the last ten to fifteen years'. Kevin Kelly (2007: 1) refers to this period as 'the golden age of documentaries', a sentiment that has been echoed repeatedly in the press (Ventre 2004, Howker 2008). Ultimately, the change that has taken place in the market since circa 2000 is not just one of more documentaries in cinemas and higher box office figures, but it is a cultural shift that reflects the increased willingness of distributors to acquire, cinema owners to programme, and audiences to view documentaries on the big screen. Understanding the effects of this evolution in the theatrical market is critical to understanding the changing landscape of documentary distribution.

Figure 4.2 Number of Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 1990 to 2010

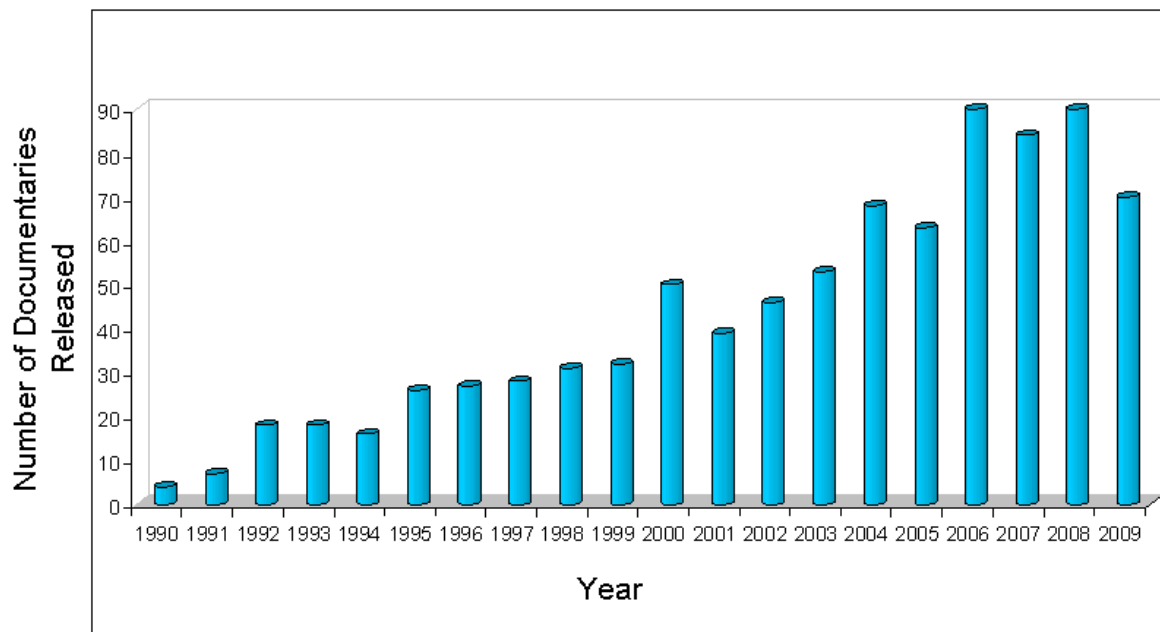


Table 4.1 Top Grossing Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 1990 to 2010

	Documentary	Year	Distributor	Gross Box Office Revenue	Inflation Adjusted Gross (*)
1	Fahrenheit 9/11	2004	Lionsgate/IFC	\$119,114,517	\$138,966,067
2	March Of The Penguins	2005	Warner Independent Pictures	\$77,217,134	\$87,734,800
3	Michael Jackson's This Is It	2009	Sony	\$43,855,342	\$43,706,234
4	Earth	2009	Disney	\$31,900,245	\$31,791,784
5	An Inconvenient Truth	2006	Paramount Classics	\$23,814,997	\$26,171,596
6	Sicko	2007	Lionsgate	\$24,540,079	\$26,122,073
7	Bowling For Columbine	2002	MGM	\$21,550,529	\$26,121,687
8	Madonna: Truth Or Dare	1991	Miramax	\$15,012,935	\$24,670,293
9	Capitalism: A Love Story	2009	Overture Films	\$13,862,120	\$13,814,989
10	Super Size Me	2004	IDP	\$11,474,599	\$13,386,948

Source: *Variety* box office reports from 1990 to 2009 (end). See Appendix B for source data.

(*) Adjusted against 2009 end inflation.

The rise in popularity of documentaries in the theatrical market has helped to legitimise them as mainstream entertainment and increased their visibility, and viability, as commercial properties. Chanan (2007b: 3-7) observes, 'the re-emergence of documentary can be traced in the press' and claims journalists' main explanations are that this phenomenon is 'either a reaction to the inadequacies of mainstream cinema, or to the inanities of television, and either way it has something to do with the cost of documentary production decreasing because of digital video, which is

also a much more accessible medium of dissemination'. Although digital technology is certainly at the core of the change, there are other likely influences, such as: the new cinematic styles of documentaries, the massive popularity of reality television, the inclusion of behind-the-scenes footage on DVDs, and the mainstream media's failure to sufficiently inform the public of important news stories. Ultimately, there is no simple explanation for the rise of documentary in the theatrical market. However, one thing is clear – despite the apparent increase in profitability, documentary remains, arguably, the most challenging genre to market to mass audiences and distribute in wide release. A long history of mainstream audiences shunning documentaries in cinemas has rendered the genre largely unappealing, and unprofitable, for most fiction film distributors. Yet, within the last decade, industry sentiment towards documentaries has shifted. According to an article by Geoffrey Macnab (2008) in *Screen International*, in 2003 when John Sloss of Cinetic Media approached Wouter Barendrecht, co-founder of Fortissimo Films, to see if Fortissimo was interested in distributing a true story about child abuse called *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003), Barendrecht responded, 'We don't do documentaries.' Circumstances changed and by 2008, Fortissimo, like many other fiction film distributors, had expanded to carry a full slate of documentaries, with about ninety percent of them aimed at theatrical distribution. In the same article, Hengameh Panahi, president of the distribution company Celluloid Dreams, offered the opinion that 'a very strong documentary that is well-made, with a great universal subject, is even easier to market than another romantic comedy'. Although traditionally documentaries have required the aid of specialised distributors to facilitate their releases in art house cinemas, as the genre has demonstrated greater public appeal, a greater number of mainstream distributors have begun acquiring documentaries and releasing them in multiplexes (Horton 2005). With more exploitable resources and connections, these studio subsidiaries have largely surpassed independent and specialty distributors with respect to the revenues they have generated from releasing documentaries in the theatrical market (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Top 20 Theatrical Distributors of Documentary Films in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010

Distributor	Documentary Releases	Total Box Office Revenue (*)	Revenue / Release	Engagements / Release	Average Weeks in Release
Lionsgate	12	\$190,262,182	\$15,855,182	2,225	9
Warner Bros.	4	\$89,097,147	\$22,274,287	5,559	5
Sony Pictures Classics	19	\$74,185,673	\$3,904,509	846	10
Paramount Classics	4	\$37,258,478	\$9,314,619	2,194	27
Disney	6	\$33,885,916	\$5,647,653	1,975	13
MGM	3	\$26,756,072	\$8,918,691	1,734	16
ThinkFilm	33	\$22,492,082	\$681,578	214	12
Magnolia Pictures	20	\$21,898,981	\$1,094,949	357	9
Overture Films	1	\$13,814,989	\$13,814,989	4,086	2
IDP	3	\$13,793,509	\$4,597,836	805	5
IFC Films	16	\$13,613,238	\$850,827	280	11
Artisan	4	\$8,428,519	\$2,107,130	491	10
Rocky Mountain Pictures	3	\$8,009,594	\$2,669,865	1,188	11
Cowboy Pictures (**)	10	\$7,570,313	\$757,031	185	8
Zeitgeist	26	\$6,703,458	\$257,825	80	12
New Yorker	12	\$5,615,886	\$467,991	98	10
Roadside Attractions	5	\$4,658,272	\$931,654	369	14
New Line Cinema	1	\$4,509,053	\$4,509,053	4,746	8
Fox Searchlight	1	\$4,044,133	\$4,044,133	1,685	14
First Run	56	\$3,537,603	\$63,171	18	9

Note: an engagement is a screen booked on a weekly basis.

(*) Adjusted against 2009 end inflation.

(**) No longer operates.

	Studio Subsidiaries
	Independent
	Specialty

For those documentaries that are not acquired by a theatrical distributor, festivals have traditionally offered the best chance for a big screen appearance; however, in recent years, a growing number of filmmakers have found audiences for their documentaries through 'semi-theatrical' releasing. In semi-theatrical releasing, filmmakers typically organise screenings independently by 'four-walling' cinemas. In this type of arrangement, the filmmaker usually pays a rental fee, as an advance on thirty-five to fifty percent of ticket sales, in exchange for the space to show his or her film. Multi-city semi-theatrical releases require significant personal effort and typically involve a cinema booker or experienced distributor (who works based on a service deal arrangement rather than an acquisition contract) to schedule and promote the semi-theatrical run (Broderick 2008). Hardie (2002a: 32) refers to these kind of screenings as 'specialist screenings' and notes that, because programmers 'know their audience', such screenings often have the capacity to sell out. For example, Ben Niles partnered with Argot Pictures to organise screenings for *Note by Note: The Making of Steinway L1037* (2007), his documentary about the making of a Steinway piano. Argot Pictures booked the cinemas while Niles personally reached

out to music teachers, piano dealers, and relevant technicians in each city where the film was scheduled to screen. He often attended screenings, sometimes accompanied by a piano, which, according to him, was a big draw. The targeted outreach strategy let those potentially interested in such a niche film know that it existed; consequently, attendance was generally very high at the screenings and the film even sold out a 536-seat theater in Rochester, New York (Tozzi 2008). In another instance, the documentary *Spirit of the Marathon* (2007), which followed six runners from five countries as they took on the 26.2-mile running event, sold out five hundred cinemas in the United States for a one-night-only event on 24 January 2008. After selling out an encore event, which the filmmakers put on one month later, the film reached over one million dollars gross in ticket sales. The filmmakers, Jon Dunham and Mark Jonathan Harris, who initially received rejections from traditional distributors, ultimately gained a DVD distribution deal with Image Entertainment in the US, which also afforded them the right to sell DVDs directly from their own website (Paster 2009: 46). Prior to the Internet and digital technology, semi-theatrical releasing was costly and complicated. However, digital cinema and online marketing have allowed filmmakers to explore semi-theatrical as a way to concentrate their efforts on a few key events, or a one-day wide release, and sell out theatres.

Many films that have screened in cinemas have sustained long-lasting limited releases by positive word of mouth and targeted outreach to core audiences. Austin (2007: 18) notes, 'Good reviews and positive word of mouth tend to be more important for documentaries than for heavily advertised and "front-loaded" big-budget fiction films.' The documentary *Valentino: The Last Emperor* (2009) serves as a good example of how strong core audience support can enable small documentaries make big box office returns. The film, directed by Matt Tyrnauer, follows the fashion icon Valentino during the final part of his career. When it opened at New York's Film Forum, it was a huge success and broke records to become 'one of the theater's top-grossing premieres in over three decade'. Tyrnauer claims the film's success was 'powered by word of mouth and community' (Knegt 2009). Tyrnauer's decision to

form an alliance with the service deal company Truly Indie came after serious consideration, and the ultimate rejection, of the several offers that distributors made at festivals. Rather than four-walling cinemas for a semi-theatrical release, Truly Indie negotiated agreements with independent movie theatres to release the film via a platform strategy, whereby the film started on a few screens and then was more widely released as word of mouth spread. Tyrnauer explains that by organising a platform release, instead of accepting a traditional theatrical deal, he and his team were able to be 'deeply involved in marketing strategies and patterns of release and press strategies'. This hands-on distribution approach was critical to the film's success as it gave filmmakers the opportunity, and incentive, to conduct their own targeted marketing and publicity campaign. Important in this process was Tyrnauer's presence at screenings, for question and answer (Q&A) sessions, which Tyrnauer describes as 'viral marketing at its most basic'. Positive word of mouth even spread to talk show host Oprah Winfrey, who 'got a hold of the film, and without being pitched anything, decided to do a show on the film and its "stars"' (Ibid.). Vitagraph came on board to help distribute the film after its demonstrated success at the Film Forum. Ultimately, over a twenty-three week release, without ever going wider than thirty-eight cinemas, the film grossed \$1,755,134 at the US box office.⁸ Although the film had a dedicated website and employed social media tools (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to conduct outreach, the film's fans generated most of the publicity by recommending the film through their own social networks.

Examples of successful semi-theatrical and platform releasing are more commonly found in the US than in the UK, which has demonstrated a weaker theatrical market for documentaries. In writing about the rise in the number of documentaries playing in US cinemas during the 1990s, Brian Winston (2000: 53) notes, 'There was no similar sudden spurt of big-screen documentary in Britain.' Hardie (2002a: 43) cites the UK's 'tradition of screening documentaries on television'

⁸ See Box Office Mojo. Available at: <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=valentinolastemperor.htm> [accessed 15 September 2011].

as a barrier to the growth of documentaries in the theatrical market. Hardie (2002b: 31) also suggests that, in the UK, 'distributors take on documentaries with reluctance'. The main issue, as Hardie explains, is the expense. A 35mm print can cost in the region of one thousand pounds. The additional advertising expenses hardly justify the amount of effort a distributor must put in to gain just thirty percent of the box office returns. Digital screens and online marketing have reduced the financial risk; however, profits in this market remain limited, and as broadcast rights are often sold to fund production, distributors have little to gain in terms of ancillary rewards. Hardie also observes that pressures from broadcasters for shorter windows between release and transmission make it logistically difficult for art house cinemas to book documentaries within such short timeframes (Ibid.).

Although these barriers hinder documentaries' financial success in the UK theatrical market, a growing number of films have appeared in cinemas in part due to lottery funding initiatives that help to cover the cost of prints and advertising, providing some films with wider distribution than they otherwise could afford. Despite such efforts, documentaries continually take in only a very small share of the box office ticket revenues. In 2009, although documentaries accounted for around eleven percent of theatrical releases in the UK, they only represented around one percent of the box office share (see Table 4.3). Even this one percent is heavily inflated by the inclusion of *Michael Jackson's This Is It* (2009), which earned £9.8 million that year, making it the highest grossing documentary ever theatrically released in the UK at that time. Likely correlated, documentaries, when compared with other genres, were also released in the least number of cinemas per film (UK Film Council 2009: 23).

Ultimately, it is difficult to make a fair economic comparison between the UK and US markets because of their vast difference in population size. Yet it remains evident that, despite the upward trend, documentary's theatrical market growth in both territories has been largely overstated.

Table 4.3 Number of Documentary Films Released in UK Theatres, 2005 to 2010

Year	UK Documentary Releases	Percentage of All National Releases	Percentage of Box Office Revenue	Average Cinemas at Widest Point of Release	Gross Box Office
2005	32	6.9%	0.5%	11	£4,300,000
2006	40	7.9%	0.4%	8	£3,800,000
2007	39	7.6%	0.2%	10	£1,600,000
2008	54	10.2%	0.4%	11	£3,400,000
2009	57	11.3%	1.1%	20	£12,000,000

Source: UK Film Council (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) *Statistical Yearbook*

4.2.2 The Appeal of Non-Theatrical for Nonfiction Films

Despite the apparent growing trend in the number of documentary screenings in cinemas, most documentaries will not achieve theatrical exhibition. For those that do enter this market, the chances that any one generates enough revenue to cover release costs remain slim. The genre's success in cinemas has been widely overstated, particularly in the press, which has helped create the illusion that documentaries are often profitable in this market. As Austin (2007: 13-14) suggests, 'the boom was in part a discursive phenomenon, constructed in the output of film magazines, websites and newspapers'. Austin explains, 'the commercial achievements of documentaries at the cinema have to be kept in proportion. While some have crossed over to the multiplex sector, the majority remain very much a niche taste, and deliver a fraction of the revenues earned by successful fiction films.' Despite documentaries being far more popular during the 2000s than in any decade prior, when comparing the genre to others, documentary has never obtained more than 2.5 percent of the annual box office share in the US during this time (see Table 4.4). It can be estimated that at least ten thousand feature documentaries were produced worldwide during the last decade (see Table 4.5). Since 2004, more than one thousand feature documentaries have been produced worldwide each year. Cinemas, as they currently operate in the US and UK, simply cannot support the release of more than a few documentaries each week. *Variety* reported US box office returns for, on average, less than one hundred documentaries a year (see Figure 4.2). For those documentaries that manage to gain theatrical distribution, the high marketing and distribution costs required to release a film in cinemas guarantees

that distributors who 'pick up' documentaries for theatrical release also want to acquire rights to all other available markets, in all relevant territories. Although this 'overall deal' helps lessen risks for the distributor (because the theatrical market is almost always a loss leader), it is unlikely that filmmakers will see any money beyond whatever advance they initially receive (see Broderick 2004, De Vany 2004, Finney 2010). As other markets typically have greater potential to create revenue for documentaries, securing an overall deal for theatrical distribution, which is unlikely to recoup the expenses it incurs, is rarely beneficial for the filmmaker.

Table 4.4 Box Office Market Share for Documentaries Released in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010

Year	Documentaries Released	Market Share	Gross Box Office Revenue	Inflation-Adjusted Gross (*)
2000	37	1.51%	\$112,946,062	\$144,168,639
2001	19	0.26%	\$20,841,339	\$25,333,646
2002	27	1.08%	\$98,929,770	\$117,149,186
2003	45	0.95%	\$89,169,139	\$101,738,585
2004	85	2.34%	\$217,098,868	\$240,521,766
2005	97	1.74%	\$155,673,323	\$167,087,763
2006	107	1.10%	\$101,378,085	\$106,485,695
2007	108	0.74%	\$71,657,283	\$71,657,298
2008	125	0.89%	\$87,958,307	\$84,283,172
2009	85	1.82%	\$194,210,796	\$178,156,038

Note: This table includes IMAX movies.

(*) Inflation adjusted against 2009 end.

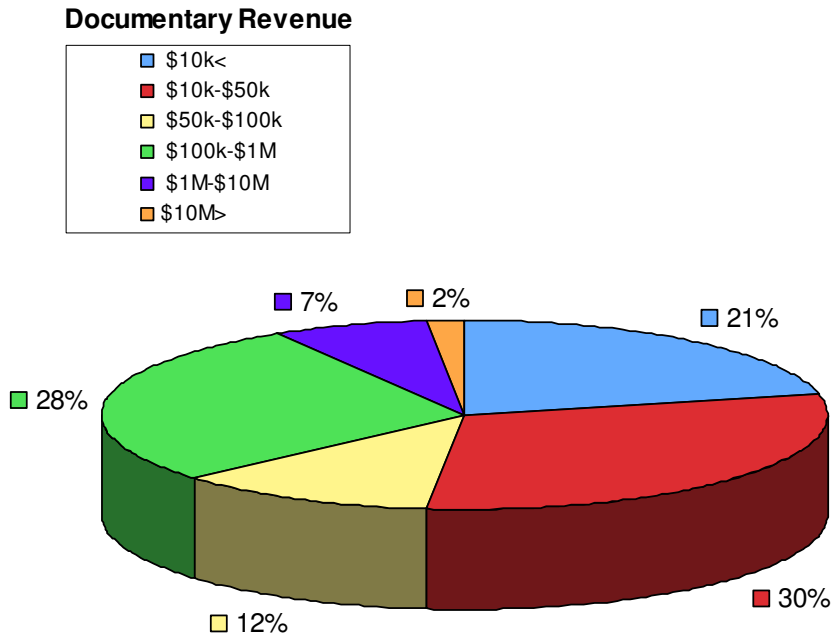
Table 4.5 Estimated Number of Documentaries Released Worldwide, 2000 to 2010

Year	All Worldwide Documentaries	Worldwide Feature Documentaries			
		Total	Without Reported Box Office Return	With Reported Box Office Return	Percentage Reported with Box Office Return
2000	4701	519	480	39	8%
2001	5655	529	502	27	5%
2002	6460	698	656	42	6%
2003	8185	774	733	41	5%
2004	9967	1003	943	60	6%
2005	11198	1127	1062	65	6%
2006	12235	1178	1100	78	7%
2007	12545	1271	1207	64	5%
2008	12042	1435	1355	80	6%
2009	12867	1732	1653	79	5%
Decade Total	95855	10266	9691	575	6%
Annual Average	8714	933	881	52	6%

Source: IMDb. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/genre/documentary> [accessed 20 January 2010].

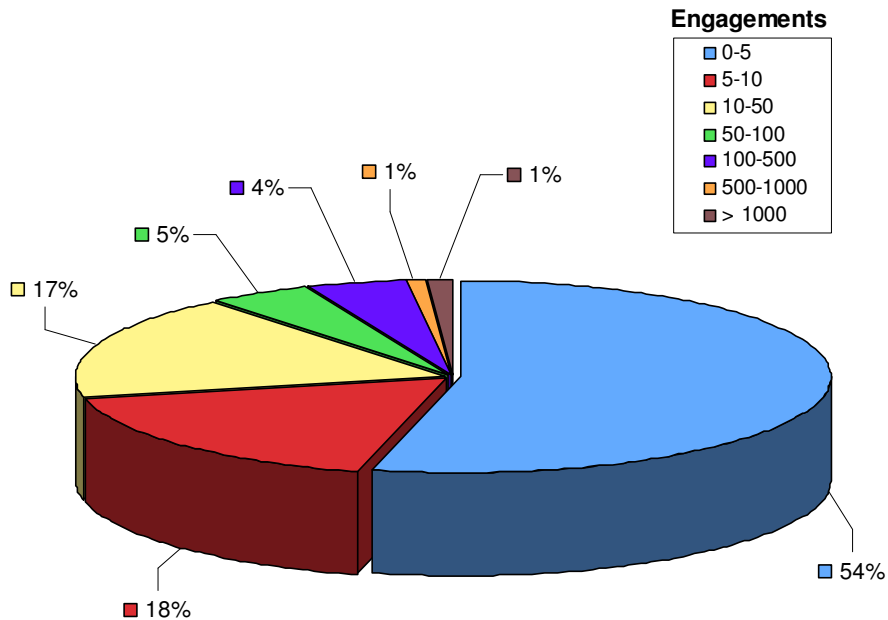
Nevertheless, many filmmakers still seek these deals in hope of seeing their films reach wider audiences. Low acquisition fees and marketing and publicity costs have enticed many distributors to take risks and release documentaries theatrically (Austin 2007: 19). As a consequence, distributors have oversaturated the marketplace with documentaries that failed to pull in a profit at the box office. In a *Newsweek* article, David Ansen (2008) suggested that distributors who were fooled by the 'gold rush' of documentaries 'got burned' after acquiring documentaries 'at prices no one was used to paying'. During these golden times, distributors gambled against all odds. As data estimates reveal, one-fifth of the 653 documentaries distributed theatrically in the United States in the decade between 2000 and 2010 made less than \$10,000, less than half made more than \$50,000, and just one in eight broke the \$1 million mark at the box office (see Figure 4.3). These results are related to the fact that documentaries typically have limited theatrical runs. During the same period, documentary films released in US cinemas achieved, on average, less than eleven engagements per week at their widest point of release (see Figure 4.4). As evidence suggests, documentaries are not well suited for Hollywood's theatrically-led distribution model, which targets mass audiences, is segmented into territories, and is prohibitively expensive to execute. Even for studio films, theatrical releasing is rarely profitable and typically serves as a way to generate more revenues in the ancillary markets (see De Vany 2004). Thus, the tendency for documentaries to have no or low-profile releases can hinder their economic performance in subsequent release windows. To offset these losses and potentially generate publicity and profit from documentary screenings, many filmmakers choose to release their films non-theatrically.

Figure 4.3 Revenue for Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010



Source: *Variety* box office reports. See Appendix B.
 Note: Total number of documentaries is 653.

Figure 4.4 Average Maximum Number of Weekly Engagements for Documentary Films Released in US Theatres, 2000 to 2010



Source: *Variety* box office reports. See Appendix B.
 Note: Total number of documentaries is 653.

Although still requiring significant effort, non-theatrical distribution is often better suited to documentary films than theatrical releasing. Non-theatrical distribution typically replaces, or sometimes follows closely behind, a film's cinematic release and offers the opportunity for films to play before audiences in alternative venues such as universities, town centres, churches, or any non-cinema projection space. These alternative cinema spaces (which distinguish non-theatrical from semi-theatrical) typically serve organised groups, are well-suited venues for discussions, and allow for special events to accompany screenings. One common benefit in non-theatrical releasing is that filmmakers may receive a speaker's fee in the region of \$750 plus expenses when they tour with the film.⁹Pray the Devil Back to Hell (2008). After screening at more than forty film festivals and having a limited theatrical release, Reticker still hoped her film would reach larger audiences. She hired the company Film Sprout to work with her team to build a 'Global Peace Tour' campaign that coincided with the UN's International Day of Peace. Reticker travelled around the world with her film, from San Francisco to London, as it screened at more than two hundred events in sixteen countries. The publicity generated from this 'tour' built further demand for her film, as hundreds of requests for screenings came in from community organisations across five continents. Non-profits and NGOs served as valuable partners, offering free promotion for Reticker's film during its non-theatrical release. For documentaries, particularly those that focus on a cause or issue, such release

⁹ Paul Devlin reports making \$10,000 in speaker's fees for one screening of his 2008 documentary *BLAST!* (Macaulay 2010).

campaigns not only help generate greater revenues but also help extend the value of a film, by inspiring discussions and potentially even creating change. With so many films and so little space, non-theatrical releasing has become increasingly important, helping to position documentaries in communities that are eager to support both the films and filmmakers.

4.2.3 Festivals as Platforms for Distribution

Over the past two decades, film festivals have become an important platform for documentaries, giving them access to big screen venues and supportive audiences. Festivals are a key component of a documentary's release strategy and offer important advantages over ordinary theatrical screenings. The main difference, as Peranson (2009: 24) notes, is that festivals are 'events'. These special events have substantial funds allocated within their budgets to attract audiences (often even special-interest audiences) and can serve as focal events in the cities that host them, attracting significant attention from locals as well as tourists. Festivals' capacity to generate publicity makes them an essential first entry point into the marketplace. As the number and power of festivals has increased, so has their influence in matters of distribution. Film festivals and markets bring the industry together and facilitate the signing of distribution deals, but opportunities at these events have grown beyond the potential for acquisitions. Much like musicians who sell merchandise and CDs at concerts, filmmakers who sell merchandise and copies of their films at festival screenings can generate significant income from their work. According to Broderick (2008), the filmmakers behind the documentary *Lumo* (2007) sold eighty DVDs of the film at one festival screening. If filmmakers want to wait to release their films on DVD until after their festival runs, they can do as Ondi Timoner did by selling copies of her previous film instead. After a screening of *We Live in Public* (2009), which I attended at Hot Docs on 6 May 2009, Timoner signed and sold dozens of copies of her documentary, *Join Us* (2007) for twenty Canadian dollars each. Even films that do not make it into prestigious festivals can find ways to gain exposure and profit from these important industry meccas. For example, Adele Schmidt took

advantage of the industry and press gathering at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah and organised a concurrent non-theatrical release for the film *Bonhoeffer* (2003), a documentary she associate produced about an important Christian figure of the same name. The story was heavily covered in the press, which resulted in sold out screenings in the four different churches where the film played. News of the film's success even reached as far as Washington, DC, where the filmmakers' production company, Journey Films, was based. When they returned back home, according to Schmidt, 'The phones didn't stop ringing. Churches from around the country called Journey Films asking if we could do the same thing in their churches' (Jacobsen 2003b: 13). Besides the obvious novelty of screening a film in churches, the venue enabled the filmmakers to efficiently reach the film's core audience of church-goers because the churches promoted *Bonhoeffer* within their circles (Ibid.). The film was ultimately acquired by the distributor First Run Features and had a limited theatrical run, which brought in almost \$300,000.¹⁰ Festivals naturally attract intellectually curious and supportive audiences, thus making them ideal venues for promoting and distributing documentaries.

Documentary films are now regularly included in the line-ups of major international festivals and there are numerous festivals dedicated exclusively to nonfiction cinema. A category search for 'documentary' on the British Council's *Directory of International Film and Video Festivals*, an online database of over fourteen thousand festivals, shows that almost half of all film festivals listed have dedicated categories for documentary. There are currently more than fifty festivals worldwide that are largely, if not exclusively, devoted to screening documentaries. Before 1988, when the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) was founded, no major festival dedicated to documentary existed. Now, several international documentary festivals have gained prestige and have established themselves as highly selective and desirable venues for premieres. Top festivals,

¹⁰ See Box Office Mojo. Available at: <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bonhoeffer.htm> [accessed 7 September 2011].

such as IDFA and Hot Docs, have catered to the niche needs of documentary films by attracting new audiences and, as a result of these efforts, they have grown substantially in recent years. For example, in 1998 Hot Docs had an annual screening attendance of around 4000. By 2007 that number had reached 68,000, which represented a growth of thirty-six percent on the previous year (DOC/NGL 2007: 58). By 2011, attendance at Hot Docs had reached a record 151,000 admissions (Knecht 2011). Showing similar expansion, by 2010, IDFA's audience attendance had grown to 180,000 admissions (Anderson 2011). Such remarkable figures suggest, as Hogarth (2006: 33) observes, 'The world's largest documentary festivals [...] are frankly corporate in intent.' These festivals support the industry, attracting commissioners and buyers from around the world and host markets for buying and selling documentaries, along with pitching forums for funding them. Festivals, therefore, have standard agendas they must follow and special interests to satisfy. They create a critical entry point for launching documentaries into the broader commercial markets. However, for films that specifically aim to attain a theatrical release, it is more advantageous to premiere them at top mainstream international festivals, which are heavily attended by the wider film industry and press. Sundance, Berlin, and Toronto are key festivals that are not exclusively dedicated to documentary but strongly support it. The Cannes Film Festival, which has typically overlooked documentary, has recently created initiatives to support documentary filmmakers and their films (Pham 2008). As these festivals have grown over the years, so has their support for documentary films; this enthusiasm has translated into more buzz about documentaries at these events and more opportunities for the filmmakers who attend them.

The Sundance Film Festival has established itself as a critical outlet and support network for theatrical documentaries. Founded in 1985, Sundance has premiered some of the most financially successful and critically acclaimed documentaries in history, including: *Roger and Me* (1989), *Hoop Dreams* (1994), *Super Size Me* (2004), *March of the Penguins* (2005), and *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006). Over the years, Sundance has developed its reputation as the US's 'top nonfiction

showcase' (Turan 2002: 37). According to Peranson (2009: 34), 'Sundance's first, and most successful historical move, was to nurture the documentary through its Documentary Film Fund.' This investment in documentary film has offered filmmakers essential support and made the festival one of the most sought-after places to debut a documentary film. Over the last decade, Sundance has given documentary a more elevated status and helped position it in the theatrical market. In 2004, the first year that Sundance opened the festival with a documentary, Patricia Aufderheide (2004: 18) observed, 'Theatrical distributors showed great interest in documentaries this year. Perhaps half of the documentaries with US public television co-producers had theatrical distribution nibbles by the end of the festival.' This growth snowballed and one year later, Aufderheide (2005: 16) observed, 'Docs have become a full-fledged part of the marketing and deal-making madness. Many directors showed up this year with big-name agents.' According to Aufderheide, that year a few documentaries came to Sundance already having theatrical deals. Three years later, Steven Zeitchik and Gregg Goldstein (2008) wrote in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 'Documentaries stole the show at the Sundance Film Festival'. Sundance's spotlight on documentaries has illuminated the commercial viability of nonfiction films and led to some of the biggest documentary acquisition deals in history. For example, *American Teen* (2008) reportedly sold in the region of \$2-3 million (Ibid.). *In the Shadow of the Moon* (2007) went for what was thought to be \$1.5 million and *My Kid Could Paint That* (2007) was taken for around \$2 million (Kay 2007). According to Zeitchik and Goldstein (2008), at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, documentaries were bringing in more bids than narrative features. Sundance's reputation as a 'valuable launching forum' (Hegedus 2001) makes it an important venue for theatrical documentaries. The attention the festival generates for documentaries appears to be linked to their success at the box office as more than one in five of the top fifty grossing documentaries at the US box office had a premiere at Sundance (see Table 4.6). Sundance's spotlight on documentaries has played a central role in the 'documentary boom' and helped to extend the genre's commercial appeal.

Table 4.6 Sundance Films Listed in Top 50 Grossing Documentary Films Released in US Theatres

Film	Director	Year	Distributor	Box Office	Rank
March of the Penguins	Luc Jacquet	2005	Warner Independent Pictures	\$77,437,223	2
An Inconvenient Truth	Davis Guggenheim	2006	Paramount Classics	\$24,146,161	6
Super Size Me	Morgan Spurlock	2004	IDP	\$11,536,423	15
Mad Hot Ballroom	Marilyn Agrelo	2005	Paramount Classics	\$8,117,961	16
Hoop Dreams	Steve James	1994	Fine Lien	\$7,830,611	17
Roger and Me	Michael Moore	1989	WB	\$6,706,368	21
The Aristocrats	Paul Provenza	2005	ThinkFilm	\$6,377,461	17
Tupac: Resurrection	Lauren Lazin	2003	Paramount	\$7,718,961	19
Touching the Void	Kevin Macdonald	2004	IFC	\$4,593,598	20
Waiting for "Superman"	Davis Guggenheim	2010	Paramount Vantage	\$6,417,135	22
Good Hair	Jeff Stilson	2009	Roadside Attractions	\$4,157,223	32
Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room	Alex Gibney	2005	Magnolia	\$4,071,700	33
The September Issue	R.J. Cutler	2009	Roadside Attractions	\$3,820,067	35
Paris is Burning	Jennie Livingston	1991	Miramax	\$3,779,620	36
Born Into Brothels	Zana Briski, Ross Kauffman	2004	ThinkFilm	\$3,515,061	40
The Corporation	Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott	2004	Zeitgeist	\$3,493,516	41
Exit Through the Gift Shop	Banksy	2010	Producers Distribution Agency	\$3,291,250	43
Catfish	Henry Joost, Ariel Schulman	2010	Rogue Pictures	\$3,237,343	44
Grizzly Man	Werner Herzog	2005	Lionsgate	\$3,178,403	45
Wordplay	Patrick Creadon	2006	IFC	\$3,121,270	46
Capturing the Friedmans	Andrew Jarecki	2003	Magnolia	\$3,119,113	47
Crumb	Terry Zwigoff	1995	Sony Pictures Classics	\$3,041,083	49
Man on Wire	James Marsh	2008	Magnolia	\$2,962,242	50

Source: *Variety* Box Office reports and IMDb.

Note: Sundance films were identified from top 50 documentaries in Appendix B.

Although Sundance is able to boast many theatrical success stories, documentaries are rarely acquired for theatrical release at festivals. More commonly, festivals offer a surrogate theatrical run experience and opportunities for promotion that might benefit a film's release in other markets. Dina Iordanova (2010: 23) has noticed a 'growing consensus' around the idea of festivals serving as an 'alternative distribution network'. As noted by Quíntin (2009: 43), there is a rising trend for festivals to offer screening fees to the films they programme. Because these fees are paid in advance, and can be in the region of hundreds or even thousands of dollars per festival, a well organised theatrical run may have more appeal than semi-theatrical releasing, which requires more effort and runs the risk of producing a loss. Nevertheless, there are limitations to this idea because, as Iordanova (2010: 26) suggests, 'The global film festival phenomenon is not inherently networked.' There is no supply chain to carry films from one festival to another, so each film follows a different path. The possibility of creating a distribution network among festivals is

limited because 'festivals lack in permanence' and therefore have 'difficulties maintaining steady relations with suppliers and cannot commit to working with distributors the way distributors would like' (Ibid.). However, as festivals have developed their online presence, they have also increased their permanence. In an effort to extend their importance and value, festivals have begun to play a role in film distribution that extends beyond their immediate communities. Although the 'festival-circuit-as-distribution' model is not yet in place, it could eventually fit within the scope of festival functions. Many festivals now offer video-on-demand services, often in conjunction with films' festival screenings (Graser 2010). Tribeca has experimented with digital release strategies, partnering with American Express in 2010 to launch the Tribeca Film Festival Virtual, which offered online 'passholders' access to certain events, features, and shorts. Hot Docs offers a variety of films for free through its Doc Library and asks viewers to 'please support the films and filmmakers by visiting their websites and buying their DVDs to share with others'. IDFA TV, the online platform for the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, streams select films to worldwide audiences using an ad-supported revenue model. IDFA pays rights holders a non-recurrent fee for permission to show their films online and promises to share advertising revenue when the service becomes profitable. In addition, rights holders have the option of offering their films through paid video-on-demand (Anderson 2011). As festivals work to extend the value of films beyond their local screenings, they strengthen their function as distribution platforms. Their positive alliances and ongoing support of filmmakers suggest that festivals could, essentially, fill the role of independent distributors, helping documentaries be seen in cinemas around the world and successfully enter other markets. As festivals consider ways to extend their value, it seems that, rather than helping films find distribution, they might better serve their communities by providing distribution services themselves.

4.3 Developing Industry Trends

4.3.1 Exploiting the Educational Market

Educational distribution has traditionally been a valuable market for documentary films. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the educational market (which caters to libraries, universities, hospitals, government agencies, and other institutions) is most fully developed in the United States, where it remains separate from home video primarily because of its higher price point. 'Educational' DVDs are generally sold at ten times the cost of a standard retail DVD, which is why educational distributors typically oppose the simultaneous releasing of films in both the educational and home video markets. For example, a film that sells in the home video market for \$19.95 may sell to a university somewhere between \$195 and \$295. This inflated price is based on an understanding that institutions should pay more than individuals because the copies of the films they purchase can be shared among many individuals and screened in group settings. Some established distributors that specialise in this market include: California Newsreel, Documentary Educational Resources, and Women Make Movies. Historically, educational distributors have kept seventy percent of the gross revenues and returned only thirty percent to filmmakers. This uneven split is a large part of why these small distributors have been able to remain in business for decades (Jacobsen 2003a: 9). In an article in *DOX* magazine, Debra Zimmerman, executive director of Women Make Movies, argues that 'for almost all filmmakers in the US, it is possible to make more money through educational distribution than through broadcast sales'. She uses the example of *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter* (1994), which was, at the time, Women Make Movies' best-selling title. The film had been in distribution for many years and earned more than \$350,000. According to Zimmerman, in this instance, the filmmaker made more money from educational distribution than from television sales (Ibid.). However, examples like this one have become increasingly rare as the Internet has challenged the educational distribution business model by making films that were once hard to find widely available. Because non-profit institutions are not

required to pay 'institutional use' licensing fees when films are screened for teaching purposes in classroom settings or loaned out to individuals, and because many 'educational' DVDs are dually available for standard consumer use, the traditional structure of the educational market, along with the sustainability it has offered, has become greatly endangered.

It has become increasingly common for filmmakers to attempt to exploit the educational market directly, by selling DVDs from their own websites, rather than working with an educational distributor. In order to heighten the perceived value of their films, many filmmakers have developed the practice of creating specific versions of their films to service this market. These extended 'institutional version' copies are often segmented into lessons and accompanied by supplementary materials that facilitate classroom instruction. These added features help to justify selling educational DVDs at a higher price point. Tiffany Shlain incorporated this strategy for the release of *The Tribe* (2006). DVD copies of the film were offered for sale on Shlain's website for \$25 for the standard home version or \$299 for the 'educational guide package'. The educational version included a fifty-page teaching guide, 'conversation cards', and other instructional materials. Shlain also created a 'discussion kit', which she sold with the standard DVD for \$40. The website offered additional resources, including a link to 'The Tribe Curriculum', which was a wiki page where users could find and add lesson plans and supplemental material (Kirsner 2007b). By packaging documentaries with supplementary materials, filmmakers can increase the perceived value of their films and give buyers the sense that their purchase is an educational investment.

The Web and digital technologies have offered new direct alternatives that challenge the economic sustainability of traditional educational distributors. One of these alternatives is the Tribeca Film Institute's Reframe Project. This service offers free digitisation of older films and videos (a typically costly service for those independent filmmakers who only have master prints of their films in non-digital formats) and enables filmmakers to digitally distribute their films into the educational market with a revenue share that is far more favourable than the

standard thirty percent. The arrangement, which facilitates the distribution of films on the Reframe website and Amazon.com, is nonexclusive and enables filmmakers to determine their own price point. Reframe targets educational institutions and has a tiered pricing structure that rewards filmmakers more substantially for purchases made by such institutions. Reframe's partnership with Amazon ensures that films can be made available both for purchase on DVDs (manufactured by Amazon) or for rent or download-to-own via Amazon's video-on-demand service. Rights holders can determine their pricing structure as they want, charging different amounts for consumer use, academic use, or public performance. The revenue share for downloads returns a full fifty percent to the rights holder and for DVDs the revenue share is tiered – giving forty percent to rights holders for products that sell for less than \$50 and eighty-five percent for those that sell for \$51 or more. Anything that sells for \$201 and above rewards rights holders with ninety percent return.¹¹ Reframe's limitation is that it works more like a platform service than a distributor, placing much of the marketing burden upon the filmmakers. The platform has more than 1200 documentary films listed in its database, many of which have never had distribution, or at least have been out of distribution for a long time. Although no data has been released that indicates how successful Reframe's model has been, its transparent accounting system, non-exclusive contract, and favourable revenue share have established it as a worthwhile alternative to traditional educational distribution.

Although documentary filmmakers have the potential to make a significant amount of money from the educational market, few do. Overall, there is a feeling that the sales model for this sector 'needs to change' (Kaufman and Mohan 2008: 6). One key challenge with educational distributors is that they have been very slow to make their catalogues available in digital formats. It was not until 2007 that leading

¹¹ Information based on a 21 November 2008 interview via email with Brian Newman, then CEO of the Tribeca Film Institute. The interview was then published on the Power to the Pixel website. Available at: <http://www.powertothepixel.com/news/online-distribution/interview-with-brian-newman-president-and-ceo-of-the-tribeca-film-institute> [accessed 28 June 2011].

special-interest video distributors in the US seriously addressed the issue of online distribution, by creating a consortium to explore how they could establish 'a common Internet portal for digital delivery of independent documentaries' (Jacobsen 2007: 4). The companies involved in this group included Bullfrog Films, California Newsreel, First Run/Icarus Films, and Women Make Movies. According to Jacobsen, these companies decided to take this step 'based on the acknowledgement that DVD is only a transitional technology, and (because) they think that now is the time for independent video distributors to enter the digital world of video-on-demand and Internet streaming' (Ibid.). This coalition, named the Independent Film Distributors' Licensing Consortium (IFDLC), produced a report in 2007 that outlined a master plan to reach the educational market digitally (IFDLC 2007). Four years later, they had not yet developed their 'common Internet portal' and had individually made little progress in their efforts to digitally sell their films to a wider market. Additionally, it seems that many well-established documentary distributors, including those previously mentioned, have failed to take advantage of the viral power of the Web and adapt their websites to cater to the new dynamics of audience engagement. Most websites for 'traditional' distributors of documentary content emphasise the film as a product to sell. By making film catalogues the main feature of their websites, distributors describe films, with text and sometimes a trailer, but rarely allow audiences to add value to their websites, through such simple means as posting comments or rating films. It is possible that these distributors have not had the means to enable these features, but their failure to adapt to the Social Web also likely stems from a fear that they would not be able to control their brand and the sentiment consumers shared. Ultimately, such a lack of user-engagement renders these sites unuseful to anyone other than those visitors who already have a particularly strong interest in licensing or purchasing a specific film. By failing to offer dynamic websites that foster audience engagement, distributors miss an opportunity to attract greater consumer interest and extend the value of their services beyond the content of the films themselves.

4.3.2 Hope for Home Video Online

Traditionally, documentary has not easily penetrated the home video market and has had to follow 'alternative' avenues to find audiences. Julia Knight (2007: 21) uses the word 'alternative' to describe niche content (including documentary) that is limited in its capacity to reach audiences through mainstream methods. Knight suggests that 'alternative/DIY distribution models' gained momentum with the advent of VHS (Ibid.: 23-24).¹² When the DVD format came along, its widespread popularity prompted growth in this market, including a rise in the number of specialty home video distributors that catered to documentaries. Regardless of this growth, documentaries still remained niche and research has shown that, when compared to other common genres, documentaries typically generate the least number of DVD sales in both the US and UK markets (Elberse and Oberholzer-Gee 2008: 19, UK Film Council 2010: 83). Because documentaries are niche, home video distributors rarely are able to sell a significant number of discs and filmmakers seldom get much of a return, unless they can also sell directly to consumers. Journalist John Tozzi (2008) details the financial benefits of independent DVD distribution stating, 'When filmmakers get a distributor to put a DVD in stores, they might see \$2.50 for a DVD that retails at \$25. The same DVD sold through the film's Web site returns over \$20 – all but the cost of pressing the disc.' Tozzi's evidence derives from an interview with industry strategist Peter Broderick, who reports, 'There are a number of filmmakers who made more than \$1 million selling one DVD from one Web site' (Ibid.). Although impressive, these few success stories should not be overstated because, in reality, direct distribution is challenging, requiring marketing skills and good fortune to achieve success. Nevertheless, direct sales remain a worthwhile pursuit. The benefits of selling direct, as Broderick and others have iterated, is that it involves a personal transaction, enabling filmmakers to have

¹² Knight (Ibid.) discusses the grassroots distribution example of *The Miners' Campaign Tapes* (1984). This package of three tapes, which aimed to educate the public about the UK miners strike and boost morale, were widely distributed through a collaboration between the National Union of Miners (NUM) and film/video workshops around the UK.

direct contact with consumers, or what some (i.e. Kelly 2008a) might call 'fans', accruing a valuable list of customer email addresses. This list can be an enormous asset when trying to raise funds or promote other films or projects. The prospect of having to sell only 10,000 DVDs to make a profit of \$200,000 has prompted many to invest the funds and effort in replicating and selling DVDs from their own websites. However, the number of genuine success stories remains small and with the declining appeal of the DVD format, direct sales are not an easy path towards sustainability for documentary filmmakers.

The home video rental market for documentaries has developed in recent years due in part to Netflix, which created an online subscription model that not only made renting DVDs convenient and affordable but also helped create greater consumer demand for niche content. In Anderson's (2006: 109-10) discussion with Reed Hastings, the founder of Netflix, Hastings quantified the difference between Netflix and Blockbuster, observing, 'Historically Blockbuster has reported that about 90% of the movies they rent are new theatrical releases. Online they're more niche: about 70% of what they rent from their website is new releases and about 30% is back catalog.' Hastings explained that Netflix is the opposite, with about thirty percent new release and seventy percent back catalogue rentals. According to Hastings, 'It's not because we have a different subscriber. It's because we create demand for content' (Ibid.). Netflix creates demand 'algorithmically' by using data mining techniques to process user ratings and rental history to determine what people watch and then recommend similar content to them. Netflix has used these analytics to negotiate acquisitions deals. With this information, Netflix can assess the value of hard-to-market films and take risks on films that traditional video distributors may not believe could be profitable. For example, when Netflix bought DVD rights to *Favela Rising* (2005), a documentary about Rio de Janeiro musicians, at that time one million customers had rented the Brazilian film *City of God* (2002) and 500,000 had rented the documentary *Born Into Brothels* (2004), and 250,000 had rented both. Netflix determined that *Favela Rising* would likely interest this overlapping subset of its subscribers. So, based on these figures, Netflix paid a

licensing fee to the producers according to a predicted 250,000 rentals, agreeing to split the upside if the film achieved more (Mullaney 2006). Helping to reduce the investment risk even further, Netflix's recommendation system is able to promote this acquisition and make these subscribers aware of *Favela Rising* as soon as it is available for them to rent. According to Anderson (2006: 130), 'Netflix changed the economics of offering niches and, in doing so, reshaped our understanding about what people actually *want* to watch.' By going beyond the boundaries of established practices, Netflix created a new business model that not only offered greater opportunities for niche content, but it also enabled Netflix to dominate the US rental market.

In the retail market, digital downloads have been slowly replacing DVD sales; however, increasing competition in this market and the economic challenge of establishing consumer-friendly solutions have meant that only a few companies (i.e. iTunes and Amazon) have generated substantial profits from digital delivery. Most VOD release experiments involving documentary films have only succeeded in delivering minimal or modest revenue returns. In the case of the film *10 MPH* (2007), which chronicles a journey across America on a two-wheeled Segue vehicle, the filmmakers hosted the film in the .m4v format on their own website and ended up selling more than one thousand digital downloads at an average of approximately six dollars each, using a 'pick-your-own-price-model' that ranged from one penny to one hundred dollars (Weiler 2008). Following on the digital download efforts, the filmmakers, Hunter Weeks and Josh Caldwell, made the entire film available on YouTube for free. It premiered online in January 2008, with a pre-roll message from Weeks that encouraged people to sign up to the entertainment website OurStage.com. Everyone who joined benefited from a free iPod download of the film, while the filmmakers gained one dollar per person from OurStage. Through this effort, they raised a little more than \$10,000 (Kirsner 2007a). This early 'success story' reflects how limited the direct revenues have been for documentaries in the online market. However, opportunities in this market are still emerging. Download platforms like iTunes and video-streaming services like Netflix have established

brand credibility that rivals that of the studios and allows them to reach far wider audiences than specialty distributors ever could. As more devices become connected to the Web, and more platforms make digital content easily accessible to consumers, filmmakers can expect to see more meaningful financial returns from digital downloads.¹³ Despite slow progress, evidence suggests consumers have started to develop the habit of paying for digital content.

Although revenue in the download market remains limited, there have been examples that suggest there is an opportunity for documentaries to profit from digital delivery. Filmmaker Gary Hustwit reported that his documentary, *Helvetica* (2007), about the font style of the same name, made approximately ten percent of its overall revenue from digital distribution methods. He estimates the film made about \$60,000 on iTunes and Netflix combined and attributes this success to the film's ability to get and stay on the iTunes 'Top Films' list. In order to achieve this, Hustwit sent out an email blast to his fans as soon as *Helvetica* was available on iTunes, which helped the film generate enough sales to make it onto the Top Films list. According to Hustwit, once a film gets on the list, it usually sparks enough interest to stay there for a few weeks. Despite his success, Hustwit does not believe that digital distribution is a 'magic bullet'. He explains, 'The exposure the filmmaker puts in, the groundwork, is what makes a film successful. Digital is just one option, money stream' (Erpelding 2009). Audiences who pay-per-view or download films on sites like iTunes generate the biggest per-transaction return; however, documentaries cannot always inspire audiences to make such discretionary purchases, which is one reason why subscription services, such as Netflix, have proven to be popular distribution outlets for documentaries.

¹³ Arash Amel, an analyst at *Screen Digest*, observes that 'the trend in movie downloads is that people are willing to pay if the service is connected to a device that they have paid for, for instance an iPod or an Xbox' (Richards 2008).

Video-on-demand has the potential to become the long-awaited solution to financial sustainability for independent content creators. Because of the low-cost of delivery, the revenue return is typically high and because the Web has no limit on shelf space, the market is wide. Anderson emphasises the value of digital delivery, stating, 'The marginal cost of manufacturing, shelving, and distribution is close to zero, and royalties are paid only when the goods are sold. It's the ultimate on-demand market' (2006: 96). Public adoption of digital delivery has grown, in part, due to the user-friendly design of Apple's iTunes, which has become a leading digital media outlet. By April 2007, iTunes had sold over two million movie downloads, making it the 'world's most popular' movie store.¹⁴ Four years later, and with many more competitors in the marketplace, iTunes still controlled about two-thirds of the online movie market in the US (Gruenwedel 2011a). Although there are plenty of online video portals that are equipped to host and sell content, iTunes' history of paying content producers meaningful revenues for downloads has made it a highly desirable distribution platform. Because of its popularity, iTunes strongly favours working with aggregators over individual filmmakers, as this approach helps ensure quality control and reduces the amount of contractual paperwork. Consequently, most filmmakers who want to sell their films through iTunes must hire a middleman to facilitate the agreement with Apple. The main drawback is that digital sales agents, such as Cinetic Media, can take up to fifty percent of the revenue profit share and require that filmmakers license their digital rights exclusively to them, for a term of ten years. Such business practices can make it challenging for independent filmmakers to position their work successfully in the online market without surrendering a substantial share of the profits. Selling digital downloads directly to consumers could prove to be a sustainable model, but few filmmakers have developed the capacity to successfully manage this process on their own.

¹⁴ See 9 January 2007 press release. Available at: <http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2007/01/09iTunes-Store-Tops-Two-Billion-Songs.html> [accessed 15 September 2011].

4.3.3 Broadcast in a Cross-Platform Context

Broadcast is an important market for documentary, especially in the UK, as broadcast licences can offer substantial means of funding, typically paid in advance of a project's completion. To secure these funds, filmmakers generally pitch their ideas to commissioners, who offer money in exchange for the rights to screen completed films on their channels. According to Kilborn and Izod (1997: 169), 'The vast majority (over ninety per cent) of documentaries are nowadays produced directly by, or at the behest of, television organisations or channels.' It is, therefore, quite common that broadcasters have a 'determining impact' on the kind of documentaries produced for this market (Ibid.). Curran and Seaton (2010: 5-6) suggest, 'The pressure on commercial television to maximize audiences naturally leads to a preference for "entertainment" as opposed to "serious" programmes', which has resulted in an emphasis on the 'personal and human interest aspects of documentary stories'. This 'case study' approach to storytelling tends to have greater mass audience appeal than other styles of documentary. To cater to these demands, production companies have necessarily become larger and more formulaic in their offerings, causing them to function as 'key suppliers' of mainstream fodder rather than producers of original one-off documentaries. Consequently, although the overall space for documentaries on television has expanded substantially, the room for thoughtful feature documentaries on broadcast channels remains largely limited. One-off documentaries have become increasingly less common on prime time television as light 'factual entertainment' has come to monopolise airtime, even on the publicly funded BBC television channels. In her book, *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC* (2004), Georgina Born investigates the changes that took place in the BBC from the late 1990s and argues that its greater focus on audience needs has led to a decline in creative culture within the BBC and has hampered the BBC's ability to deliver on its public service remit. As a consequence of yielding to commercial pressures, UK broadcasters have lost some of their stature as outlets for quality documentary films.

In the US, where 'public service remit' is not part of the industry lexicon, the market for documentaries on television has always been commercially oriented. In the 1960s, independents like Robert Drew and his team at Drew Associates relied on brands like Xerox and Bell Telephone Company to sponsor the production of documentaries. These companies would fund production and pay for the network airtime. But, according to Drew (2005: 290-01), 'As the costs of network hours increased, fewer sponsors could afford to buy whole programs.' Consequently, multiple sponsors became necessary for each program and networks gained more power to determine what to air. Drew argues, 'As network competition for audiences increased, culture disappeared as a regular commodity in prime time' and networks began funding the kind of programs 'that appeared to be a documentary but entailed none of the risk of dealing with the current real world' (Ibid.). Even those like Drew, who assert their status as independents, still feel pressure to cater to the needs and desires of those who fund and distribute their films. Such sponsorship by government, academic, or private sector bodies has been a key factor of influence on the development of documentary since the early days. As Keith Beattie observes, 'The prominence of sponsorship within the documentary tradition is exemplified in the fact that "sponsored documentary" is a category which includes the majority of documentary output' (2004: 41). It is difficult for independent filmmakers to find sustainability within a system that continually requires that they meet corporate demands and seek commissioner approval. Regardless of the few who are fortunate enough to be awarded with 'easy' money, this universal dependency on institutional financing has hindered market expansion and limited the overall diversity of documentary.

The hurdles involved in the broadcast sponsored path towards documentary production have become even more insurmountable due to the growing popularity of the craft of documentary filmmaking and the declining revenue and funds available to the industry. As difficult as it is for filmmakers simply to gain the opportunity to pitch their ideas, it is nearly impossible for them to persuade commissioners to agree to fund projects through pre-sales and co-financing.

Dorothy Viljoen, in her book *Art of the Deal* (1997), explains that producers frequently find themselves in a 'classic "chicken and egg" situation' because a film typically needs to have a commitment from a broadcaster, or 'end-user', in order to get a co-financier to consider funding it. However, the broadcaster or distributor is rarely interested until someone, namely a co-financier, has agreed to put some money into the project (Ibid.: 137-39). Due to cuts in commissioning budgets, such 'pre-sale' funding scenarios have become increasingly less obtainable, and when they do manifest, they are typically far less rewarding than expected. Alan Rosenthal attributes the decline to 'competition among filmmakers for cable slots', which has in turn created a buyers' market in which 'fees in the first market have been considerably reduced'. According to Rosenthal, 'Whereas a few years ago a filmmaker could get a deal for \$50,000 of financing, allowing the station four runs in five years for that amount, the current deal is more likely \$20,000 for two runs in two years' (2005: 172). The situation has deteriorated even further and is now described as the 'commissioning crisis' within the documentary community. The commissioning crisis has been a topic addressed repeatedly at many of the industry sessions I have attended at documentary festivals (including Hot Docs, Sheffield Doc/Fest, and IDFA) and has been raised as a point of concern in the *Digital Britain Final Report* (DCMS/DCBI 2009: 4). Major broadcasters in the UK, including Channel 4 and the BBC, have experienced significant budget cuts in recent years (Sweney 2009, Tryhorn 2009). Sentiment in the press seems to suggest that, as a result of these cutbacks, pre-sales have essentially 'all dried up' (Kaufman 2009), which has created a 'funding crisis for high-end docs' (McMahon 2009). These financial strains have had a negative effect on the documentary market as broadcasters have become increasingly focused on the bottom line and, therefore, have become more inclined to fund programmes that embody mass appeal and are relatively inexpensive to produce. As television documentaries lose their power to attract mass audience attention, broadcasters lose their justification to fund these programmes. With less support from broadcasters, 'serious' documentaries now must find alternative sources of funding and outlets for exhibition. Broadcast funding alone is simply not

enough to support the documentary industry.

4.3.4 Cross-Platform Challenges

In the midst of budget cuts, UK broadcasters have endeavoured to develop solutions that extend the value of their content and work to retain their audiences, who are spending increasingly more time on the Web. To better fulfil their public service mandates, broadcasters have offered viewers on-demand access to their programmes through 'catch-up TV' services (i.e. BBC iPlayer, 4oD, Demand 5). Catch-up TV not only gives audiences a second chance to watch television programmes but it also gives public service broadcasters a way to extend the reach and value of their programming. These services have become accessible through a variety of means, via broadcaster's dedicated portals, affiliate platforms, cable service providers, game consoles, portable media devices, etc. Channel 4 became the first broadcaster worldwide to allow YouTube to stream its full-length television shows when it signed a non-exclusive, three-year deal that made its catch-up schedule available free of charge to global audiences. This deal suggested a shift from broadcaster's branded players, hosted on their own sites, to syndicating content through online aggregators. Jon Grisby, Channel 4's director of future media and technology, has stated that Channel 4 aimed to get its 'content onto as many branded platforms as possible' (Barnett 2009). However, by offering content to aggregators, broadcasters risk losing control of their audiences. For instance, if YouTube managed to aggregate the majority of broadcast content, then it would have a monopoly in the market and could determine the terms of any contract. Broadcasters would be dependent upon YouTube to provide access to its massive audience and would have nowhere else to go (Ibid.). Partially because of this danger, many broadcasters, particularly those in the US, have been reluctant to syndicate their content through online aggregators. Instead, several content suppliers have banded together to establish an aggregate platform, which *they* control, that offers content from major studios and networks on both an ad-supported and subscription basis. Hulu – a joint venture between NBCUniversal,

Fox Entertainment, and Disney-ABC Television – has become the US's most popular catch-up TV service. Within three years of its launch, Hulu demonstrated free online distribution could be profitable (Stelter and Stone 2010); yet rights clearance issues have kept it from growing its profits by expanding its service into other regions (except for Japan, which is currently the only foreign region with access to Hulu). Despite being part of the World Wide Web, on-demand platforms still suffer from territorial limitations. Consequently, programmes on Hulu cannot be watched in the UK, just as programmes on the BBC's iPlayer cannot be watched in the US. As on-demand platforms benefit from having access to the widest possible audience, these boundaries must be overcome in order to return maximum revenues for both the platforms and the rights owners.

The BBC has made some progress to expand the iPlayer beyond the UK, launching a subscription service in more than ten other countries (Dredge 2011). The radical growth of the iPlayer demonstrates the growing popularity of on-demand access to content. Four years after it soft-launched in July 2007, the iPlayer had a monthly stream of over 130 million programme and radio downloads.¹⁵ Allowing viewers to catch-up on what they missed on television, the iPlayer offers free on-demand access to BBC programmes for up to seven days after they air. Users can also download programmes to their desktop and mobile devices (via an iPlayer application), where they can store them for up to thirty days for later viewing. Virgin TV, which carries the iPlayer as part of its subscription package, accounts for approximately twenty percent of the iPlayer's television programme streams. As the BBC reaches across a growing number of platforms – the iPlayer now spans more than twenty devices, such as mobile phones, broadband TV, and game consoles – it gains access to wider and more diverse audiences (Sweney 2010). Although the iPlayer does not exclusively feature documentary content, the device does promote a substantial amount of what the BBC calls 'factual' programming and has seemingly

¹⁵ See BBC July 2011 *Monthly Performance Pack*. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbcinternet/2011/08/18/BBC-iPlayer-performance-monthly-1107-final.pdf> [accessed 15 September 2011].

helped to increase the appeal, or at least dissemination, of this content to a wider public. Because the BBC owns the rights to most of its factual programmes, many of which are produced in-house, it can more freely distribute this content on the Web than it could, for instance, Hollywood feature films. The BBC also ensures that it requests Internet rights for all independently produced acquisitions, including documentaries, that it airs on its channels. In this way, the iPlayer favours these independent productions, allowing them to reach larger audiences than other more commercial kinds of content (i.e. studio films and network television programmes), which typically must be filtered out of the BBC's acquisitions pool due to rights clearance issues (Murray-Watson 2007). Although the iPlayer has the potential to increase the popularity of documentaries simply by making them more readily available to watch than other kinds of content, it is unlikely to increase their revenues, unless the BBC develops a scheme to share its profits as it expands the reach of its content.

Employing social media has become an important strategy for broadcasters, who hope to attract and engage larger audiences by enhancing live programmes and catch-up TV services. The BBC has effectively incorporated social media into the development of the iPlayer. Since its launch, the iPlayer has steadily improved its design and offering, releasing programmes in high definition and developing interactive features. The iPlayer aims to create a 'complete social ecosystem', which serves users by recommending programming based on personalised preferences and user viewing history. For example, the iPlayer is capable of identifying those who watch documentaries and then recommending more documentary content to those individuals in the personalised 'For You' section of the iPlayer homepage. Additionally, the iPlayer has been integrated with Twitter and Facebook, so users (who log-in with their BBC ID) can see what programmes their friends are watching and can recommend shows to them (BBC News 2010). These new features can help the iPlayer to inspire greater awareness of documentaries and increase their exposure by ensuring that viewers are quickly informed of newly available films. Ultimately, such enhanced interactivity could pave the way for a more democratic

broadcasting system. For instance, it is possible to imagine that the BBC iPlayer could one day profile projects in development, which users could click on or evaluate to show their interest and ultimately dictate how their TV licence fees are spent. Such an approach would also establish a deeper connection with these individuals, which could translate them into viewers once the documentary is released. Additionally, by building a greater level of interactivity, all documentaries that are hosted on the platform could, in a relatively simple manner, integrate cross-media components into their narratives. It is easy to imagine how cross-platform programmes, like *Britain From Above* (2008), could benefit from migrating their individual websites onto the iPlayer platform and engage wider audiences as a result. Ultimately, such developments will serve to enhance both the immediate and long-term value of documentary programmes.

The disintegration of the mass audience has decreased the value of television advertisements and pushed the broadcast market into an 'apparently inexorable' period of decline. John Naughton (2006: 44) claims that broadcast television is 'haemorrhaging viewers, or at least the viewers who are the most commercially lucrative'. Audiences have shifted away from watching scheduled programmes on major networks and begun spending more time consuming content through other outlets, such as specialised subscription-based channels or free online video platforms. As audiences fragment, the potential for broadcast advertising revenues declines and the commercial logic changes (Ibid.). The obvious solution of making content available through video-on-demand is less than ideal for broadcasters because doing so invariably leads to a loss in advertising revenues. Advertising around VOD is challenging because viewers expect immediacy, which places a limit on the amount of advertising they are willing to cope with before choosing to watch something else. Certainly, the traditional ten minutes per every hour on regular television is an unthinkable goal for VOD (Keens 2010). Another challenge facing broadcasters that enter the vast online domain of the Web is that they are limited to 'relatively small audience shares'. According to Andra Leurdijk (2007: 86-87), the Internet poses a threat for broadcasters because it positions them in a massive

'multichannel environment', which forces them compete for audience attention – both with other content platforms and with content creators themselves, who can bypass broadcasters and reach audiences directly.

Competition in the online market has pushed broadcasters to develop innovative solutions that more deeply engage audiences in their programming. Developing 'long-form interactive documentaries' helps to counteract online viewers' short attention spans by requiring 'repeated visits that enable a gradual unfolding of the narrative' (Proctor 2011). Consequently, cross-media storytelling, which extends beyond just cross-platform delivery, is a growing trend that can help public service broadcasters better fulfil their remits through the creation of highly personal, interactive educational experiences. Because cross-media (also known as 360° or transmedia) documentaries can be expensive and their online extensions typically offer low return on investment, they frequently appear in countries that have substantial public funds dedicated to such initiatives. France and Canada are two leaders in cross-media documentary, having supported numerous award-winning projects, including Arte's *Gaza/Sderot* (2008) and *Prison Valley* (2009) and the NFB's *Waterlife* (2009) and *Highrise* (2010). In the UK, there has been some effort from the BBC to create documentary programmes with interactive elements, including *Britain from Above* (2008) and *The Virtual Revolution* (2010). In addition, Channel 4 has created a fund specifically for cross-platform commissioning, which has produced projects such as *Battlefront* (2008) and *Routes* (2009). Support for this trend is also evidenced through the number of cross-media pitching competitions and industry sessions that have appeared at key documentary events, such as IDFA, Sheffield Doc/Fest, and Sunny Side of the Doc. In addition, educational programmes, such as DigiDocs 360 and the Crossover Labs, demonstrate the UK industry's investment in cross-media production skills training for documentary filmmakers.

Although the Internet has created the opportunity for broadcasters to more deeply engage audiences in their programmes, it has also stripped away some of the influence broadcasters have over audiences' viewing choices. As Grant et al. (2009:

64) explain, 'The Internet represents a major shift in how programming content is disseminated. Producer and consumer are dis-intermediated in the Internet delivery model. In an IPTV world, anyone can be an aggregator. Everyone is their own programmer.' In today's on-demand culture, the role of the broadcaster is shifting from an elite curator of content to a common supplier of content, existing in the midst of infinite other platforms on the Web. As broadcasters lose the capacity to draw attention to content, they also lose their ability to generate a common appreciation for programmes that have cultural value. Caldwell (2008: 161) considers this potential loss in relation to the iPlayer:

If public service broadcasting's role is to create informed citizens, then in allowing users to become self-schedulers, the BBC passes a great deal of responsibility to the user, potentially trading the broad vistas of television's window-on-the-world for a narrow, personalized portal of the user's individual taste preferences.

As people are now able to search an infinite selection of choices and decide what they want to watch, they most likely will only spend time viewing programmes that are widely popular or of a particular interest to them, overlooking more diverse content that exists outside these domains. Although Anderson (2006) suggests audiences will not just watch mainstream content but also consume niche content in the long tail, it seems more likely that releasing via an on-demand platform could earn an individual niche program far less views than it would garner through a traditional broadcast, which limits choice and focuses public attention. Broadcasters have historically had the capacity to bring attention to programmes that otherwise could be overlooked. Public service broadcasters in the UK have adhered to remits that require them to schedule a certain amount of educational content during prime time hours. However, on-demand viewing strips them of this power; consequently, documentaries are in danger of becoming invisible to the public, and buried beneath more commercial content, unless some effort is made to elevate them on these platforms. Platforms like iPlayer can help remedy this problem by recommending documentary content. Yet inspiring viewers to press play is likely a bigger challenge than inspiring them to stop surfing when they encounter a documentary playing on television. It seems clear that documentaries are unlikely to reach mass audiences in

an on-demand context unless broadcasters and distributors help focus public attention on them.

4.4 Emerging Distribution Models

4.4.1 Direct and Hybrid Approaches

As suggested earlier in this chapter, documentary filmmakers seldom experience the satisfaction of having their films widely seen. With the noteworthy exception of Michael Moore, documentary directors are typically challenged to get their films in front of mass audiences and generate enough revenue to sustain their craft. Even acclaimed directors, such as Frederick Wiseman and D.A. Pennebaker, who have made numerous award-winning documentaries over the course of decades, have difficulty getting projects funded and distributed beyond public television (Macnab 2010). Historically, the problem has been that a few main distributors controlled what films would be released to the public. This monopoly has allowed distributors to filter content according to their own agendas, not necessarily to suit the tastes of the audiences they aim to serve. Additionally, because distributors are risk-averse, they commonly avoid any content that might result in a lawsuit or require additional rights clearances, which can be expensive and time consuming. Particularly with broadcasters, any film missing appropriate paperwork (and failing to show that all rights have been cleared) is unlikely to be licensed for screening. This is because distributors and broadcasters commonly focus on the bottom line (the financials) over the need to innovate or the desire to please audiences. Such commercial restrictions conflict with the primary aim of most independent filmmakers – to build their careers by getting their work seen as widely as possible. Hardie (2002b: 31) observes, ‘documentary-makers have, historically, focused on creativity, and ignored economics’. For a while, the broadcast commissioning system in the UK was affluent enough to afford many filmmakers this luxury and created a system of dependency in which filmmakers relied upon broadcasters ‘for all funding

and a living' (Hardie 2002a: 43). Yet the recent commissioning crisis has demanded that filmmakers, in both the UK and US, explore alternative funding and distribution solutions, in order to continue their careers. In the US, a study that Peter B. Kaufman and Jen Mohan (2008) conducted for the Tribeca Film Institute revealed that many documentary filmmakers felt frustration and dissatisfaction with the limited distribution options and opportunities for financial return, which have emerged from the fact that '[n]o studio exists for educational film and video makers in the United States, and the system of production and distribution and funding has arisen without much central planning' (Ibid.: 4). The spirit of self-distribution, which is apparent in the US documentary culture, developed out of a lack of institutional support and the need to generate revenues and make a sustainable living, by any means possible.

Although its origins go back many decades prior, self-distribution gained momentum in the 1960s, when Direct Cinema filmmakers explored the options of circumventing distributors to find audiences for their work. Yet this movement was not part of the social revolution of the time, but rather was the result of having no alternatives. According to D.A. Pennebaker, one of the pioneers of Direct Cinema, self-distribution is not a 'brave' solution:

It's hard work because we don't do it very well, we are not very efficient at it – how can we be? We don't have the access to theatres, we don't have the sales, we don't have the muscle that a big major has, we can't put out a half a million dollars in advertising (quoted in Rosenthal 1972: 197-98).

Direct Cinema, with its 'fly on the wall' approach, evoked an unconventionally personal feeling that, along with its shaky camera movements, did not immediately appeal to distributors. In discussing *Don't Look Back* (1967), Pennebaker claims, 'The distributors thought it was much too ratty for the theater.' Consequently, his production company, Leacock-Pennebaker (which he ran with Richard Leacock) acted as the distributor for the film (Miranda 2007). After failing to reach an agreement with any conventional theatres, the filmmakers found a porn cinema that agreed to screen the film. Once *Don't Look Back* opened in this venue, it gained the attention of the public and reviews from critics and, ultimately, more theatres

requested screenings (Ibid.). One year later, Pennebaker faced a similar roadblock with his film *Monterey Pop* (1968), which he self-distributed in cinemas after it was denied a television release. Although the film was produced as a television programme, the film's sponsor, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), decided it was too controversial to air (Marlow 2007). Establishing a pattern with Pennebaker's previous release, the only screen willing to show *Monterey Pop* was also a 'porn house' on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Ultimately, the film had a profitable run there, where it attracted an audience of regulars for over a year (Miranda 2007). Although Pennebaker and his team faced many challenges in distributing these films, they had the good fortune of being able to do so in a time of rare opportunity. As Pennebaker describes, shortly after the 1960s, the potential to self-distribute documentaries disappeared as, 'the organized people out in Hollywood closed in and made it so that would be hard to do. They wanted to make that money and they didn't want any insurgents taking it away from them' (Marlow 2007). Although the Internet has created new opportunities to circumvent gatekeepers, self-distribution remains a challenge for documentary filmmakers, even in the network society.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing impatience and determination in documentary filmmakers (most evident in the US), which has driven a significant number of them to adopt do-it-yourself (DIY) approaches. Because of the low cost of digital tools, filmmakers no longer need a major investment or commission to fund the production of a film. And because of the Internet, filmmakers no longer need the services of a distributor to access audiences and generate income from their work. This paradigm shift in the industry started to gain momentum at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when, according to David Bollier (2001: 12), the masses began to understand that 'you don't necessarily *need* the "Big Content" industries [...] to find an audience'. Despite the fact that filmmakers (including Grierson and Flaherty) have been independently distributing documentaries since the early days of cinema, self-distribution is still largely regarded as a novelty, particularly when characterised by the press. Michael Cieply's (2009) article in *The New York Times*

announced a 'new way' of distribution, which involved 'filmmakers doing it themselves'. Cieply falsely declared the beginning of a movement that dates back decades before – in 1977, Julia Reichert, co-founder of New Day Films, even published a book on it called *Doing it Yourself: A Handbook on Independent Film Distribution*.¹⁶ Despite its decades of history, DIY distribution is commonly regarded as a new phenomenon because of the Internet, which has disintermediated traditional sales and distribution channels and allowed filmmakers to widely release their work in efficient and economical ways. The recently enhanced possibilities of DIY distribution are novel, not the concept itself. As Anderson (2006) suggests in his Long Tail theory, direct sales allow businesses to operate with maximum cost-efficiency and create greater opportunities for small businesses or individuals to carve a niche in the online market. Do-it-yourself, direct, independent, alternative, self-distribution – whatever words are used to define it – is only new in the sense that everyone now has easy access to the networks and tools needed to exploit the markets, which media institutions once almost exclusively controlled.

As strategies for DIY distribution are constantly changing and unique to each film, each filmmaker must invent his or her own approach to finding audiences. Filmmaker Paul Devlin designs his strategies around understanding who his core audiences are. For Devlin's film *BLAST!* (2008), which follows Devlin's brother Mark as he and a team of astrophysicists attempt to launch a new telescope into space, Devlin knew his best chance to profit from the film was through connecting with those who already had an established interest in astronomy or science (Sells 2010: 90). To facilitate the distribution of his film, Devlin hired a small team, which succeeded in generating enough revenue to sustain the film's outreach operations. In Devlin's words, 'If I don't have to dip into savings to keep the business running, I consider it HUGELY successful' (Macaulay 2010). It is telling that Devlin, one of the

¹⁶ Founded in 1971, New Day Films is a filmmaker collective that established a database of resources to help filmmakers target the educational market. It offers filmmakers sixty to seventy percent of their sales, versus the standard twenty to thirty percent share from traditional distributors. See New Day Films website. Available at: <http://www.newday.com/benefits.html> [accessed 8 February 2012].

better known DIY filmmakers, has had to hire a team to implement his 'DIY' strategies and has been challenged to find the means to make a living from his work. Independent filmmakers like Devlin typically use other jobs (such as shooting weddings, editing commercials, producing corporate videos, etc.) to fund their documentaries. As the example of *BLAST!* suggests, successful self-distribution often requires a team effort and a complex strategy to release the film through many different avenues.

Because self-distribution is too limited and labour intensive to work as a stand-alone solution, filmmakers still need the support of distributors and broadcasters to help them efficiently fund and distribute their work. However, the traditional overall (or all-rights) deal of the past has little value to filmmakers in the present industry context. Filmmakers, and even key figureheads in the industry, have recognised that the common business practice of licensing all film rights to a single distributor within a territory, often for as long as ten to twenty years, no longer makes sense in the digital era. Widely discussed in forums at festivals around the world, the idea that filmmakers should exploit their licensing rights by sharing them among multiple distribution partners has gained significant momentum in recent years. Journalist Etan Vlessing (2009) documented industry sentiment towards this trend in an article published in *The Hollywood Reporter* that summarised a panel session held at the Hot Docs Film Festival.¹⁷ At this event, Annie Roney, president of the sales agency ro*co films international, discussed a 'new paradigm' in distribution that involved producers and sales agents dividing up all the rights for a film in order to find the best partner to exploit each window. According to Vlessing, filmmakers 'were told it might be time to sell rights piecemeal rather than pursuing the holy grail of all-rights distribution deals'. In truth, the 'holy grail' deal has seldom rewarded filmmakers (see Broderick 2004). Quite often the only revenue a filmmaker gains from an overall deal is the advance (if there even is one) offered

¹⁷ I attended this event, 'Distribution Now - What's Working?' on 4 May 2009 at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto.

for signing the contract. The new 'piecemeal' model is more commonly referred to as 'hybrid distribution', which is a term industry consultant Peter Broderick (2007) coined to describe a system of splitting up rights that enables filmmakers to 'maximize sales and limit cross-collateralization by retaining the right to sell directly from their websites and splitting other rights among capable distribution partners'.

Hybrid distribution offers filmmakers more freedom than they have had in the past, which, naturally, brings greater responsibility. Unlike standard overall deals that require minimal effort from filmmakers, hybrid distribution insists that filmmakers involve themselves in elements of distribution, managing activities such as selling DVDs from their own websites and negotiating partnerships with companies that can help effectively exploit the different markets, including broadcast, home video, VOD, and educational sales. As Broderick (2009) explains, 'A hybrid approach enables filmmakers to choose partners with the resources and expertise to maximize distribution in different channels while allowing filmmakers themselves to do what they do best—reach core audiences directly'. Not all filmmakers have the skill and determination to reach core audiences directly; however, many filmmakers have started using social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to explore the possibilities. The freedom to self-distribute is a core principle of hybrid distribution and has increasingly become a right that filmmakers demand when they sign distribution contracts. A decade ago, such a clause was unthinkable and five years ago it was uncommon. However, today, as filmmakers have seen how others have supplemented their incomes through direct sales, many are requesting this right and protesting when distributors deny it to them. As more films profit from direct sales, this revenue stream will become an important element to consider when evaluating the overall financial success of a film. The complexity of hybrid distribution makes it hard to gather data to illustrate its success, as each film employs different partners and records of sales are generally kept confidential. The entire documentary industry could benefit from aggregating and analysing such information (see Appendix A). Understanding the capacity for documentaries to generate revenues requires considering every potential distribution method,

including filmmaker to audience direct sales.

4.4.2 Reaching and Engaging Communities

As discussed earlier in this thesis, documentaries attract audiences primarily on the basis of subject matter, without the need for star power or even critical acclaim. Audiences are much more willing to pay to see a documentary when they are innately curious about the topic and want to learn more. Although a famous director like Michael Moore can certainly offer a film credibility, recognisable names are not the main selling point of documentaries. Supporting Hardie's (2002a) research conclusions (see Section 1.1.3), a study Kees Ryninks (2006: 5) commissioned in the Netherlands found that sixty-one percent of audiences chose documentaries purely on subject matter and only nine percent named the director as an important factor. These findings suggest that filmmakers can benefit from choosing to document subjects that already have strong existing communities of interest. For example, the documentary *FASTER* (2003), about Grand Prix motorcycle racing, generated international buzz through a publicity stunt at the Cannes Film Festival. According to the director, Mark Neale, when the film's narrator, Ewan McGregor, rode down the Croisette with 'a gang of MotoGP riders on race bikes', the noise they made caught public and media attention and was hailed in the movie press as 'one of the best publicity stunts the festival has ever seen'.¹⁸ In part, because of this exposure, motorcycle fans around the world got news of the film and went to the website, watched the trailer, then signed up for the newsletter. Ultimately, many bought the DVD directly from the film's website as soon as it was available (Screenrights 2008: 3). Since then, Neale has made several other motorcycle documentaries, continuing to supply his growing MotoGP fan base with new films to consume. The more deeply connected these communities are to the topic, the easier it is for a documentary to reach and appeal to them. For this reason, documentaries do not

¹⁸ See *FASTER* website. Available at: http://www.fastermovie.com/media_kit/Director.html [accessed 15 September 2011].

have to depend upon charismatic characters, beautiful cinematography, or well-crafted stories to gain the appreciation of audiences. Instead, documentaries can succeed on subject alone, as long as they are made known and available to their core audiences. As Ryninks (2006: 6) argues, 'Reaching a general audience can be very expensive and inefficient, whereas connecting with a core audience can be done inexpensively and effectively.' The more identifiable a documentary's niche audiences are, the easier the film is to market and sell. Ultimately, the tendency to appeal to core audiences gives documentaries an advantage over other 'generic' independent fiction films.

One way documentaries are able to enhance their visibility and community appeal is through special event releasing, which turns a one night only screening into a social experience. As explained earlier in this chapter, the number of documentaries released in cinemas has grown significantly over the past two decades. This growth has not necessarily made it easier for documentaries to profit at the box office as they must compete with each other and bigger Hollywood films for ticket sales. By incorporating unique events into their theatrical release strategy (see Section 6.3.2), documentaries can generate substantially more attention than they could through standard limited releasing. Enhancing the appeal of watching documentaries in the cinema, special event screenings typically offer audiences rewards and the means for deeper engagement. For example, Martin Scorsese's Rolling Stones documentary, *Shine a Light* (2008), held a special event for its premiere on 2 April 2008. Audience members who bought tickets to the 'show' could watch the film at one of the hundred participating cinemas across the UK. As a bonus, they were given a free limited edition tour T-shirt, which helped enhance the concert feel of the film. Audiences were also privileged to twenty minutes of live, exclusive footage of the red carpet premiere, which the Rolling Stones attended in London's Leicester Square. As 20th Century Fox did not officially launch the film's theatrical run until 11 April, this highly publicised preview gave fans an incentive to make the effort to go to the cinema to be the first to see the film and take

part in this unique experience (Appleyard 2008).¹⁹ Special event screenings are particularly suited to concert documentaries, offering fans of a particular musical artist or group a chance to come together and show their support. These events create what Kelly (2008b) refers to as 'embodiment', which offers audiences enhanced experiences in an effort to generate greater revenues. In addition, through the use of special event screenings, documentaries can foster discussions around the issues they present and help build communities to support certain causes. Consequently, special event releasing not only can help create greater revenues for the film but it can also help the film create a greater impact in the community.

Documentaries thrive in communities and communities thrive online. Consequently, the Internet is an ideal environment for documentary films because it enables global communities to form around specific interests. The potential to connect directly with existing communities through the Web gives documentaries the ability to reach widespread global audiences no matter how niche their subject matter is. As one of the first to explore 'computer-mediated social groups', Howard Rheingold (1993: 5) developed the concept of 'virtual communities', defining them as 'social aggregations that emerge from the [Internet] when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace'. As the Web has grown as a communication platform, so have the strength, size, and number of its online communities. Participants are drawn to online communities for a variety of reasons, which include: the ability to find and bond with others regardless of location, the ability to have twenty-four hour access to the group, and the ability to gain support from the group (Baym 2010: 72). The Internet enables people to participate in far more groups online than they ever could manage within their own real world communities (see Benkler 2006, Shirky 2008, Shirky 2010). This is because 'new technology enables new kinds of group-forming' (Shirky 2008: 17). Online social tools facilitate group

¹⁹ Although I have been unable to find data showing how successful this marketing strategy was, the screening I attended at the Vue Cinema Islington in London appeared to be sold out.

formation by offering users the capacity to generate content and interact with each other, thereby engaging in activities that can allow those who monitor the group to measure interest, generate new ideas, solicit feedback, and rally support. The popularity of online communities is evidenced by the success of Facebook, which has more than 750 million active users.²⁰ Facebook's users are grouped by shared connections, which may be common friends or interests. These members communicate constantly and help one another solve problems. Through online networks, consumers gain a stronger voice and are elevated to a more powerful position in the distribution channel (Kucuk and Krishnamurthy 2007: 48). This capacity to share information widely and offer support is why active online users are far more valuable than passive television viewers. It is also why distribution is becoming more socially driven and important to comprehend, for those who study documentaries and for those who make them. Ultimately, filmmakers who have the ability to engage online communities in activities that provide feedback and facilitate promotion benefit from increased visibility and revenue generating potential (see Chapter 6).

Because artists and audiences can more easily communicate with each other online, the number of films that have been funded at least in part by supporters (or fans) has grown significantly in recent years. However, as Kelly (2008b) suggests, fans 'will only pay if it is very easy to do, a reasonable amount, and they feel certain the money will directly benefit the creators'. Online crowdfunding services developed on this premise of 'patronage', which anticipates that people will freely donate money to help creative projects get made. In the past few years a growing body of evidence has supported this idea. Platforms such as IndieGoGo and Kickstarter demonstrate that filmmakers can supplement their budgets through soliciting small amounts of money from hundreds of individuals. For example, the early success story *Tapestries of Hope* (2009) – a short documentary on the

²⁰ See Facebook 'Press' page. Available at: <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics> [accessed 15 September 2011].

Zimbabwean sex crisis – raised \$22,500 through IndieGoGo (Isler 2009). This amount is paltry compared to more recent crowdfunded documentary projects. Some notable Kickstarter examples include: Ranko Tutulugdzija and Nick Lewis's *Rise and Shine: The Jay DeMerit Story* (\$223,422), Steve Taylor's *Minecraft: The Story of Mojang* (\$210,297), Jennifer Fox's *My Reincarnation* (\$150,456), Ricki Lake and Abby Epstein's *More Business of Being Born* (\$121,679), Gary Hustwit's *Urbanized* (\$118,505), and John Maloof and Anthony Rydzon's *Finding Vivian Maier* (\$105,042).²¹ Before crowdfunding became mainstream, the feature documentary *Made in L.A.* (2007) raised more than ten percent of its budget from small individual donations (Bahar and Carracedo 2009: 49). Although *The Age of Stupid* (2009) may be the biggest success story, having raised more than £880,000, it employed an investor model that required complex accounting and payment to its shareholders. In contrast, IndieGoGo and Kickstarter work on a rewards model, which promises donors small gifts (such as credit in the film, a DVD copy, merchandise, etc.) in exchange for payment. Although still a new phenomenon, crowdfunding has demonstrated the potential to work as a financing model for documentary. The subject appeal of documentaries give them an advantage; however, the likelihood of crowdfunding success depends both on the quality of the project and the capacity of the filmmaker to inspire audience support.

Failing to build their own online community of supporters, filmmakers may 'piggyback' on someone else's online community through the use of celebrity endorsements. Using social media tools (in particular, the microblogging service Twitter), many celebrities have built followings of millions of people with whom they communicate to on a regular basis. Although it may seem out of reach, and perhaps absurd, inspiring a celebrity with a massive Twitter following to mention a documentary can deliver some of the benefits of a personal following, without requiring all the effort. For example, the marketing team for *The End of the Line*

²¹ See Kickstarter website. Available at: <http://www.kickstarter.com/discover/categories/documentary/most-funded?ref=more#p1> [accessed 15 September 2011].

(2009) approached English actor Stephen Fry, who had at the time around one million Twitter followers, to send out a 'tweet' about the film. Fry agreed and immediately after he tweeted a brief message to his fans, the film's website saw more than seventeen thousand unique visits (Shooting People 2009). Fry also has used his tweeting power to promote artists, such as sixteen-year-old singer-songwriter Nia Roberts, who saw plays for her songs on MySpace quickly jump from nine hundred to eighteen thousand after Fry's tweet (BBC News 2009). In another instance, Fry's post for David Eagleman's novel, *Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives* (2009), created a six thousand percent sales spike (Telegraph 2009). Although celebrity endorsements can generate significant interest, any kind of positive online discourse about documentaries helps to enhance their public appeal. According to Christian Crumlish, 'In the gift economy of the Internet, a new form of advertising is unsolicited endorsements' (2004: 181). Services such as Facebook have enabled endorsements to happen effortlessly, through clicking embedded 'Like' buttons, which keep count of these gestures and link to individuals' profile pages, and through posting comments on fan pages, which stand as emblems of community support. Twitter functions as a powerful endorsement platform as messages not only spread from one to many but they are often 'retweeted', creating a chain reaction that potentially influences the behavior of thousands of individuals. Such social networking tools have given the public more power to influence distribution by enabling them to carry out actions that support it and effectively become part of a film's marketing campaign.

The more filmmakers extend their social networks and enhance their online visibility, the more effectively they can build support for their work. In her book *Sociology in the Age of the Internet* (2007), Allison Cavanagh explores how developing an online identity can enable one to 'gain and keep an audience'. According to Cavanagh (Ibid.: 122):

In order to attract an audience, or to act as a seed of community, the self we present online must be intelligible to this audience, and this requires a certain coherence. In essence, in order to achieve online visibility we must produce ourselves as an easily recognizable 'brand' of a person.

Like documentaries themselves, documentary filmmakers are rarely commercially driven. Although the word 'brand' seldom applies to documentary filmmakers, a few of the most successful ones have achieved some kind of brand status. Jonathan E. Schroeder (2010: 20-30) uses the phrase 'artist as brand' to characterise creatives who both exhibit a theme in their work and consistency in their public image. Schroeder applies this term in the context of visual artists, exploring how some manage their own brands by developing and promoting themselves as recognisable products, enhancing their ability to stand out in the competitive cultural marketplace. Schroeder develops his argument using the prime example of Andy Warhol, who even branded his art through the repeated use of brand images. Although not on par with Warhol, filmmakers like Michael Moore and, to a lesser extent, Robert Greenwald (see Section 6.2) have, through consistency in subject matter and communication with their fans, developed branded personas. Both Moore and Greenwald have established their identities as activist filmmakers and successfully enrolled supporters via their respective websites, using social media to engage their audiences and create discussion around their films. Their recognisable identities contribute to their success and their cooperative efforts help expand their personal followings and the appeal of their products. These two filmmakers have occasionally united their personal followings (which invariably share a significant overlap) to support one another's work. For example, in an event held on 16 March 2010, Greenwald hosted a thirty-minute live video stream discussion with Moore in order to promote the DVD release of Moore's documentary *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009). The stream showed on both Greenwald's and Moore's homepages and anyone who submitted an email and zip code on Greenwald's website received a five dollar discount on the DVD or Blu-ray of Moore's film. The live feed chat on the bottom of the video screen was updated during the interview with comments and questions from viewers.²² Establishing consistent themes and personas creates an

²² I watched this event streamed live from the Brave New Films website, which no longer hosts it. An archive of this video is available at: http://www.corliss-lamont.org/hsmny/Michael_Moore/ [accessed 15 September 2011].

opportunity for filmmakers to partner with and support other similar filmmakers, films, or causes. For instance, *The Age of Stupid* (2009) filmmakers encouraged their environmental followers to subscribe to the related 10:10 project, which campaigned to cut carbon emissions in the UK. In the case of Moore and Greenwald, having similar themes enabled them to employ cooperative promotion strategies and pool their personal audiences. Although developing a branded identity can restrict the kinds of films a filmmaker makes, it can also help a filmmaker gain greater recognition. By avoiding generic filmmaking and establishing their reputations as experts or auteurs, documentary filmmakers enhance their capacity to develop communities to support their work.

There appears to be two main approaches to leveraging communities to support documentaries. The first is to build a community from the ground up, as Michael Moore has done by developing his 'artist as brand' identity and engaging with his fans through his personal website. The second is to tap into existing communities, as the *FASTER* (2003) team did by ensuring news of the documentary spread to MotoGP fans. Although both require effort, by far, the easier of the two approaches is to target existing communities and to rely upon communication between members of the group to raise awareness of the film and build support for it. This approach offers the greatest benefit when documentary filmmakers repeatedly serve the same community with new, relevant films. Bloggers regularly brand their work in this way, as Cavanagh (2007: 123) argues, establishing their identities as providers of certain kinds of content in order to be recognised by potential audiences. Cavanagh asserts that bloggers must adhere to a 'consistent theme', which encourages repeat visits from those looking for relevant updates (Ibid.). Similarly, documentary filmmakers, who offer consistent content and who have direct access to consumers (via their own websites, electronic mailing lists, and social media extensions), can carry their audiences from one film to the next. For example, Gary Hustwit has successfully developed a brand that centres on the element of design, which has been embodied in all three of the feature documentary he directed: *Helvetica* (2007), *Objectified* (2009), and *Urbanized* (2011). As previously

mentioned, Mark Neale has kept his focus on motorcycle racing, making *FASTER* (2003); *The Doctor, the Tornado, and the Kentucky Kid* (2006); and *FASTEST* (2011). Unlike Moore and Greenwald, these two filmmakers have not depended upon political issues or their own celebrity to attract and engage audiences. Instead, they have adhered specifically to a theme, effectively branding their work. It should be acknowledged that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, as quite often filmmakers who target an existing community manage to carve out a personal following from the broader interest group. Gary Hustwit has succeeded in this regard, as is evidenced by his personal Twitter account, which has over 150,000 followers.²³ Hustwit has strengthened the community that exists around his work by calling upon his fans for suggestions of what to include in his films and asking them to record and upload footage when he is unable to film those subjects himself (Colman 2011). Although building a personal following is challenging and requires that documentary filmmakers elevate themselves to the status of small celebrities, the rewards can be long-lasting and, as Kelly (2008a) suggests, can potentially enable them to independently sustain their careers.

The cases presented in this section suggest that there is a need to explore how communities may be leveraged to support documentary distribution. Although the theoretical debates of this thesis have not been positioned in the field of marketing studies, literature on brand communities can help inform discussions about audience engagement. Jenkins (2006: 79) notices a shift in industry discourse, which has moved from concentrating 'either on mass undifferentiated audiences (of the kinds that get measured by ratings system) or individual consumers' to discussions of 'brand communities'. Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001: 412) define 'brand community' as 'a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand'. Networks have given strength to brand communities by facilitating communication between those who admire a particular

²³ See Gary Hustwit's Twitter page. Available at: http://twitter.com/#!/gary_hustwit [accessed 8 March 2012].

brand and enabling those admirers to engage in activities that support the brand. O'Guinn and Muñiz (2005: 254) describe brands as 'particularly marked things' whose power derives from being marked. Essentially, brands differentiate similar products from one another. As suggested earlier, neither documentaries nor documentary filmmakers are commonly thought of as brands; however, when filmmakers are able to successfully distinguish themselves and their films from others, they sometimes can appeal to communities (much like some brands have) in ways that inspire loyalty, feedback, and participation. McAlexander et al. (2002: 38) suggest that communities (which are comprised of individual members and the relationships among them) are typically identified 'on the basis of commonality' and instrumentally 'share essential resources'. As one of the main functions of communities is to provide support, documentaries can benefit greatly from making use of them. Observing that 'community and consumption are no strangers', O'Guinn and Muñiz (2005: 253) state, 'the very idea of community is historically and fundamentally connected to the marketplace'. Using the term 'community' to discuss audience (or consumer) behaviour better reflects how distribution has changed, as it has developed from a mechanism by which companies deliver content to mass audiences into a social process that is driven and underpinned by communities.

In an online community context, consumers become part of the distribution channel. Instead of passively receiving content, consumers actively influence, and to some extent control, the distribution process. Although there has been an overall rising trend in participation, individuals' levels of involvement online varies from person to person. Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff (2008) came up with the concept of the 'groundswell' as a way to describe an apparent cultural trend, defined by the collision of three forces: 'people's desires to connect, new interactive technologies, and online economics' (Ibid.: 11). To better understand the groundswell, Li and Bernoff identified consumer involvement in online groups on a ladder scale, which put 'Inactives' at the bottom and 'Creators' at the top, and 'Spectators', 'Joiners', 'Collectors', and 'Critics' ascending in between. Li and Bernoff (Ibid.: 43-44) use the

online survey Forrester's carried out in 2007 as an illustration. This study revealed that forty-four percent of US adults online were inactive, completely not involved with social media, and only eighteen percent created content, producing their own social media artifacts. As social media have become more pervasive and easier to use, more people have taken steps up the 'Social Technographics' ladder. Although Creators – who by definition need to publish an original video, song, or blog post once a month – likely still remain in the minority, virtually everyone online now at least qualifies as a Spectator, consuming the products of social media without engaging in them. As a growing number of people have moved away from being inactive, social media technologies have become increasingly important tools for facilitating audience engagement. When social media activities develop around a documentary, and people join a Facebook group and send out tweets, support for that film grows and its distribution extends to a wider community.

Evidence suggests that the value of a community should not be determined by its size but rather by the level of engagement of its members. Russell et al. (2004) discuss the value of 'connectedness' in consumer consumption of television programming (using the example of the NBC series *Friends*) and build an argument for why audiences should be measured in terms of 'connectedness level instead of audience size or viewing frequency' (Ibid.: 160). The findings of this study suggest that the 'level of intensity of the relationship(s)' between documentaries (or filmmakers) and their communities varies in relation to the amount of social interactions that happen between members (Ibid.: 152, 156). The theory of '1000 True Fans' relates to this idea as it suggests that deep engagement, more than wide exposure, is how independent artists will generate value from their audiences (Kelly 2008a). By employing active fan (or brand) communities, filmmakers are able to not only gain financial support, via crowdfunding, but they can also benefit from creative support, via user contributions and feedback (see Chapter 6). In a brand community setting, the activities, or 'practices', that consumers participate in create value (Schau et al. 2009: 39-40). Often this value manifests as some form of promotion. Early audience engagement in a documentary project can support the

financing, production, distribution, and marketing of the film. Consequently, strategies for audience engagement have become part of the creative process and the boundaries that separate the various steps of the filmmaking process have become less defined. Ultimately, distribution no longer works as a one-way channel, which delivers a finished product to mass audiences. Instead, distribution takes shape through a series of many-to-many exchanges between individuals, who influence a developing project.

4.5 Conclusion

New technologies have generally worked to the advantage of documentary filmmakers, simplifying the production process and creating the means for wider distribution. With the advent of high-quality online video streaming, the potential distribution avenues for documentary films expanded in unprecedented ways, offering independent filmmakers ways around traditional gatekeepers by providing the means to cheaply and directly distribute content to global audiences. The Web's networks and platforms allow audiences to instantly discover, consume, and engage with documentary content anywhere they are, through the use of mobile devices. This on-demand, interactive exchange that audiences now experience with documentaries sharply contrasts with the static display methods that existed in the early years, when big screen exhibition was the only method of dissemination. In the first part of the 1900s, documentaries were rarely the main feature in cinemas. Most documentaries made pre-1950s only reached audiences through non-theatrical release, which often involved touring film prints around to churches, town halls, libraries, and other public exhibition spaces. In the 1950s, when the technology of broadcast television alleviated the manual burden of distribution, documentary gained access into people's homes via a new, and arguably more suitable, screening platform. In the decades following, a number of documentaries achieved successful limited theatrical releases, but documentary remained largely on the fringes of mainstream entertainment until the 1990s. Although video enhanced the possibility

that documentaries could be made and screened outside of the industry system, the complexity of the expanding market ensured that there remained little chance that documentaries could reach mass audiences without a broadcaster or distributor's support. However, in recent decades, advancements in technology have removed many barriers and documentaries have demonstrated their capacity to be widely popular and capable of being distributed outside the traditional industry structure. Alan Rosenthal (2005: 171) observed that the past decade 'marked a clear revolution in the marketing of documentaries'. During this time, 'Documentaries became *hot*. Film festivals started paying attention to them. New specialised documentary channels were created. And new terms like "factual programming" and "factual entertainment" started hitting the headlines.' Digital technology and the Internet have played an important role in this expansion, providing new formats and platforms for exhibition. Online film distribution has not only given documentaries a fair chance to compete in the marketplace, but, unlike television, it has placed no limit on the kind of content that might be exhibited or who may release that content, giving documentaries of all shapes, styles, and subject matters a free space in which to connect with global audiences. Ultimately, wider access to digital technologies has greatly enabled the expansion of documentary over the last decade, allowing it to fill new forms and spaces.

Because documentaries are niche, they are distributed differently than mainstream fiction films. With a few rare exceptions, documentary films have never been able to compete, neither in terms of revenue nor exposure, with Hollywood films in the theatrical or ancillary markets. Ana Vicente (2008: 273) argues that '[...] documentaries have a far more limited reach when using traditional distribution methods. First, despite the critical acclaim a documentary may enjoy, its sale or licensing to all main territories is rare. Second, even when a film is sold for widespread theatrical distribution, profits and revenues are not guaranteed.' Evidence in this chapter has supported Vicente's (Ibid.) observation that '[t]raditional distribution systems simply do not work for the main bulk of feature film documentaries produced'. Vicente's (Ibid.) claim that '[d]ocumentary audiences

are growing around the world and there is little doubt of the existence of many untapped audiences that occur due to a lack of exposure or access to the product' suggests that there is a need to explore how documentary films can reach new audiences and generate revenues via the Web. The Internet has worked to create access to 'untapped audiences' by making documentaries more widely available and marketing documentaries far more affordable. Because of limitations in the theatrical market and the ever-increasing number of independent films produced each year, documentary's best chance to reach mass audiences is through the exploitation of all avenues, including the festival, non-theatrical, educational, home video, broadcast, and online markets. Understanding how documentaries are released and marketed in each of the windows creates a better sense of what might limit their overall profit potential. Frequently funded by broadcasters, documentaries, particularly in the UK, often have their first release window on television, foregoing a theatrical run and only briefly appearing in cinemas while playing at festivals. Thus, documentaries that follow this release pattern seldom gain substantial attention in the press, which can limit their success in other markets. Festivals and non-theatrical screenings can help fill this gap and bring attention to documentaries on the big screen, but these opportunities are limited by location and time. The educational market, which primarily exists in the United States, has been largely consumed by the home video market, which is now challenged by the declining value of the DVD. DVDs have been important to fiction films, but their value for documentaries is primarily situated in the rental market -- although direct sales have demonstrated the potential to enhance profit in the home video market. Broadcast has largely sustained the documentary industry, but as this market becomes increasingly commercialised, it also becomes increasingly burdened by advertisers' programming demands and the need to cater to mainstream interests. Ultimately, as the ancillary markets converge onto the Web, VOD appears to be how documentaries will find sustainability. VOD creates the opportunity to directly connect with interested audiences, immediately enticing them to watch (and sometimes pay for) films, and potentially inspiring them to spread the news about

those films to their wider networks.

The Internet has made it so that distribution no longer stands as the main hurdle for documentaries to overcome; instead, the critical challenge is how to target audiences and engage them early in the filmmaking process. One way to hook audiences is by building interactive viewing experiences. Many films today have cross-media elements that appear as additional content on the film's dedicated website. As those websites become more interactive and engaging, they can generate new content, which can take the shape of user-generated material, short videos, and even games. Broadcasters have also explored the potential to engage audiences through the Internet. These new modes of engagement have become increasingly popular and, as the next chapter explores, broadcasters and distributors have adopted such interactive features as a means to overcome audience fragmentation. Although the expansion of cross-media appears to foreshadow documentary's online future, as David Hogarth (2006: 126) maintains, 'documentary's days on television are not necessarily numbered'. Despite the current turmoil the broadcast market has experienced, television still remains the most viable distribution option for documentaries (Albiniak 2011). However, for the many documentaries that are not screened on television (and for those that are but aim for wider audiences), online distribution is an important alternative to explore. Documentaries have an apparent advantage in this market because they are commonly topic oriented, and the Web hosts a multitude of communities, which are similarly topic oriented. Therefore, rather than having to build a community from the ground up (as most brands and fiction films must do), documentaries can benefit from reaching out to existing online communities. Participatory culture, which develops through user-to-user communication tools, has created the opportunity to anchor fans or engage communities through enrolling their early support in activities that generate funding, ideas, content, and promotion. The shift from audience to community involves more than just correspondence from filmmakers to fans but also some amount of communication between the fans themselves. Films that target existing communities are advantaged over films that aim to establish new communities,

which take more time and effort to grow. Ultimately, the more in tune people are with a topic, the easier it is to inspire the kind of deep social engagement that strengthens the bonds within a community and supports distribution.

CHAPTER 5

Distribution Platforms

5.1 Introduction

The Web has opened new spaces for documentaries and has made them more accessible to consumers via on-demand and interactive media. Cross-platform strategies have grown organically both out of broadcasters' efforts to provide their audiences with a variety of additional materials that compliment the programmes they air and viewers' growing appetite for expanded online services, including dedicated programme websites (Kilborn 2003: 17). Media institutions have responded to this new demand by creating online platforms and services that cater to active audiences and develop their reputations as leaders in innovation. Sometimes these endeavours become widely popular (i.e. the BBC iPlayer), but more often they emerge with pomp and circumstance, quickly struggle to gain audiences, and then fade into oblivion, becoming simply one of thousands of online destinations for watching videos. With so many platforms competing in the online space, it becomes increasingly important that each one preserves and cultivates the elements that set it apart from the rest and works to deeply engage audiences. The case studies in this chapter illuminate some of the changes that have developed in the new media landscape. To understand how the trends in cross-platform distribution relate to documentary, it is essential to more broadly consider nonfiction content and include user-generated content in the discussion. Through exploring the examples of a public service broadcaster, cross-platform network, start-up online distribution company, and peer-to-peer distribution service, this set of case studies demonstrates how the push for innovation and audience attention has led the industry to increasingly involve consumers in the distribution process.

Each of the case studies demonstrates the ever-growing importance of audience engagement and the challenges of innovation. In general, broadcasters have had a difficult time adjusting to the increasingly competitive online media marketplace. However, public service broadcasters in the UK have taken the initiative to overcome these challenges by following audiences onto the Web. Through their online channels, they have endeavoured to support the growth of cross-platform documentary content. This shift has not been as evident in the US, where innovation must promise financial return in order to get financial investment. This commercial focus has hindered the development of the Web as a platform for documentary storytelling in this region. With the notable exception of Current TV, broadcasters in the US have largely adhered to a traditional 'cross-platform' approach rather than innovating to create interactive 'cross-media' engagement. As Murdock (2004: 16) observes, when commercial stations entered the Web domain, they primarily used their online destinations for program listings, news, promotion, and commercial activity, aiming to incorporate audiences 'more fully into the channel's imagined community'. This approach is still widespread in the US, while in the UK, public service broadcasters have some freedom to innovate without focusing exclusively on profits and have become 'very active in exploring the possibilities' of using the Web in more creative ways (Ibid.). Not driven entirely by commercial aims, public service broadcasters have used the Web as a means to increase the diversity of their offerings to the community, rather than just as a tool to extract value from the community, which is something commercial entities commonly have in mind. Consequently, public service broadcasters have been leaders in developing cross-platform strategies and programmes, often putting documentary content at the forefront of these experiments, as Channel 4 did in the case of FourDocs.

5.2 FourDocs: Channel 4's Forgotten Failure

5.2.1 Channel 4's Documentary Tradition

Channel 4, perhaps more than any other UK broadcaster, has built a reputation for delivering quality, innovative documentary programming. Founded in 1982, Channel 4 has established its reputation over the past three decades as 'the home of documentaries', as Nick Broomfield has described it (quoted in Austin 2007: 15). In recent years, Channel 4 has strengthened this reputation through its ongoing support of the BRITDOC Foundation, established in 2005, which exists to 'empower documentary filmmaking' and help 'build new business models for filmmakers to deploy'.²⁴ In addition, Channel 4 has dedicated millions of pounds to fund innovation through its cross-platform commissioning department, which has produced many successful interactive documentary projects, including *Battlefront* (2008) and *Routes* (2009). John Corner (2002: 149) regards Channel 4's *Big Brother* programme as the mark of a 'huge decisive stage in actuality-based entertainment'. This reality series, which Corner describes as a 'pre-planned group surveillance within a "game frame" that has an element of viewer voting', was one of the first, and most successful, examples of interactive factual entertainment. Channel 4 also pioneered catch-up TV in the UK when it launched 4oD in 2006, more than a year before the BBC iPlayer debuted. Through 4oD, Channel 4 provides free access to a significant number of documentaries, which make up more than one-third of the offering.²⁵ Channel 4's dedication to documentary is also evident in its creation of FourDocs, which it launched in the summer of 2005 with the intent to both train novice filmmakers and discover new talent. With a start-up investment of £700,000 and an annual maintenance budget of about £150,000, Channel 4 commissioned

²⁴ See BRITDOC website. Available at: <http://britdoc.org/britdoc/mission/> [accessed 12 September 2011].

²⁵ Channel 4's 4oD platform lists 319 of a total 867 programmes as 'documentary'. Available at: <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/tags/documentaries/4od> [accessed 12 September 2011].

Magic Lantern Productions, a London-based interactive media company, to build and operate the FourDocs website (Jensen 2007). Magic Lantern was brought on board to design a cross-platform arena that would exhibit short format user-generated content, which could then eventually air on broadcast television as part of Channel 4's *3 Minute Wonder* strand. At the time, FourDocs was a niche novelty and recognised as a potential point of entry into the UK documentary industry.

FourDocs was designed to be a platform for new talent, allowing anyone to submit a documentary as long as it met the length requirements of no more than four minutes. Anthony Lilley, head of Magic Lantern, explained that, 'While it could function as a first step for budding filmmakers, that's not its main purpose [...] It's an environment in which stories about the real world (which can't be told on TV for all kinds of reasons) can find an audience' (Lilley 2005). Despite its 'radical' design, FourDocs was always intended to be a controlled platform. According to Leurdijk (2007: 89), 'Channel4 [sic] and the editors of the site want to bring their ideas on high quality documentary, decency and public values to the users, therefore the site is moderated.' Besides ensuring the quality, moderators also needed to check that each film had all of its rights cleared. Those films selected to be exhibited on the site (by October 2006 the site hosted two hundred films) received feedback from the community and the FourDocs editorial team, who published their opinions on the site. The website also made resources available to filmmakers, including a free footage archive of copyright cleared material, information on the history of documentary, interviews with filmmakers, and training guides. Channel 4 had the clear intention of using the website to discover new talent, who it could then commission to work on other projects (Ibid.: 90). When executives at Channel 4 conceived of FourDocs, the concept of user-generated content with user feedback was largely unknown. Perhaps as a consequence, the website got off to a slow start and only received around one film submission a week. To provoke user-participation, Channel 4 invested in an innovative marketing campaign (Jensen 2007). Providing a budget of £100,000, FourDocs commissioned the media agency OMD to create a campaign that would raise public awareness of FourDocs and

clarify its status as an online site, separate from Channel 4. OMD created a plan that gave people throughout London access to eight short documentaries via Bluetooth technology. Interactive posters (set up in train stations, cinemas, and on the subway system) exhibited instructions and enabled the transmission of the FourDocs documentaries to people's mobile devices (BrandRepublic 2006). As this technology had never before been used in a major cross-media marketing campaign, it not only brought attention to FourDocs but it further established Channel 4's reputation as an innovator in cross-platform media.

FourDocs was never designed to reach mass audiences, but rather it was tailored to connect with individuals specifically interested in learning the craft of documentary or supporting new documentary talent. The platform uniquely worked to create a direct path from new talent to top commissioners in a time when few avenues of access were available. Initially, executive editor Patrick Uden watched every film (which seldom amounted to more than fifteen per week) and offered one bit of feedback to those films he deemed good enough to exhibit on the FourDocs website. The most successful filmmakers were then linked to Kate Vogel, who was the commissioning editor of Channel 4's short documentary strand *3 Minute Wonder*. In this way, FourDocs helped filmmakers by making sure, as Uden phrased it, 'their films get seen by people who really matter' (Dams 2007: 24). With films kept to a maximum of four minutes, the FourDocs editors could easily afford to watch every film submitted in its entirety, yet that is likely not the only reason FourDocs focused on short format video. In 2005, online video still had many technological hurdles to overcome, which often tested the patience of Web users. Uploading a few minutes of video could take several hours and downloading videos was often interrupted with delays. With upgrades to the FourDocs website and increased broadband usage, these drawbacks became less of an issue and people experienced less disruption while watching video online (Poel et al. 2007: 16). However, despite these improvements, FourDocs still struggled to attract viewers to its platform.

5.2.2 Commercial Changes and Challenges

FourDocs' initial plan to create a dynamic, user-generated platform and discussion forum for short-format documentary was highly novel at the time. However, as the site was not gaining many submissions or online viewers, Channel 4 saw the need to make changes (see Figure 5.1 for original site design). Consequently, Channel 4 abandoned its community-building features when it launched a new version of the FourDocs website in July 2008 (Figure 5.2). This design, which provided no room for comments on the videos, entirely eliminated the space for user feedback and discussion. Overall, users reacted negatively to the change in design and expressed their opinions by adding their comments in the only space they could – in the comment area of the FourDocs blog. On 28 July 2008, Paul wrote:

I'm missing the old site. It had more of a 'power to the people' feel. This new one seems cold and corporate. With the redesign, it seems that the aim of FourDocs is to harvest filmmakers for broadcast, whereas the old site was a place to show films, regardless if they were suited to broadcast or not.

In a 2 August 2008 post, Greg Browning expressed his disappointment that the Brightcove player, which Channel 4 had adopted on the site, offered 'no way to leave comments'. On 8 October 2008, Blake Berry asked, 'Does anyone know of a site that does what FourDocs used to?' Finally, Zeroinfluencer added on 26 December 2008, 'The whole purpose of Channel 4 is to invigorate and support the creative communities of the UK; FourDocs has turned its back on all this in favour for a corporate sponsor and top down editorial with carrot shaking to acquire more 3 *Minute Wonders* for TV.' By redesigning the platform to limit user-engagement, FourDocs disassociated itself from its original 'community' purpose and consequently alienated some of its core users, who were likely contributing the most to its platform.

Figure 5.1 FourDocs Website from 2005 to 2007



Image of the original FourDocs website. Available at:
<http://renedelabre.com/2005/08/06/fourdocs/> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

Figure 5.2 FourDocs Website from 2008 to 2009



Image of the redesigned FourDocs website. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20090125203613/http://channel4.com/culture/microsites/F/fourdocs/index.html> [accessed 12 September 2011].

Saturated with advertising and poorly organised, the second generation FourDocs platform lacked aesthetic appeal and user-friendly functionality, challenging it to attract and engage new users. Two conspicuous banner advertisements, which trailed along the top and right side of the page, directed visitors away from the core features of FourDocs. These dominant distractions, along with a hyperlinked 'Sponsored by Passat' emblem that branded the homepage

and the Google Ads that spread throughout the site, made it appear as though FourDocs was not its own entity but rather an extension of a bigger commercial website. While other platforms such as YouTube and Current TV have worked to integrate advertising into their design and content, the new FourDocs website drew more attention to its sponsors than its features. This scarred aesthetic created an unwelcoming point of entry, which likely deterred visitors from further exploring the site. Another problem with the site was its confusing navigation system, which had redundant hyperlinks and vague categories such as 'How To' (which only contained one article entitled 'Where to upload') and 'Archive' (which surprisingly contained thirty-five feature length documentaries for online viewing). In general, the website suffered from outdated and unclear text. A key section (featured in the left navigation bar), entitled 'Bursaries' encouraged visitors to submit to a contest that had already ended. Site users were also confused by a 2 September 2008 entry on the FourDocs blog that announced a pitching contest. Although most FourDocs blog entries were without comments, this entry prompted so many users to post questions that, in addition to responding to them individually on the blog, Rebecca Frankel, the editor of FourDocs, issued a follow-up post on 5 November 2008 to clarify the terms of the contest. Just two months later, Frankel posted a 'Farewell' blog entry on 6 January 2009, marking the end of FourDocs. The website issued the promise: 'Look out for the new refreshed 4Docs coming soon!' However, it was not until eight months later, on 11 August 2009, that the new 4Docs made its debut.

The blog, which Frankel updated from 11 July 2008 to 6 January 2009, was the one part of the website that remained somewhat dynamic. Frankel introduced the FourDocs blog with the promise that, 'Here we're going to discuss all things documentary related, whether it be films watched on the web, television, cinema or at festivals, inspirational directors, new talent opportunities, gossip, current affairs or philosophy.' Updated by Frankel approximately once or twice a week, the posts seldom provoked comments, and therefore the blog never earned its status as a discussion forum. The blog also failed to deliver on other promises. For example, Frankel posted on 11 July 2008 that 'commissioner Kate Vogel will be writing on this

blog regularly about what rocks her boat and works for television TX's', and that former FourDocs editor, Charlie Phillips, who left Channel 4 to take a position at Sheffield Doc/Fest, would 'pass on his wealth of knowledge about life, and pitching and getting longer documentaries films funded too, here in the blog.' Neither of those individuals contributed to the blog and there was no reconciliation as to why they never delivered the articles as promised. In fact, only one other person besides Frankel posted on the FourDocs blog. Guest editor Lee Kern (who is a filmmaker and comedian) reviewed twelve of the short films entered into the *My Home Town* competition. Kern's contribution seemingly contradicted FourDocs' aim to nurture new talent as he criticised most of the films he reviewed and only offered encouragement to four of them. In one review, on 21 October 2008, Kern wrote, 'This film did my head in. I hated the voiceover and couldn't really understand a lot of what was being said.' His negative remarks contrasted with the sentiment of most FourDocs users, who expressed their support and appreciation to the filmmakers whose work made it onto the website. When users posted responses to Kern's reviews on the blog (sometimes defending films and prompting him with questions), he never responded.²⁶ This phase in FourDoc's development marked the beginning of the end.

As FourDocs had a commitment to supporting new talent, having an editorial voice that criticised submissions conflicted with FourDocs' aims and Channel 4's public service remit. The contradictions in what FourDocs promised and what it delivered are hard to overlook and comprehend. How could Channel 4, the home of documentaries, so badly neglect an initiative that began with such good intentions? The answer most likely comes down to financial considerations and the fact that developing FourDocs was a far more complex and taxing process than anyone imagined. Clearly, regardless of all its good intentions, FourDocs never became, as it has described itself, 'the democratisation of documentary filmmaking' (Patterson

²⁶ Kern's reviews are archived on the 4Docs blog. Available at: <http://www.4docs.org.uk/blog/page/10/> [accessed 15 September 2011].

2007: 4). Nor did it do much to establish, as Uden described, 'a high-profile platform for people to make and display their own personal documentaries' (Ibid.).

Ultimately, very few people used FourDocs for this intended purpose – as the website received less than nine hundred submissions during the three years it accepted user uploads (Frankel 2009). It seems possible that the public criticism of some of the submissions could have deterred some filmmakers from sharing content on the site. Having such a low submission average – less than one film per day – called into question FourDocs' capacity to help Channel 4 deliver on its remit. However, FourDocs did offer some public value as it established a resource archive that provided valuable guidance on the filmmaking process. The videos, featured under the website heading 'Guides' instructed filmmakers on how to hone production skills and helped them understand how the documentary business works. Clear and engaging, these tutorials explained the entire filmmaking process, including everything from camera functions and shot composition to rights clearance and video compression. Some written information also existed on topics such as documentary history and theory, but these artifacts only offered a superficial introduction. The written 'Legal Checklist', with its own link on the left navigation bar of the homepage, offered detailed information and advice on how to make a film 'responsibly'. These resources were at the core of FourDocs and many have been adapted and integrated into the new 4Docs wiki resource site.

5.2.3 The Critical Masses

Although FourDocs created a platform for short documentaries, it failed to inspire enough user-contributions to grow the site and engage an audience. At its peak, FourDocs received around fourteen films per week. Most submissions appeared on the site as editors only eliminated a few each month, most commonly due to copyright clearance issues. Both amateurs and professionals contributed to the site, but the vast majority of users were teachers, professors, students, and film schools seeking to stimulate pupils to showcase their work and receive feedback (Poel et al. 2007: 16). Although schools and training programmes provided FourDocs with a

certain amount of content, the site failed to grow because of its inability to engage wider audiences and compete with other more advanced and user-friendly venues for documentary (i.e. YouTube). One of the key problems with FourDocs was that it failed to create a meaningful value proposition for its users. Since user-generated content is contributed charitably, usually with no expectation for remuneration or profit, those who contribute need to gain some sense of satisfaction from the process (see Jenkins et al. 2009). Although Channel 4 championed FourDocs' value, it did not offer users much beyond the opportunity to receive 'feedback' from the editors, and the small hope that payment or exposure might come out of that. In addition, because FourDocs became burdened by advertising, users may have felt their 'free' films were being exploited commercially, without them being offered any share in the revenues. The focus on advertising was removed from the new '4docs' site, which not only gained a different name but also a different aim, to provide resources rather than a platform for exposure (see Figure 5.3). An archive of short films has remained on the site, but users have not been given the opportunity to post comments or evaluate the films. Although the website was designed as a 'wiki', which anyone could contribute to, there has been little evidence of user engagement as its information has remained largely out of date. However, the blog posts (which have been transferred from the old website) have been regularly commented on – by spambots, who have posted hundreds of advertisements pointing users to other commercial websites. Clearly, no one has been monitoring the site as many of these spam entries were posted long ago. Ultimately, Channel 4's redesign of 4Docs abandoned its initial user-generated content aims and created a primarily static site, which functioned to provide information rather than attempt to engage a community in documentary.

Figure 5.3 4Docs Website in 2010



Image of the new 4Docs wiki website. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20090125203613/http://channel4.com/culture/microsites/F/fourdocs/index.html> [accessed 12 September 2011].

As with many pioneering pursuits in the digital domain, FourDocs failed to meet the high expectations it initially set and subsequently abandoned its original key function – to provide a platform for the exposure and discussion of short documentary. The hype that once surrounded FourDocs points to what was lost through its failure. Patrick Uden remarked that he believed FourDocs had tapped into a 'wild enthusiasm for the self-made documentary' (Dams 2007). Anthony Lilley declared, 'By helping this kind of grassroots filmmaking to be seen, C4 is stepping into the world of new media in a way it hasn't done before. With a bit of patience, the gamble will pay off' (Lilley 2005). Although the executives heading the initiative championed FourDocs as a pioneer of the user-generated phenomenon, they ultimately took very few steps to enhance the growth of user-generated content on the FourDocs website and ensure that it satisfied Channel 4's core aim for the project. FourDocs never created a strong enough community to grow its platform or justify its cost. The £150,000 annual maintenance budget was simply not enough to employ the number of people required to successfully deliver all the platform

promised and ensure that the website remained dynamic and engaging. Although user-generated content is free, creating an online space that successfully inspires it commonly requires a substantial amount of money and effort. Inevitably, Channel 4 recognised this shortcoming and cut funding for FourDocs, eventually closing the submission door – relegating the site to its status as an archive and resource and eliminating its function as a platform for new talent. As Channel 4 has been a leader in cross-platform innovation and has developed other successful participatory websites, it is surprising that FourDocs failed to such an extent. Because FourDocs launched in 2005, when user-generated content was just starting to take off, it was largely ahead of its time. Yet FourDocs did not keep up with the times; thus, technology (and other competing platforms) rendered it obsolete. Ultimately, the failure of FourDocs demonstrates one of the key pitfalls involved in developing participatory online platforms – the tendency to underestimate the cost and labour required to inspire user-generated content and grow a community.

Many opportunities exist for broadcasters who develop cross-platform extensions, but these old institutions do not always easily adapt to the challenges of new media. Audiences have fragmented and dispersed into an infinite number of places, making it unlikely for a haphazard, ‘build it and they will come’ approach to work on the Internet, even when the project is funded by a major broadcaster. Users must be individually lured or driven to a website, and then, once they arrive, their interest must be sufficiently stimulated so that they will want to return, again and again. Channel 4 failed to succeed with its FourDocs platform because it neither offered enough ways for users to engage on the site nor provided enough content to captivate an audience. Consequently, whatever users FourDocs initially attracted quickly went elsewhere in search of a site that could better served their needs. Even with ongoing innovation (which FourDocs did not have) it would be difficult to develop a website for niche content (i.e. short documentaries) that can compete with the thousands of other online video platforms that offer similar content and more. Clearly, Channel 4 had the capacity to nurture new talent and create an online space for filmmakers to exhibit their documentaries; however, the broadcaster was

torn between its ambition to create cultural value through innovation and its need for commercial sustainability. Like Channel 4's Independent Film and Video department, which temporarily helped 'radical voices' be heard (Fountain 2007: 37), FourDocs temporarily gave new talent an access point into the industry. Although both initiatives were innovative and highly regarded by the public, both failed because they could not attract a large enough audience to be financially sustainable for Channel 4, which primarily supports its operations through selling its own advertising. In many ways, the BBC, which does not have the same commercial burden, has been more successful in its efforts to support user-generated content. In 1993, the BBC launched *Video Nation*, a participatory project that lasted six years on television and resulted in the creation of 1300 'mini-portraits' of people's lives. *Video Nation* now exists on the Web as an online archive, which continues to grow as more people submit user-generated videos (Carpentier 2003: 427-28, Murdock 2004: 16-17).²⁷ More recently, the BBC's Film Network has done what FourDocs aspired to do by giving filmmakers a place to get their work seen.²⁸ Not exclusively dedicated to documentary, the Film Networks offers more ways for users to engage – through rating, commenting, networking, etc. – in a sleek, BBC branded environment that gives credibility to the films it showcases. Ultimately, FourDocs' failure does not suggest that a user-generated documentary platform that supports new talent could not succeed but merely indicates that success in a commercial context is difficult to achieve.

²⁷ See BBC's *Video Nation* archive. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation> [accessed 12 September 2011].

²⁸ See BBC's Film Network. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/> [accessed 12 September 2011].

5.3 Current TV: Democratised and Commercialised

5.3.1 A Current Approach to Documentary and TV

The move to enable audiences to become more than viewers and actively participate in media has grown in recent years, fostering what Jenkins (2006) refers to as 'participatory media culture'. Jenkins (Ibid.: 3) notes that media producers and consumers are increasingly 'participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands'. These rules govern a complex new media culture in which consumers have begun to play a far greater role in determining what information is important and worthy of being seen and shared on the Web. Some consumers are also choosing to create their own content and share these stories with the wider public, often in an effort to educate people about issues or angles that the mainstream media have overlooked. Compensating for the failures of the news media, documentaries have become critical sources of information and powerful means of expressing ideas, opinions, and stories. Now that media tools are widely accessible, more people have engaged in the process of creating documentaries, offering a greater spectrum of commentary and insight than has traditionally been available through broadcast channels. Taking advantage of this trend, the cable network Current TV has used the Web as a means to help gather potential stories for broadcast and has employed user-generated content and ratings to help determine which stories are worth programming on its network. This unique cross-platform approach to generating factual content has given documentary filmmakers an opportunity to gain broadcast commissions and have their voices heard; however the complexities of such a design, and the challenge of establishing a profitable business model that supports it, have required that Current reconsider its user-generated business model and alter its approach.

Started in August 2005 as a joint venture between former Vice President of the United States Al Gore and entrepreneur Joel Hyatt, Current TV transpired as a platform for young adults to report on and discuss current events. Gore and Hyatt designed Current to help remedy the 'one-to-many' structure of the American news

media, which they felt neither represented nor engaged young people. By establishing an online platform (at www.current.com) and enabling anyone to upload video news stories, Current established a new democratic outlet for young adults to explore media topics and express their viewpoints publicly. Branding itself as 'the world's leading peer-to-peer news and information network', Current uniquely provided a 24/7 television network that relied upon viewer-generated content to fill approximately one-third of its on-air programming. Eighteen months after its inception, in March 2007, the channel launched in the UK, catering to regional audiences and functioning with the same user-generated model that it used in the United States. Current has reached more than sixty million households in the US and UK through its distribution partners, which have included: Comcast, Time Warner, DIRECTV, DISH Network, Sky, and Virgin Media Cable. Additionally, in May 2008, Current began broadcasting on Sky Italia and launched a dedicated Italian website, which, although not as developed as the US and UK websites, offered essentially the same features.²⁹ While Current operated in some respects as a traditional broadcaster, filtering content for its television viewers, its unique participatory model offered the opportunity for a greater diversity of perspectives to be expressed through its network than any standard news outlet could provide.

When it launched in 2005, Current TV emerged as the first wholly cross-platform cable channel, running both a cable network and an online television channel. In its initial design (Figure 5.4), the network sought to attract audiences by engaging them in viewer-created documentary content and allowing anyone to upload a video, which users could then watch and vote on to help determine which ones should air on the cable network. Six months after its launch, the Current cable channel reached twenty million television households. The web platform played an essential role in enabling the channel to increase its audience base while helping content that did not make it onto the cable channel find an audience online (Lotz

²⁹ See 'About' on Current website. Available at: <http://current.com/s/about.htm> [accessed 10 May 2010].

2007: 133). The website was a critical feature in Current's design as it eliminated territorial boundaries and allowed Current's content to go global. For this reason, cross-platform releasing can significantly aid broadcasters' survival in the digital age – allowing them to counteract some of the losses incurred from audiences developing stronger online and mobile media consumption habits and spending less time watching traditional television channels. Since broadcasters can no longer guarantee that their content will reach a large captive audience, they also cannot expect that their advertising spots will have the same value as when only a few main public channels existed. The dilemma of audience fragmentation has made it difficult to monetise content through television advertising and has prompted many broadcasters to follow their audiences onto the Web, creating branded channels for their programming (Gardam 2008: 12). Ultimately, Current, in its efforts to employ user-generated content as a significant part of its network programming, pushed the boundaries of cross-platform design, and, consequently, encountered numerous problems in the process.

Figure 5.4 Current Website in 2005



Image of the original Current website. Source: Reiter's Camera Phone Report. Available at: http://www.cameraphonereport.com/2005/04/al_gores_youth_.html [accessed 12 September 2011].

5.3.2 Current Content Challenges

Since its launch, Current has given its homepage and website several facelifts in an effort to broaden its brand. Initially the site targeted the video producer community for Current TV (Figure 5.5), but in late 2007, Current dropped the 'TV' after its name and launched a strikingly different website, which deemphasised its traditional television focus and increased online interactivity. The new site shifted references to the network to a side panel and relocated social news and videos to the center of the homepage (Figure 5.6).³⁰ Making it easier interact with other users and submit videos and links, the website allowed users to post a link to a news story (or YouTube video) or record their own video submission from a webcam. Current also expanded its outreach to academic institutions by creating a program called College Current, which gave student media producers the opportunity to contribute stories to the network. To help young producers create quality content, Current developed an online producers training program and offered production resources, including a library of legal music, which could be used in videos shown on Current and in-house editors who polished the final cut and managed the final sound mix for user-generated videos (Figure 5.7).³¹ In 2009, Current began to strip away its user-generated features and by 2010, Current had readopted the 'TV' part of its name and shifted the website back to a TV-centric design, removing the VC2 Leaderboard (which was a panel that displayed a ranking of the most popular user-generated videos) from the homepage and instead featured panels that highlighted the TV schedule and TV shows (Figure 5.8). Although the site offered more social features, including the ability to form groups, the interactive features were pushed to the bottom of the homepage and user-generated videos were lost within the secondary pages of the website.

³⁰ See 'FAQ' on Current website. Available at: http://current.com/s/faq.htm#Why_so_many_changes [accessed 18 September 2010].

³¹ Information gathered from a presentation by Emily Renshaw-Smith held on 9 May 2008 in Bedford Square, London.

Figure 5.5 Current Website in 2006



Image of the Current website circa 2006. Source: Developer's portfolio. Available at: <http://rodnaber.com/portfolio-2010/> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

Figure 5.6 Current Website in 2007

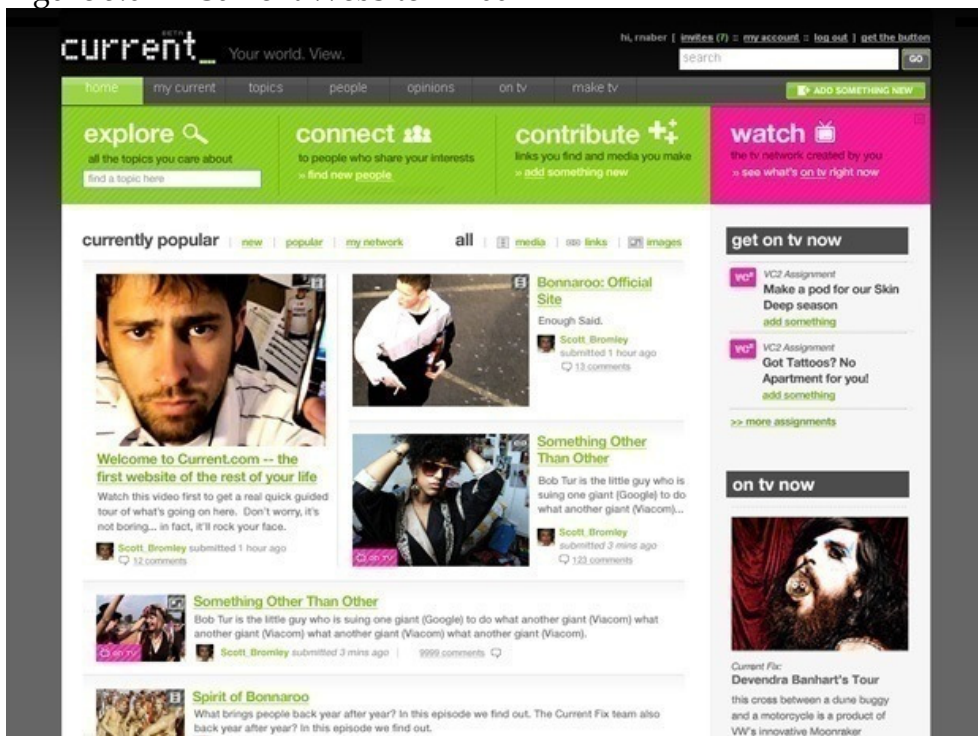


Image of the Current website circa 2007. Source: Developer's portfolio. Available at: <http://rodnaber.com/portfolio-2010/> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

Figure 5.7 Current Website in 2008

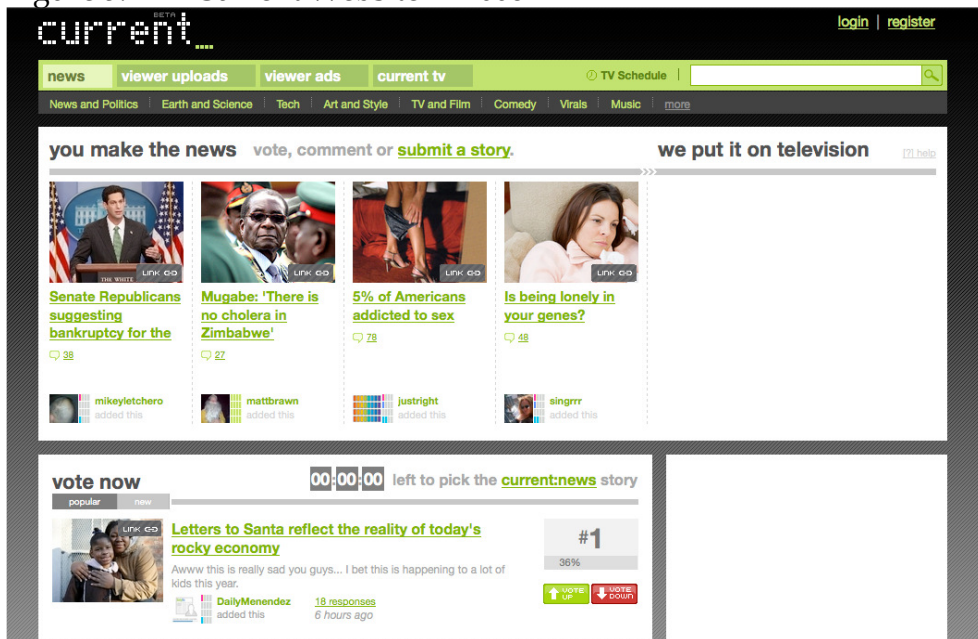


Image of the Current website taken on 11 December 2008. Source: The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20081211214236/http://current.com/> [accessed 12 September 2011].

Figure 5.8 Current Website in 2010



Image of the Current website circa 2010. Source: Developer's portfolio. Available at: <http://rodnaber.com/portfolio-2010/> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

Although its name might imply otherwise, Current's user-generated videos were rarely of the moment because of the time it took to produce and prepare the content for screening. Catering to its audience of eighteen to thirty-four year olds, Current loosely defined what subjects were suitable for its 'news' channel. Initially, the short videos, which Current called 'pods', were all factual, self-contained stories of no more than eight minutes in length on an array of topics including: fashion, culture, arts, politics, and current affairs. In general, the type of videos Current aimed to broadcast were those that told a story, profiled a character, or shared an idea. The pods uploaded onto Current's website could be viewed and rated by the public and the best (determined in part by their popularity) were then licensed for use on its network channel. Current's business model involved acquiring one-third of its content from user-generated submissions, for a maximum one-time payment of \$2000 or £1000, along with all licensing and exhibition rights across all media and territories in perpetuity. Initially, Current also requested exclusivity, not allowing filmmakers to distribute their shorts to any other platform without significantly re-editing the footage.³² In the UK, the model shifted in late 2008 to become highly competitive – offering, just once a month at a specified time (i.e. Thursday at 17:00 GMT), the user-uploaded video which ranked the most popular at that time £1000 for the exclusive rights to air it on Current's network channel. Shortly after this shift, Current stopped paying for 'viewer created content' (VC2), although it still gave users the opportunity to get paid for creating an advertisement for a sponsor. These VCAMs, or 'viewer-created ad messages', were generated through contests and helped Current integrate brand advertising into its site in a non-intrusive way. Users submitted VCAMs for a designated brand, such as Toyota or Sony, and then viewers rated the ads to determine the best ones. If a VCAM was selected for the network (at one point up to thirty percent were), then the producer was paid a fee, which ranged from \$1000 to \$2500 (Hampp 2007). It seems likely that one of the reasons Current

³² In Emily Renshaw-Smith's presentation (Ibid.), she stated that Current required exclusivity due to the network's contracts with Virgin Media and Sky, which demanded that that ninety percent of Current's content remains exclusive.

struggled with making its user-generated content model profitable is because it offered little incentive for users to contribute, other than the potential for exposure on television. Even short documentaries can require substantial work and the small fee of less than \$2000 had to cover all production costs, including filmmakers' salaries. This amount was likely not enough to entice skilled filmmakers to submit their work to Current, especially given that they had no chance of using their videos to generate further revenue or exposure via other platforms, due to Current's demands for exclusivity.

As Current moved away from its original focus on user-generated videos and towards an emphasis on user-contributed links and comments, the website shifted from being a platform on which users could post their own personal news stories to a website that aggregated and filtered mass media news stories (Figure 5.9). By diminishing its user-generated features, Current's website shifted its attention away from media creators and towards media consumers. More than a year after Current shifted its model, the FAQ page still suggested that the network was accepting user-submitted uploads; however, there was no viewer access to such programmes on the site, nor was there any way to upload videos. Practically every year since it launched, Current radically redesigned its website and reshaped its business model. At one point, in 2009, Current's website emphasised its functions as a social network, allowing regular users to form groups or add one another as 'a connection'. Current incentivised these actions by rewarding the most active users with 'badges' based on the number of times a user voted or commented. The site then tracked user activity and displayed an 'activity feed' on each individual's profile page. Current even offered a 'Make Current' (bookmarklet) button that people could embed in their browser, which would allow them to add content directly to the Current site as they came across it on the Web. These social elements did not effectively network or engage Current's audience. Instead, they transitioned its once unique user-generated video platform into an ordinary aggregate news site, which also happened to screen network programming.

Figure 5.9 Current Website in 2011



Image of the Current website on 13 September 2011. Taken from the homepage. Available at: <http://current.com/news-and-politics/> [accessed on 13 September 2011].

5.3.3 The Current Reality

Although it initially aimed to fill one-third of its broadcast slots with user-generated content, Current ultimately shifted to a relatively standard broadcast model, utilising professionals to create most of its programming in-house. Instead of novice reporters, Current employed seasoned journalists (including renowned ones, such as former MSNBC reporter Keith Olbermann) to voice both facts and opinions. The site still aimed to entertain and engage, but it adopted a more serious tone and a target audience 'comprised of affluent, curious, social and connected adults', rather than

the youthful group of eighteen to thirty-four year-olds that it initially sought to reach.³³ Instead of screening programmes that have been described as ‘out-and-out moronic’, such as ‘Tips for When She's Too Drunk and She's Too High’ (Beam 2007), Current began exhibiting quality feature documentaries, such as *Born into Brothels* (2004) and emphasising its award-winning *Vanguard* (2008) series, which sends filmmakers around the world to report on global issues that have social significance. In an effort to increase the quality of its programming, Current has introduced programmes such as *This American Life* (2007), which visualises Ira Glass’s popular radio show of the same name, and a five-part series hosted by Morgan Spurlock, called *50 Documentaries to See Before You Die* (2011). Ultimately, Current has steadily moved away from its user-generated design and become just another broadcaster with a website.

Current’s failure to maintain the user-generated element of its cross-platform design helps demonstrate broadcasters’ need to regulate participatory media in traditional markets. Even when Current accepted user-generated content, by commissioning and selecting stories, the network always controlled the scope of topics that aired and confined its democratic and open approach to its online platform. Drawing such a boundary was necessary because, ultimately, Current needed to exercise some form of quality control in order to earn respect as a proper news outlet and establish its brand. Early on, in the FAQs section of its website, Current admitted that its staff ‘tend to be quite active’ on its website and that ‘Sometimes breaking news items and other timely and relevant content needs to be programmed on the homepage, so these items receive an extra push from our editorial staff’.³⁴ If Current left the programming entirely up to young adult audiences, users might express a strong preference for pop culture stories and

³³ Current has since redefined its audience on the ‘About’ page of its website. This description was originally available at: <http://current.com/s/about.htm> [accessed 18 May 2011]. It is now available from the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110514034241/http://current.com/s/about.htm> [accessed 12 September 2011].

³⁴ Although this information is no longer available, it was originally available at: <http://current.com/s/faq.htm> [accessed 12 September 2008].

Current could lose credibility as a legitimate news outlet. Consequently, staff necessarily steered the discussions in the online community towards newsworthy topics, seeking to balance videos on fashion, music, and celebrity with more journalistic news stories. Current's desire to offer quality content and build its brand meant that it had to abandon its user-generated business model, which had failed to engage audiences in the ways that Current had initially anticipated. Despite media culture's growing 'democratic' tendencies and the benefits of public engagement, profit models in the online marketplace still work on the fundamental basis of giving consumers what they want. Ultimately, it appears that Current underestimated consumer demand for professional news content and overestimated consumer desire to create news stories.

Although Current has faced many challenges, its shifting business model has perhaps been the weakest part of its cross-platform strategy. Henry Jenkins (2006: 241) stated that Current originally planned to 'pay a large number of independent filmmakers to become roaming correspondents' but this idea was replaced by the 'plan to allow amateurs to submit material for consideration and then get paid upon acceptance'. Certainly economic considerations were a key factor in the design of Current's commissioning model, which allowed Current to pay a nominal fee to license distribution rights rather than risk investment in projects with uncertain outcomes. Crowdsourcing news stories may have seemed viable when Current launched in 2005, but as online video platforms have now shown, content produced by average citizens is, quite often, below average in quality – and subsequently not suitable material for commercial broadcasting. Although it is plausible that Pro-Ams (Leadbeater and Miller 2004) could have rescued Current from the amateur abyss, the site likely did not offer enough incentive or creative freedom to inspire talented individuals to want to take part in it. Instead, those who contributed to Current were more likely just amateurs (missing the 'Pro' element) who roughly assembled some footage that could pass as a news story, in the hopes of earning some money while gaining exposure on television. Current's idealised vision for its network could never be achieved without a constant supply of quality programming, which

could never be achieved without offering fair payment to skilled producers. As Current moved away from its democratic design, it moved more in line with Keen's observation that '[c]itizen journalists simply don't have the resources to bring us reliable news. They lack not only expertise and training, but connections and access to information' (Ibid.: 48). Current's example shows that producing quality news programming is not easy, nor is inspiring talented filmmakers to build a commercial participatory network, essentially for free. As there will always be a demand for professional content, there will always be a need for broadcasters. Although broadcasters will necessarily move online, how these institutions will adapt their business models to work in the on-demand space of the Web is not yet clear.

From early on, Current has struggled to succeed in its niche market and has adapted its business model numerous times, in an effort to counteract losses. Current has an established history of facing difficulties with audience ratings on the network. In addition, the continual redesigning of its website and redefining of Current's purpose have clouded its online identity and alienated its original intended audience. Overall, Current has simplified its online platform but, in doing so, it has sacrificed the most interesting element of its original design – the focus on user-generated documentaries. Although innovative at its start, Current no longer merits the acclaim it earned – including the Emmy it won just two years after its launch for outstanding achievement in interactive TV. In Current's case, all the effort that was put into creating a fully integrated cross-platform network never translated into the fully engaged mass audience it needed to attract in order to generate profits. Although the network more than doubled its subscribers in the first year, Current's website only averaged 151,000 unique visits per month in its second year, not even remotely comparable to the 26 million who regularly visited CNN.com at that time (Hampp 2007). Reports of cutbacks indicate that Current has been challenged to find an audience for its content. One report on CBS News revealed that Current had more than doubled its financial losses in 2007 as a result of declines in advertising revenues. The final balance sheet for that year showed that Current had just \$6.1 million in cash available with a debt of around \$41 million dollars (Weisenthal 2008).

At the close of 2008, Current laid off sixty of its staff. Five years after its launch, Current only averaged 18,000 homes in prime time hours, the lowest of any network Nielsen measured (Guthrie 2011). Lack of quality content certainly deserves some credit for Current's low audience numbers and profits. This deficit likely emerged not only from an overall poor quality of user-submitted 'pods', but also from an overall low volume of submissions. The failure of this user-generated design suggests that interactivity in news programming may not be as universally appealing as Current's business model projected. Creating 'pods' requires far more work than posting comments and sharing links. Certainly some portion of Current's audience did engage in content generation activities on Current's website, but, as evidence of engagement was relatively limited, these users clearly formed the minority of Current's audience. Most users remain observers, which suggests that participatory culture does not necessarily equate to mainstream culture.

5.4 SnagFilms: User-Distributed Documentary

5.4.1 Designed to Embed and Spread

Documentaries are typically not the kind of films audiences go out of their way to see. More often, people stumble across documentaries and get hooked into watching them. For this reason, television has served documentary well — giving it the kind of visibility required to lure people into watching. Film festivals have also helped to generate attention for documentaries by spotlighting them in a special event screenings. However, both television and festivals are only able to exhibit a limited number of films over a limited number of screening times. Many potentially interested audiences invariably miss their chance to see some films of interest simply because they are unable to be in the right place at the right time. A solution to this problem exists in the space of the Internet. The Internet, with its endless 'shelf space' (Anderson 2006) and free promotional possibilities simultaneously offers documentaries the opportunity to find larger audiences and audiences the

opportunity to encounter more documentaries, either intentionally or inadvertently. Yet unless a user searches for a specific title, documentaries rarely appear at the top of a 'Google' search return on a particular subject. Therefore, in order for documentaries to be discovered and watched, they must also be aggregated and promoted. In an effort to fulfil these functions, SnagFilms, a US-based online platform, has collected a catalogue of documentaries and offered them to the public in such a way that also serves to promote them – by enabling and encouraging users to embed full-length films on any website and share them freely with others (MacIntyre 2008).

Founded in July 2008 by Ted Leonsis, vice chairman emeritus of AOL, and two other former AOL figureheads, Steve Case and Rick Allen, SnagFilms expanded its library from two hundred fifty to over two thousand documentary films, in the span of three years. A key feature of SnagFilm's initial design was the ability to 'snag and embed' movies via a SnagFilms widget. These widgets could be embedded on any website, blog, or social network page – enabling anyone who clicked on them to screen their contents via a pop-up player. The widget, which was essentially designed as a customised video player, also had a playlist feature, called 'My Virtual Movie Theater'. This feature allowed users to create a playlist of up to fifty films, which they could then share with others (Figure 5.10). However, the value of the feature was limited because even when people did go to the effort to share their 'movie theaters' with others, it did not guarantee that anyone watched the films. SnagFilms faced the challenge of encouraging people to share the films and argued that those who have posted films on their own blog have donated 'pixels and helped support independent filmmakers'.³⁵ In making such a statement, the company promoted the idea that audiences could contribute to a good cause by sharing documentaries. Since the films were free to view, those who watch had little at stake except their time. The idea that people should share documentary films was

³⁵ See 'About' on SnagFilms website. Available at: <http://www.snagfilms.com/films/about> [accessed 16 July 2011].

at the core of SnagFilms' business model and because the advertisements, which were the primary source of revenue, were embedded in the films themselves, there was no drawback to users taking ownership of the films and promoting them on their own websites.

Figure 5.10 SnagFilms Virtual Movie Theater

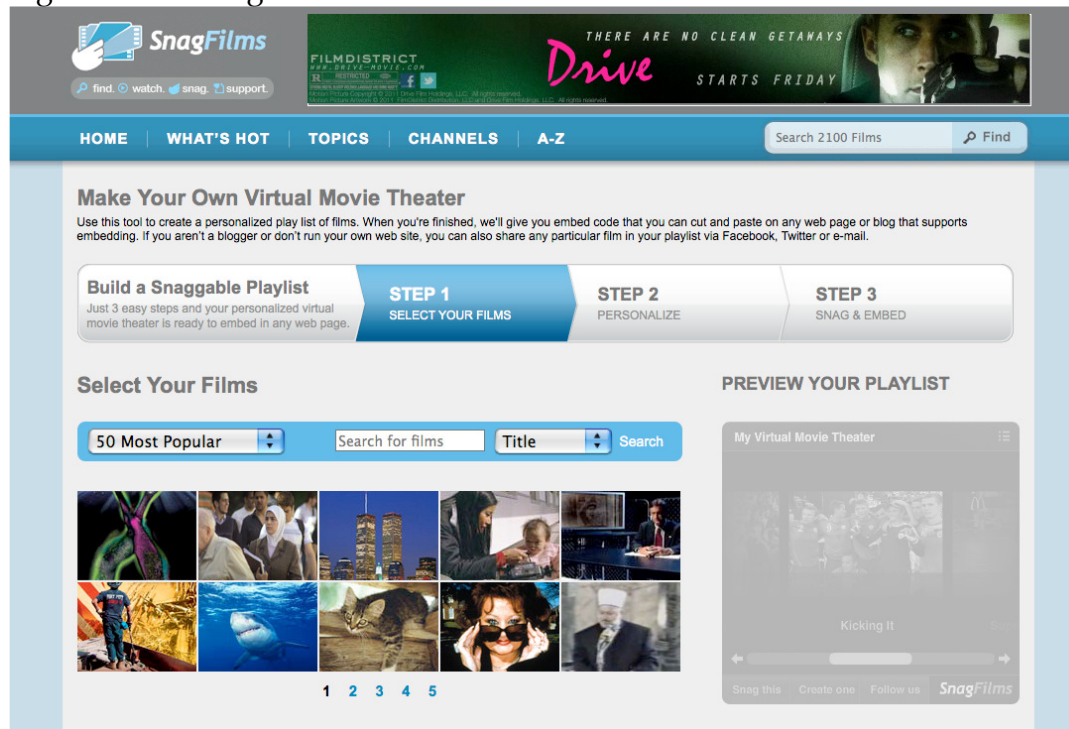


Image of the SnagFilms website on 12 September 2011. Taken from the 'Widget' page. Available at: <http://www.snagfilms.com/films/widgets> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

Unlike most traditional distributors of documentaries (see Section 4.3.1), SnagFilms hosted its films on a website that aspired to be social and engaging (Figure 5.11). The aesthetically pleasing homepage featured a slideshow of images in a window that showed a changing array of documentaries (Figure 5.12). The offerings varied from day to day, featuring links to popular documentaries, such as Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004) and Wim Wender's *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), and lesser-known films, such as Kobi Shely's *MacHEADS* (2009) and Hanson Hoesin's *Independent America: Rising From Ruins* (2009). Helping to keep the site dynamic were the 'Just Viewed' and 'Popular Today' boxes, which recommended films to visitors of the site. Below those boxes, near the center of the homepage, was

the 'Movie Matcher' search engine, which allowed users to narrow down the films on the site by selecting keywords one at a time. More interactive than a traditional search box, the Movie Matcher counted down the number of relevant films remaining with each keyword selected. For example, choosing the words 'inspiring', 'music', and 'history', in that order, yielded three recommended titles from the website's database.³⁶ Another way to filter content was via the 'Channels' link, which grouped the videos on the site by producer or distributors, located on the main horizontal navigation bar. The list of companies at one point included: Brave New Films, Lionsgate, National Geographic, the National Film Board of Canada, Palm Pictures, PBS, and the USC School of Cinematic Arts. Offering such a diverse list of esteemed partners helped to establish SnagFilms' credibility as a worthwhile service. In addition, shortly after it launched, SnagFilms acquired the highly regarded US independent film news source, indieWIRE, which facilitated publicity and provided the site with news stories and resources that helped to enhance its value. With no barrier to entry, the SnagFilms website allowed anyone to watch films without registering. If users wanted to comment on films, they could log in via any one of seven methods, through accounts they already had on Facebook, Twitter, Google, Yahoo, AOL, MySpace, or LinkedIn. Users could then vote and comment on videos and share them via a range of social media applications. Through this design, SnagFilms helped to eliminate any barriers that stood between its users and the films they want to watch and share.

³⁶ Search conducted at: <http://www.snagfilms.com/films/> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

Figure 5.11 SnagFilms Film Page (Sample)

The screenshot displays the SnagFilms website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'WHAT'S HOT', 'TOPICS', 'CHANNELS', and 'A-Z'. A search bar indicates 'Search 2100 Films'. The main content area features a large video player for 'Lovecraft: Fear of the Unknown', which is marked as 'Available Worldwide'. The video player includes social media sharing options (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) and a 'Buy Now' button. Below the video player, there are buttons for 'SAVE MY PLACE', 'RESUME', and a progress indicator 'PROGRESS IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS'. A 'You might also like' section recommends five other films: 'Monsters of the UFO: Incident at Kelly', 'Slip of the Tongue', 'The Secret KGB Psychic Files', 'Dishonored', and 'On Native Soil'. The 'Film Details' section shows the film's title, a 90-minute runtime, and a synopsis: 'The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is Fear of the Unknown.' It also mentions that H.P. Lovecraft was the forefather of modern horror fiction. On the right side, there is a 'Login Using a Partner Site' section with social media icons and a 'Related Films Like This' section featuring 'Was local doctor Jack the Ripper?', 'Tales of the Unexplained: London Underworld', 'Tales of the Unexplained: Creatures of the Night', and 'Lieve Monster (Sweet Monster)'. A banner at the bottom right says 'Now you can watch SnagFilms'.

Image of the SnagFilms website on 13 September 2011. Taken from the 'Lovecraft' film page. Available at: http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/lovecraft_fear_of_the_unknown/ [accessed on 13 September 2011].

Figure 5.12 SnagFilms Homepage



Image of the SnagFilms website on 13 September 2011. Taken from the homepage. Available at: <http://www.snagfilms.com/films/> [accessed on 13 September 2011].

SnagFilms made an effort to acquire high-quality documentary films and help connect those films with wider online audiences. The company aimed, 'to address the bottleneck in traditional distribution for quality documentaries that has left many great films unable to reach their potential audience or to provide a viable financial return'.³⁷ What was striking about SnagFilms, besides the quality and array of documentary films it offered, was how efficiently it established its brand, at least

³⁷ See 'Press' on SnagFilms website. Available at: <http://www.snagfilms.com/films/blog/category/press> [accessed 12 September 2011].

within the documentary community. Because SnagFilms was interested in acquiring documentaries, it was able to carve a unique niche for itself within the industry and make deals with small distributors and even directly with filmmakers themselves. When SnagFilms launched its SummerFest programme, it raised its profile within the industry. SummerFest was intended to commemorate the anniversary of SnagFilms' launch by offering a limited engagement preview of 'documentaries that have not been released theatrically or on television' (Kohn 2009). For three years running, SummerFest offered four to six 'new' documentaries, released every week or two. Although the SummerFest documentaries were not always as new as SnagFilms claimed them to be – such as the case of *The Age of Stupid* (2009), which had its US television premiere on Discovery months before SummerFest debuted it – they did generally meet the standards of award-winning and commercially appealing films. By hosting SummerFest each year, SnagFilms helped draw attention to its platform and enhanced its profile as a premiere outlet for feature documentaries on the Web.

5.4.2 The Value of Filmanthropy

SnagFilms was founded on the philosophy of 'filmanthropy', a term founder Leonsis coined 'to describe the power of documentary films to inspire, enlighten, and serve as agents for change'.³⁸ Although this attitude has been around since the days of John Grierson, the Web has made it easier for documentaries to fulfil such a mission. SnagFilms encouraged filmanthropy by including a box on each film's dedicated page that stated 'Support This Film's Cause' and linked each film to a related charity. This feature allowed users to either donate to the selected charity or help the cause by volunteering. A search field powered by VolunteerMatch, a company that does what its name suggests, enabled people to enter their location and find relevant organisations in their area that could use their help. Users were

³⁸ See 'Support' on SnagFilms website. Available at: <http://www.snagfilms.com/films/support> [accessed 12 September 2011].

able to help by sharing the film through Facebook, Twitter, or email. These features made it easier for people to get involved with a film's cause, immediately after watching the film, and encouraged charities to promote related films as part of their outreach campaigns. The culture of filmanthropy gave esteem to SnagFilms and suggested that the company had charitable aims. However, SnagFilms overlooked a key way it could service the community – through facilitating direct donations to its films and the filmmakers who made them. Rather than donating to some broad non-profit organisation, audiences could feel more of a personal connection if their donation went directly to the filmmaker, either as support for their work or support for a related cause. For example, the film *Up the Yangtze* (2007) was able to raise almost Can\$34,000 to pay for education and medical care for members of the Chinese family who were featured in the film. The filmmakers did this by including a link on their website to their specific campaign page on GiveMeaning.com.³⁹ By keeping the campaigns generic and largely omitting information about filmmakers on the pages for each film, SnagFilms missed an opportunity for audiences to connect on a deeper level with both creators and their causes.

SnagFilms also missed the opportunity to provide more substantial profits by building its business around an advertising-based revenue model that required hundreds of views for every dollar of return, which it then split evenly with the rights holder. Ad-funded video streaming has become a popular mode of video consumption for consumers as it relieves viewers of the burdened of paying for content, as long as they are willing to tolerate commercial intrusions. However, the periodic advertisements that interrupt the watching experience can create barriers that prevent viewers from watching films in their entirety. Since SnagFilms has not posted the number of view counts on its website or release information about the advertising revenue each film earns, it has been difficult to assess what amount of money a film could earn from distribution via its platform. The revenue generated

³⁹ See GiveMeaning website. Available at: <http://www.givemeaning.com/project/yufam> [Accessed 28 November 2011].

by advertisements, which occur every eight to ten minutes, is proportional to the number of people who watch a film. Site traffic analysis shows that the SnagFilm's website maintained approximately 200,000 unique visits per month in 2011 (not counting months when it ran special events or contests, which generated between two to three times more visits).⁴⁰ This is not enough traffic to promise a worthwhile revenue return to the more than two thousand films hosted on the platform.

Although the service had 'found widespread consumer adoption' by 2009, evidence suggested that SnagFilms had yet to prove lucrative for even the most popular documentaries it featured (Waxman 2009). Morgan Spurlock, whose highly successful film, *Super Size Me* (2004), was made available on SnagFilms reportedly made only around two thousand dollars in the first three months of having it on the site (Erpelding 2009). Although it has been suggested, by chief executive Rick Allen, that a film like *Super Size Me* 'might reach a million viewers through the system' and return a low six figure advertising revenue, evidence indicates the financial return has been far less (Cieply 2010). Andrew Mer, vice president of content partnerships at SnagFilms, cited *Okie Noodling* (2001) as an example of a film that has done well, explaining that when AOL ran a story that featured the documentary in a 'video break', the film gained 30,000 views over just that one weekend. According to information provided by Mer in 2010, it took 70,000 to 100,000 streams to generate one thousand dollars in advertising revenues and payment to content owners (made on a quarterly basis) ranged from zero to two thousand dollars.⁴¹ Such low revenue figures suggest the limitations of SnagFilms 'free' distribution model and why the company has been motivated to expand its reach and offering.

In July 2010, SnagFilms made a move to extend the value and reach of its content by expanding its distribution strategy across multiple platforms.

⁴⁰ Comparison done on Compete website. Available at: <http://compete.com> [accessed 12 September 2011].

⁴¹ Information included in this section was gathered from two separate discussions with Andrew Mer, held on 22 November 2009 at IDFA in Amsterdam and on 6 November 2010 at Sheffield Doc/Fest in Sheffield.

Transitioning from an 'ad-supported online aggregator of documentary films' to 'a significant distributor of documentaries', SnagFilms formed partnerships with on-demand services on fee-based channels (Cieply 2010). By making its catalogue available through VOD, SnagFilms increased its audience reach, allowing it to cater to older audiences, who might not be inclined to watch documentaries online, by enabling people to watch films on television. Increasing its reach to younger generations, SnagFilms made deals with mobile carriers via the content aggregator A3 Media Network. SnagFilms also expanded its business model to make content 'available for purchase on iTunes, for rental from YouTube, and in both free and pay forms on the iPad' (Pond 2010). Over time, SnagFilms has steadily built partnerships with other online platforms, such as Hulu, which featured many SnagFilms documentaries in the launch of its documentary channel. The partnership with Hulu, a commercial content streaming platform that is currently only available in the US and Japan, demonstrated one of SnagFilms' limitations – its inability to release films internationally. Because SnagFilms was not always able to acquire streaming rights for all territories, some of the content within its catalogue was not able to be viewed worldwide. The error message 'The video you are trying to view is not currently available for streaming in your region' encouraged many users to look elsewhere for content. This limitation hindered SnagFilms' audience reach in many territories outside of the US (including the UK). Perhaps to compensate for this loss, SnagFilms focused its efforts on expanding domestically, with a particular interest in exploiting the educational market.

In August 2010, SnagFilms launched SnagLearning, an 'online platform dedicated to presenting high-quality documentary films as educational tools to ignite meaningful classroom discussion'.⁴² This website, which targeted educational institutions, narrowed down SnagFilms' catalogue to around 250 films suitable for students aged twelve and older. The SnagLearning website emphasised the

⁴² See 26 August 2010 press release. Available at: <http://eon.businesswire.com/news/eon/20100826005185/en/Documentary-films/education-community/ePals> [accessed 12 September 2011].

educational value of films, providing each with a description along with a list of 'Learning Questions'. The site also prompted teachers to submit their lesson plans and allows students to 'Join The Discussion' by posting a question or comment on the site. However, SnagLearning showed little evidence of user engagement with this feature. Like the other platforms discussed in this chapter, SnagFilms aimed higher than it could ultimately deliver. At the launch of SnagLearning, Stephanie Sharis, executive vice president of SnagFilms, said, 'We will create daily blog posts on our films, as well as about other documentaries not currently highlighted as part of SnagLearning. We will also single out teachers within our community who are teaching their students in extraordinary ways'. Such developments did not appear on the SnagLearning website, which remained largely static (Figure 5.13, Figure 5.14). This lack of user engagement indicated that SnagFilms did not successfully penetrate the educational market.

Figure 5.13 SnagLearning Film Page (Sample)

The screenshot shows the SnagLearning website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the SnagLearning logo and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features the film 'Sacred Angkor' (2008), 6 min, with a video player showing a stone face sculpture. Below the video player, there are social media sharing icons and a description of the film. The right column features a video player showing a man in a white shirt, with a description of the film and a 'Watch This Film' link. Below the video player, there is a section for 'Related Learning Videos' with three video thumbnails and their descriptions. At the bottom of the page, there is a section for 'ABOUT SnagLearning'.

Sacred Angkor (2008), 6 min

6-8, 9-12, College, Arts & Music, History, World Culture & Geography

National Geographic photographer Chris Rainier and filmmaker Ethan Boehme team up to bring Rainier's photographs and Boehme's cinematography of the sacred temples and Buddhist monks of Angkor Wat poetically to film. With music by Anoushka Shankar.

Learning Questions

1. Describe a couple of visual effects in this film. What emotions and mood do these techniques evoke?
2. How important is the soundtrack to enhancing the visuals? What does the music bring to this film?
3. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to use a combination of still photography and video footage in this film?

ePals Students from around the world are talking about these questions (and much more!) on the ePals Student Forums. [Talk About It >](#)

Submit Your Lesson Plan

Join The Discussion

Don't be shy, leave a comment below. Educators, students and parents can use this forum in a number of ways:

- + Start a classroom discussion
- + Tell us how you used this educational video for learning
- + Or, just leave a regular old comment on what you thought of the video

Related Learning Videos

- The Tehuacan Project**
Young Lucia and Jesus, both deal from preventable childhood disease, find their way to Mexico's first school for the deaf.
[Watch This Film](#)
- Paperback Dreams**
Filmmaker Alex Beckstead reflects on the stories of two landmark bookstores and their ongoing struggles to remain relevant.
[Watch This Film](#)
- Volunteer**
A profile of Georgia's most unlikely literacy volunteer.
[Watch This Film](#)

ABOUT SnagLearning

SnagLearning is dedicated to presenting high-quality documentary films as educational tools to ignite meaningful discussion within the learning community.

Image of the SnagLearning website on 13 September 2011. Taken from 'Sacred Angkor' film page. Available at: <http://learning.snagfilms.com/film/sacred-angkor> [accessed on 13 September 2011].

Figure 5.14 SnagLearning Homepage

The screenshot shows the SnagLearning homepage layout. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Snag Learning logo and links for HOME, SUBJECT, GRADE LEVEL, CHANNEL, ALL, and SEARCH. Below the navigation bar is a large featured film section for "Sacred Angkor" by National Geographic's Chris Rainier and Ethan Boehme. To the right of the film image is a "Read More & Watch the Film" button. Below the featured film are three smaller film recommendations, each with a "Watch the Film" link: "The Tehuacan Project" (6-8, 9-12, History, World Culture & Geography), "Paperback Dreams" (9-12, College, History, World Culture & Geography), and "Volunteer" (Campus Movie Fest, 6-8, 9-12, College, History, World Culture & Geography). On the right side, there is an advertisement for the film "Drive" and an "ABOUT SnagLearning" section with a "Learn More" link.

Image of the SnagLearning website on 17 September 2011. Taken from SnagLearning homepage. Available at: <http://learning.snagfilms.com/> [accessed on 17 September 2011].

5.4.3 The Limits of Snag

The evidence presented in this case study suggests that SnagFilms struggled to gain enough views to profit from its advertising-based business model. According to a press release: 'SnagFilms' library has been featured on over 2 billion web pageviews, via more than 100,000 affiliates, and is distributed throughout AOL channels, and the websites of the Miami Herald, the Chicago Reader, IMDb; portals like Hulu,

Fancast and Daily Motion' (Thompson 2011). However, the platform's market reach appears largely overstated as evidence suggests that this massive exposure has not translated into a massive number of viewers who watch documentaries in their entirety. Having many affiliates does not guarantee a substantially wider market. For example, the SnagFilms Channel on YouTube, which launched on 11 February 2009, gained less than 150,000 upload views over the span of two and a half years.⁴³ This small view count could be attributed to SnagFilms using YouTube primarily as a rental platform (selling limited access to advertising-free titles for \$3.99); yet, regardless of any justification, this data (which averages to less than seventy-five views per film) still stands as evidence that SnagFilms failed to become a mainstream means of consuming documentary films.

Although SnagFilms has gathered an impressive catalogue of quality documentaries, because so few people watched them, the platform failed to prove financially rewarding for content owners. The inability to appeal to widespread audiences led to insufficient advertising revenue, which likely led some filmmakers to remove their films from the platform after their standard three-year contract ended. For example, *Super Size Me* (2004) disappeared from SnagFilms. Even though SnagFilms' offered non-exclusive contracts and a certain degree of publicity, filmmakers who made their films available to watch for free on its platform were unlikely to see an increase in value in other markets, especially given that SnagFilms made a direct effort to exploit the lucrative educational market and made little effort to promote direct DVD sales on its own website.⁴⁴ From a consumer perspective, SnagFilms' free distribution model could not, on a large scale, compete with popular subscription platforms, such as Netflix, that offered a wider selection of films with no intrusive advertisements. Evidence of this inequality can be seen comparing the

⁴³ See SnagFilms YouTube channel. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/snagfilms> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

⁴⁴ Although the site does link out to filmmakers and distributors' online stores (giving SnagFilms an 8.5 percent commission from each sale), SnagFilms only indicates this option through a small 'buy now' button (Kasson 2009).

two sites' Internet traffic statistics on Alexa.com, which revealed that SnagFilms has consistently ranked below twenty thousand on the list of top sites, while Netflix has maintained its position, somewhat regularly, in the top one hundred.⁴⁵ Ultimately, despite its viral aims, 'filmanthropic' design, and corporate support, SnagFilms has not been able to successfully penetrate the mainstream market because it failed to engage online consumers in its niche offering.

Technology can enable deeper audience engagement, but only if audiences understand how to use the technology. SnagFilms clearly catered to young viewers with its 'widget' design, overlooking the older generation of individuals who may have been interested in watching SnagFilms' documentaries but not comfortable using its platform and 'snagging' them. By extending across platforms and making films available through VOD partnerships, SnagFilms helped to resolve this issue and subsequently increased its chances for greater profits. However, in a VOD context, SnagFilms had little to differentiate it from other services, including its biggest competitor, Netflix. All digital streams are essentially the same, regardless of who provides them, so cost aside, people migrate to whatever platform offers the best service, which is usually the platform that offers the most choice. In the online market, the bigger the aggregator, the bigger the profits. SnagFilms understood this logic of the long tail (Anderson 2006) and made an effort to expand its catalogue. Helping to facilitate this growth, the cable company Comcast and the venture capital firm New Enterprise Associates offered SnagFilms a ten million dollar investment to enable it to expand its offering to include fiction features (Pond 2011). This move to broaden its catalogue suggests that niche distributors may not have a place in the online market, as consumers naturally prefer to have one source to go to that can serve all their content needs (rather than visiting a multitude of specialty platforms). Yet, at the same time, for a film to reach the widest possible audience, it needs to be available on as many platforms as possible. Although the logic of SnagFilms'

⁴⁵ In a search conducted on Alexa, SnagFilms ranked 31,193 and Netflix ranked 96 on its list of sites with the most web traffic. Available at: <http://www.alexa.com> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

spreadable design catered to this understanding, its widgets, in effect, isolated films from a wider selection. As unlikely as it was that people felt inclined to create virtual movie theatres and post them on websites, it seems even more unlikely that those browsing the Web would stop what they are doing to watch an embedded documentary stream on a random web page. More likely, the widgets act as emblems of documentary, allowing people who embed them to show support and help advertise films to others, which may inspire later viewing through other outlets. In this way, SnagFilms appears to have created greater exposure for documentaries, even if this exposure has not directly translated into profits.

5.5 VODO: Making Piracy Pay

5.5.1 The Potential of Piracy

Digital distribution provides both an opportunity and a challenge; the opportunity emerges from the low cost of dissemination while the challenge arises from finding ways to monetise online transactions. The industry lost control of the market for digital downloads with the advent of peer-to-peer networks. To understand the significance of peer-to-peer, it is beneficial to consider how file sharing entered mainstream culture, when the first major peer-to-peer media system appeared on the Web in 1999. Napster, developed by Shawn Fanning, facilitated the formation of an enormous, searchable library of user-provided MP3 music files. Within months of its launch, the music industry took legal measures to put an end to Napster and ultimately had the site shut down in 2001. Although the court case *A&M Records et al. v. Napster* (2001) firmly established the online intellectual property rights of the entertainment industry, it did little to suppress the rapidly growing number of file sharers on the Web (McCourt and Burkhart 2003: 334). Thus, when it became clear that suing the software makers would not prevent illegal file sharing, media corporations began litigation against individuals and ultimately pressured governments to force Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to monitor customer activity

and ban those suspected of file sharing from using the Internet.⁴⁶ Although the industry has campaigned to stop illegal downloaders, advances in technology have made file sharing increasingly easier to accomplish. With BitTorrent technology, developed by Bram Cohen, people can easily download copies of feature films at fast speeds. BitTorrent software spreads bandwidth use by enabling links to the files, or torrents, to seed the media from many different users all at once, thereby reducing the cost and risk associated with downloading. Many websites exist that track these torrents, making it easy for people to search, while linking each user to everyone who is seeding that file. Unlike Napster, which relied upon a centralised database, BitTorrent clients spread files across the Web, to a seemingly infinite number of machines, so that once a file enters the network, it becomes almost impossible to remove it (Christin 2010). The ease of this technology, which Clive Thompson (2005) calls 'for free video on demand', has ensured its massive appeal. As it has become apparent that peer-to-peer file sharing cannot be stopped, it seems logical for the industry to re-examine piracy and see if there might be ways to monetise the action.

As digital formats have replaced analogue recordings, the media industries have lost control of their content. Because digital media are uncontrollable, they also have little inherent value. Assigning a price to a product that does not have a tangible package and can be accessed through peer-to-peer networks for free has been a challenge for the industry. Expecting consumers to value a digital download at the same price level as a DVD, when it is apparent that much less money has been invested into packaging and delivery, is illogical (Sander 2002: 65). In addition, while most people acknowledge that copyrighted content may be regulated in other (tangible) forms of media delivery, when that content is on the Web, people often expect to receive it for free (see Levine 2011). Millions of people have grown accustomed to getting whatever media they want at no cost, and, as a consequence,

⁴⁶ The UK has supported this effort through its Digital Economy Act. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/24/contents> [accessed 15 September 2011].

they have begun consuming far more media. This has created a cultural shift that requires rethinking traditional economic models. As Douglas Thomas (2002: 90) states:

The ethos of new media has fostered a belief that, while content can be owned, controlled and regulated, *distribution* cannot and should not be. As a result, the value of the Internet is not found in the information it provides, but in the *way* in which it provides that information.

The Internet has linked together the world and created a universal repository for all digital content. Because anyone can add to this virtual space, everything can be found on it for free. Peer-to-peer networks efficiently facilitate this free exchange and their existence ensures that digital media will always have a base price point of zero.

Traditional distributors are partly responsible for fueling peer-to-peer networks' growth due to their failure to adapt their businesses to satisfy the growing demand for digital content. With no other reasonable alternatives, consumers turned to file sharing to get digital media that could neither be easily found nor economically purchased. Eli Noam (2008: 6) suggests that the reason media corporations have delayed investment in 'critical mass' technologies is because 'they may already have an arrangement satisfactory to themselves in a related business activity, and which the firms do not want to destabilize'. He evidences Hollywood's historical opposition to new distribution technologies, such as television, cable TV, and VCRs – all of which eventually proved to be lucrative. According to Noam, because Hollywood does not compete on price, it maintains 'above-competitive price levels through an oligopolistic industry structure, by a vertical integration of content production with distribution, and by product differentiation' (Ibid.). With the Internet, any potential benefits of online distribution are outweighed by the potential loss of established profitable means of distribution. Ultimately, this fear of lost revenues has kept the film industry from keeping pace with online technology and monetising digital delivery. Consumers' perception that Hollywood makes huge profits regardless of whether or not a person downloads a 'free' film is likely one influencer in the decision to pirate films. As the most commonly downloaded

titles are typically studio productions, niche content likely experiences less financial loss from piracy. For documentary, the kinds of audiences interested in watching documentaries are typically the kinds of audiences who would want to support documentaries. Because of this different dynamic, it is possible to imagine how documentaries might use piracy as an opportunity to connect with downloaders and potentially inspire them to promote and pay for their films.

5.5.2 A Free-For-All Film

The practice of piracy has challenged the economics of film distribution. As a result, media corporations typically view piracy as criminal. Independents often accept piracy as an unfortunate, but tolerable, consequence of the Internet. Only a handful of progressives have been able to look beyond the apparent drawbacks to see the opportunity that piracy presents. An example that illustrates the potential value of piracy is the documentary *Steal This Film* (2006). The film argues the case that, because file sharing is the fundamental structure of the Internet, it is therefore a natural, rather than criminal, activity. It presents this argument primarily through talking head interviews that articulate key intellectual property debates. Keeping in the spirit of the film's title, an anonymous group of friends, calling themselves 'The League of Noble Peers', came together to make *Steal This Film* and released the first version directly onto the Web in August 2006. Although the production was a collaborative effort, Jamie King, who directed the second broadcast edition, *Steal This Film II* (2007), is often attributed as the creator of both parts. Whereas the original focuses on the pirate culture in Sweden, and the United States' attempt to control The Pirate Bay's activity through the World Trade Organization, *Steal this Film II* examines much broader issues of intellectual property as they pertain to everyday Internet users. A third 'Trial Edition', which expands on footage taken from *I* and *II* and mixes in new interviews with The Pirate Bay's Peter Sunde, was released around the time of the trials of The Pirate Bay in 2009.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Kerrigan (2010: 207-08) also discusses King's experience with *Steal This Film*.

Although the film's appeal likely derives from the argument it presents rather than the artistic value it projects, its notoriety in the film community comes from the unconventional way it was released. The film has played at many festivals, yet it is essentially, as King has described it, 'propaganda' packaged in the form of a 'very scrappy documentary' (King 2009). Despite this lack of sophistication, *Steal This Film I and II* have together received over six million downloads on the Internet. While this record of piracy would horrify many filmmakers, King sees it as evidence of success. Acknowledging that achieving such widespread distribution for *Steal This Film* was only possible through the mechanism of peer-to-peer, King recognises that pirate networks can provide opportunities for independents whose work might otherwise never be widely seen. Describing it as the 'best distribution model', King asserts that there are no hurdles left to overcome in terms of the technology of online film distribution. Instead, the challenge is how to find a business model that works within this framework (King 2008). In order to achieve this level of exposure, King approached the owners of The Pirate Bay and asked them to help distribute the first version of *Steal This Film*. King claims that the film could only ever have been distributed via peer-to-peer networks because distributors would never release a film that contained so much uncleared copyrighted content (King 2009). King speculates that, at the time, The Pirate Bay had eight to ten million unique users a day. To help the film reach this massive audience, The Pirate Bay owners agreed to replace their familiar logo on the front page and with a logo for *Steal This Film* over the course of about ten days. According to King, as a result, *Steal This Film* gained over two million downloads in the first week alone. Even after the logo was taken down, the film went on to amass a total of approximately four million downloads due to the enormous amount of people who shared the film and discussed it in online arenas (Ibid.). As there is no way to know for sure exactly how many downloads the film had, these round numbers are loose approximations (which vary depending on the source). Nevertheless, *Steal This Film* reached an exceptionally large audience considering how little it cost to make and that the filmmakers spent no money on marketing and distribution. Although the film had

not generated any revenue, the belief that, as Kelly (2008b: 9) suggests, money follows the path of attention led the filmmakers to explore how they might make piracy profitable.

King asserts that making money was never part of the plan for *Steal This Film*; however, once the filmmakers saw how popular the film had become, they decided to attempt to monetise some of the transactions. So, as King explains, they came up with the idea of asking people to donate one dollar if they enjoyed the film, hoping that a million downloads might equal a million dollars. However, the experiment, which they launched well after the film's initial release, only secured donations from approximately one in every thousand who downloaded. As PayPal took approximately thirty percent of each dollar, the revenue did not amount to much. Nevertheless, King gained valuable insight from the experiment and a commission from Channel 4 to create a documentary for television, *Steal This Film II*. When that film was released on peer-to-peer networks in December 2007, King again asked for donations. This time he did not specify the amount except to say that if people donated fifteen dollars, they would get a free gift. The result was that ninety-eight percent of the donations received met the fifteen dollar target and the film quickly earned \$30,000. King recalls the joy of seeing £600 to £700 per day entering his PayPal account and the satisfaction of knowing that these contributions were entirely voluntary. Although only a very small percentage of the viewers made donations, the experiment hinted at the prospect of creating a post-distribution revenue model that monetised content on peer-to-peer networks while offering audiences the right to freely share and promote films. King questioned how he could use this 'unmediated relationship' with audiences to build a system that would allow people to voluntarily pay for films, after they have watched and enjoyed them (King 2009).

5.5.3 From Pirate to Patron?

Attempting to monetise peer-to-peer networks, King developed an online distribution system called VODO (an abbreviation of 'Voluntary Donation'), which

works on a free-to-share basis through a 'coalition' of file-sharing partners. VODO is powered by DISCO, the Distribution Coalition of file sharing sites, each of which has an estimated ten to twenty million unique visitors a day. These peer-to-peer networks have all agreed to promote at least one new independent film a month for a 24-hour period. Films chosen for promotion are given prominent front-page space on websites such as Mininova, The Pirate Bay, Isohunt, and Miro, as well as on the VODO homepage. VODO has the technology to track the exposure of each film. King estimates that seventy to eighty million people could see the promotions on these peer-to-peer websites and expects that five to ten percent of those people might download the film as a result. The key question then becomes, how many of the remaining few million will, when prompted to donate, actually chose to do so. Even if it is a very small number, the return for artists could be significant as all donations will be direct. The hope is that, as King phrases it, 'attention can be transmuted into gold' (King 2008).

One of the aims of VODO is to take films that were commissioned but never programmed on television and find audiences for them online. Due to the high number of eligible films and the limited promotion space on the file sharing networks, VODO operates selectively. The VODO team asks filmmakers to upload their films to the VODO website where 'influencers' (VODO members and visitors) can watch and promote the film. Based on community popularity and their own personal opinions, the VODO team selects at least one film a month to be promoted through its DISCO partners. By the end of 2011, the VODO website listed close to one hundred forty films, ranging from just a few minutes in length to full features, offering a fairly even mix of documentary and fiction films.⁴⁸ VODO has been in development since 2008 and was produced through a partnership with the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation (BRITDOC) and with support from the Arts Council UK, Emerald Fund, and Goldsmith's College, London (Cooper 2009).

⁴⁸ See VODO website for the list of films released. Available at: <http://vodo.net/film/allfilms> [accessed 10 March 2012].

Although VODO does promise exposure, content creators must be willing to accept that their films' distribution will be out of their control as VODO released films are intended to spread virally around the world. As each film is released, DISCO members offer promotion via a standard banner, which hosts a small Flash trailer. Once the film is downloaded, it can travel beyond the partner websites, without measure or control. The idea is that the wider the film spreads, the more attention it will generate. As peer-to-peer networks allow film distribution to happen naturally, King is primarily concerned with making it just as effortless for people to donate (King 2009). The process is not yet seamless as it requires that people read and follow the pre-/post-roll instructions, which direct them to the film's VODO page where they can make a donation via PayPal.⁴⁹ Making payment as simple as possible is critical; however, in order for VODO to succeed, the site and its users must work to persuade downloaders to support the notion that making voluntary donations is worthwhile. To establish this paradigm shift, users need to develop the currently unnatural habit of paying after they have watched a film. It appears that in order for this model to work, users must not only appreciate the films they watch but also care enough about the filmmakers' ongoing careers to want to offer them money.

VODO's patron model has shown limited revenue potential since the service launched in October 2009 with its debut release, Ivo Gormley's *Us Now* (2009). The documentary achieved 100,000 downloads within its first five days (Cooper 2009). Nearly two years later, the film had reached 520,000 downloads.⁵⁰ As VODO promotes its biggest success stories on its homepage (and currently only lists three titles, one of which has achieved less than \$10,000), it can be inferred that *Us Now* did not make enough money to merit a mention. To incentivise donations, VODO suggests that filmmakers offer users items such as credits in a future production or

⁴⁹ VODO has experimented with other forms of payment, such as using the 'digital currency' bitcoin. See bitcoin website. Available at: <http://bitcoin.org> [accessed 12 September 2011].

⁵⁰ Download count taken from VODO website. Available at: <http://vodo.net/usnow> [accessed 19 September 2011].

downloadable soundtracks. Even with such incentives, the financial rewards remain small. VODO's biggest documentary release, *The Yes Men Fix the World: P2P Edition* (2010), offered prize draws and paraphernalia and still only achieved around \$30,000 over its first year.⁵¹ With VODO taking twenty-five percent of all donation revenues (and fifty percent of any merchandise sales facilitated by the VODO website), the expected return for a film released on VODO remains small.

Nevertheless, King asserts that the service offers 'material value' to filmmakers via a 'raised profile, donations and marketing' (Ibid.). King argues that VODO 'can create opportunities for creators that rival or outperform those of copy-restricted media, without supporting the privations demanded by Big Entertainment'. Serving the company motto that 'everyone is a distributor', King aspires to shift the business from 'download, support' to a more 'game-like economy that gets people really active around VODO works and releases' (Miller 2010). One successful model of a similar design is the crowdfunding site Kickstarter, which enables people to fund projects that are in the process of being made (see Section 4.4.2). Funding a project in development potentially has greater public appeal than 'voluntarily donating' to a film that has already been completed because the audience benefits from being involved throughout the filmmaking process and seeing how their support makes a difference.

In the case of *Steal This Film I and II*, although these two films did not make a substantial amount of money, they demonstrated the value of finding a large audience. For King, the exposure created opportunities to speak at festivals around the world and get noticed by broadcasters, who ultimately commissioned him for more work. Yet because King had no personal connection with his audiences, who anonymously downloaded the film, he was limited in his capacity to grow a community to support his work. With other pre-pay models (i.e. crowdfunding), filmmakers can harvest substantially more data on who their audiences are and

⁵¹ Information gathered from VODO website. Available at: <http://vodo.net/> [accessed 12 September 2011].

potentially engage with them in a dialogue, helping further commit them to projects. Audiences, even when they are not paying or individually identifiable, bring value by collectively demonstrating public interest and demand for a film. In some ways, piracy can be viewed as a form of flattery and, for the independent filmmaker, could offer the hope of financial return once the downloaders realise that the film belongs to an individual rather than an institution. Some work must be done to cultivate this understanding and turn pirates into patrons. King admits that generating revenue with this model may not be easy but claims that in his experience, 'Having a film that known, even if it hasn't made a good deal of money for you, is valuable in itself' (King 2009).

Attention is the currency of the online market. Yet attention does not automatically translate into monetary transactions. *Steal This Film I* and *II* were fortunate to gain substantial attention, but the overall value of this exposure came more from the indirect rewards rather than the direct donations. The attention King generated in this effort appears to be largely due to the novelty of his approach and the relevance of his subject matter to the audience he targeted. Although the service is currently in its third year of operating, VODO still has a long way to go to demonstrate that other independent documentaries distributed via peer-to-peer networks could achieve the same tangible or intangible level of success the *Steal This Film* series achieved. King suggests the marketing generated by peer-to-peer networks will ultimately lead people directly to the filmmaker's own website where they can express their support. However, at the moment, the system is designed to route users back to VODO.net in order to make payment. As it stands, VODO depends on peer-to-peer network users to demonstrate a spirit of generosity that goes beyond simple gestures of media sharing and adopt a new conscious-driven habit of paying for media that they have already freely obtained. Should it be able to strengthen this bond between creators and consumers, VODO has the potential to financially succeed; however, people must not feel burdened by the donation process. One way to alleviate the payment effort is to establish a monthly subscription plan, which enrolls people to spread their support across the wider

community of VODO films. Such a service already exists in Flattr, created by Peter Sunde of The Pirate Bay, which debits money from people each month and then allows them to spread those funds across the Web simply by clicking Flattr buttons embedded on sites. Although VODO now enables the use of Flattr as an alternative to PayPal, the low figures revealed on the embedded counters show that this method has not yet become widely popular. Ultimately, an opportunity exists to use micropayments as a means of generating revenue for independent content, but, as VODO suggests, the challenge is far greater than just establishing a system that facilitates payment – it requires establishing a new social contract that encourages pirates to become patrons.

5.6 Conclusion

All the platforms discussed in this chapter have attempted to attract audiences with innovation and all of them have failed to be as successful as they intended (or claimed) to be. When I started these case studies, I intended to reveal how each one worked as an innovative solution to online distribution. Each one inspired me with the promises it made: FourDocs presented an opportunity for new talent to be discovered; Current did the same while democratising the news; SnagFilms promoted filmanthropy and the free sharing of documentaries; and VODO encouraged patronage through peer-to-peer distribution. However, as I looked deeper to understand how each one operated, the hype that surrounded them disappeared and their flaws became unavoidably apparent. Despite my desire to reveal the possibilities of online documentary distribution, what has happened is that I have illuminated the challenges. Although each platform did achieve a certain amount of success, it happened early on, when their novelty was high and public interest was at a peak. With time, each platform lost a degree of public esteem as it struggled to sustain its operations. Because aggregation has mass consumer appeal, the smaller the platform, the greater the challenge it faces to compete for attention in the marketplace. Ultimately, innovation requires renewed financial and creative investment and a concerted effort to attract new audiences and keep them engaged.

For these reasons, innovation is nearly impossible to sustain in a commercial market without a substantial budget to fund it.

Systems that democratise distribution, without requiring any form of customer payment, rarely prove profitable unless they successfully attract and engage audiences. Even for FourDocs, with the financial backing and promotion of Channel 4, the inability to inspire user-generated submissions and appeal to a worthwhile number of viewers ensured the end of its existence as an outlet for short documentary. In order for broadcasters to survive and withstand the challenges of audience fragmentation, they must adapt their business models to better cater to audience demand and find ways to build communities around their content. Current's efforts to enable conversations to unfold around its online news stories and network programming have signified a growing trend in cross-platform delivery. Yet the network's abandonment of its initial user-generated approach to programming suggests that 'common' content has little commercial value and that active audiences are difficult to aggregate. Such low user engagement is likely why SnagFilms has chosen not to publicly log the views its films have gathered (in the way that YouTube has) and why it has decided to expand its catalogue of content to include fiction films. As SnagFilms generalises its offering, it moves further away from its original niche focus and risks experiencing the same loss of identity that FourDocs and Current experienced as they evolved. Yet SnagFilms has made this strategic move in an effort to survive, as it has shown that free distribution models do not generate significant revenue for niche content. In the case of VODO, even when films are elevated to the attention of mass audiences, there is no guarantee that free downloads will translate into dollars. VODO's aim to inspire people who come across its films on peer-to-peer networks to donate money after watching them appears to be a largely unachievable goal for documentary – unless the film caters specifically to the 'pirate' demographic. Democratised distribution, which allows consumers to take part in the free sharing of content, has afforded documentaries the potential to reach wider audiences; however, it has not yet developed the capacity to offer greater financial rewards.

CHAPTER 6

Films and Filmmakers

6.1 Introduction

Although digital technology has made the process of making films far easier, it has also made the marketplace more competitive and profitable distribution more difficult to manage. Filmmakers have had to work harder to bring their films to market and promote them; however, as a reward for their efforts, they have gained far greater control over the distribution process. Many filmmakers now play an active role in their films' distribution and partner with distributors to devise innovative release strategies and promotion campaigns. These emerging business practices aim to build audience demand for niche content and increase attention for documentaries within the crowded marketplace. As discussed in Chapter 4, the theatrically-led distribution model rarely works for documentary and documentary's expansion in the ancillary markets has been limited due to its lack of commercial appeal and its need for specialised support. Before the digital age, filmmakers did not have many options for distribution, as most distributors did not acquire documentaries and the few that did controlled the market and required that filmmakers sign over their distribution rights for little money, long licence periods, and generally unfavourable contract terms. It was standard practice for distributors to deduct losses before paying royalties and when a film proved to be too much work to distribute, they would shelve it, for a decade or more, until its contract expired. These common business practices meant that most filmmakers only saw their documentaries released on television and relied exclusively upon broadcast commissions as a means to fund their work.

The Internet has impacted the relationships between filmmakers and distributors by offering access to alternative distribution solutions and facilitating

direct-to-consumer sales. As more and more filmmakers have independently made money from self-distributing their films in the online market, they have challenged distributors and pushed them to adjust their business practices to better serve the filmmakers, whom distributors depend on to supply their businesses with products. Although some distributors have resisted this change, many are becoming 'filmmaker friendly' and offering more flexibility in their licensing agreements. As a consequence of this change, the process of distribution has become a more cooperative endeavour, as filmmakers, distributors, and even audiences, have begun to work together to overcome challenges. As collaboration between these three groups grows, distribution becomes an increasingly social process, which develops through innovation and must be adapted to each project's specific audience. However, in such uncertain times in documentary history, innovation is no guarantee of success; yet it has become increasingly necessary that filmmakers employ new methods to finance, create, and distribute their work. The films and filmmakers discussed in this chapter all serve to illuminate the possibilities and challenges that arise when documentaries seek to engage audiences through the Web. New media technologies have made the process of making, distributing, and marketing films a participatory practice that works most effectively when all parties, from distributors to filmmakers to audiences, work together to ensure that the films they value get the attention they deserve.

The three case studies in this chapter illuminate developing media trends and demonstrate how the desire, or need, for attention has been a powerful driving force behind innovation in the film industry. Documentaries could easily be lost among the ever-expanding pool of content on the Web; however, new tools and websites have helped many documentaries and filmmakers get noticed. As broadcasters and online platforms have developed new means of engaging audiences in documentary content, filmmakers have adopted new approaches that involve audiences in the filmmaking process, and, as a consequence, have uncovered potentially sustainable models for financing, production, and distribution. These models rely upon innovation and social media, which can critically enable films to stand out in the

crowded marketplace. Ultimately, the long-established distribution models, although still in existence, have become largely ineffective. Niche films benefit from niche strategies that target core audiences and foster a sense of community (see Section 4.4.2). The Internet has made it easier to employ such strategies. This chapter explores the benefits that emerge from a highly personal, targeted approach to distributing documentaries. All three examples discussed reflect important changes that have taken place in the industry and suggest where documentary distribution is headed in the future.

6.2 Robert Greenwald: Distribution Without Distributors

6.2.1 Greenwald's Brave New Idea

Once a novelty, self-distribution is now a well-established practice within the film industry, streamlined and simplified by the growth of e-commerce and online video. Nevertheless, despite the accessibility of self-distribution, many filmmakers are willing to forego the option in favour of an overall deal, with the hopes that their films will reach wider audiences. However, for documentary films, specialty distributors rarely have the means or motive to tailor their outreach strategies to individual projects and effectively position them in the mainstream markets. Perhaps an even bigger challenge for filmmakers has been the selectivity of these institutions, which, for a long time, restricted what content reached audiences. Over the course of documentary history, there have been some attempts to circumvent these gatekeepers. Most notably, in 1962, an organisation of avant-garde filmmakers, called the New American Cinema Group, established a distribution centre called the Film-Makers' Cooperative. According to filmmaker and Cooperative member Jonas Mekas, the organisation helped set 'a new standard for film distribution on which filmmakers everywhere should insist' and it aimed to remedy the problem that 'It was always the distributor whose taste determined which films were "distributable"

and which were not' (Mekas 2005: 36-37). The organisation aimed to support avant-garde films, including documentaries, and helped to demonstrate how niche films could reach audiences through alternative means. The cooperative was unique at the time not only for its generous revenue share, offering filmmakers seventy-five percent of the profits, but also for its novel approach to rights. The Film-Makers' Cooperative neither acquired rights nor created contracts that limited where filmmakers could distribute their work. As Mekas suggests, bypassing the commercial system helped create an 'alternative dissemination system' that was suited for 'smaller, private, and community circuits of film presentation', which included 'film societies, universities and colleges, galleries, museums, clubs' (Ibid.: 38). The methods employed by the Film-Makers' Cooperative inspired similar coalitions, most notably, the London Film-Makers' Co-op, which formed several years later to facilitate grassroots filmmaking and distribution in the UK (James 1996: 198-99). These early cooperatives have helped pave the way for independents, such as Robert Greenwald, to find ways to distribute their work outside standard industry operations.

Robert Greenwald is, perhaps, the most well-known example of a documentary filmmaker who has successfully distributed his films outside the traditional industry systems. A filmmaker and activist who began his career in Hollywood in the 1970s, Greenwald has produced and directed more than fifty television movies. Yet most recently, over the last decade, he has taken the radically different avenue of self-financing, producing, and distributing his own politically liberal documentary films. After directing his first documentary feature, *Uncovered: The War on Iraq* in 2003, Greenwald founded his company Brave New Films and established a do-it-yourself infrastructure that enabled him to subsequently make and distribute *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (2004), *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005), and *Iraq For Sale: The War Profiteers* (2006) in quick succession. To overcome the limits of traditional distributors, Brave New Films developed distribution methods that relied upon the Internet to organise a coalition of supporters who work together, often for free, to expand each film's outreach to

and impact upon the broader community. These alternative methods helped establish Greenwald as a figurehead in the alternative distribution (DIY) movement within the documentary industry.

Greenwald has used the term 'alternative distribution' to describe the unique combination of house parties and Internet outreach he has used to exhibit and promote his films. Relying upon the Internet has enabled Greenwald to ensure that 'gatekeepers', or those people who award and refuse distribution for films, do not stop his films from being seen (BuzzFlash 2003). Greenwald has also extended his audience reach by removing financial barriers, enabling anyone to attend a free screening or buy a cheap DVD (for half the cost of standard retail DVDs). This strategy has helped facilitate audience gratitude and positive word of mouth; however, the economics of the model have demanded that Brave New Films operate on shoestring budgets and rely on supporters for supplementary funding. A large percentage of supporters have come via the Brave New Films website, which asks visitors to register in order to participate in online discussions. Some fans even have chosen to become paying supporters, pledging ten dollars a month to gain access to early cuts of Greenwald's latest film and behind the scenes information. When Brave New Films ran a subscription campaign in 2008, the website measured the number of paid supporters with a graphic thermometer, showing how close the company was to reaching its financial goal. This visualisation helped demonstrate both the need for and effect of audience support, as it simultaneously set a clear target and encouraged fans to donate further to achieve it. Greenwald's ability to support the operations of his production company through voluntary donations from his fans has set him apart from most other filmmakers who have experimented with alternative distribution. Though there have been other successful do-it-yourself documentary filmmakers – such as Sandi DuBowski, whose accrued list of 17,000 emails enabled him to arrange over eight hundred grassroots screenings in sixteen countries for his film *Trembling Before G-D* (2001) – prior to Robert Greenwald, no one had managed to create a self-sustaining business that operated on the scale of

Brave New Films.⁵² Greenwald has attributed his success to the 'critical treasure' of his email list, which has enabled him to communicate regularly with those who appreciate his work and has allowed him to ask for their support whenever he needs it (Greenwald 2007a).

Greenwald's campaigns for grassroots supporters and ongoing communication with his audience have been key to Brave New Films' success. Greenwald has built a fan base that believes strongly in his ideals and champions his work in various public and online spheres, organically expanding the Brave New Films network with each new film released, while reducing Greenwald's need for traditional distribution outlets. Greenwald has naturally facilitated this behaviour by creating films that target a particular group of individuals or corporations, rather than addressing broader cultural and societal issues. This 'targeted' approach has enabled Greenwald to partner with grassroots advocacy organisations, such as the democratic MoveOn.org, to incite reform. These partner organisations have used Greenwald's films as educational tools and provided free marketing outreach via massive mailing lists, fueling Greenwald's online distribution system with the publicity it needed to function effectively and affordably (Haynes 2007: 7-9). Greenwald's established coalition of supporters guarantees that as long as he creates films that meet his liberal following's needs, there will be audiences waiting to see them and, more importantly, willing to pay for them. The model that Brave New Films developed – of building a grassroots network, creating a brand, calling people to action, and facilitating direct distribution – is not easy to replicate; however, Brave New Films' example suggests that alternative approaches can work for films that have strong (political) topics and filmmaker who have strong support networks.

⁵² Information provided by Sandi DuBowski during 'Financing Docs That Cause Change' panel session at Sheffield Doc/Fest on 8 November 2007. For more information, see Sandi DuBowski's website. Available at: <http://www.filmsthatchangetheworld.com> [accessed 20 May 2011].

6.2.2 Guerrilla Freedoms and Grassroots Distribution

Well-known for his guerrilla method of documentary filmmaking, Greenwald has not only created timely political films on short schedules with virtually no budget, but he also has applied guerrilla tactics to distribute them. Greenwald often had no choice but to avert traditional distribution as his films vehemently criticised major corporations, such as Fox News and Wal-Mart, which had the power to block traditional avenues of distribution, including retail outlets and theatre chains, through boycott and legal threats. Timeliness was essential, as Greenwald needed his films to be up-to-date with current issues and therefore could not tolerate a lag in the distribution process. To ensure his films reached widespread audiences as quickly as possible, Greenwald relied upon the Internet for distribution (Boynton 2004). Greenwald's first accelerated feature documentary, *Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War*, only took four and a half months from conception to completion (Ibid.). In speaking about his films, Greenwald commented, 'The intent is to get them out while the country is still in the middle of the debate' (Weiler 2006). To produce *Iraq for Sale*, which investigates the controversy surrounding the Bush administration during the launch of the war in Iraq, Greenwald and his team had to maintain a 24-hour work schedule, a sustained sense of urgency, and a deep level of commitment to the project. Greenwald's films have served as centrepieces for larger campaigns and typically have addressed central issues of contemporary importance. In the case of *Uncovered*, which criticises the actions of the first-term Bush administration, Greenwald initially distributed the film exclusively on the Internet, using the support of strategic partnerships. For example, MoveOn.org, a liberal public policy advocacy group, encouraged its 2.2 million members to see the film and sponsored about 2,600 'house parties' on the night that *Uncovered* was released. All around the United States, people gathered to watch and discuss the film in each other's homes (Boynton 2004). This unusual exhibition construct, according to Charles Musser (2007: 16), created 'a viewing situation that was at the interface of the public and private realms, engaging and reshaping the forms of media reception'. When asked why he chose to use the Internet to distribute the film,

Greenwald said, 'This is a powerful, democratic and alternate way to get the film into peoples' hands' (BuzzFlash 2003). And for Greenwald, it has offered him the reward of every dollar earned from direct sales, with only the cost of manufacturing the DVD deducted. *Uncovered* had about 23,000 DVD orders in the first two days, all of which were mailed out from Greenwald's office in Culver City, California. It was not until the number of orders hit 100,000 that Greenwald accepted help from a commercial distributor, Cinema Libre, which took the film to Cannes and subsequently sold it globally (Boynton 2004).

Following a similar accelerated production schedule, Greenwald's second documentary, *Outfoxed*, assembled video clips from Fox News segments into a searing attack on the network. Made in secret so as to avoid the possibility of a lawsuit from Fox News that could thwart the film's distribution, the film exposes, as Greenwald views it, the way Fox News distorts its coverage to serve the conservative political agenda of the network's owner, Rupert Murdoch. Greenwald made the film, on a budget of only \$300,000, from excerpts of Fox News programming, along with interviews with former Fox employees and numerous leaked memos. These internal memos originated from an anonymous source within the Fox News network and seemed to direct its journalists to promote a pro-war agenda. One of the memos presented in *Outfoxed* commented on the United States' military siege on Falluja stating, 'It won't be long before some people start to decry the use of "excessive force"'. It then orders, 'We won't be among that group'. These memos, along with highlights from thousands of hours of news footage and first-hand testimony, expose the contradictions and biases that have saturated the Fox news programmes. Greenwald's fear that he might be issued a copyright-infringement lawsuit never materialised as Fox did little more than publicly criticise the film. As a result, *Outfoxed* helped to strongly reinforce fair use – the unwritten practice that enables filmmakers to fairly use an unlimited amount of copyrighted material to launch a critical attack against the copyright owner (Boynton 2004). It was very unlikely that a traditional distributor would have wanted to take on such a high-risk film, which is why it was essential that Greenwald had established other

means for releasing his film to the public.

Similarly controversial, Greenwald's monumental assault on the Wal-Mart corporation began with a highly publicised limited theatrical premiere in about two-dozen theatres. However, the film, *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, reached its largest audiences in the weeks following, in venues outside traditional cinemas. In speaking about the distribution strategy, Greenwald said there were 'six or seven thousand screenings of the film. Three or four of them were in theaters and all of the rest of them were in churches and schools and homes and bowling alleys and pizza parlors' (Greenwald 2007b). Greenwald's 'house party' distribution approach functions on the premise that wherever there is a television, audiences can view a film and it operates on the belief that people have a natural desire to come together, as a community, to view and discuss films. The system was not designed to maximise revenues, as only the person organising the screening had to pay anything (for *Wal-Mart* it was ten dollars per DVD). Anyone could order DVDs in bulk for five dollars and any website could earn five dollars per sale by posting a *Wal-Mart* affiliate link. For *Wal-Mart*, Greenwald began organising affiliates early on, having over 120 groups supporting the film before it had even been shot. The publicity these groups offered helped, in part, to instigate immediate sales as soon as the DVD was available for purchase (Haynes 2007). Greenwald provoked a response from Wal-Mart, which criticised both the film and filmmaker. Wal-Mart then produced a short video that claimed the *Wal-Mart* film had factual errors. The company even went to the effort to make a second film, called *Why Wal-Mart Works and Why That Makes Some People C-r-a-z-y* (2005), which addressed broader issues surrounding Wal-Mart's reputation (Barbaro 2005). Wal-Mart did have some effect on Greenwald, as the corporation's threat to ban all products distributed by any company that agreed to handle the film did effectively scare away potential distribution partners. Fortunately for Greenwald, he did not need distributors as his network of grassroots supporters helped generate direct sales of 100,000 DVD units

within the first month of release.⁵³

As Greenwald built up his list of supporters, film by film, the value of his personal following was not fully evident until he began his fourth and final feature documentary, *Iraq for Sale*. Initially needing to raise \$200,000 to start work on the film, in February 2006, Brave New Films asked people on its mailing list to give fifty dollars in exchange for special thanks in the film's credits. They needed to raise the money quickly, as the film had to be completed at least a few months prior to the November 2006 election in order for it to have the potential political effects Greenwald hoped it would. Sceptical himself, Greenwald initially wondered, 'Why would people give money for a movie they hadn't even seen yet?' Nevertheless, in a matter of ten days, the company raised all the money it needed to start (Weiler 2006). Greenwald notes that the key 'was to think at the start, from a political and from a strategic point of view, who was our audience and how do we reach them and what is the way that the film can be a tool for social change'. Before the film was even made, Brave New Films reached out to a wide variety of groups and linked to over one hundred of them on its website (Greenwald 2007a). In this experiment, Greenwald helped to establish the validity of crowdfunding, a financing model that was further popularised by the film *The Age of Stupid* (see Section 6.3).

6.2.3 Challenges for Greenwald's Model

As a consequence of Greenwald's time constraints and objectives, his films are stylistically simple, employing direct address and cause and effect logic to prompt audiences to take action and work to resolve contemporary problems in American society. Hardly cinematic, Greenwald's films have been described as 'humorless, modest-looking documentaries' (Musser 2007: 16). Scholars such as Haynes (2007: 1-2) have classified Greenwald's films as 'expository', referring to Bill Nichols' (2001) modes of documentary, while likening Greenwald to the most widely recognised of

⁵³ See the Wal-Mart movie website. Available at: http://www.walmartmovie.com/wm_sales.php [accessed 15 September 2011].

propaganda filmmakers, Michael Moore. Although Greenwald does not appear in his films like Moore does, he shares with him an 'overtly politicised' approach to documentary (Haynes 2007: 2). However, while Moore tells stories in a comical and suspenseful manner that appeals to mainstream audiences, Greenwald directly targets 'a core constituency of leftist activists' through straightforward narrations built primarily from talking head interviews. What makes Greenwald interesting to study is not so much the films he has made but rather the 'alternative' approach he has taken to make those films, using grassroots support and low-cost operations to sustain Brave New Films, without needing to reach mainstream audiences. Even if Greenwald's prolific style and outreach efforts garnered him the same level of name recognition as Moore, it is unlikely that Greenwald would ever earn the same critical acclaim, winning an Oscar and a Palme d'Or. Not purely a consequence of his simple style of filmmaking, Greenwald's limited success at festivals has been a result of him necessarily avoiding them because they delay distribution and he feels they are not important for the kind of work he does. As Greenwald has explained, 'Our mission is social change – it's not to win an Oscar, it's not to get into the most theaters possible, and it's not to gross the largest amount of money known to mankind. It's to change hearts, affect minds, and critically get people to take action' (Greenwald 2007b). Ultimately, it is precisely this kind of vision that has drawn thousands to support Greenwald's films and causes.

Always concerned with delivering a message, Greenwald has expressed that 'the film, itself, while not offering solutions, must offer hope' (Ibid.). Unlike many issue-oriented documentaries of recent years, Greenwald's films raise awareness in a way that enables people to feel that 'success is possible, that change is possible, that winning is possible' (Ibid.). It is often this sense of hope that resonates most with Greenwald's audiences and prompts them to encourage others to view his films. Greenwald has made an argument for the importance of finding the human stories associated with the issues at hand, rather than merely compiling press releases and other interesting data into a film. In expressing his desire to engage his audiences, he uses the phrase 'it's a conversation rather than a speech' to characterise his

documentary filmmaking approach (Weiler 2006). Although this conversation may begin in Greenwald's films, it does not end there. Haynes (2007: 6) has written that Greenwald's films 'do tend towards a certain lack of critical rigour in favour of what might be described as a form of muted sensationalism, which aims to provoke lively post-screening debates'. However, due to the one-sided nature of Greenwald's films, it is unlikely that many house party attendees would argue against each other, from polar positions. It is also difficult to know to what extent such alternative methods of distribution and exhibition have allowed Greenwald's films to reach beyond his base constituency. Haynes (Ibid.: 8-10) has recognised 'a surprisingly broad range of groups' have hosted screenings, however, these groups have not necessarily gathered together audiences of diverse opinions. Certainly Greenwald has raised public awareness of certain issues and his grassroots fan base has helped to mobilise audiences to spread his films to the wider public. Yet, in truth, none of Greenwald's films has truly crossed over into the mainstream and his distribution strategies have largely served to attract only those who already agreed with the liberal points of view expressed in his films. It has been Greenwald's challenge to extend the debate beyond house parties, which he has been able to do to some extent through the use of online video.

Although Greenwald has demonstrated that alternative distribution can generate enough revenue to support documentary production, and even a small production company, his methods have evolved over time and needed a small team of full-time employees and hundreds of volunteers to execute them. Greenwald still sells DVDs from his websites, but he has, at least for the moment, given up making features and instead exclusively produces short web documentaries. According to Greenwald, he and his collaborators at Brave New Films had an 'a-ha' moment after releasing a comical, short video onto YouTube. He gained this insight when, in the autumn of 2006, Brave New Films posted a short video on YouTube about Halliburton, which garnered 12,000 views within its first two days. Reflecting upon this success, Greenwald rhetorically asked, 'If you had that for a movie in two days in a theater you'd be beside yourself, right?' According to Greenwald, the success of

the short started a conversation within the company about 'whether there was an opportunity to reach more people and a diverse audience more quickly' (Krinsky 2008: 8). Greenwald has demonstrated an opportunity does exist as Brave New Films' campaign videos have collectively received more than fifty million views on the Web.⁵⁴ Only a few minutes in length, these videos spread virally through the Internet as people share them and other websites link to them; within a relatively short time frame, these 'viral videos' can reach millions of viewers. This approach not only enables Greenwald to raise audience awareness of issues but it also increases public awareness of the Brave New Films brand, as his videos often open with 'A Robert Greenwald and Brave New Films Production' and end with the slogan 'psssst ... Do Something'. It also generates financial returns through shared advertising revenues on video platforms like YouTube. With some of the films achieving more than ten million views, it seems possible that the payoff may even be enough to offset the cost of producing them. These videos can serve to supplement Brave New Films' other revenue streams, which it generates through foundation grants, partner organisations, individual donations, subscriptions, and merchandise sales (Ibid.).

More than a production and distribution company, Brave New Films is a marketing organisation that employs new media and the latest web technologies to access audiences. With a designated channel on YouTube and pages on Facebook and MySpace, Brave New Films ensures that its content reaches audiences through multiple online outlets, all of which point back to the company's homepage. Greenwald seeks to inspire discussion, enabling his followers to communicate with him and each other by posting comments on the Brave New Films website. Additionally, Brave New Films launched an initiative called Brave New Theaters, which offers free access to the software program that coordinated the house parties for Greenwald's films. Brave New Theaters functions as a virtual distributor,

⁵⁴ The total count of all Greenwald's viral videos is more than 56 million views, according to the Brave New Films' website. Available at: <http://bravenewfilms.org/about/> [accessed 15 September 2011].

allowing filmmakers to list their films on the site and then direct people to their dedicated page to sign up for screenings. Individuals wanting to attend a screening then log their zip codes on the website, and if enough people in an area express interest, the filmmaker can secure a venue and sell tickets. Labeled as ‘the world’s first people-powered movie distributor’, Brave New Theaters takes away the ‘tyranny of the middleman’ and allows filmmakers to reach audiences without having to spend money on advertisements or persuade a distributor to put their movies in cinemas (Weiler 2006). However, the problem with Brave New Theaters and the rest of Greenwald’s distribution devices is that, although they appear to be simple solutions, they rely on a massive fan following to work. From organising house parties to selling DVDs online to launching viral videos – the success of each of Greenwald’s methods depends upon substantial marketing know-how and effort on the part of hundreds, if not thousands of people. Greenwald has had the good fortune of being one of the first filmmakers to successfully use the Internet to self-distribute his work and his status as a pioneer has certainly contributed to his success. But for those filmmakers just starting out, who do not have access to a personal mailing list of thousands and the backing of an organisation with more than two million members, distribution efforts are likely to be far less rewarding. Greenwald has proven that sustainability can be achieved through alternative distribution methods, but he has also demonstrated that success in *self*-distribution relies as much upon the contribution of a community as it does upon the filmmaker’s own personal drive.

Greenwald has successfully demonstrated how it is possible to build a self-sustaining documentary enterprise by using the Internet to reach out to audiences. His activist fan base has been essential to his success, and it was Eli Pariser, of MoveOn.org, who first gave Greenwald the idea to distribute DVD copies of his movies online (Haynes 2007: 7). As Haynes (Ibid.: 8-10) has suggested, Greenwald’s ‘strategies are articulated within more or less dense networks of interaction, the mobilisation of online communities and grassroots organisations without which they make little sense and are rendered ineffective’. Greenwald’s grassroots tactics

have only worked for issue-oriented films that could attract the support of grassroots organisations and NGOs. For those films that join up with a campaign, the challenge of gathering a coalition of passionate supporters still remains a substantial hurdle to overcome. Although likely unappealing to many filmmakers, who would rather be making films than running campaigns, the prospect of building a fan base to support documentary films can no longer be considered implausible. Most certainly, as Haynes (Ibid.) has argued, Greenwald's work has been 'informed by an ethos of participation' and it is this calling to action that has made Greenwald's methods work. Greenwald has called his audience to participate through his 'Distribution Advocate' programme, which employs a 'Toolkit' to help people use social media tools to effectively disseminate video clips and information about the work Brave New Films is doing. Greenwald has involved his audience in all aspects of his business, soliciting their solutions to challenges, such as coming up with a name for the once nameless Brave New Films or determining what politicians should receive free copies of Greenwald's films. He also has relied upon his online network to provide valuable tips on stories and to film elements for his movies or special features for his DVDs, such as house party discussions. Greenwald has built a community around his company, which has enabled him to build a financially sound business model for documentary filmmaking. However, as Greenwald has noted, 'It's hard work selling on your own site because you have to reach each customer' (Weiler 2006). Yet Greenwald has expressed his optimism stating, 'Rather than put the energy into trying to convince a middleman, I put the same amount of energy into doing it myself' (Ibid.). The example that Greenwald set by charting his own distribution course has shown how alternative distribution can work. It has also demonstrated the value of campaign filmmaking and distribution and the need for innovation and sustained outreach, which are ideas further evidenced by the next case study.

6.3 *The Age of Stupid: Campaigning Through Crowdfunding*

6.3.1 Independent Origins

New media and the Internet have enabled documentary films to launch global campaigns, sustaining an even greater degree of public awareness and engagement than some Hollywood releases have managed. The instant access of the Web has enabled producers to make direct appeals to core audiences. As a result of these new online connections, documentary filmmaking has expanded into more than just a mode of storytelling but also a complex enterprise, which demands high-level fundraising, marketing, and distribution skills to produce packaged products with global audience appeal. In some ways, filmmakers, such as Robert Greenwald, have managed the process of widely distributing documentary films better than many specialty distributors have. Greenwald's example suggests that documentary distribution happens most naturally when the film's topic is an issue of critical relevance to a society, or even the world. In recent years, there has been more organisational support for these types of documentaries, which aim to engage audiences around an issue and inspire them to act. Two examples of such initiatives are Working Films, which links 'nonfiction film to cutting edge activism', and Channel 4's BRITDOC foundation, which offers funding support and helps 'broker relationships between Foundations, Charities, NGOs and Filmmakers'.⁵⁵ These organisations can relieve some of the burden for filmmakers who aspire to change the world with their films but do not know where to begin. As the documentary business has developed, strategic networks and outreach plans have become vital assets in determining a film's success. In a market that has become increasingly guided by audience demand, filmmakers who develop their films without a clear understanding of who their audiences are and how they can best reach them are

⁵⁵ See BRITDOC'S website. Available at: http://britdoc.org/real_good/ [accessed 15 September 2011]. See Working Films website. Available at: <http://www.workingfilms.org/> [accessed 15 September 2011].

seriously disadvantaged. Perhaps the best way to gain audience support is to make films that represent a cause of global significance. The filmmakers behind *The Age of Stupid* (2009) effectively built a campaign around climate change that, through mobilising the efforts of thousands, ultimately allowed their film reach the eyes of millions.

The Age of Stupid illustrates both the challenges and benefits that emerge from independently financing and distributing a documentary feature film. Although the film is largely composed of documentary footage, it is more accurately classified as a hybrid documentary due to its fictional framework. More than its style, what makes the film unique is that, unlike most theatrical documentaries that subsist on studio or broadcaster funding, *The Age of Stupid's* entire budget was gathered from private investors, who were given no editorial or administrative control over the film. Consequently, the freedom of not working under typical industry guidelines enabled the project to creatively expand, rather uncontrollably, and take more than four years to complete. Nevertheless, the time the filmmakers took to develop the film afforded them the luxury of finding its core audiences and planning grassroots distribution strategies well before the film was completed. As a result of the care the filmmakers took to establish an outreach campaign, the film has been seen by over sixty million people.⁵⁶ Despite its achievements, *The Age of Stupid* raises some questions about the potential limitations of its business model. Could the film's funding and distribution strategies work for documentaries that are not strongly issue oriented? How much was the novelty of the approach a factor in the film's popularity? Is innovation, more than filmmaking talent, now what is required for independents to stand out in the marketplace? In examining the case of *The Age of Stupid*, and the process the filmmakers took to develop and release the film, it is clear that the campaign to stop climate change was a significant factor in the film's success.

⁵⁶ According to a rolling count on the Spanner Films website, the total number of people who have watched *The Age of Stupid* is 61,944,208. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/> [accessed 15 September 2011].

The innovative methods used to produce and release *The Age of Stupid* originated from director Franny Armstrong's experience with *McLibel* (2005), a documentary about the legal actions McDonald's took to silence two people who distributed fliers about the health deficits of the franchise's fast food. When Armstrong first contacted Helene Steel and David Morris to see if she could make a film that followed them through their trials, they informed her that eight other production companies had beaten her to the story. However, after some time, Armstrong received a call from Morris who let her know that all of the other contenders had dropped out after failing to get the project commissioned, which is why Armstrong, as a first time filmmaker, was granted access and was able to cover this landmark legal trial (BBC Four 2005). Armstrong made her own attempt to get the story commissioned by broadcasters, but was turned down, like the rest, on the basis of the controversial subject matter and the fact that some broadcasters had been sued by McDonald's in the past. According to Armstrong, she consequently was 'forced to make it independently and realised the advantages of owning all the rights, controlling the distribution, having complete editorial freedom' (Armstrong and Gillett 2009). *McLibel* was first released in 1997 as a 52-minute programme, which sold to broadcasters in about eight countries. The trial, however, continued so that once the case went to the European Court of Human Rights, Armstrong re-edited the footage into an 85-minute feature, which was released on television, in cinemas, and on DVD in 2005. Armstrong has stated that by having taken an independent path, and by retaining ownership of all the rights, she has been able to distribute the film however she wanted, which has resulted in an estimated twenty-five million people seeing it (Ibid.).

Informed by the lessons she learned from *McLibel*, Armstrong started making *The Age of Stupid* in 2004 under its original title, *Crude*. The story interwove six documentary portraits from six different parts of the world to illustrate the problem of runaway climate change. In 2007, the documentary was assembled into a final cut, but Armstrong felt that the story was not powerful enough to inspire the audience to take action, so the filmmakers came up with the idea of framing the documentary

segments in a fictional future. Armstrong inserted mock-up clips (featuring herself as one of the actors) of two teenagers from the future berating the audience for the legacy they have been given. In September 2007, the filmmakers ran a test screening at the Curzon cinema in London, showing the film to an audience of financiers and crew. After receiving negative feedback from the audience, the filmmakers decided to alter the narrative device so the story was told from the perspective of their generation, fifty years later (Ibid.). In the final version, an elderly archivist survivor, played by Pete Postlethwaite, speaks to the audience from the post-apocalyptic year of 2055, using a series of video clips to demonstrate the dooming events that have led to the end of civilisation. The archivist laments the disaster and pleads with the audience to work to reverse climate change, giving the film a strong call to action that greatly appeals to environmental organisations and activists. These core audiences, which supported the film from beginning to end, helped to ensure that *The Age of Stupid* had the resources it needed to reach its completion and get widely seen. The film ultimately garnered high-profile attention in the media, largely due to the buzz generated by fans and supporters. Having a strong loyal fan base offered hope to the filmmakers and gave them the sense that, rather than having to rely exclusively on luck and others' approval to unlock opportunities, they could determine their own future in the film industry. In truth, luck and approval remain essential factors in filmmaking success; however, these qualities now are governed more democratically by thousands instead of only a few.

6.3.2 A Collaborative Effort

The Age of Stupid gained significant press, which often highlighted the unconventional approach the filmmakers used to fund the film. Rather than approaching commissioners for money, the filmmakers assembled a group of potential supporters in a room and made a direct appeal for financial support. In just one night, pitching nothing more than the broad concept, Armstrong and her producer Lizzie Gillett secured £37,000 of investment money. Ultimately, *The Age of Stupid* raised its entire £450,000 production budget through this method of

crowdfunding. Instead of securing a few large financiers, crowdfunding enables a larger population to invest smaller amounts of money in exchange for a tiny percentage of the profit. In the beginning stages of fundraising, one share of the film cost just £500 but four years later, shares sold for £5,000 each. Because of the growing reputation of the film, those pricey shares proved easier to sell than the early shares, despite representing a smaller percentage of the profits (Armstrong and Gillett 2009). Unlike the simple donations that Greenwald harvested, these investments were actually 'limited recourse debentures', or loans, that ultimately needed to be paid back should the film make enough profit to allow it. In order to pay back early investors, the film needed to earn £1 million, while those who came on board later would be paid back once the film brought in £10 million net profit. *The Age of Stupid's* website described how the system worked and provided a download of the investor's 'Letter of Agreement' for those who wanted to replicate the model. Crowdfunding made it easy for the filmmakers to continue to raise funds for the film even after it was completed, asking for donations through the website and selling some of their personal shares of the profit. Although people could form syndicates to buy shares, the amount required was still beyond the means of many supporters, so the filmmakers also accepted smaller donations – offering things such as 'a warm fuzzy feeling' and a credit on the website as rewards, rather than the prospect of financial return (Figure 6.1). During the final round of fundraising, individuals could purchase items to support *The Age of Stupid's* 'Stupid Show' webcast from the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen for as little as £2. These itemised purchases listed names, locations, and comments from those who contributed, creating a running log of supporters. The site also featured a 'cash-ometer' that measured the amount of money the film had received from its fans (Figure 6.2). Ultimately, 620 plus ordinary individuals invested and donated more than £880,000 to support the film – £450,000 for the production, £180,000 for the UK release, £220,000 for the international release, and more than £30,000 for the 'Stupid Show'. Incidentally, having hundreds of investors, as opposed to only a few, also helped with the film's outreach efforts.

Figure 6.1 *The Age of Stupid* Crowdfunding Reward Scheme

	Warm fuzzy feeling	Credit on website	Credit on film & DVD	Chance to star in film	0.25% of profits	1.25% of profits	2 tickets to Premiere	2.5% of profits
DONATE								
£20-99	✓	✓						
£100-499	✓	✓	✓					
£500+	✓	✓	✓	✓				
INVEST								
£5000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
£25,000	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
£50,000	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓

Image taken from the Spanner Films website. Available at: http://www.spannerfilms.net/crowd_funding [accessed on 13 September 2011].

Figure 6.2 *The Age of Stupid* Cash-Ometers



Image taken from *The Age of Stupid* website. Available at: <http://www.ageofstupid.net/money> [accessed on 8 March 2009].

The Age of Stupid's website explained that crowdfunding enabled the filmmakers to control three key elements: 'what the film says, who sees it, and who gets the cash'. The website stated, 'As we're making it completely independently, we don't have any Executive Producers or Money Men telling us what film we should be making, or to hurry up and finish to fit with their deadlines, or to tone it down because their advertisers won't like it.'⁵⁷ The website announced the ultimate motive was 'to help bring about the exponential change in global awareness needed to force governments to introduce legislation which cuts global carbon emissions by 60% and allows life to continue on this planet'. This lofty aim gave the filmmakers an incentive not to surrender control to a distributor who might potentially shelve the film and prohibit them from distributing it widely and freely. The freedom to determine where their film went was a key benefit that emerged from crowdfunding the film's production and distribution. Crowdfunding also offered the reward of knowing that if the film achieved the kind of success Armstrong imagined it would, the revenue would flow directly back to the filmmakers and the people who supported them instead of getting lost in the accounts of the middlemen. The film allocated forty percent of its profits to be shared among the crew and one percent to each principal character. The remaining portion was for the funders, who Gillett describes as the vital 'backbone' of support for the production. Through weekly production updates and regular correspondence, the filmmakers cultivated a close relationship with these '*Stupid* Insiders' that helped guarantee the film's success and opened up the possibility, as Gillett explains, that they could be 'ready to fund other films' (Gillett 2009). By crowdfunding their film, *The Age of Stupid* filmmakers were able to have full control of the film's destiny and maximise both the film's distribution and their own financial return.

⁵⁷ See 'Money FAQ' on Spanner Films website. Available at: http://spannerfilms.net/money_faq [accessed 15 September 2011].

Aware that they could not handle the film's distribution entirely on their own, the filmmakers adopted a hybrid distribution approach (see Section 4.4.1), forming a few strategic partnerships to help them manage the film's release. In order to penetrate the international market, the filmmakers worked with the sales agent Celluloid Dreams. Although generally happy with the arrangement (which deliberately excluded the territories of Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom and gave them a veto right for deals in the United States), Armstrong has suggested that their attempts to distribute the film as widely as possible created some problems for Celluloid Dreams and resulted in instances where they were 'treading on their toes'. According to Armstrong, 'In hindsight, it might have been better for us not to have a sales agent [...] so that we would be completely free' (Armstrong and Gillett 2009). As an illustration, Gillett cited the example of Celluloid Dreams selling exclusive rights to Canada early on, which prohibited the filmmakers from including that territory in their global theatrical release plan. In order to help organise the film's theatrical release, the filmmakers partnered with Dogwoof, a UK distributor of social issue films (Ibid.). Dogwoof used a 'Hybrid Film' distribution model for *The Age of Stupid*, designed to help filmmakers help themselves 'by partnering with them to give them direct access to professional film distribution services, whilst letting them retain the rights to their film, controlling costs, and actually having the chance of seeing revenues and profits'.⁵⁸ This statement, from a relatively new but well-regarded distributor, evidences the trend in the building of cooperative relationships between distributors and filmmakers. Many distributors have recognised that there is no longer the need to license all rights to the films they represent. A popular alternative to exclusive acquisition is to partner with filmmakers and use their involvement to encourage audience engagement and lead films to overall better financial returns.

⁵⁸ See 'About' on Dogwoof website. Available at: http://dogwoof.com/about/dogwoof_indie/ [accessed 15 September 2011].

In an effort to maximise profits and reduce costs, *The Age of Stupid* team smartly concentrated their efforts in the theatrical market on a few highly publicised limited engagements, rather than attempting a traditional, widespread theatrical run. Instead of launching a multi-week, multi-screen release, the filmmakers channeled all their efforts into special one-day event screenings. As a result, the film's UK People's Premiere set a new Guinness World Record as the largest simultaneous film screening, beaming the film to sixty-five screens. On 15 March 2009, the film screened after a live broadcast from the 'green carpet' premiere with celebrities and political figures speaking live to audiences around the country from London's Leicester Square. The film later launched its Global Premiere on 21 September, with a live event in New York featuring musical artist Moby and a satellite performance from Radiohead's Tom Yorke, among other notable guests. That US event, accompanied by European premieres the following day, streamed to seven hundred cinemas in over fifty countries and reached more than one million people.⁵⁹ Volunteers helped translate the film into more than thirty languages, ensuring that citizens of less wealthy nations could watch the film subtitled in their own language. These versions were made available for free on the Internet via The Auteurs, an online video-on-demand service (later renamed MUBI). Organising such massive events helped create a sense of community around the film. These events were successful largely due to the outreach efforts of the film's partners and fans; as Gillett describes, 'It wasn't just the film, people went along for the event' (Ibid.). The hype built around these events helped to attract press coverage and ensure that resources were used efficiently, rather than spread out over the course of a long release schedule.

The filmmakers relied upon their network of supporters to help put on their premieres and ensure that these events were well publicised and well attended. The UK premiere involved support from over one thousand people, including the 228

⁵⁹ See 'The Global Premiere' on Spanner Films website. Available at: http://www.spannerfilms.net/global_premiere [accessed 15 September 2011].

investors and 105 film crew members who, according to the producer, were all obsessive fans. Additionally, each screen had local speakers, one representing a national organisation and one representing a local organisation, from NGO partners like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. For the Global Premiere, the filmmakers relied on NGOs to assign local speakers to each cinema, promote the event in the community, and collect email addresses for *The Age of Stupid*'s mailing list. These highly publicised limited engagements made audiences aware of the film and gave them an incentive to catch its one appearance on the big screen. Once inside the cinema, audiences also were encouraged to take action to spread the word and support the climate change cause during the discussion forum that followed the screening. These one-day events were more cost-effective and environmentally friendly than traditional theatrical tours, which send filmmakers to different locations around the world to promote a release. Satellite releasing enabled the filmmakers to keep the film's carbon emissions at one percent of that of a typical Hollywood premiere. It also served to maximise the revenue return in the shortest amount of time possible, which can be beneficial for films that address timely topics. Additionally, the satellite screenings were appealing because they did not require film copies to be shipped to the cinemas. In the US, most cinemas were equipped to capture the live feed and schedule an encore screening the following week (Ibid.). After the theatrical release, the film screened on broadcast channels in a dozen countries and was released on the Web as a download or pay-per-view stream.⁶⁰

The film gained momentum in part because the filmmakers regularly provided updates via their website, releasing new publicity and details about their screenings as they happened. The environmental appeal of the premieres, coupled with the satellite release strategy, prompted a significant amount of press coverage for *The Age of Stupid*. The film's website logged over 130 positive press articles from

⁶⁰ See 'Screenings' on Spanner Films website. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/screenings> [accessed 15 September 2011].

respected news outlets such as *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *Wired*.⁶¹ To help manage the substantial amount of requests to screen the film, the filmmakers developed an online tool, called Indie Screenings, which allows individuals or organisations to license *The Age of Stupid* for public screening. The licence fee is determined by factors such as the expected size of the audience, country of exhibition, purpose of the screening, and nature of the organisation. Once the licence is paid, a loaner copy of the film is sent out and the licensee is free to show the film for one week, keeping any revenue from ticket sales. This non-theatrical licensing program also enabled organisations such as the UK Ministry of Defence, the NHS, Transport for London, and the British Council to purchase blanket licences for longer periods of time that enable them to show the film in an unlimited capacity within their organisations. UK politician John Prescott even requested a twenty-minute version of the film to show in schools (Ibid.). This distribution model has worked well for the film, resulting in more than fourteen hundred screenings and £110,000 in revenue paid directly to the filmmakers.⁶² No longer exclusive to *The Age of Stupid*, Indie Screenings enables every filmmaker to use the website to facilitate the licensing of a film. There has also been a spin-off site, affiliated with the Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation, called Good Screenings, which offers a selection of social justice documentaries for licensing.⁶³ The development of this service reduces the need for educational distributors, allowing filmmakers to directly gain revenue from screenings in schools and other public places.

⁶¹ See 'Press Reviews' on Spanner Films website. Available at: http://www.spannerfilms.net/press_reviews [accessed 15 September 2011].

⁶² The total number of screenings of *The Age of Stupid* is 1491. See Indie Screenings website. Available at: <http://indiescreenings.net/> [accessed 15 September 2011].

⁶³ See Good Screenings website. Available at: <http://www.goodscreenings.org/> [accessed 15 September 2011].

6.3.3 Carrying on the Campaign

The Age of Stupid's success hinged on a successful promotion campaign, which largely depended upon the support of its partners. Those partners, particularly NGOs, saw the film as a vehicle to spread an important message about climate change. Certainly not everyone who watched the film was an environmentalist; however, *The Age of Stupid*, perhaps somewhat naively, sought to inspire everyone to become one. When asked why she made the film, Armstrong stated, 'Either we seriously tackle climate change or we wipe out most of life on Earth. So it's not a tricky decision, as a filmmaker, to decide which subject to work on. I find it hard to understand how anyone who grasps the problem can work on anything else' (Evans 2009: 44). This do-or-die attitude is captured in the film and works to inspire those already behind the cause to campaign more rigorously for it. One simple way people have been able to help is by using the film as an educational tool. Raymond L. Bryant (2009: 2-3) argues that, while the film 'is explicitly designed to shock the human species out of its "suicidal" state of being', *The Age of Stupid* 'is most unlikely to achieve its highly ambitious aim: to effect urgent and dramatic change'. Bryant's prediction appears true when considering how *The Age of Stupid*'s massive awareness campaign leading up the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen had no positive effect on the legislative outcome. So, although the film was successful in terms of exposure and profits, it has yet to reach its campaign goals, which, ironically, helps extend the relevance and revenue potential of the film, allowing it to retain its educational value as long there are still organisations campaigning for its cause. On the other hand, the danger of strongly linking a film to an issue is that once that issue loses public interest, the film becomes largely irrelevant and dated.

Regardless of its outcome, the campaign was critical to the development of the film, establishing a common aim for the coalition of supporters and allowing the filmmakers to achieve some degree of sustainability in their craft. Having a campaign also created a significant advantage for fundraising, as the filmmakers were able to raise money even before they had found characters or developed the

story. The publicity of the film's crowdfunding success likely inspired more documentary filmmakers to attempt to raise their money independently, through crowdfunding services (see Section 4.4.2). The number of filmmakers who have raised funds this way is rapidly growing, and success seems to be easiest to achieve for those who link their films to a particular cause or controversial topic. For example, Nick Broomfield raised over thirty thousand dollars through Kickstarter to help cover distribution costs for his film *Sarah Palin: You Betcha!* (2011) (Harris 2011). However, Paul Devlin, who attempted to raise funds for his documentary *BLAST!* (2008) through the online service ArtistShare, found little patronage for his well-crafted film about a group of scientists who launch a telescope under a NASA high-altitude balloon. After several months of effort, thirty people donated a total of three thousand dollars to the project. Half of that amount came from one individual, while the others gave an average of fifty dollars each. Considering the estimated ten to twelve thousand dollars of expenses incurred from Devlin's effort, the failed crowdfunding attempt ended up costing Devlin more than seven thousand dollars. Devlin admits that he may have ruined his chances of gathering support by starting the process when the production was nearly complete (Isler 2009). However, it is possible that his film simply did not have a topic of strong enough appeal to inspire donations. Additionally, Devlin, an accomplished filmmaker who has experience in self-distribution and marketing, had to build the audience for *BLAST!* from the ground up since it shared little in common with his previous films, *SlamNation* (1998) and *Power Trip* (2003). Devlin acknowledged that the diversity of his films has likely challenged his potential crowdfunding success (Androich 2008: 18).

The success of *The Age of Stupid* indicates the potential validity of Kelly's (2008a) theory of '1000 True Fans'. Although one thousand people may not sound like a lot, it is a goal few filmmakers have achieved. The filmmakers behind *The Age of Stupid* seemingly met that target; however, there is no assurance that they could retain the full support of their largely environmentalist fan base should the topic of their next film be different. Looking beyond *The Age of Stupid* to those filmmakers like Paul Devlin who have made films without built-in campaigns or controversial

topics, it seem unlikely that they could corral one thousand loyal supporters, unless they had an established reputation comparable to the likes of Werner Herzog, Nick Broomfield, or Michael Moore. The filmmakers behind *The Age of Stupid* built their fan base through the film's website, which serves as a testimony to the substantial amount of work that was involved in raising funds for the film, making the film, and ensuring that it reached the widest possible audience.⁶⁴ To expect the same kind of success, other filmmakers must be equally ambitious, skilled, and innovative. Luck aside, innovation is perhaps the most important quality needed to ensure a film will stand out and command attention in a saturated market. Much of the recognition *The Age of Stupid* received was because of the public's perception that the filmmakers were charting a new course with their fundraising model. As much as the film's topic, the sense of newness in the methods that the filmmakers employed drew people to the project. However, the kind of fans they attracted were probably not akin to Kelly's 'true fans' as they most likely cared more about the concept of the film than the filmmakers themselves. Ultimately, the kind of supporters that *The Age of Stupid* attracted were most likely individuals who had a concern for climate change and who understood that by supporting the film, they could creatively aid the larger cause.

The Age of Stupid filmmakers seemed to have taken some lessons from Greenwald in terms of building their grassroots movement; however they channelled their efforts into producing one film in the same amount of time it took Greenwald to produce four. Like Greenwald did for his films, Armstrong and her team regularly contributed to their dedicated website with more than four hundred news updates and released various promotional media through *The Age of Stupid's* YouTube channel, Vimeo channel, Facebook page, Twitter stream, and other outlets. The Spanner Films website contains information about the evolution of *The Age of Stupid*, including personal accounts of the process of distributing the film. Like

⁶⁴ See 'Timeline' on Spanner Films website. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/timeline> [accessed 15 September 2011].

Greenwald, the filmmakers made an effort to reveal their personas online, helping to endear themselves to the public and enroll people in their cause, not just as supporters of the film but also as activists in the movement to stop climate change. Their success has been evidenced by the substantial amount of donations raised via the website, which subsequently allowed the filmmakers to expand their project and create *The 'Stupid' Show* (2009), an eight-episode webcast from the UN Summit in Copenhagen.⁶⁵ Although the Summit has passed and the film's theatrical release has ended, the filmmakers continue campaigning. They launched an initiative called 10:10, which answers the question: 'What can I do about climate change?' The campaign aimed to get everyone in the UK 'to commit to cut their emissions by 10% in 2010'. Although, more than 115,000 people have joined the cause, it failed to reach its goal of having ten percent of the UK population cut emissions by October 2010.⁶⁶ The effort to stop climate change has been unsuccessful but, by mobilising people to join the climate change cause, *The Age of Stupid* filmmakers have engaged a community that is ready to enthusiastically support any product they produce, at least within the scope of environmental topics. Ultimately, the most impressive accomplishment has not been the filmmakers' environmental impact but rather their ability to harness a massive fan base, which allowed them to make and distribute their film without going into debt.

⁶⁵ See '*The "Stupid" Show*' on Spanner Films website. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/stupid-show> [accessed 15 September 2011].

⁶⁶ See 10:10 Global. Available at: <http://www.1010global.org/uk> [accessed 15 September 2011].

6.4 *Life in a Day: YouTube's Audience Activity*

6.4.1 Big Players, Big Platform

Documentary filmmakers have always shared images of humanity with the wider world; yet only recently have they had the capacity to communicate with the wider world, through the Internet, and assemble a portrait of the planet from thousands of individual perspectives. Traditionally, nonfiction stories have adopted an outsider's perspective, maintained by the necessity of a film crew. However, digital technologies have inspired greater intimacy in documentaries, allowing recording to happen without the involvement of anyone other than the subject, who documents life from his or her own perspective. As cameras have become smaller, they have allowed filmmaking to be less intrusive, appearing almost invisible to the subjects they film. Now that video cameras have become standard features on mobile phones, people are readily equipped to document real life at a moment's notice. No place on the Web better exhibits this democratic engagement with documentary than YouTube. YouTube has changed the culture of documentary, creating windows into ordinary people's lives by offering everyone a global platform for personal expression. Although content on YouTube offers a mix of professional and amateur, it is clear that 'regular users' are the dominant force behind the video ranks and ratings. Burgess and Green (2009: 91-92) conducted a survey of YouTube videos and found that half of the content in their sample of 4320 videos was 'traditional media content', while the other half was 'user-created content', with approximately two-thirds of uploads coming from individuals not associated with organisations of any kind. Within the vast pool of user-created content is something Lange (2009: 71) calls 'videos of affinity'. Similar to video blogs, videos of affinity often have a diary post structure and 'attempt to maintain feelings of connection with potential others who identify or interpolate themselves as intended viewers of the video'. Although videos of affinity generally lack the creative approach that might characterise them as documentaries, they are important tools for documentary filmmakers to use to support their projects. Many filmmakers, including Robert Greenwald and Franny

Armstrong, have used this approach to directly communicate with their fans and motivate them to take action. For amateurs, it is a way, as Lange explains, for them 'to gain support and viewership for work that they would happily commercialize' (Ibid.: 83-84). On another level, videos of affinity can be used to offer viewers a deeper sense of connection, not only to documentaries, but also to the people who create them. Ephemeral in nature, videos of affinity have become an important means of communication and a way to inspire audiences to fund projects, on websites like Kickstarter, and submit user-generated videos to participatory projects, such as YouTube's *Life in a Day*.

In order to inspire audiences to participate in *Life in a Day*, the producers employed every means possible to promote the project and give it celebrity status. Loosely echoing the aims of the Mass Observation Archive, which documented everyday life in Britain during the 1930s to 1950s, *Life in a Day* claims to be 'the first user-generated feature-length documentary feature shot in one day' (McNary 2010). With Ridley Scott as a producer and Academy Award-winner Kevin Macdonald as the director, *Life in a Day* had instant credibility and gave novice filmmakers a genuine incentive to participate in the project – the chance for their work to be seen by important film industry figures and audiences around the world. These powerful partnerships helped increase the appeal of the project and ensure that the press gave it the attention it needed to succeed. When the project first launched, Macdonald went on a whirlwind global press tour, which included appearing on '26 US breakfast TV shows in one day via satellite' (Macdonald 2011). This aggressive publicity campaign, along with the decision to premiere the film at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, raised esteem for the project and generated substantial press coverage. When the film screened at Sundance, YouTube simultaneously streamed it online for free, around the world, as a commemorative symbol of the platform's fifth anniversary. The six-month project completion date was ambitious and the guidelines were simple: the shoot had to happen only on 24 July 2010, filmmakers had to be at least thirteen-years-old and have a YouTube account, and videos had to adhere to YouTube's Community Guidelines (Ibid.). Although YouTube users

submitted the raw footage, Macdonald served as the director, and through releasing his own videos of affinity, he instructed his international film crew to document answers to the following four questions: 'What do you love the most? What do you fear the most? What makes you laugh? What do you have in your pockets?' The top twenty contributors whose footage was chosen for the final film were offered co-director credit and a free trip to Park City for the film's premiere (Ibid.). This high profile prize prompted many people to take time out of their day to film something and donate their footage to the project.

Although the final documentary did not go public until its festival premiere in Park City, YouTube hosted pieces of the raw footage on its *Life in a Day* channel. The website was regularly updated in the run up to the premiere at Sundance, with Macdonald and his editor Joe Walker posting videos that described how the film was coming together. Directly addressing the audience, their videos of affinity gave viewers a sense not only of what the film was about but also an understanding of who was assembling the film. Another way the film was promoted was through the release of viral videos on YouTube, many of which gained hundreds of thousands of views, and through advertisements that YouTube placed on its platform. Through these measures, the team generated a significant amount of interest in the project; however, the online audience for the documentary was limited by the fact that the film was streamed only once, at the same time it premiered on 27 January 2011 at the Sundance Film Festival. The six o'clock MDT evening screening time in Park City equated to the middle of the night in other parts of the world, including in the UK where the screening began at one o'clock in the morning. It seems likely that if YouTube had time shifted the screening in some areas of the world, it could have attracted a larger online audience. However, keeping the engagement limited in this way also ensured that many people who were interested in the film missed their one opportunity to see it. To satisfy this potential demand, the film received a limited theatrical release, through the film division of National Geographic, approximately one year to the date all the footage was recorded. In the US, the film had its theatrical release on 29 July 2011 and made just over \$250,000 at the box office. To

facilitate this release, and gather demographics to help determine where the film should screen, the *Life in a Day* channel allowed visitors to request screenings in their hometowns. There was also an effort to promote these screenings by inviting viewers to participate in the marketing of the film by remixing footage from the film to create promotional trailers that could be shown at these screenings.⁶⁷

6.4.2 Inspiring the Masses

It takes a massively popular platform like YouTube to mobilise thousands of people to participate in the development of a feature documentary. To expand the project's reach, YouTube released promotional trailers in many different languages, including German, Spanish, Italian, and French. In order to gain a broader representation of humanity, the production team sent out five hundred cameras into the developing world, to cover areas where people did not have access to the Internet (Utichi 2010). They hired twenty-five multi-lingual assistants to comb through video clips, ensuring that no prime piece of footage got overlooked. The assistant editors graded each clip on a scale of one to five and sorted the clips by keywords. Ultimately, the project grew far beyond anyone's expectations and Macdonald and Walker only had time to watch the best 250 hours of a total of 4500 hours of footage, from which they assembled their favorite material into segments (Jones 2011, Macdonald 2011, Silverman 2011). As Macdonald and Walker decided on the final cut, members of the editing team had to follow up with participants to obtain the master recordings, in an effort to ensure that the finished film was of the best quality possible. Although the production costs of the project were very low, the post-production expenses were substantially greater than what is typical for a standard feature documentary. Because logging and organising the footage required the services of many paid workers, the post-production expenses increased in proportion to the number of user-generated contributions the project received. Ultimately, the more

⁶⁷ See 22 June 2011 press release. Available at: <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/fans-invited-to-participate-in-marketing-effort-for-life-in-a-day-2011-06-22> [accessed 12 September 2011].

successful the submission campaign, the more expensive the film was to make.

Life in a Day stands as the most successful crowdsourced documentary feature to date primarily because of the massive investment YouTube made to fund and support the project. On a small scale, crowdsourcing can reduce the amount of resources required to make a film, but in the case of *Life in a Day*, the huge number of submissions made the project surprisingly expensive.⁶⁸ Ultimately, the project received more than 80,000 submissions from 192 countries (Silverman 2011, Tourtellotte 2011). Prior to the Web, it would have been unthinkable to have so many people contribute video footage for a documentary. Yet video recording has become part of mainstream culture, as people, who would never consider themselves filmmakers, have gotten into the habit of filming events in their everyday lives. As digital technology is still a novelty for some and the process of recording and uploading videos is not yet ubiquitous, the full potential of these kind of collaborative filmmaking projects has not yet emerged. Clearly, *Life in a Day*, could never completely capture 'the story of a single day on earth' because it only reflects the lives of those who have access to digital technologies and who are comfortable using these tools to communicate with others. Although five hundred cameras were delivered to the developing world, the people who received these devices did not know how to use them and were not comfortable expressing themselves on video, so, as Macdonald admits, little of what was returned on the SD cards was good enough to include in the final film. In hindsight, Macdonald (2011) notes, 'My biggest regret is that we didn't send out fewer cameras – maybe 50. With them, we could have sent along film-makers who could have taught people how to use the equipment and, more crucially, how to make what we wanted.' From the start, Macdonald was never confident the project would receive enough interesting and usable footage to make a feature film. At the film premiere, he explained, 'We called it an experiment because with an experiment you can fail.' Yet, as the film

⁶⁸ Macdonald, K. (2011) Kevin Macdonald: *Life in a Day*. 5 November [presentation]. Sheffield: Sheffield Doc/Fest.

started to come together, attitudes changed and it was no longer called an 'experiment' (Tourtellotte 2011). Although Macdonald took a creative risk by getting involved with this project, the challenge of leading such a massive collaborative project rewarded him with the opportunity to explore the theme of universal connection in a way that had never before been done, and before the Web, was impossible to do. The ability to effortlessly reach out to people around the world to gather their stories is changing both the way documentaries are made and the diversity they embrace.

YouTube has helped to inspire greater diversity in documentary by giving people a space to share with the world personal videos of their lives. Without YouTube's distribution technology, a participatory film on the scale of *Life in a Day* could never have been made. Each passing year brings a greater potential for these kind of global, collaborative projects, as more people learn to use new technologies and engage in participatory media. Ultimately, the final film, cobbled together from thousands of contributions, was far greater than the sum of its individual parts. *Life in a Day* merely hints at the potential path documentary might follow in the online space. The impressive quality of much of the content within the film suggests that the Web is rife with intriguing user-generated content and goes against Keen's (2007) suggestion that there is no art within the cacophony of participatory culture. Yet, at the same time, the example of *Life in a Day* supports Keen's argument for the value of curation as it was the editorial team that really 'made' the film and it was Macdonald's vision that shaped it. The project demonstrates the value of hiring a talented director, as is evident when comparing the content on *Life in a Day*'s online matrix (Figure 6.3) with the clips featured in the completed version of the film. Unlike the poetic finished film, the fragmented footage on the website was largely unfiltered and incoherent. Clips of submitted videos were presented as thumbnails, which users could arrange in a variety of ways, including: as a sphere, matrix, geo-tagged globe, and 'heat map' showing when and where the uploads occurred. Additionally, the site allowed users to watch two videos at the same time. Although intriguing to explore, these features did not offer any meaningful insight into the

project and the online platform existed primarily as a space to browse through the footage, but did not serve to extend the film's narrative. Nevertheless, the *Life in a Day* channel has successfully appealed to viewers, who have visited over thirty-eight million times and viewed the videos uploaded to the channel almost twenty million times collectively. With more than 45,000 channel comments, the project has demonstrated its ability to engage with users and stands as one of the most successful documentaries ever released on YouTube.⁶⁹

Figure 6.3 *Life in a Day* Video Explorer

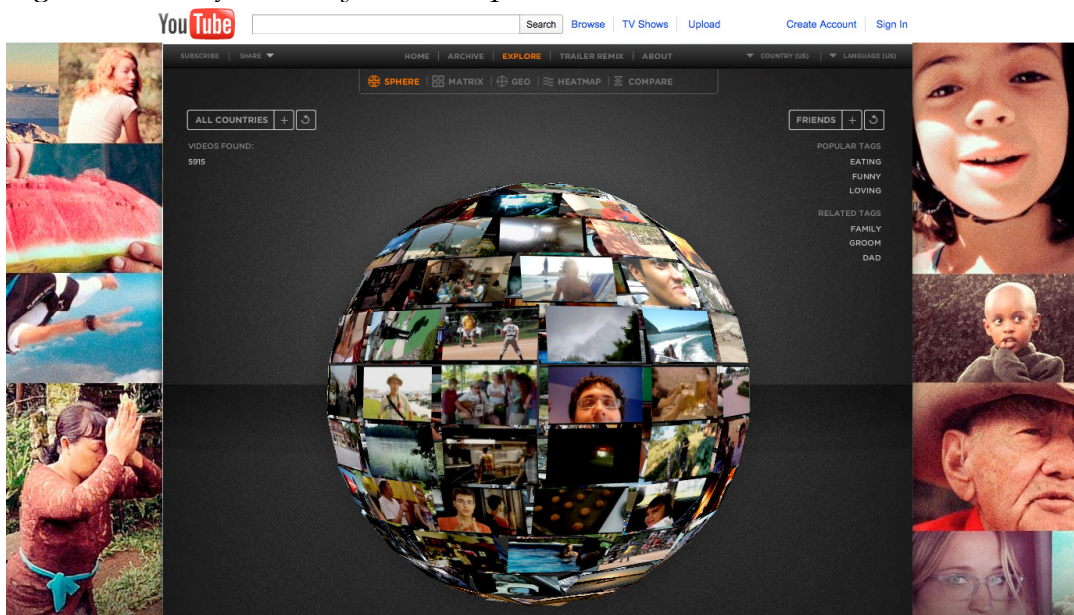


Image taken from *Life in a Day* YouTube Channel. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/lifeinaday> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

6.4.3 A Global Distribution Solution

Both *Life in a Day*'s sponsorship from YouTube and its inherent collaborative design facilitated the success of its marketing and distribution strategies. Every person who participated in the production phase had a vested interest in watching (and promoting) the finished film. Additionally, the novelty of the project significantly

⁶⁹ See *Life in a Day* YouTube channel. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/lifeinaday> [accessed 15 September 2011].

helped draw attention to it. *Life in a Day* had many attributes working to its advantage: a high profile creative team, promoted distribution on the world's most popular video platform, fully funded sponsorship from YouTube and LG, and a launch at a top international film festival. However, the high post-production costs and reliance upon novelty and celebrity to generate interest make its model difficult to successfully replicate on a non-corporate (independent) scale. In fact, a very similar, yet lesser-known collaborative documentary project called *One Day on Earth* (2011) illustrates the challenge for participatory projects that lack the kinds of funds and resources that YouTube offered *Life in a Day*. *One Day on Earth* aimed to have thousands of participants 'film over a 24 hour period' on 10 October 2010 and create 'the first truly worldwide film'.⁷⁰ Despite having partnerships with Oxfam, the American Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, and other large non-profit organisations, who encouraged their members to participate in the project, *One Day on Earth* failed to show the same level of audience engagement in its website that *Life in a Day* Channel captured on YouTube. As the producers built their own platform (which streams video from embedded Vimeo players) and invested substantial resources into developing and running it, they were limited in their capacity to market it (Figure 6.4). Although the project may have received thousands of video submissions, it was clearly far from the mark of 80,000 that *Life in a Day* set. The uploads were presented on the *One Day on Earth* website in an interactive map format, which, although reasonably functional, lacked the sophistication and aesthetic appeal apparent in *Life in a Day's* design. In addition, more than one year after the filming date, the status of the final film remained unclear on the *One Day on Earth* website, which presented the project as if it was still yet to be shot.⁷¹ Had the

⁷⁰ See *One Day on Earth* website. Available at: <http://www.onedayonearth.org/page/history-1> [accessed 15 September 2011].

⁷¹ While the *One Day on Earth* homepage clearly indicated an upcoming 11 November 2011 filming event, the outdated About/History page addressed the past project in the future tense with these words: 'Stay tuned; we need your help to make 10.10.10 something that will change the way we see the world.' Available at: <http://www.onedayonearth.org/page/history-1> [accessed 19 September 2011].

project been featured on an already established platform, such as YouTube, it might have gained greater exposure and inspired greater participation. Because YouTube already had an active audience of millions, it merely had to internally redirect its traffic to promote *Life in a Day* rather than attempt to lure users away from other online destinations. For this reason, YouTube's involvement with *Life in a Day* was key to the project's success.

Figure 6.4 *One Day on Earth* Video Archive

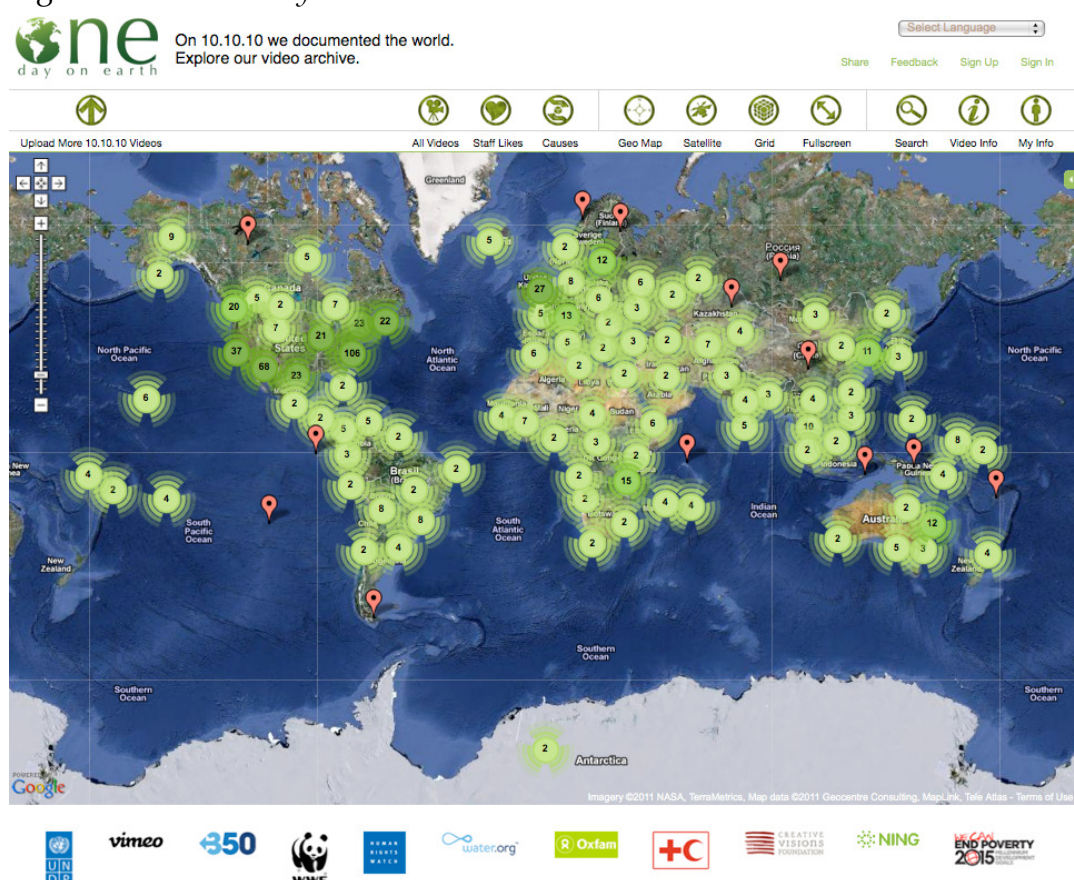


Image taken from *One Day on Earth* website. Available at: <http://archive.onedayonearth.org/index.php/videos> [accessed on 12 September 2011].

YouTube has demonstrated its capacity to draw attention to the films it promotes, yet YouTube's failure as a platform for documentary rests in its inability to fully translate those viewers into sustainable revenues. Most feature documentaries on YouTube are available for free and only earn revenue from shared advertising. The first 'widely released feature film to play in full on the site' was

Charles Ferguson's *No End In Sight* (2007), which was available to watch for free on YouTube for two months prior to the 2008 US presidential election (Kilday 2008). The documentary, originally distributed theatrically by Magnolia Pictures, gained exposure from the release but, except for a small amount of advertising revenue, the film did not gain substantial profits from its debut on YouTube. Although YouTube's business model depends on advertising revenue to generate profits, it has explored ways to extend into the VOD market. In conjunction with the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, YouTube launched an experiment that put five festival films available for rental on its platform at the price of \$3.99 each. The total amount of money made, as *The New York Times* reported, was a paltry \$10,709.16. However, it is interesting to note that the one documentary in the group, *The Cove* (2009), which was watched 1103 times, received more than twice as many views as any of the other four films (Helft 2010). Although it has immense popularity as a platform for music videos, movie clips, and user-generated content, YouTube has not yet widely inspired its users to watch (and pay for) documentary films.

As the case of Current TV suggested (Section 5.3), user-generated content rarely has commercial value. YouTube commissioned *Life in a Day* with no true intent to make money from it. As an online platform where all content has traditionally been available for free, YouTube has struggled to commercialise its massive content offering and inspire people to pay. As YouTube still relies predominantly on advertising to generate revenue, the value it offers independents is limited by the fact that its ad-revenue split with content partners has 'privileged major media companies over individual users' by putting more advertisements on professional content (Wasko and Erikson 2009: 380). Independents also must compete with content partners that can afford to pay to have their content listed in 'Promoted Videos' and 'Spotlight Videos', which then helps drive traffic to those videos and the accompanying advertisements (Ibid.: 382). As Sørenssen (2009: 144) considers, YouTube's main limitation as a distribution channel is its 'signal-to-noise ratio'. Among the 'avalanche of home brew video snippets of laughing babies, stupid dogs and an endless number of popular film and TV show emulations', how

could a feature documentary stand out enough to compete? Innovation and audience engagement brought attention to *Life in a Day* and demonstrated that YouTube can inspire its users to add value to its platform and contribute to a promotional project. However, how might documentary films that are not sponsored by YouTube benefit from distribution on its platform is a question that remains to be answered.

6.5 Conclusion

Through examining three different case studies, which together extend across a period of approximately eight years, this chapter has revealed how direct connections between filmmakers and their audiences have fostered new funding, production, and distribution models for documentary. In the case of Robert Greenwald, building a massive mailing list of fans, and outreaching to them, allowed him to sustain the operations of his production company, Brave New Films, and produce four feature documentaries. The house party model that Greenwald employed to distribute his films illustrates how, by developing a personal audience and a community of grassroots supporters, filmmakers can reduce their dependence on distributors. For Brave New Films, house parties not only inspired debate and action but also fostered a sense of common appreciation for Greenwald's work. When people gathered to watch a Greenwald documentary in someone's home, it was very unlikely that anyone arrived intending to critique it. Rather, Greenwald's films were designed to be shared and aimed to create a feeling of camaraderie and unity around a particular issue. Franny Armstrong used a similar approach to building support for her film, *The Age of Stupid*, as she focused it on the issue of climate change and gathered supporters from those who were leading this campaign. This 'good cause', along with Armstrong's passion for it, inspired people to donate over £880,000 to *The Age of Stupid*. Although over half the money was from investors, who expected some return, no one expected Armstrong to give up any editorial control over the film. Armstrong developed her relationship with her

supporters by keeping them informed via updating the film's website and sending out emails to her mailing list. The more Armstrong grew her following, the more help she had to distribute the film. For Kevin Macdonald, engaging with viewers through YouTube was the only way he could hope to achieve the high level of participation needed to ensure *Life in a Day* captured its global aim, with enough good quality video images to make a feature film. As a sponsor, YouTube was able to direct substantial attention towards this project, yet it was Macdonald's 'videos of affinity' and outreach that likely made people want to participate. By involving thousands of people in the process of filming, Macdonald also guaranteed that thousands of people were invested in the project's distribution. The word-of-mouth buzz that developed around the film cannot be accurately measured, but this hype certainly helped the film reach wider audiences. While each of these cases relied upon audience engagement for success, innovation was what distinguished them and garnered them public attention.

Although these are exceptional cases, noteworthy examples are occurring far more often now than they were just four years ago. When I started this research, few people had heard of house parties or crowdfunding or cross-platform documentary. And very few filmmakers were engaging with their audiences in the ways that Greenwald, Armstrong, and Macdonald have. Now, innovation has become a driving force in the documentary industry as filmmakers and media institutions are searching for ways to find sustainability through deeper audience involvement. These efforts have triggered the development of a new set of audience expectations and behaviours. On a basic level, audiences expect to be able to find out more about a film (and the people who created it) online. The more active viewers even hope to get in touch with those behind the story and become part of their following. Audience's drive to connect naturally varies and therefore it is hard to generalise or anticipate audience behaviour. This study has reviewed many ways filmmakers can cultivate personal connections with their audiences (see Section 4.4.2). For instance, Michael Moore has made great efforts to reach out to his fans, calling upon them for support, listening to their political gripes, and offering them information and

resources. Using social media services, including Twitter and Facebook, to communicate with fans has become increasingly less 'optional' for filmmakers who hope to break into the business or advance their careers. Those filmmakers who manage to build a following, no matter how small, have a distinct advantage over passive filmmakers who merely hope audiences will watch their films.

With the ever-growing amount of content available and the continually diminishing capacity to reach mass audiences, the ability to target niche audiences has become a valuable skill to hone. Social media tools enable filmmakers to reach groups of people with similar interests and engage them in activities that can help drive the distribution of their documentaries. The challenge, however, is that in order to gain success with these new strategies, filmmakers must have an entrepreneurial spirit and be willing to work just as hard to deliver their films to audiences as they did to make them in the first place. Undoubtedly, this is not a burden everyone is ready or willing to carry. However, the growing trend 'active audiences' suggests followers can become allies and carry some of the workload that traditionally has been managed by distributors, publicists, and sales agents. Although the case studies in this chapter demonstrate how active audiences have supported documentary and enabled distribution, none of these examples offers a scalable solution. There are valuable lessons to be learned, yet there are no default models as success inherently depends upon innovation and varies on a case-by-case basis. The unique process each filmmaker followed to engage with audiences, although highly rewarding, was also deeply taxing and required support from a wide-reaching network. It appears that many of the issues surrounding documentary distribution will be resolved by strengthening the connection between filmmakers and their audiences, yet how to successfully foster these relationships is another issue in itself.

CHAPTER 7

Documentary Distribution in the Digital Age

7.1 Distribution as a Social Phenomenon

Social media have revolutionised the distribution process. These communication tools, which facilitate collaboration and enable user-generated contributions on the Web, have given birth to participatory culture and encouraged deeper consumer engagement in all aspects of the filmmaking process. To some extent, distribution has always been social due to its affiliation with marketing, which aims to develop relationships with consumers. However, social media have brought distribution to the level of a social ‘phenomenon’ because they have opened it up to public participation, enabling consumers to add value to projects in unprecedented ways. Traditionally a one-way mechanism for delivering products to consumers, distribution has become an interactive (feedback) exchange, which is shaped by community action. Community-building is a core component of social media and it is the context in which this terminology first was used in the 1990s. Tina Sharkey, who claims to have coined the term while working at iVillage, explains, ‘It wasn’t media we were creating, it was media we were facilitating’ (Bercovici 2010).

Although the term social media did not enter the mainstream lexicon until a decade later – when applications such as blogs, wikis, and social networking sites became popular – the notion of participatory media stretches further back in time, decades before the digital age began. As discussed in the literature review, McLuhan (1962, 1964) and Enzensberger (1982) developed abstract debates that anticipated how breakthroughs in network technology would drive the media industries to become more socially oriented. McLuhan envisioned that electronic media, through facilitating the sharing of information, would bring people together in the shape of a

global village. Forecasting the rise of participatory culture, Enzensberger predicted that the distinction between producers and consumers would eventually disappear. Such general insights, although interesting to consider in the early context in which they developed, need to be refocused in order to understand how the process of documentary distribution has changed as a result of these technological trends. Although there is some truth to broad debates about the rise of networks and user-participation, the case studies in the previous two chapters have shown that the applicability of these theories varies on a case-by-case basis. Despite digital evangelists' affirmations that all films can profit from free distribution and that it is possible for any filmmaker to sustain his or her career by developing a following of a thousand true fans, the reality is only a few examples evidence these arguments. Similarly, the generalisation that distribution is becoming a social phenomenon has little meaning without probing deeper into theories about participatory culture, the long tail, free distribution, network society, etc., and identifying how they specifically work for documentary. However, the fact that there are some genuine success stories (such as those discussed in Chapter 6) indicates that the industry is moving towards solutions that could potentially generate sustainability for documentary films. This study's exploration of emerging models has uncovered evidence of two rising themes: audience engagement and innovation. These two trends represent, to some extent, how distribution has developed as a social process and why it happens differently for each film.

Digital technology and the Internet have been the enabling forces behind the growing trends for audience engagement and innovation in the distribution process. The numeric principle of digital media follows, as Manovich (2001: 31) observes, a logic of 'individual customization, rather than mass standardization'. Through networks, which Castells (1996: 470) characterises as 'open structures, able to expand without limits', the absorption of new nodes naturally leads to innovation and growth. These qualities inherent in digital and network technologies have facilitated a transformation in distribution, allowing it to grow from a generic operation to an individually tailored process. Through his exploration of 'the network society',

Castells (1996, 1997, 1998) credits networks (and the interpersonal communications they foster) with enabling cultural transformations. The ability for individuals to publicly share thoughts and form virtual communities online has given birth to participatory culture. As viewers adopt the role of users, they gain greater control. Consequently, people have begun to personalise their viewing experiences and adapt new media channels to suit their own consumption needs. This trend is a reflection of the process of convergence, which Jenkins (2006) recognises not only as a technological change but also as a sociological phenomenon. Jenkins argues, 'Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others' (Ibid.: 3). Within this 'convergence culture', distribution develops similarly – through the changing needs of consumers and person-to-person exchanges. As consumers have become more deeply engaged with media, they have become active enablers in the distribution channel, rather than merely passive receivers. The feedback and support consumers now supply means that distribution has become more than a one-way mechanism for delivering content and instead is a reciprocal activity. This idea that media consumption is a social process is not new. McLuhan (1964) suggested, in his interpretation of media as extensions of man, that all media are social. In his discussions of 'hot' and 'cool' media, McLuhan characterised the electronic age as immersive and thought about media in terms of the amount of participation they demand. The trend towards immersive media is apparent on the Web, where stories can unfold differently as a result of choices each user makes and users can build upon stories by recontextualising and potentially even expanding them (see Jenkins 2006, Lessig 2008). In this Web 2.0 environment, successful distribution relies more upon participatory culture than institutional sponsorship. Ultimately, social media tools have allowed the distribution process to grow from a one-to-many operation into a many-to-many phenomenon, which produces a highly personal consumption experience along with the possibility for users to interact and collaborate with each other. The trend for personalised media has created the need to eliminate the one-

size-fits-all approach and customise distribution methods to serve each consumer and each product.

In a networked environment such as the Web, the objective of distribution is not only to deliver a film but also to enroll audiences to participate in the process. Major online distribution platforms, like Netflix and YouTube, demonstrate this trend by offering their users a set of social features (i.e. rating, commenting, sharing, tagging, etc.), which help to more deeply engage their customers and support the needs of their communities. For filmmakers, engaging with audiences early on in the filmmaking process, even before the film is produced, can allow them to measure interest and help them understand how their films can best be released into the marketplace. Audience involvement in the early stages of a project also allows producers to gain feedback and new ideas that may, ultimately, impact the content in the final film. Furthermore, audiences can be called upon to aid in the launch and promotion of a film. By offering personal endorsements via social networking services, audiences can significantly enhance a film's visibility on the Web. Deeper involvement of audiences has allowed distribution to become a site of innovation, as consumer participation has encouraged new approaches to content production and marketing (see Section 6.4). As distribution develops as a social phenomenon, it also becomes a cause that people campaign for and a hub of community action. However, despite the apparent rise of social distribution, it is not yet clear how universally beneficial it is or how big it will become. There has been a lot of hype (and hope) surrounding emerging models and innovative examples that work to harness participatory culture, yet only a few documentaries have succeeded in this space. Interpreting the findings of this research within the conceptual framework of distributors, filmmakers, and audiences, this chapter draws conclusions out of the case studies and links them to the wider theoretical debates so as to develop the idea that distribution functions as a social phenomenon and understand what this means in the specific case of documentary.

7.2 The Changing Role of Distributors

As the Internet has expanded the media marketplace, traditional distributors have witnessed the fragmentation of their audiences and have encountered new competition from online innovators. The fall of Blockbuster and the rise of Netflix (discussed in Chapter 3) demonstrate how established industry business models have been challenged by new approaches to distribution and how all media corporations (including giants like Blockbuster) need to innovate in order to adapt to the changing economics and culture of distribution. Traditionally, distributors have responded slowly to new technologies and have, as evidence presented in Chapter 3 suggests, shown resistance to new content delivery methods that provide consumers with greater access and control (i.e. the VCR, digital downloads). This apparent reality contradicts McLuhan's (1962, 1964) technological determinist ideas, which suggest that new media naturally transform the industries and society. Evidence of inertia and resistance within the film industry demonstrates that technology alone does not have the capacity to create change – instead, visionary entrepreneurs and demanding consumers have helped the industry evolve and pushed distributors to adjust their behaviours and offer new services. The online marketplace has challenged distributors' status and profit potential not only because it provides consumers with infinite content alternatives but also because it gives consumers a platform to express their opinions. Users can now publicly rate and comment on distributors and their offerings, providing insight that, prior to the Internet, would have been transient or difficult to find. Consequently, reputation in the online environment is less a product of a distributor's established brand and more dependent upon recent users' feedback. As O'Guinn and Muñiz (2005: 269) suggest, 'Brands are social creations', which are influenced by the 'empowered consumer'. Channel 4 experienced the endangerment of its brand through FourDocs (see Section 5.2), as negative user comments on its website for nonfiction shorts discredited the platform and emphasised how Channel 4, by failing to develop FourDocs into a supportive community for new talent, did not live up to its 'world

class' reputation in documentaries.⁷² Invariably, public discourse about distribution services can influence the choices audiences and filmmakers make.⁷³ In order to retain customers, distributors have had to consider public feedback and work to increase audience engagement in their content and brand.

One way distributors have deepened audience engagement is by involving consumers in the process of curation, by enabling them to efficiently rate and filter content. Historically, curation functioned almost as a form of censorship, with a small number of decision-makers determining what the public could see, not only filtering out 'bad' content but also eliminating some 'good' content that lacked commercial appeal. The Web has changed how curation happens by allowing audiences to use social media tools and their personal networks to find the content they want to consume through a variety of sources (Gibs 2009). As the need for 'expert' content curation has diminished, distributors have had to rethink how to enhance the value of their content offerings. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Web operates on the basis of 'publish, then filter' (Shirky 2008), allowing consumers to access everything and enabling them to perform simple actions, such as tagging and rating content, to collaboratively filter and curate it. On the Web, having a platform with a limited selection of content serves neither distributors nor consumers. The case of SnagFilms (Section 5.4) evidences this point as the documentary-only platform eventually expanded its offering to include fiction films. The economics of the long tail (Anderson 2006) and the success of large media aggregators such as iTunes and Amazon suggests that the more content there is on offer, the more appealing the platform is for audiences, and the greater the chance for revenue. Although iTunes is selective, anyone can sell a film on Amazon or post a video on YouTube – evidencing that the online marketplace has become open to all. Keen (2007) argues that the loss of (gatekeeper) curation is a threat to culture. However,

⁷² See Channel 4 website. Available at: <http://www.channel4.com/info/commissioning/4producers/documentaries> [accessed 8 March 2012].

⁷³ This study made an effort to aggregate information and opinions about distributors in a collaboratively filtered, open database called the DocAgora WebPlex (see Appendix A).

his argument stands contrary to documentary, as curation has traditionally limited the availability of documentary, keeping many films out of the mainstream markets since, with the exception of public service television programmes, content has typically been curated on the basis of expected profitability. Ultimately, the Web, with its unlimited free shelf space, has greatly benefitted documentary by allowing all films to be globally available. Anderson's (2006: 5) observation that the Internet has eliminated the one-size-fits-all market and replaced it with a 'market of multitudes' suggests that in order for documentaries to succeed in this market, they must be easy to find, not only through the search engines of the Web but also on all (economically satisfying) platforms available. In order to enhance the value of their services, distributors have been developing better ways to enable consumers to find content. For example, Netflix has facilitated content discovery through its recommendation system, which suggests documentaries to those who appear to have an interest in them or related topics. Social tools on the Web function similarly and help documentaries (that are topic oriented) become easier to find and share among communities of interest. Content curation is one way distributors can differentiate their services and develop a brand (Cavanagh 2007: 122-23). Involving consumers in online curation (whether on open platforms like YouTube or selective digital retail sites like iTunes) can help distributors grow a brand community, engaging users in collaborative practices that build loyalty and co-create value (Schau et al. 2009).

Establishing business models that work in the free-for-all space of the Internet has not been an easy task and many traditional media institutions have had to reconfigure or abandon long-standing, successful distribution methods in exchange for less lucrative pursuits in a desperate attempt to capture audience attention on the Web. Traditionally, distributors' work entailed acquiring films, shopping them around to various outlets, and advertising them to audiences, whom they hoped would want to see them. On the Web, distributors have had to fill a different role, which involves engaging with audiences. Literature on the long tail and free distribution suggests that online distribution does not operate under the economic

model of scarcity. However, monetising free distribution for documentary films, as the case studies of SnagFilms (Section 5.4) and VODO (Section 5.5) have indicated, remains challenging. Content only makes money when it attracts enough audience attention to push it closer to the head of the long tail. As Kelly (2008c) suggests, Anderson's Long Tail (2006) theory only works for aggregators, who profit from selling a large number of niche items. Smaller distributors or documentaries that are self-distributed have little chance to compete with companies such as Amazon, iTunes, and Netflix (which offer significantly more choice), unless they engage audiences in their products. However, for large aggregators of content, the concern is not how to generate audience engagement for any particular film but rather how to grow user engagement in their databases. Essentially, it does not matter what films get watched as long as users stay active on the platforms. Offering the largest selection of content can attract consumers, while collaborative curation tools can give them ways to engage. Ultimately, aggregation is a bigger challenge for online distributors since customers can manage the burden of curation.

7.3 The Challenge to the Filmmaker

By removing the barriers between filmmakers and their audiences, the Web and digital technologies have morphed a once impersonal and unidirectional relationship into a two-way conversation that can be both highly authentic and mutually beneficial. Kerrigan (2010: 208-09) identifies a 'new breed of filmmaker/marketers' who have been able to use this authentic connection to create 'sustainable filmmaking'. Web 2.0 technologies empowered this 'new breed' by granting greater access to niche audiences, the ability to engage those audiences more deeply in projects, and the potential to turn consumers into fans who may support future projects – both financially and creatively. This idea, captured in Kelly's (2008a) '1000 True Fans', was mostly just a theory when Kelly first wrote about it in 2008. Kelly (2011) acknowledges that, at the time, he could only find three artists 'who might have qualified'; yet a few years later, Kelly claims he can 'point to

a whole pile of creative people who are making a good living independent of traditional media mediators, who are living directly off their fans' (Ibid.). Robert Greenwald (Section 6.2) and Franny Armstrong (Section 6.3) are two examples discussed in this thesis who suggest Kelly's theory can work for documentary filmmakers. However, in order to sufficiently reach core audiences, filmmakers must develop new skills and manage much of the distribution process themselves. As Greenwald and Armstrong have demonstrated, building personal audiences takes time and effort, requiring a fundamental understanding of how to use social media tools and a willingness to open up to strangers, critics, and the risk of failure. Many documentary filmmakers prefer to maintain anonymous identities and continue to work within traditional industry framework, pitching for commissions and not 'wasting time' with social media and marketing. The broadcast industry is structured in a way that still allows such an approach, but this is changing as audience engagement has proven to help documentary films stand out within the ever-growing long tail of content. As filmmakers develop the capacity to gauge and grow audience contributions throughout the life of their projects – from inception to delivery – they reduce their dependency on distributors and increase their chances of financial sustainability.

In the long tail of content, innovation is one way filmmakers can bring attention to their work. Over the past decade, many average films have been spotlighted due to their ability to showcase cutting-edge funding, distribution, or marketing techniques. As early as 1999, with the breakthrough success of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), the Web demonstrated how creative online marketing strategies could draw widespread attention to low-budget content. As discussed in Chapter 3, the documentary *Tarnation* (2003), produced by first-time filmmaker Jonathan Caouette on his iMac, gained international recognition for being the first no-budget feature to have a high-profile festival and theatrical run. Chapter 6 revealed how, through creative outreach methods and alternative distribution strategies, Robert Greenwald was able to build interest in his work and gain esteem within the filmmaking community – albeit more for his skills as an innovator than an artist.

Greenwald's strategy of developing campaigns around the issues featured in his documentaries helped him grow a loyal community of supporters. The situation is similar for Franny Armstrong and Lizzie Gillett, who relied upon public fascination with their successful crowdfunding technique and enthusiasm from environmentalists to help draw attention to *The Age of Stupid* (2009) – and their campaign to stop climate change. Certainly novelty and the promise of high-profile recognition helped *Life in a Day* (2011) achieve its 80,000 submissions (see Section 6.4). Innovation has proven to be a pathway towards new solutions that can help documentary films overcome their long-established struggle in the commercial markets (see Chapter 4). Although the case studies presented in Chapter 6 have shown how innovation can advantage documentaries, they have also revealed that innovation requires a significant amount of effort, and some degree of good fortune, to garner success. For each of these success stories there have been dozens of failures – documentaries that have remained unknown despite serious efforts to creatively provoke audience support. As a greater number of people consider themselves to be 'filmmakers' and produce no-budget films, the market has become oversaturated with content (Keen 2007), making it almost impossible for any 'amateur' documentary, no matter how original and compelling, to stand out from the rest. As the amount of content on the Web moves towards infinity, the challenge to tap into each person's finite amount of attention to some degree counteracts the opportunities gained. Consequently, filmmakers have had to help their own projects through the distribution process and think creatively how to engage audiences in their work from the start.

In order to ensure that their films reach audiences and generate revenues, filmmakers are increasingly having to behave like entrepreneurs. As those who have their own independent production companies must often 'invest in the development of film projects and pay their associated overhead costs at their own risk', they also must have a strategy for getting a return on this investment (Finney 2010: 208). As Chapter 4 revealed, early documentary filmmakers worked within a closed distribution system, in which media corporations funded production and managed

all aspects of the release process. Most filmmakers had no involvement and those who did, such as Robert Flaherty, did so out of necessity. Now many filmmakers are self-funding and releasing their work without the aid of distributors, via the Internet; however, this requires that they carry the burden of finding an audience for their work. Blogging, tweeting, touring, etc., are new demands placed upon the filmmaker, which are all components of the bigger challenge of building a fan following that enables sustainability. When filmmakers work to develop relationships with their audiences, distribution shifts from being a mechanism for dissemination and becomes a process of engagement. This process works best when filmmakers first identify who their core audiences are and then outreach to the existing online communities that cater to those audiences. This new breed of artist-entrepreneurs must think beyond their craft to understand how they can best deliver their work to audiences and turn audience interest into profits. Some, like Gary Hustwit (see Section 4.4.2), have done this by developing themes in their work, others, like Matt Tyrnauer (see Section 4.2.1), have wisely selected topics with preexisting fan communities. Many of these filmmakers also employ hybrid distribution models (see Section 4.4.1), which require that they split up their licensing rights and form multiple partnerships, while also facilitating self-distribution by building their online presence and leveraging communities. Although the Web has made self-distribution a low-cost operation, the need to aggressively promote and widely distribute work online means that success with this approach demands a significant amount of time. In all my discussions with independent filmmakers, I have yet to come across any who feel that self-distribution is easy to manage. In truth, most are overwhelmed by the demands of the process. Although each passing year provides more examples of profitable, independently distributed documentaries, each success is unique. There are now many services that can help to facilitate a filmmaker's pursuit of direct distribution, but there is no established one-size-fits-all model that promises a filmmaker financial sustainability. Each documentary that has substantially profited from direct distribution has been supported by elaborate publicity and outreach

campaigns. Yet the core elements of self-distribution, setting up a website and social media extensions, have become much simpler to manage in recent years, which has made self-distribution a far more appealing and common pursuit. As more filmmakers use these tools to engage with their audiences, success in distribution becomes more reliant upon strong communities than strong content.

7.4 The Influence of Active Audiences

Because of the diversity and vast quantity of online content, the Internet does not support the notion of mass audiences. Instead, niche audiences have appeared on the Web, which has led marketing and release strategies to increasingly target specific interest groups. As content consumption has become on-demand, 'empowered consumers' (Jenkins 2006: 19, 169) have gained control of the marketplace and, as a consequence, new strategies have been developed to attract and sustain consumer attention. The rise of participatory culture has inspired some media platforms (e.g. Current TV, FourDocs) to be situated around user-generated contributions. As the case studies in Chapter 5 demonstrated, the degree to which audiences participate largely determines the success or failure of these online platforms. Li and Bernoff (2008) suggest in their discussions of the 'groundswell' that people's level of participation in social media is wide ranging and only a minority of people are willing to go so far as to share their original creations on the Web. Of those who do make the effort to post their films online, most choose platforms with high visibility, like YouTube, rather than specialised sites, like FourDocs. As the example of *Life in a Day* (see Section 6.4) suggests, a large number of individuals will contribute documentary content freely when enticed by meaningful rewards, such as the chance for a free trip to the Sundance Film Festival. However, smaller rewards, such as a thousand pound payment from Current TV in exchange for the exclusive rights to a user-created video 'pod', are unlikely to incentivise people to contribute. As brand community literature suggests (Scahu et al. 2009), consumers collectively create value when they are actively engaged in

community practices. However, how to best engage consumers is a question that cannot be uniformly answered. Jenkins (2006: 169) suggests, 'Consumers [...] are asserting a right to participate in culture on their own terms, when and where they wish'. Jenkin's suggestion that online audiences cannot be controlled has been well-established through the case studies in Chapter 5; however, his notion that consumers are eager to participate in culture seems somewhat overstated in light of this evidence. Documentary rarely inspires the kind of fandom that commercial properties, such as Harry Potter or Star Wars, incite. Nevertheless, as the case studies in Chapter 6 showed, audiences will engage in documentary and support it when they feel a strong connection with its concept and creators.

Social media tools have made it easier to effectively target and engage online communities (see Section 4.4.2). This has provided an opportunity for documentary films, which, as previously established (Hardie 2002a), attract audiences based on their topics. Documentaries that are able to reach relevant online communities can benefit from word-of-mouth publicity, which spreads naturally among people who share a personal bond or common interest. As Kelly (1999) suggests, significant value can come from this spread of information; consequently, these person-to-person exchanges have become an essential part of the distribution process. As mentioned above, Web 2.0 technology's democratic nature, and immense popularity, has made it easier to outreach to communities. As audiences have fragmented in the online space, it has become increasingly necessary to tailor release strategies to suit each film by working to engage those core audiences who have matching interests. As actively engaged communities 'can be a valuable source of innovation' (Füller et al. 2008), there is an incentive to develop new models that harness participatory culture. As Kelly (2008a) suggests, audiences do not need to be large to be meaningful. Because there is no singular documentary audience (Hardie 2002a), successful distribution requires identifying a film's core audiences and developing ways to reach and engage them. Although this thesis is not a study of documentary audiences, in terms of their demographics and opinions, it necessarily includes some discussion of audience behaviour, as the new activities audiences

participate in are primarily what has moved distribution to become a social phenomenon. Although the case studies in this thesis specifically address how the Internet and digital technologies have changed the ways in which distributors (see Chapter 5) and filmmakers (see Chapter 6) approach distribution, the reality is that audience engagement has been the driving force behind new models and determining what success they achieve. Audiences have become collaborators in the distribution process and have developed deeper, and often mutually beneficial, relationships with content creators. As the Web has afforded filmmakers greater access to resources, it has concurrently given audiences greater opportunity to have hands-on involvement in large-scale creative projects (i.e. *The Age of Stupid, Life in a Day*). This kind of participation, which has been valued by many theorists (Benkler 2006, Jenkins 2006, Shirky 2008), can clearly work to the benefit of documentary films. Chapter 6's exploration of how audience involvement has influenced the ways documentary films are funded, created, distributed, and marketed, has led to the recognition of what appears to be the development of a promising new social contract, which establishes a loyal bond between artists and their audiences. In the online domain, distribution has become less defined by the mechanical processes it involves and more shaped by the social contributions of those who support it.

7.5 The Economics of Documentary

Despite the recent renaissance of nonfiction filmmaking, feature documentaries still struggle to compete for revenues in the mainstream market. When an Academy Award-winning documentary, such as *The Cove* (2009), makes in its entire theatrical run less than one-tenth of what an easily forgettable Hollywood comedy, like *Funny People* (2009), makes on its opening day, the inequalities in the market become glaringly apparent. Furthermore, of the hundreds of critically acclaimed documentaries released theatrically over the past decade, only one director has managed to consistently deliver documentaries that produce box office returns that are anywhere near the financial figures generated by unsuccessful Hollywood films.

Although Michael Moore has achieved unparalleled success, his achievements more commonly reflect documentary's new potential for financial success at the box office – at least in the US market, where documentaries have been recognised for their entertainment value. By contrast, the UK market has not experienced such a breakthrough, as documentary remains widely regarded as a television format and limited in terms of its potential revenue returns at the box office. Despite increased attention from the press, feature documentaries still retain a peripheral position in film culture and are unable to gain the kind of consumer support that mainstream fiction films possess in the retail markets. As Chapter 4 revealed, traditionally, the documentary industry has centred around the broadcast market, with broadcasters funding production costs in exchange for the right to co-produce films and show them on their channels. Commercial pressures have narrowed the market and outside of television, documentaries have had very limited opportunities to find mass audiences. As commissioning budgets have decreased, documentary filmmakers have become increasingly dependent upon revenue from other forms of distribution as a means to sustain their work. The failure of traditional distributors to adapt their business practices and successfully exploit the online market has incentivised some documentary filmmakers to explore alternative solutions, while the decentralised and nonhierarchical structure of the Web and increased public participation have changed the nature of the industry. The effects have been profound and far-reaching, resulting in documentary distribution no longer operating on a relatively simple and stable business model, funded largely by public money and heavily regulated by gatekeepers. Although it is challenged and changing, the traditional broadcast market remains, at the moment, the primary funding and distribution source for documentary films. However, the Internet appears to be where documentary distribution will happen in the future.

Documentaries have an advantage over most independent fiction films because of their innate potential to attract audiences on subject matter alone. The Web has demonstrated that subject matter can compensate for mediocre filmmaking, enabling documentaries that otherwise would never have gained the

support of a distributor to achieve millions of downloads or views (see Section 5.5). The *Steal This Film* (2006, 2007, 2009) series stands as evidence of this phenomenon, along with Robert Greenwald's productions. Generally, the more controversial or popular the issue, the greater potential for public interest in a documentary about it. Because issues are typically defined by keywords, people searching for information on the Web are able to discover films of relevance. Documentaries that are not linked to contemporary issues are disadvantaged from those that are. They still have a chance to find audiences on the Web, but they require more specialised handling and marketing to make sure their core audiences discover and appreciate them. For this reason, the theatrical market and festival screenings remain important outlets for documentaries helping to legitimise films by offering them publicity and the space to be seen. As the marketplace becomes more competitive, the kinds of documentaries that make it into these venues usually have compelling narratives and high entertainment value – often very different from the kind of public service documentaries that are shown on television. So, where will public service documentaries be seen in the digital age? Will more innovative documentaries crowd them out of the marketplace? On the Web, there is room for everything, so these kinds of films will likely see their value and visibility extended as they are made continually available through the platforms of the broadcasters who funded them in the first place. Yet broadcasters' approach to 'educational' documentaries is likely to change as they will need to work to deepen public engagement in this content to justify spending public funds on it.

Documentary on the Web exists in a variety of forms; therefore, in order to investigate online distribution models, it has been essential to expand the discussion beyond just the classic feature format. The case studies in the previous two chapters have included nonfiction shorts, user-generated news programmes, campaign feature films, viral videos, a hybrid documentary, and a collaborative cross-platform project. All of these various forms are unlikely to fit together within a narrow academic understanding of documentary; yet they all qualify for this study's fluid definition, which declared that anything commonly called documentary would be

considered as such. This diversification of documentary suggests that its economic models are changing. However, as the online market is still developing, it is too soon to identify how exactly these new models will be structured. So far it seems that every financially successful documentary film has employed different strategies, which implies that the case studies discussed in this thesis are one-offs. However, some general trends are apparent. More documentaries are being made, but for much smaller amounts of money. What this also indicates is a rise in the number of personal projects, which people are funding with their own resources (or through crowdfunding) rather than through pitching and securing broadcast commissions. As this kind of public engagement in documentary creation has grown, so has the diversity of the form. Documentary has expanded so much, both in terms of content and availability, that it seems inappropriate to continue describing it with the word 'niche'. However, documentary's inability to generate revenues in the mainstream markets suggests it has not fully gained commercial status. Documentaries are still commonly distributed for free, which allows them to reach the widest possible audience, even though this approach may not return the greatest financial rewards. Nevertheless, 'free' models can enable sustainability, as long as the production costs are covered up front (via sponsorship, crowdfunding, etc.). One way to keep costs low is to produce short form content, which appears to be a trend in online distribution. Ultimately, the vast expansion of documentary suggests that there will never be a singular economic model that universally supports it.

7.6 Conclusion

The fundamental challenges for documentary in the digital age stem from the global shift towards democratised media. The once elite media distributors have lost control of the market while content producers have gained more bargaining power, no longer completely dependent upon institutions' resources to fund production or their endorsements to facilitate distribution. As costs have declined, documentary producers have been able to independently finance, distribute, and market their

own projects. The benefit of more people being able to participate in the creation and dissemination of documentary is counterbalanced by the challenges of an oversaturated marketplace. Despite all the opportunities, it remains a perpetual challenge for independents to gain access to the resources needed to promote their work and sustain their careers. The failure of traditional distributors to adapt and cater to the changing demands of the market has prompted many content creators and startup companies to develop independent distribution solutions. For the most part, filmmakers have been working and innovating on their own, but social media tools have helped them develop community support. The growing number of successful self-distribution and crowdfunding examples suggests that eventually, more filmmakers will have the capacity to distribute their films directly to their audiences and generate revenues in the process. Whatever form the new online business models take, they will benefit from harnessing the social contract that is developing between filmmakers and their fans. Ultimately, success in documentary distribution appears to be linked to a film's ability to connect early with its core audiences and gain online communities' support. Through this process, distribution become far more than just a consumption mechanism.

This thesis has shown how documentary distribution has developed in relation to participatory media trends. Simply screening documentaries on television no longer offers the promise that viewers will show up to watch them. As people have moved away from their television sets and into the online space, documentary has abandoned part of its 'traditional' audience, in particular, those people who choose to watch documentaries only when they come across them. Unlike documentary fans, willing to search for films online, these less passionate documentary audiences could disintegrate once immersed in the on-demand culture of the Web. Compared to television, which provides a relatively confined exhibition space, the infinite Web offers little chance that users will discover documentaries accidentally and choose to stop what they are doing to watch them. Therefore, distributors are increasingly having to find ways to put documentaries in front of audiences and engage users in their platforms. Although not all distributors employ

social media, using online tools to involve audiences in activities (such as curation) can create value not only for distributors but also for the films they offer and the online communities they serve. For filmmakers, the original prescription of securing a commission, making the documentary, playing it at festivals, then gaining a singular distribution deal, which culminates in a domestic television release, is no longer, and arguably never was, the ideal scenario. New approaches, which use social media tools to target online communities and build personal followings, have given filmmakers an opportunity to develop lasting and supportive relationships with their audiences. For audiences, social media tools have afforded greater opportunities to participate in the filmmaking process by enabling users to offer projects funding, feedback, promotion, and even content. As audiences engage more deeply with documentary, documentary becomes more of an experience to have than a product to consume. As distribution develops as a social phenomenon, it becomes embedded in the filmmaking process and has a much greater impact upon the ways in which documentaries develop, the forms they take, and how they are received.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Our future business will be conducted in a world made more of verbs than nouns.
– John Perry Barlow, *The Economy of Ideas* (1994)

8.1 Research Review

This thesis has explored how the economics and culture of documentary distribution have developed in the digital age by reviewing new approaches that utilise the Web and social media. To properly assess the research findings, it has been essential to consider the history of distribution so as to illustrate how quickly and profoundly the digital revolution has transformed the documentary market. To establish an appropriate theoretical framework, it has been necessary to look beyond the field of documentary studies, which has produced little knowledge on this topic, and consider how new media theory might inform academic understanding of documentary distribution. Subsequently, this has led to considering how knowledge of documentary distribution might contribute to new media debates. This research has shown how digital technologies and the Internet have created challenges for the traditional media industries, requiring that media institutions reinvent existing business models and reform their hierarchical structures in order to remain relevant in a democratised online marketplace. Nevertheless, my arguments have not gone so far as to suggest that traditional distributors can no longer provide value. Rather, this thesis has evidenced how the entire documentary industry, from distributors to filmmakers to audiences, can cooperatively drive distribution through social media. This final chapter summarises the ideas and arguments expressed throughout the narrative of this thesis, drawing some final conclusions about how documentary culture and consumption have developed in the context of ‘social’ distribution – and why advancing knowledge in this space is important.

Providing a foundation for this exploration, Chapter 1 introduced the topic of documentary by first establishing its definition and status as a genre. The discussion of relevant texts, in both the areas of documentary and new media, identified which writers most significantly informed this study. This literature review indicated that no substantial academic work had been published on the topic of distribution that examined the overlap between these two fields. It also established that in trying to develop knowledge in this space, it was necessary to consider literature that looks at the developing culture on the Web and how audiences are becoming more active. After posing the central research question – how have the economics and culture of documentary distribution developed in the digital age? – the scope of this thesis was narrowed to focus primarily on distribution over the past decade within the US and UK territories. It was then explained that this thesis would concentrate on feature documentaries (rather than television documentary programmes) and provide some discussion of new media documentary within the context of online distribution platforms. Before beginning the primary investigation, it was deemed necessary to explain and justify the methodology employed.

Chapter 2 began discussions of the research methods by identifying the challenges inherent in this particular study and the need for an exploratory approach. The dynamic nature of distribution and the lack of transparency in the industry required that information be gathered from a variety of sources and cross-checked to establish the reliability of the data. Quantitative methods were used to investigate the theatrical market for documentary, while qualitative methods were employed to develop the case studies and the research conclusions. Desk research, which utilised online tools and information, was complemented by field research, which involved participant observation and interviews. Some discussion of action research was also included in this chapter, so as to introduce and explain the work carried out on the DocAgora WebPlex (see Appendix A). The chapter concluded with a discussion of the case study approach, including: why each case study was selected, what sources of data were used, and how this information was critically interpreted. Ultimately, by establishing the level of care taken to identify reliable

sources and triangulate information, this methodology chapter offered reassurance that personal bias and industry 'spin' were vetted from this thesis.

Addressing the origins and development of the digital revolution, Chapter 3 offered a historical overview of the rise of digital and explored how key innovations have shaped the film industry. Using vignette and snapshot examples, this historical account illuminated how digital media and the Web have helped to create a wider space in the market for independent films. Conversely, Hollywood has suffered from the collapse of release windows as studios have lost some ability to exploit the lucrative DVD market due to the Internet's development as a delivery platform and audiences' growing desire for on-demand media. For independents, online platforms have offered the benefit of economical means of delivery along with the opportunity (and need) for filmmakers to more deeply engage with audiences. By exploring the development of the digital revolution within the context of the wider film industry, this chapter established the necessary background for considering how these changes have specifically affected the documentary market.

Building upon the background of the digital revolution, Chapter 4 made sense of the apparent growth in the documentary market by first establishing the origins of the industry. This historical review focused on documentary's modes of exhibition and delivery, exploring its traditional status as a niche genre and the unique challenges it faced in its efforts to reach audiences. This chronology charted the growth of documentary and created a framework for examining the recent 'documentary boom' in the theatrical market. Further investigation showed those who have documented this 'boom' have also amplified it, as two decades of US box office data (which were independently gathered and analysed) showed that theatrical releasing has remained an unlikely and unprofitable distribution option for documentary. Although other avenues (such as non-theatrical releasing and festivals) can lead documentaries to the big screen, these approaches are similarly limited by competition between films for time and space. Arguably more opportunities exist for documentaries in both the educational and home video markets, but television still stands as documentary's most reliable source of income.

Yet funding cuts and audience fragmentation have pushed the broadcast market towards a crisis point, which has diminished broadcasters' financial support for documentary films and prompted the development of cross-platform distribution solutions that aim to capture audience attention and monetise online engagement. Filmmakers have looked for sustainability through developing direct connections with individuals (via self-distribution and crowdfunding) and by strategically working to target core communities. Although the documentary market has experienced much growth, it has not universally profited from the opportunities for expansion.

Exploring how online business models operate, Chapter 5 considered four examples of broadcasters and distributors of documentary content that have incorporated the Web into their designs and aimed to sustain their operations through deeper audience engagement. Through these case studies, each platform was assessed in terms of its ability to engage users and succeed in its intended aims. The first case study, on Channel 4's FourDocs, showed how the platform failed to cultivate enthusiasm and exposure for user-generated short documentaries by succumbing to commercial pressures and neglecting its online community. In the case of Current TV, its cross-platform model for user-generated documentary content made it difficult for the network to ensure high-quality content, large audiences, and profitability. Examining SnagFilms revealed how the financial limits of using an ad-funded model to generate revenue for documentary films demanded that the distributor expand both its partnerships and content offering. Finally, the case study of VODO suggested how a model that relied upon peer-to-peer networks to facilitate free distribution and users to submit voluntary payments was unlikely to work without the reinforcement of a new social contract, which compelled 'pirates' to become patrons. All of these examples suggested that, despite developing innovative approaches, online platforms have struggled to commercialise documentary and inspire audience engagement in the free, on-demand culture of the Web.

Also employing a case study structure, Chapter 6 explored three filmmaker examples to understand how fan communities could be used to support the financing, production, and distribution of documentaries. In the case of Robert Greenwald, who managed to successfully self-distribute four feature documentaries, it was argued that a coalition of loyal supporters could carry out many of the functions of a distributor. For *The Age of Stupid* (2009), Franny Armstrong and Lizzie Gillett demonstrated how they could raise £880,000 from supporters to fund their film about runaway climate change and spread its campaign to cinemas and audiences around the world. In the final example, Kevin Macdonald relied upon corporate support and his own star power to entice members of the YouTube community to help him 'direct' the feature documentary *Life in a Day* (2011), which was produced from over 80,000 clips of user-uploaded documentary footage – all shot on the same day. Although these examples provided insight into how filmmakers can benefit from developing relationships with their audiences, they have not offered scalable models. Nevertheless, they reinforce the idea that innovation and audience engagement may lead to greater opportunities for sustainability in the future.

Drawing from the findings in the case studies, Chapter 7 considered how distributors, filmmakers, audiences, and documentary were responding to the apparent trend in 'social' distribution. The concept that distribution has become a social phenomenon was developed through examining these elements and suggesting that the industry is changing in ways that have led to a loss of control for distributors, a greater burden placed upon the filmmaker, and increased participation from audiences. As a consequence of the development of on-demand media and interactive possibilities offered by Web 2.0 technology, audience engagement has become a core part of the distribution process. In conjunction with these changes, public contribution to documentary creation has expanded and consumers have started to get involved from the onset of projects. Although profitable economic models have not fully materialised, evidence suggests that value can be gained when distribution becomes a cause that communities support.

Through the course of this study, I have carved out an understanding of documentary's position in the developing online space, despite an absence of literature on this topic. By examining emerging distribution models within both the US and UK markets, and pulling together data from a wide range of sources (including information gathered from experts in the field), I have been able to consider what distribution mechanisms have worked in the past and then explore how digital technology and the Web have helped documentary grow and develop in the present marketplace. This thesis has offered insight into documentary's marginal presence in the theatrical market and its increasingly pervasive position on the Web. By examining documentary outside of television, I have demonstrated the scope and significance of its expansion onto other platforms. This research has helped to fill a gap in documentary studies (which have traditionally viewed documentary as a television format) by building a more complete understanding of documentary's political economy and its capacity to engage with wider audiences through other platforms. It is important to consider how documentary can appeal to audiences in networked environments as this is the path it must take to achieve economic sustainability in the future. Ultimately, understanding how documentary distribution can be community-driven provides insight into how its economic models are developing and how its culture is becoming more participatory.

8.2 The Value of Distribution Knowledge

As distribution has become more socially driven, it has gained greater theoretical significance and subsequently has become more important to understand. The more academics study distribution and discuss it in their work, the easier it is to recognise how relevant distribution is to traditional debates in film studies. Julia Knight (2007: 25) observes, 'The fact that this area of scholarship has been developing indicates that the influential role the distribution link plays in shaping our film culture – determining what we as audiences get to see – is now more widely acknowledged.' Online distribution deserves to be studied as much as traditional modes, such as

television and cinema, not only because of its pervasiveness but also because of its process, which calls for new forms of audience engagement. Understanding distribution in this networked environment requires viewing it as more than a mechanical process. It demands studying the roles distributors, filmmakers, and audiences play as they interact with one another and collaborate in the social setting that now surrounds the process that commonly has been defined as 'distribution'. These social activities that develop around films on the Web drive distribution and, in effect, shape film culture and industry economics. According to Janet Wasko (2004: 227), studying the political economy of film requires understanding 'motion pictures as commodities produced and distributed within a capitalist industrial structure'. As this research has suggested, distributing documentaries is different from distributing Hollywood films and even other independent films. The distribution process is unique to each film; therefore, it is essential to study documentary (and its specific cases) in isolation in order to gain an accurate view of its political economy. The commissioning crisis and rising competition in the broadcast market have pushed documentaries away from their traditional sponsorship models, while the Internet has granted them instant entry into a worldwide, commercial arena. Digital technology and the Internet have taken films that were largely inaccessible to audiences (beyond a few scheduled screenings on television and in art house cinemas) and made them immediately watchable by anyone, anywhere in the wired world. Now that documentaries are widely available and consumed within a social context, they must be studied differently. Because very little has been written about the economics of documentary and its process of distribution, this thesis has contributed novel insights, which have suggested the need to look beyond film texts and consider how documentaries are produced and consumed.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this research has examined current documentary distribution methods by comparing them to past models, while also looking for 'crude prototypes of what is to come' (Jenkins 2004: 253). This approach made it likely to study attempts that failed. Consequently, although it was not an intended

aim, this thesis has shown how innovation does not always work. The failures discussed in this thesis suggest that testing new methods is how distributors remain competitive and filmmakers find sustainability for their work, and yet innovation is no guarantee for success. Innovation may bring attention, but it does not always bring an audience or profits. My own experience with the failure of innovation, through the work I put into developing the WebPlex (see Appendix A), taught me that, for any project or service, success in the online marketplace hinges on community support. Services like MovieLink and CinemaNow failed where YouTube succeeded because YouTube better served audiences' needs, while MovieLink and CinemaNow catered to studio interests. History shows that many distributors have gone out of business because they failed to adapt and cater to consumer demand. When success is achieved through innovation, such as Greenwald and Armstrong's experiments with crowdfunding, the industry commonly responds by creating services that help to streamline and replicate these approaches, for example, by building crowdfunding websites. The fact that some documentaries have achieved success through alternative models suggests that the industry as a whole is moving closer to finding workable solutions.

This research has stressed that, in order to develop an accurate understanding of distribution, it is important to focus on the details and examine specific cases. The themes that this research has developed have been important, but the real value of this study comes from taking these themes and finding more specific applications for them. As Jenkins (2004: 248) suggests, 'Digital theory is responding to the process of change, describing and analyzing a medium (or cluster of media) still being born.' Because the process of distribution is continually evolving, it cannot be easily generalised. Consequently, it is more useful to have multiple theories of new media rather than overarching ones. So as academics begin to study distribution, the best approach is a focused one, which considers how distribution works for particular films and genres and contextualises those observations within the broader historical development. This has been the approach this study has taken to develop the idea that distribution has become a social phenomenon, which social media tools have

enabled and communities have driven. By examining the case of documentary, I have not suggested another grand theory of new media but rather given nuance to existing new media debates. Ultimately, the question of how have digital technologies influenced the economics and culture documentary distribution stretches far beyond consideration of how the industry mechanisms have changed or what new platforms have emerged. The growing participation of audiences, across the entire filmmaking process (through funding, creation, promotion, etc.), calls for a more developed understanding of documentary as a genre and its unique capacity to engage audiences.

8.3 Documentary Changes and Challenges

Throughout history, documentary has endured challenges and adapted to opportunities in the marketplace. In the early days, documentary's only chance to be seen was on the big screen. Television created a new exhibition space for documentary and (more in the UK than in the US) provided a reliable source of funding to support its production. Although the emergence of the home video market in the 1980s and the addition of the DVD format in the 1990s offered documentary the possibility for wider and more commercial distribution, the major breakthrough in the documentary marketplace happened within the last decade, when the Internet developed as a film distribution platform. The distribution barriers Flaherty faced – when, despite his targeted outreach efforts, he failed to persuade Paramount to support *Moana's* (1926) general release – no longer remain challenges to overcome in the digital age. Instead, in the online environment, documentary distribution does not depend upon studio approval but rather community engagement. As traditional distributors have been disintermediated and some of the creative process has been delocalised towards the public, documentaries have become increasingly supported by participatory culture. Rooted in the real world, documentaries have the potential to inspire powerful connections with and within the audiences they reach. Documentaries involve ordinary people (not actors)

in their stories, which naturally creates an opportunity for public engagement. As the Social Web has developed, there has been a surge in user-generated documentaries, as witnessed both in the assemblage of *Life in a Day* (2011) and the popularity of YouTube as a nonfiction viewing platform. Because those who produce documentaries now have the capacity to develop meaningful direct relationships with those who consume documentaries, the genre has taken steps beyond its nonfiction narratives to become, in many instances, a social experience. Through these new cooperative paradigms distribution has grown to be something far greater than an act of releasing content or an element of commerce – it has become as a site of innovation and public engagement.

As digital technology's simplification of the filmmaking process has enabled documentary to grow into a more collaborative enterprise, it has also prompted a return to a more artisanal approach. Individuals now experiment with and manage the entire filmmaking process. As more people engage with documentary, and as technology enables new modes of engagement, experiencing the 'creative treatment of actuality' has become a process far more creative and lively than Grierson could ever have imagined. As the term has gone from being an adjective, like Grierson first used it, and developed past its commonly understood status as a noun, 'documentary' in the digital age has become almost a verb, symbolising action. As more people become involved in the process of making documentary, through recording and sharing their own stories, new debates about documentary ideology emerge. As the documentary form becomes more fragmented and diverse, so does its definition. Expressions of reality from unconventional artists extend beyond form and platform, no longer confined to television screens, or rare theatrical runs, but, rather, surface subtly on the Web or come to life through organised campaigns and interactive extensions of story. As a consequence, the accompanying elements (whether web series, user-generated content sites, mobile application, etc.) have the potential to extend the appeal of documentaries to audiences they traditionally have not reached. Because anyone with access to basic equipment can make a documentary and exhibit it for the world to see, digital technology and the Web

have helped to enhance the cultural diversity of documentary.

Although the absence of gatekeepers has allowed more documentaries to enter the marketplace, it has also made it harder to draw attention to any one film. One solution may be that documentary will embody new forms online. This trend is already apparent in the rise of short form content on the Web. Although there is not space in this thesis to fully debate how digital has impacted upon documentary form, it is worth briefly mentioning the remarkable development of cross-media. As media have evolved into multimedia, every element has become capable of having multiple extensions in the forms of blogs, wikis, social networking pages, video clips, etc. Non-professionals and enthusiasts, more than filmmakers or marketers, commonly are responsible for developing these elements. The multi-layered convergence culture that Jenkins (2006) describes is evident when films are linked to these other elements, deeply interconnecting online content and communities in such a way that reshapes and redefines them both. As Jenkins (2007) observes, 'We now live in a world where every story, image, sound, idea, brand, and relationship will play itself out across all possible media platforms.' Because the online delivery medium removes the narrative boundaries of content, consumers can selectively determine how stories unfold and more deeply engage with them. Ultimately, the shift towards immersive media suggests that audiences can be brought into the process at an earlier stage and can be enticed to stay with projects for a much longer time. Cross-media projects demonstrate how consumers have come to experience distribution differently – as it has evolved from a sales operation into a social exchange that adds value to and shapes the end product.

8.4 Directions for Further Research

While this thesis has developed knowledge of documentary distribution, it has necessarily bypassed some issues and concepts in an effort to streamline the narrative and build a cohesive argument. Consequently, there are a number of elements, which have been deliberately overlooked, that would be worthwhile to

explore. Although the topic of piracy has been touched upon in the case studies (Section 5.5), consideration of documentary's intellectual property issues deserves a separate study. Research could be done to explore how copyright influences documentary's capacity to reach and engage with wider audiences. As documentary films have begun to include media from a wider range of sources, the rights to fair use (US) and fair dealing (UK) need to be better understood. Although this thesis offers insight in the US and UK markets, a study that more specifically compares and contrasts these two industries and evaluates their significance on a global scale would further develop knowledge of documentary's political economy. In addition, investigation into how documentaries are distributed in other territories could provide more insight into the developing international marketplace and the efforts needed to sustain each industry within it. Further research also is needed to understand how public service documentaries can remain relevant on the Web and the cultural effects that have developed as a result of broadcasters moving their content online. In general, there is a need for more case studies that examine profitable platforms for on-demand content and filmmakers who have generated revenues through self-distribution and crowdfunding. When I started my research, there were only a few examples of filmmakers who had explored alternative modes of funding and distribution and Robert Greenwald was always the first name mentioned. Many more filmmakers have entered this space; consequently, it would be useful to consider additional cases in order to develop the understanding of how alternative approaches are working to deepen audience engagement and expand documentary distribution. Such research could build upon the theoretical foundation established in this thesis by specifically exploring the developing social contract between filmmakers and their audiences and how this personal connection influences the ways in which films are brought to market. Without being overly speculative, it is reasonable to say that the future of documentary lies in online distribution. However, how to best generate revenue in this emerging market still remains an unknown. Ongoing analysis that examines how the business models and marketing strategies are developing in this space would be useful. The findings in

this thesis could serve to support such studies.

8.5 Closing Thoughts

Before the Internet, there was no public involvement in the filmmaking process, beyond such simple activities as tuning in to the television channel, buying a DVD, or purchasing a cinema ticket. Over the last decade, people have developed from being passive consumers and adopted more active roles in the consumption process, making distribution a more interactive process. Mainstream online distributors (e.g. YouTube, Netflix) now see users' participation as a key component of their business strategies, effectively aiming to build online brand communities around their content. They therefore promote social interactions on their websites, including enabling user profiles, blog posts, feedback, ratings, and ad-hoc social activities. These activities create value, growing distributors' websites with new content and helping to organise their content databases. Through leveraging online communities, filmmakers can help maximise their chances of success by measuring interest and gauging the potential audience for a given project. As more evidence suggests that it is possible to independently fund and distribute films, more filmmakers are testing these alternative models in their efforts to grow and sustain their careers. Despite the impending collapse of the broadcast commissioning model, which has historically stood as the primary method for funding and distributing nonfiction films, the number of documentaries produced year-on-year has grown. Resourceful filmmakers, like Robert Greenwald, have taken advantage of new digital technologies and made films on shoestring budgets. As Anderson (2006), Kelly (2008a), and others have suggested, lower production costs combined with free distribution means that filmmakers no longer need to generate a high volume of sales in order to cover their costs. Yet successful self-distribution is not only a product of having access to a database of thousands of contacts. To generate revenue via the Web, audiences must be deeply engaged. As the case studies in this thesis have shown, distribution strategies for documentary vary in relation to each

film's core audiences and how deeply engaged those individuals are in the project. Ultimately, distribution in the digital age does not exist as a simple, replicable model but rather unfolds as a dynamic process that has to be constantly tried and innovated.

Reference List

Works Cited

- Acland, C. (2008) Theatrical exhibition: accelerated cinema. In: McDonald, P. and Wasko, J. (eds.) *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 82-105.
- Acohido, B. (2005) Tech turns average Joes into mini-Spielbergs. *USA Today*. Available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/educate/college/careers/entrepreneurship/articles/20050410.htm> [accessed 23 May 2011].
- Aitken, I. (1998) *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Albiniak, P. (2011) TV grows in importance for docs: nonfiction filmmakers in feverish fight for auds. *Variety*. Available at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118033940> [accessed 28 March 2011].
- Amel, A. (2011) Apple iTunes remains dominant in US online movies in 2010, despite competitors' inroads. *IHS Screen Digest*. Available at: <http://www.isuppli.com/Media-Research/News/Pages/Apple-iTunes-Remains-Dominant-in-US-Online-Movies-in-2010-Despite-Competitors-Inroads.aspx> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Anderson, C. (2004) The Long Tail. *Wired*. Available at: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Anderson, C. (2006) *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*. New York: Hyperion.
- Anderson, C. (2008) Free! Why \$0.00 is the future of business. *Wired*. Available at: http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff_free?currentPage=all [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Anderson, C. (2009) *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*. London: Random House.
- Anderson, J. (2011) Docs find new auds on Internet TV. *Variety*. Available at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118033357> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Androich, A. (2008) POV: net funds. *Realscreen*, 11(4), 18.
- Ansen, D. (2008) How much did 'Taxi to the Dark Side' earn at the American box office? *Newsweek*. Available at: <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/06/28/how-much-did-taxi-to-the-dark-side-earn-at-the-american-box-office.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Appleyard, B. (2008) Rolling Stones: 'Shine a Light'. *The Times*. Available at: http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/article3365427.ece [accessed 29 June 2011].

- Arango, T. (2009) Sony to offer hit movie on Internet TV, then DVD. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/business/media/10sony.html> [accessed 10 November 2009].
- Ariño, M. (2007) Content regulation and new media: a case study of online video portals. *Communications & Strategies*, 66(Q2), 115-35.
- Armstrong, F. and Gillett, L. (2009) Distribution Case Study: 'The Age of Stupid'. *The Cross-Media Film Forum*. 14 October [presentation]. BFI London Film Festival. London: Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://blip.tv/file/2830621> [accessed 21 September 2010].
- Arthur, P. (2005) Extreme makeover: the changing face of documentary. *Cineaste*, 30(3), 18-23.
- Aufderheide, P. (2004) Distribution encouragement to docs at Sundance. *DOX*, 52(May), 18-19.
- Aufderheide, P. (2005) Year round commitment to docs. *DOX*, 58(May), 16.
- Austin, T. (2007) *Watching the World: Screen Documentary and Audiences*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Austin, T. and de Jong, W. (eds.) (2008) *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices*. London: Open University Press.
- Bahar, R. and Carracedo, A. (2009) 'Made in L.A.', funded from all over: towards a sustainable model for social issue filmmakers. *Documentary*, 28(2), 48-50.
- Barbaro, M. (2005) A new weapon for Wal-Mart: a war room. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/01/business/01walmart.ready.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Barlow, J.P. (1994) The economy of ideas. *Wired*. Available at: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.03/economy.ideas.html> [accessed 22 May 2011].
- Barnes, B. (2009) Hollywood's quest for life after DVDs. *The New York Times*. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/26/business/media/26stream.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print [accessed 26 October 2009].
- Barnett, E. (2009) Is Channel 4's 'catch-up' TV deal with YouTube a new watershed? *Telegraph*. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/6367931/Is-Channel-4s-catch-up-TV-deal-with-YouTube-a-new-watershed.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Barnouw, E. (1993) *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barsam, R.M. (1992) *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, 2nd edn. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Baym, N.K. (2010) *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BBC Four (2005) Director interview: Franny Armstrong. *BBC*. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/storyville/franny-armstrong.shtml> [accessed 10 September 2010].
- BBC News (2009) Fry's Twitter lift for singer, 16. *BBC*. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north_east/8306827.stm [accessed 22 February 2010].

- BBC News (2010) BBC iPlayer integrates Twitter and Facebook. *BBC*. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10162232> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Beam, A. (2007) Al Gore's low voltage network. *Boston Globe*. Available at: http://www.boston.com/ae/tv/articles/2007/11/12/al_gores_low_voltage_network/ [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Beattie, K. (2004) *Documentary Screens: Nonfiction Film and Television*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Beattie, K. (2008) *Documentary Display: Re-Viewing Nonfiction Film and Video*. London: Wallflower Press.
- Bell, D. (1976) *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books.
- Belson, K. (2006) As DVD sales slow, Hollywood hunts for a new cash cow. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/13/technology/13disc.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Belton, J. (2002) Digital cinema: a false revolution. *October*, 100(Spring), 98-114.
- Benkler, Y. (2006) *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bercovici, J. (2010) Who coined 'social media'? Web pioneers compete for credit. *Forbes*. Available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffbercovici/2010/12/09/who-coined-social-media-web-pioneers-compete-for-credit/> [accessed 8 March 2012].
- Bettig, R.V. (2008) Hollywood and intellectual property. In: McDonald, P. and Wasko, J. (eds.) *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 195-205.
- Bollier, D. (2001) The future of creative control in the digital age. Paper presented at *Artists, Technology and the Ownership of Creative Content*. 31 March. Los Angeles: USC Annenberg School for Communication. Available at: <http://www.learcenter.org/pdf/CreativeControl.pdf> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Born, G. (2004) *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Boynton, R. (2004) How to make a guerrilla documentary. *New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/11/magazine/11FOX.html> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- BrandRepublic (2006) C4 pushes broadband documentary channel with Bluetooth poster campaign. Available at: <http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/535787/c4-pushes-broadband-documentary-channel-bluetooth-poster-campaign/> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Broderick, P. (2004) Maximizing distribution. Available at: <http://www.peterbroderick.com/writing/page20/maximizingdistribution.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Broderick, P. (2007) The new age of independent distribution. Available at: <http://peterbroderick.com/writing/assets/The%20New%20Age%20of%20Independent%20Distribution.pdf> [accessed 15 September 2011].

- Broderick, P. (2008) Welcome to the new world of distribution. Available at: <http://www.peterbroderick.com/writing/writing/welcometotheworld.html> [accessed 28 June 2011].
- Broderick, P. (2009) Declaration of independence: the ten principles of hybrid distribution. *indieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/declaration_of_independence_the_ten_principles_of_hybrid_distribution/ [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Broida, R. (2009) Free iPhone app streams short films, documentaries, cartoons, and more. *CNET*. Available at: http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-19512_7-10381323-233.html [accessed 6 February 2010].
- Brooks, B. (2011) Morgan Spurlock's 'Greatest Movie': maybe there can be more 'docbusters' now. *indieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/morgan_spurlock_after_you_watch_this_movie_it_will_change_forever/ [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Brown, K. (2000) Jane Balfour Films in liquidation. *Realscreen*. Available at: <http://realscreen.com/2000/07/01/29525-20000701/> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Bruzzi, S. (2006) *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bryant, R.L. (2009) Peering into the abyss: environment, research and absurdity in the 'Age of Stupid'. London: Kings College. Available at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/geography/research/epd/BryantWP19.pdf> [accessed 12 January 2011].
- Burgess, J. and Green, J. (2009) *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Burgess, R.G. (1990) *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*, 4th ed. London: Routledge.
- BuzzFlash (2003) Robert Greenwald, producer/director of 'Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War' a new documentary that reveals how the Bush administration lied the nation into war. Available at: <http://www.buzzflash.com/interviews/03/11/int03031.html> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Caldwell, J.T. (2008) Prefiguring DVD bonus tracks: making-ofs and behind-the-scenes as historic television programming strategies prototypes. In: Bennett, J. and Brown, T. (eds.) *Film and Television After DVD*. Abingdon: Routledge, 149-71.
- Carpentier, N. (2003) The BBC's 'Video Nation' as a participatory media practice: signifying everyday life, cultural diversity and participation in an online community. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6(4), 425-47.
- Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. I. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castells, M. (1997) *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. II. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Castells, M. (1998) *The End of the Millennium, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. III. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castells, M. (2001) Informationalism and the network society. In: Himanen, P. *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*. London: Vintage, 155-78.
- Castells, M. (2005) The network society: from knowledge to policy. In: Castells, M. and Cardoso, G. (eds.) *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy*. Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations.
- Cavanagh, A. (2007) *Sociology in the Age of the Internet*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Chanan, M. (2007a) Authentic talking cinema. *Sight & Sound*, 17(9), 27-31.
- Chanan, M. (2007b) *The Politics of Documentary*. London: British Film Institute.
- Chapman, J. (2007) *Documentary in Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chapman, J. (2009) *Issues in Contemporary Documentary*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cheng, X., Dale, C., and Liu, J. (2008) Statistics and social network of YouTube videos. In: *Proceedings of the 16th IEEE International Workshop on Quality of Service*. Enschede: IWQoS, 229-38. Available at: <http://www.cs.sfu.ca/~jcliu/Papers/YouTube-IWQoS2008.pdf> [accessed 12 April 2012].
- Christin, N. (2010) Peer-to-peer networks: interdisciplinary challenges for interconnected systems. In: Dark, M.J. (ed.) *Information Assurance and Security Ethics in Complex Systems: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Hershey: Information Science Reference, 81-103.
- Cieply, M. (2009) Independent filmmakers distribute on their own. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/13/business/media/13independent.html> [accessed 13 August 2009].
- Cieply, M. (2010) SnagFilms to expand distribution of documentaries. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/19/business/media/19snag.html?src=busln> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Cieply, M. (2011) A strong crop of documentaries, but barely seen. *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/03/business/media/03docs.html> [accessed 3 January 2011].
- CinemaTech (2009) Sundance panel on 'Models and Experiments in Indie Distribution'. Available at: <http://cinematech.blogspot.com/2009/01/audio-sundance-panel-on-models.html> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Colman, D. (2011) Making his own mark, once again. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/27/fashion/gary-hustwits-documentaries-on-design-up-close.html> [accessed 8 March 2012].
- Cooper, S. (2009) 100,000 downloads for first VODO release. *ScreenDaily*. Available at: <http://www.screendaily.com/news/digital/uk-ireland/100000-downloads-for-first-vodo-release/5007038.article> [accessed 22 September 2010].
- Corcoran, P. (2011) Average video announcement and video release windows (as of 3/23/11). NATO. Available at: <http://www.natoonline.org/Release%20Windows/2010/Q4/windows%20yearly%20quarterly%20memo%203.23.11.pdf> [accessed 12 September 2011].

- Corner, J. (2002) Documentary values. In: Jersliv, A. (ed.) *Realism and 'Reality' in Film and Media*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 139-58.
- Crumlish, C. (2004) *The Power of Many: How the Living Web Is Transforming Politics, Business, and Everyday Life*. London: Sybex.
- Currah, A. (2006) Hollywood versus the Internet: the media and entertainment industries in a digital and networked economy. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 6(4), 439-68.
- Curran, J. and Seaton, J. (2010). *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*, 7th edn. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Dams, T. (2007) Better by design. *Televisual*, November, 24.
- Dawn, R. (2004) Dawn of the doc. *MovieMaker*. Available at: http://www.moviemaker.com/directing/article/dawn_of_the_doc_2941/ [accessed 12 September 2011].
- DCMS/DCBI (2009) *Digital Britain Final Report*. Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. London. Available at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm76/7650/7650.pdf> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- De Vany, A. (2004) *Hollywood Economics: How Extreme Uncertainty Shapes the Film Industry*. London: Routledge.
- DeBauche, L.M. (1997) *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War I*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2007). *The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Research Projects*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) Introduction: the discipline and practice of qualitative research. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1-44.
- DeWalt, K.M. and DeWalt, B.R. (2002) *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Ditzian, E. (2011) Justin Bieber's 'Never Say Never' re-release: five secrets revealed. *MTV*. Available at: <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1658471/justin-bieber-never-say-never.jhtml> [accessed 6 April 2011].
- DOC/NGL (2007) *Getting Real: An Economic Profile of the Canadian Documentary Production Industry*, Volume 3. The Documentary Organization of Canada and Nordicity Group NGL. Toronto. Available at: <http://www.omdc.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=6161> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Doctorow, C. (2007) Copy killers. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2007/jul/31/comment.drm> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Drake, P. (2008) Distribution and marketing in contemporary Hollywood. In: McDonald, P. and Wasko, J. (eds.) *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 63-82.

- Dredge, S. (2011) BBC iPlayer goes global with iPad app launch in 11 countries. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/appsblog/2011/jul/28/bbc-iplayer-global-ipad-launch> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Drew, R.L. (2005) An independent with the networks. In: Rosenthal, A. and Corner, J. (eds.) *New Challenges for Documentary*, 2nd edn. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 280-92.
- Eitzen, D. (1995) When is a documentary?: Documentary as a mode of reception. *Cinema Journal*, 35(1), 81-102.
- Elberse, A. and Oberholzer-Gee, F (2008) Superstars and underdogs: an examination of the long-tail phenomenon in video sales. Boston: Harvard Business School. Available at: http://www.people.hbs.edu/aelberse/papers/hbs_07-015.pdf [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Ellis, J.C. and McLane, B.A. (2006) *A New History of Documentary Film*. London: Continuum.
- Enzensberger, H. (1982) Constituents of a theory of the media. In: Grimm, R. and Armstrong, B. (eds.) *Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Critical Essays*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 46-76.
- Erpelding, C. (2009) Revenue expectations of digital distribution. *Digital Content Producer*. Available at: <http://digitalcontentproducer.com/headlines/revenue-digital-distriburtion-0318/> [accessed 28 May 2010].
- Evans, G. (2009) Eyewitness: 'The Age of Stupid'. *Vertigo*, 4(2), 44-45.
- Facebook (2008) Successfully promoting films with Facebook pages. Available at: http://ads.ak.facebook.com/ads/pages/case_studies/american_teen_film_20080219.pdf [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Fielding, R. (2006) *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911-1967*, 2nd edn. London: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Finney, A. (2010) *The International Film Business: A Market Guide Beyond Hollywood*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Flew, T. (2009) Online media and user-created content: case studies in news media repositioning in the Australian media environment. Paper presented at the *European Media Management Association Annual Conference*. 13 February. Paris: Media after the Mass. Available at: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/17345/1/17345.pdf> [accessed 12 April 2012].
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J.H. (2005). The interview: from neutral stance to political involvement. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 695-728.
- Fountain, A. (2007) Alternative film, video and television 1965-2005. In: Croyer, C., Dowmunt, T., and Fountain, A. (eds.) *The Alternative Media Handbook*. Abingdon: Routledge, 29-46.
- Frankel, R. (2009) Farewell from [old] FourDocs. Available at: <http://www.4docs.org.uk/blog/2009/01/farewell-from-fourdocs/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Friedberg, A. (2002) CD and DVD. In: Harries, D. (ed.) *The New Media Book*. London: BFI Publishing, 30-39.

- Fritz, B. (2009) Blockbuster loss grows as revenue dives 21%. *LA Times*. Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-blockbuster13-2009nov13,0,21934.story> [accessed 13 November 2009].
- Fritz, B. and Eller, C. (2010) Sony Pictures to cut 450 workers as DVD sales decline. *LA Times*. Available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/02/business/la-fi-ct-sony2-2010feb02> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Fuchs, A. (2011) Digital screens see rapid growth. *Film Journal*. Available at: http://www.filmjournal.com/filmjournal/content_display/columns-and-blogs/europe-an-update/e3i6eec7fec77eb723a708959c9c5246252 [accessed 7 September 2011].
- Füller, J., Matzler, K., and Hoppe, M. (2008) Brand community members as a source of innovation. *The Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 25, 608-19.
- Gans, H.J. (1999) Participant observation in the era of 'ethnography'. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28, 540-48.
- Gardam, T. (2008) The purpose of plurality. In: Gardam, T. and Levy, D.A. (eds.) *The Price of Plurality: Choice, Diversity and Broadcasting Institutions in the Digital Age*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 11-22.
- Garrett, D. (2009) Studios collapsing VOD windows. *Variety*. Available at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118009748.html> [accessed 9 October 2009].
- Gauntlett, D. (2004) Web studies: what's new. In: Gauntlett, D. and Horsley, R. (eds.) *Web.Studies*, 2nd edn. London: Edward Arnold, 3-23.
- Gil, B. (2010) VOD: an indie alternative? *Home Media Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.homemediamagazine.com/vod/vod-an-indie-alternative-18577> [accessed 1 March 2011].
- Gillett, L. (2009) Case Study: A Guide to Crowd-Funding - 'Age of Stupid'. *Tales from the Digital Frontier*. 23 June [presentation/video]. Edinburgh International Film Festival. Edinburgh: Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://blip.tv/file/2319540> [accessed 21 September 2010].
- Grant, I., Kaminer, A., and Lee, C. (2009) Paradise lost: the end of appointment television. *Policy Options*, October, 63-68.
- Graser, M. (2010) Digital deals could impact festival pick-ups. *Variety*. Available at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118014143?refCatId=2470> [accessed 22 January 2010].
- Greenwald (2007a) Session 5: Adventures in Online Distribution. *The Media Conference*. 3 July [presentation/audio recording]. London: BRITDOC. Available at: https://www.britdoc.org/conference/session5b.php?movie=s5_rgreenwald [accessed 9 March 2008].
- Greenwald (2007b) Distribution Case Study: Brave New Films and 'Iraq for Sale'. *The Digital Distribution Forum for Independents*. 25 October [presentation/video]. London Film Festival. London: Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://powertothepixel.com/videos> [accessed 12 April 2009].
- Grierson, J. (1966) *Grierson on Documentary*. F. Hardy (ed.). London: Faber.

- Grossman, W.M. (2009) An £8,000 projector ushers in future for independent cinema. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/jul/08/digital-cinema> [accessed 7 September 2011].
- Grover, R. (2005) DVD sales: why buyers hit pause. *BusinessWeek*. Available at: http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/jul2005/nf20050713_8906_db011.htm [accessed 26 February 2010].
- Gruenwedel, E. (2011a) iTunes dominated 2010 online movie consumer spending. *Home Media Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.homemediamagazine.com/itunes/itunes-dominated-2010-online-movie-consumer-spending-21913> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Gruenwedel, E. (2011b) Magnolia bows VOD movies prior to theatrical release. *Home Media Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.homemediamagazine.com/magnolia/magnolia-bows-vod-movies-prior-theatrical-release-23666> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Guthrie, M. (2011) How Al Gore offered Keith Olbermann a job. *The Hollywood Reporter*. Available at: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/al-gore-offered-keith-olbermann-97680> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Hampp, A. (2007) Current.tv relaunches as Current.com: Al Gore's user-generated-news experiment extends to ads. *Advertising Age*. Available at: http://adage.com/mediaworks/article.php?article_id=121176 [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Hardie, A. (2002a) *Docspace Report*. Available at: <http://www.docspace.org.uk/DocspaceReport.pdf>. [accessed 12 January 2008].
- Hardie, A. (2002b) Documentary on the move: films in search of their audiences. *Vertigo*, 2(3), 30-31. Available at: <http://www.vertigomagazine.co.uk/articles/pdf/Documentary%20on%20the%20move.pdf> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Hardie, A. (2008) Rollercoasters and reality: a study of big screen documentary audiences 2002-2007. *Particip@tions*, 5(1). Available at: http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%201%20-%20special/5_01_hardy.htm [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Harris, D. (2011) Nick Broomfield raises \$30,000 on Kickstarter; 'Sarah Palin: You Betcha!' in theaters September 30. *indieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/nick_broomfields_sarah_palin_you_betcha_will_be_in_theaters_september_30/# [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Haynes, J. (2007) Documentary as social justice activism: the textual and political strategies of Robert Greenwald and Brave New Films. *49th Parallel*, 21(Autumn), 1-16.
- Hegedus, C. (2001) Using the drama of cinéma vérité to tell real stories: it often conveys news, but is it journalism? *Nieman Reports*. Available at: <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=101606> [accessed 4 December 2011].
- Helft, M. (2007) Netflix to deliver movies to the PC. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/16/technology/16netflix.html> [accessed 12 September 2011].

- Helft, M. (2010) YouTube's take from movie rentals: \$10,709.16. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/youtubes-take-from-movie-rentals-1070916/> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Hernandez, E. (2008) The glut, festivals, resolutions and more: summing up '07 and looking ahead to 2008. *indieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/the_glut_festivals_resolutions_and_more_summing_up_07_and_looking_ahead_to_/ [accessed 27 June 2011].
- Hill, J. (1996) British film policy. In: Moran, A. (ed.) *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 101-09.
- Hill, J. (1998) Film and postmodernism. In: Hill, J and Gibson, P. (eds.) *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies: Critical Approaches*. London: Oxford University Press, 94-103.
- Hodder, I. (1994) The interpretation of documents and material culture. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 393-402.
- Hogarth, D. (2006) *Realer Than Reel: Global Directions in Documentary*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Horn, J., Fritz, B., and Abramowitz, R. (2009) Hollywood studios in midst of their own horror show. *LA Times*. Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/la-et-moviebiz6-2009oct06,0,702751.story> [accessed 6 October 2009].
- Horton, A. (2005) Documentaries hit the multiplexes: from 'Super Size Me' to 'My Architect' and beyond. *World Literature Today*, 79(3/4), 66-69.
- Howker, E. (2008) Is this a golden age for documentaries?. *The Independent*. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/tv-radio/is-this-a-golden-age-for-documentaries-1066699.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- IFDLC (2007) *Digital Delivery of Video Survey Report*. The Independent Film Distributors' Licensing Consortium. Available at: <http://www.docuseek.com/misc/IFDLC.survey.pdf>. [accessed 15 September 2011].
- IHS (2011) IVOD to exceed EST in US online movie market in 2013. Available at: <http://press.ihs.com/press-release/product-design-supply-chain/ivod-exceed-est-us-online-movie-market-2013> [accessed 7 September 2011].
- Iordanova, D. (2010) The film festival circuit. In: Iordanova, D. and Cheung, R (eds.) *Film Festival Yearbook 2*. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 23-39.
- Isler, T. (2009) Funds from the maddening crowd: raising money through the Internet. *Documentary Magazine*, 28(2), 28-32.
- ITVS (2011) *2011 ITVS Digital Survey*. Available at: <http://cdn.itvs.org/digital-survey-2011.pdf> [accessed 18 September 2011].
- Jacobsen, U. (2003a) By and about women. *DOX*, 47(June), 8-11.
- Jacobsen, U. (2003b) Doing the church circuit. *DOX*, 47(June), 13.
- Jacobsen, U. (2007) US distributors join forces for online doc platform. *DOX*, 68(January), 4.
- James, D.E. (1996) For a working-class television: the Miners' Campaign Tape Project. In: James, D.E. and Berg, R. (1996) *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 193-216.

- Jenkins, H. (2004) The work of theory in the age of digital transformation. In: Miller, T. and Stam, R. *A Companion to Film Theory*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 234-61.
- Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2007) From participatory culture to participatory democracy. *Confessions of an Aca/Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins*. Available at: http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/from_participatory_culture_t_1.html [accessed 8 February 2012].
- Jenkins, H., Li, X., Krauskopf, A.D., and Green, J. (2009) *If It Doesn't Spread It's Dead: Creating Value in a Spreadable Marketplace*. Available at: http://convergenceculture.org/research/Spreadability_doublesidedprint_final_063009.pdf [accessed 12 March 2012].
- Jensen, E. (2007) Magic Lantern Productions, Channel 4: Fourdocs web site. *TV Week*. Available at: http://www.tvweek.com/news/2007/06/magic_lantern_productions_chan.php [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Jones, E. (2011) Sundance hosts YouTube film premiere. *BBC News*. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-12306103> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Kasson, E.G. (2009) Weaving a web of distribution. *Documentary*. Available at: <http://www.documentary.org/content/weaving-web-distribution> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Kaufman, A. (2009) No one knows anything, continued. *IFC*. Available at: <http://www.ifc.com/news/2009/09/no-one-knows-anything.php?page=2> [accessed 23 May 2011].
- Kaufman, P.B. and Mohan, J. (2008) *The Economics of Independent Film and Video Distribution in the Digital Age*. New York: Intelligent Television.
- Kay, J. (2007) Avalanche of pricey Sundance deals includes 'Clubland', 'Waitress', 'Joshua'. *ScreenDaily*. Available at: <http://www.screendaily.com/avalanche-of-pricey-sundance-deals-includes-clubland-waitress-joshua/4030408.article> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Kay, J. (2009) Sundance Channel starts VOD day-and-date with Spike Lee project. *ScreenDaily*. Available at: <http://www.screendaily.com/news/digital/us-americas/sundance-channel-starts-vod-day-and-date-with-spike-lee-project/5004608.article> [accessed 11 October 2009].
- Keane, S. (2007) *CineTech: Film, Convergence and New Media*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Keen, A. (2007) *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Keens, E. (2010) Broadcasters face challenge of armchair revolution. *The Times*. Available at: http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/leisure/article6982917.ece [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Kelly, K. (1999) *New Rules for the New Economy: 10 Ways the Network Economy is Changing Everything*. New York: Penguin Books.

- Kelly, K. (2007) *True Films 3.0: 200 Documentaries You Must See Before You Die*. Available at: <http://www.kk.org/cooltools/tf3-registered.pdf> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Kelly, K. (2008a) 1000 true fans. *The Technium*. Available at: http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2008/03/1000_true_fans.php [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Kelly, K. (2008b) Better than free. *The Technium*. Available at: http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2008/01/better_than_fre.php [accessed 22 May 2011].
- Kelly, K. (2008c) Wagging the long tail of love. *The Technium*. Available at: http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2008/07/wagging_the_lon.php [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Kelly, K. (2011) The stars of 1,000 true fans. *The Technium*. Available at: http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2011/03/the_stars_of_10.php [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Kerrigan, F. (2010) *Film Marketing*. Elsevier: Oxford.
- Kilborn, R.W. and Izod, J. (1997) *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Kilborn, R. (2003) *Staging the Real: Factual TV in the Age of Big Brother*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Kilday, G. (2008). YouTube screens 'No End' docu. *The Hollywood Reporter*. Available at: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/youtube-screens-no-end-docu-118144> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- King, J. (2008) Distribution Case Study: 'Steal This Film'. *The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum*. 22 October [presentation/video]. BFI London Film Festival. London: Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://www.powertothepixel.com/london-forum-2008/jamie-king-distribution-case-study-steal-this-film> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- King, J. (2009) Case Study: Leveraging Peer-to-Peer Networks – 'Steal This Film' and VODO. *Tales from the Digital Frontier*. 23 June [presentation/video]. Edinburgh International Film Festival. Edinburgh: Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://blip.tv/power-to-the-pixel/jamie-king-case-study-leveraging-peer-to-peer-networks-steal-this-film-vodo-2338216> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Kirby, A. (2009) *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure Our Culture*. London: Continuum.
- Kirsner, S. (2007a) Case study: Hunter Weeks and Josh Caldwell: '10 MPH'. In: *ITVS Digital Initiative: Report from the Field*. Available at: <http://www.itvs.org/funding/resources/report-from-the-field-10-mph> [accessed 28 June 2011].
- Kirsner, S. (2007b) Case study: Tiffany Shlain: 'The Tribe'. In: *ITVS Digital Initiative: Report from the Field*. Available at: <http://archive.itvs.org/producers/digitalinitiative/fieldreport/tribe.html> [accessed 28 June 2011].
- Klinger, B. (2006) *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Knegt, P. (2009) A DIY emperor: the rise of 'Valentino'. *indieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/a_diy_emperor_the_rise_of_valentino/ [accessed 12 September 2011].

- Knegt, P. (2011) 'Somewhere Between' wins Hot Docs Audience Award as fest breaks attendance record. *IndieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/somewhere_between_wins_hot_docs_audience_award_as_fest_breaks_attendance_re [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Knight, J. (2007) DVD, video and reaching audiences: experiments in moving-image distribution. *Convergence*, 13(1), 19-41.
- Kohn, E. (2009) One year old, SnagFilms unveils online doc fest and Comcast, Sundance Channel pacts. *indieWIRE*. Available at: http://www.indiewire.com/article/1_year_old_snagfilms_launches_online_fest_for_new_docs_and_comcast_sundance/ [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Krinsky, T. (2008) Brave New Films makes quick work of issue-driven videos. *Documentary*, 27(4), 8.
- Kucuk, S.U. and Krishnamurthy, S. (2007) An analysis of consumer power on the Internet. *Technovation*, 27, 47-56.
- Kung, M. (2010) Indie film iPhone apps - the new distribution frontier? *The Wall Street Journal*. Available at: <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2010/03/16/indie-film-iphone-apps-the-new-distribution-frontier/> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Lal, V. (2007) Documentary phenomenon. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(7), 544-45.
- Lange, P.G. (2009) Videos of affinity on YouTube. In: Snickars, P. and Vonderau, P. (eds.) *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 70-88.
- Langford, B. (2005) *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lawler, R. (2010) 'Freakonomics' hits iTunes, Amazon and VOD before theaters. *GigaOm*. Available at: <http://gigaom.com/video/freakonomics-hits-itunes-amazon-vod-before-theaters/> [accessed 23 May 2011].
- Leadbeater, C. and Miller, P. (2004) *The Pro-Am Revolution: How Enthusiasts are Changing Our Economy and Society*. Online: Demos. Available at: <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/proamrevolutionfinal.pdf> [accessed 7 September 2011].
- Leitner, D.W. (1996) Byte sized: D.W. Leitner on the next wave of digital equipment. *Filmmaker Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.filmmakermagazine.com/issues/spring1996/digital.php> [accessed 3 June 2011].
- Lessig, L. (2008) *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Leurdijk, A. (2007) Will broadcasters survive in the online and digital domain? In: Cesar, P., Chorianopoulos, K., and Jensen, J.F. (eds.) *Interactive TV: A Shared Experience*, 5th European Conference. EuroITV. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- Levine, R. (2011) *Free Ride: How the Internet is Destroying the Culture Business and How the Culutre Business Can Fight Back*. London: The Bodley Head Ltd.
- Li, C. and Bernoff, J. (2008) *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Lieberman, D. (2005) Digital film revolution poised to start rolling, *USAToday*. Available at: http://www.usatoday.com/money/media/2005-05-17-digital-cinema-usat_x.htm [accessed 7 September 2011].

- Lilley, A. (2005) FourDocs: the future is broadband. *Televisual*, October, 11.
- Lima, F. (2008) The New Exhibitors: MovieMobz. *The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum*. 22 October [presentation/video]. BFI London Film Festival. London: Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://blip.tv/power-to-the-pixel/fabio-lima-moviemobz-the-new-exhibitors-london-forum-2008-1421412> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Lobato, R. (2007) Subcinema: theorizing marginal film distribution. *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, 13, 113-120.
- Lotz, A. (2007) *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. New York: NYU Press.
- Macaulay, S. (2010) Paul Devlin on the afterlife of BLAST! *Filmmaker Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.filmmakermagazine.com/blog/2010/02/paul-devlin-on-afterlife-of-blast.php> [accessed 11 February 2010].
- Macdonald, K. (2011) 'Life in a Day': around the world in 80,000 clips. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jun/07/life-in-a-day-macdonald> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- MacIntyre, J. (2008) SnagFilms: best thing for docs since Netflix. *GigaOm*. Available at: <http://gigaom.com/video/snagfilms-best-thing-for-docs-since-netflix/#more-4978> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Macnab, G. (2008) In focus: marketing theatrical documentaries. *ScreenDaily*. Available at: <http://www.screendaily.com/in-focus-marketing-theatrical-documentaries/4042151.article> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Macnab, G. (2010) Frederick Wiseman and D.A. Pennebaker: the truth is still out there. *The Independent*. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/frederick-wiseman-and-d-a-pennebaker-the-truth-is-still-out-there-1920044.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Marlow, J. (2007) D.A. Pennebaker: looking back - revisiting 'Monterey Pop'. *Greencine*. Available at: <http://www.greencine.com/central/node/282> [accessed 28 June 2011].
- McAlexander, J.H., Schouten, J.W., and Koenig, H.F. (2002) Building brand community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), 38-54.
- McCarty, D., Sandler, L., and Kary, T. (2010) Blockbuster files for bankruptcy after online rivals gain. *Bloomberg*. Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-23/blockbuster-video-rental-chain-files-for-bankruptcy-protection.html> [accessed 8 February 2012].
- McClintock, P. (2008) Exhibs seeking \$1 bil for conversion. *Variety*. Available at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117993236?refCatId=1009> [accessed 23 September 2009].
- McCourt, T. and Burkart, P. (2003) When creators, corporations and consumers collide: Napster and the development of on-line music distribution. *Media, Culture, & Society*. 25(3). 333-50.
- McDonald, P. (2007) *Video and DVD Industries*. London: British Film Institute.
- McDonald, P. and Wasko, J. (eds.) (2008) *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- McKernan, B. (2005) *Digital Cinema: The Revolution in Cinematography, Postproduction, and Distribution*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McLuhan, M. (1962) *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: Mentor.
- McMahon, K. (2009) Percy warns of funding crisis for high-end docs. *Broadcast*. Available at: <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/multiplatform/news/percy-warns-of-funding-crisis-for-high-end-docs/2017332.article> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- McNary, D. (2010) Scott, Macdonald pact for 'Life'. *Variety*. Available at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118021411?categoryid=4025&cs=1&nid=2562> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Mekas, J. (2005) Independence for independents. In: Holmlund, C. and Justin, W. (eds.) *Contemporary American Independent Film: From the Margins to the Mainstream*. Abingdon: Routledge, 35-40.
- Menand, L. (2004) Nanook and me. *The New Yorker*. Available at: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/08/09/040809crat_atlarge [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Merriam, S.B. (1998) *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, S. (2010) Five questions with... VODO founder Jamie King. *GigaOm*. Available at: <http://gigaom.com/video/5-questions-with-vodo-founder-jamie-king/> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Mintz, S. (2005) Michael Moore and the re-birth of the documentary. *Film & History*, 35(2), 10-11.
- Miranda, C.A. (2007) Q&A with D.A. Pennebaker. *Time*. Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1593766,00.html> [accessed 26 May 2011].
- Mullaney, T.J. (2006) Netflix: the mail-order movie house that clobbered Blockbuster. *BusinessWeek*. Available at: http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/may2006/sb20060525_268860.htm?campaign_id=search [accessed 17 February 2010].
- Muñiz, A.M. and O'Guinn, T.C. (2001) Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-31.
- Murdock, G. (2004) Building the digital commons: public broadcasting in the age of the Internet. Vancouver: Paper presented at the *Spry Memorial Lecture*. 18-22 November. Vancouver/Montreal: University of Montreal. Available at: https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/type/www/116/Theory_OtherTexts/Theory/Murdock_BuildingDigitalCommons.pdf [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Murray-Watson, A. (2007) Internet groups warn BBC over iPlayer plans. *The Independent*. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/internet-groups-warn-bbc-over-iplayer-plans-461167.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].

- Musser, C. (2007) Film truth in the age of George W. Bush. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 48(2), 2-35.
- Naughton, J. (2006) Our changing media ecosystem. In: Richards, E., Foster, R., and Kiedrowski, T. (eds.) *Communications – The Next Decade: Trends and Challenges*. London: Ofcom, 41-50.
- Nichols, B. (1991). *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nichols, B. (2001) *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nichols, B. (2010) *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd edn. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Noam, E.M. (2008) The economics of user generated content and peer-to-peer: the commons as the enabler of commerce. In: Noam, E.M. and Pupillo, L.M. (eds.) *Peer-to-Peer Video: The Economics, Policy, and Culture of Today's New Mass Medium*. New York: Springer, 3-13.
- O'Guinn, T.C. and Muñiz, A.M. (2005) Communal consumption and the brand. In: Mick, D.G. and Ratneshwar, S. (eds.) *Inside Consumption: Frontiers of Research on Consumer Motives, Goals, and Desires*. New York: Routledge, 252-72.
- O'Reilly, T. (2005) What is Web 2.0: design patterns and business models for the next generation of software. *O'Reilly*. Available at: <http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Pariser, L. (2006) Long live the cinemas: policy for specialist films - an exhibitor's wish list. *Vertigo*, 3(1), 42-43. Available at: <http://www.vertigomagazine.co.uk/articles/pdf/Long%20Live%20the%20Cinemas.pdf> [accessed 7 September 2011].
- Park, S. (2003) Trends in the distribution windows for movies: the impact of new technology on existing markets. Paper presented at the *International Communication Association Annual Conference*. San Diego. Available at: http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/1/3/2/2/pages13224/p13224-1.php [accessed 7 September 2011].
- Paster, M. (2009) Capturing that elusive theatrical screening: three films rise to the challenge. *Documentary*, 28(2), 45-46.
- Patterson, H. (2007) Side door to the industry. *DOX*, 70(May), 4-5.
- Pegoraro, R. (2006) Movielink and CinemaNow: hardly worth the effort. *The Washington Post*. Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/13/AR2006051300187_pf.html [accessed 1 February 2011].
- Peranson, M. (2009) First you get the power, then you get the money: two models of film festivals. In: Porton, R. (ed.) *dekalog3: On Film Festivals*. London: Wallflower, 23-37.
- Pham, A. (2008) Jérôme Paillard: director general of the Cannes Film Market. *Cineuropa*. Available at: <http://cineuropa.org/2011/it.aspx?t=interview&l=en&did=84150> [accessed 15 September 2011].

- Poel, M., Tee, R., and Leurdijk, A. (2007) *Digital TV Platforms of Public Organisations: Business Models, Bottlenecks and Public Policy*. 16 March [report]. Delft: TNO Information and Communication Technology. Available at: https://doc.freeband.nl/dsweb/Get/Document-78703/D2.20_Freeband_B@Home_digital_TV_platforms_of_public_organisations.pdf [accessed 12 April 2012].
- Pond, S. (2010) SnagFilms adds Comcast, FiOS VOD. *The Wrap*. Available at: <http://www.thewrap.com/movies/column-post/snagfilms-adds-comcast-fios-vod-19340> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Pond, S. (2011) SnagFilms expands into new platforms, adds narrative films. *Reuters*. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/21/idUS421325276420110921> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Proctor, J. (2011) The case for the slow Internet. *In Media Res*. Available at: <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2011/09/05/case-slow-internet> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Quinn, M. (2001) Distribution, the transient audience, and the transition to the feature film. *Cinema Journal*, 40(2), 35-56.
- Quintín (2009) The festival galaxy. In: Porton, R. (ed.) *dekalog3: On Film Festivals*. London: Wallflower, 38-52.
- Raban, W. (1998) Expanding practice in television: defending the right to difference. *Vertigo*, 1(8), 42-43.
- Rampell, C. (2010) Unusual marketing for 'Freakonomics' film. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/30/movies/30freak.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Reichert, J. (1977) *Doing it Yourself: A Handbook on Independent Film Distribution*. New York: Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers/New Day.
- Renov, M. (1993) *Theorizing Documentary*. New York: Routledge.
- Reticker, G. (2009) Self-distribution hell: indie sheds light on DIY distribution methods for 'Pray the Devil Back to Hell'. *MovieMaker*. Available at: http://www.moviemaker.com/distribution/article/pray_the_devil_back_to_hell_self_distribution_gini_reticker_20091014/ [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Rheingold, H. (1993) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Rich, B.R. (2006) Documentary disciplines: an introduction. *Cinema Journal*, 46(1), 108-15.
- Richards, J. (2008) Apple to sell new-release films on iTunes. *The Times*. Available at: http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article3855597.ece [accessed 26 May 2011].
- Rifkin, J. (2000) *The Age of Access: How the Shift from Ownership to Access is Transforming Modern Life*. New York: Penguin Business Library.
- Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research*, 2nd edn. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Rombes, N. (2005) *New Punk Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Rosenthal, A. (1972) *The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Rosenthal, A. (2005) Staying alive. In: Rosenthal, A. and Corner, J. (eds.) *New Challenges for Documentary*, 2nd edn. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 167-80.
- Rosenthal, A. and Corner, J. (eds.) (2005) *New Challenges for Documentary*, 2nd edn. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Rossmann, S.F. and Rallis, G.B. (2003) *Learning in the Field: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Rotha, P. and Ruby, J. (1983) *Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Rowinski, D. (2011) Amazon's Video On Demand now has 100,000 titles available. *ReadWriteWeb*. Available at: http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/amazons_video_on_demand_now_has_100000_titles_avai.php [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Russell, C.A., Norman, A.T., and Heckler, S.E. (2004) The consumption of television programming: development and validation of the connectedness scale. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 150-61.
- Ryninks, K. (2006) Bringing documentaries to a wider audience: towards a new distribution model for 2010 and beyond. *DOX*, 62(1), 4-6.
- Salamon, J. (2004) The man who was raised by a movie camera. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/26/movies/26julie.html> [accessed 3 September 2011].
- Sander, T. (2002) Golden times for digital rights management? In: Syverson, P.F. (ed.) *Financial Cryptography: 5th International Conference, FC 2001, Grand Cayman, British West Indies, February 2001, Proceedings*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 64-74.
- Schau, H.J., Muñiz, A.M., and Arnould, E.J. (2009) How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.
- Schonfeld, E. (2011) Streaming is driving new subscriber growth at Netflix. *TechCrunch*. Available at: <http://techcrunch.com/2011/01/27/streaming-subscriber-growth-netflix/> [accessed 13 May 2011].
- Schroeder, J.E. (2010) The artist in brand culture. In: O'Reilly, D. and Kerrigan, F. (eds.) *Marketing the Arts: A Fresh Approach*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Screenrights (2008) Hybrid distribution - what is it and how can it work for you? November. Available at: <http://www.screen.org/pdfs/about/offtheair/2008/ota1108.pdf> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Sells, M. (2010) Sense and sensibility: real lessons in independent distribution. *MovieMaker*, 85(Winter), 90-92.
- Shirky, C. (2001) Listening to Napster. In: Oram, A. (ed.) *Peer to Peer: Harnessing the Power of Disruptive Technologies*. Online: O'Reilly, 24-33. Available at: <http://www.elportal.info/ebooks/O'Reilly%20-%20Peer%20To%20Peer.pdf> [accessed 15 September 2011].

- Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books.
- Shirky, C. (2010) *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age*. London: Penguin Books.
- Shooting People (2009) Digital Bootcamp. 6 November [presentation]. Sheffield: Sheffield Doc/Fest. Slides available at: <http://www.slideshare.net/inkykopp/digital-bootcamp-sheffield-docfest> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Silverman, J. (2011) Review: crowdsourced 'Life in a Day' captures thrills, emotions. *Wired*. Available at: <http://www.wired.com/underwire/2011/01/life-in-a-day-review/> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Sisario, B. (2011) New service offers music in quantity, not by song. *The New York Times*. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/14/technology/spotify-music-streaming-service-comes-to-us.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Snickars, P. and Vonderau, P. (2009) Introduction. In: Snickars, P. and Vonderau, P. (eds.) *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden.
- Sørensen, B. (2009) Breaking the age barrier in the Internet age: the story of Geriatric 1927. In: Snickars, P. and Vonderau, P. (eds.) *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 140-51.
- Stelter, B. and Stone, B. (2010) Success (and some growing pains) at Hulu. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/01/technology/01hulu.html?ref=technology> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Stringer, E.T. (2007) *Action Research: Third Edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sussex, E. (1975) *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary: The Story of the Film Movement Founded by John Grierson*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sussex, E. and Grierson, J. (1972) Grierson on documentary: the last interview. *Film Quarterly*, 26(1), 24-30.
- Swann, P. (1989) *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1946*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swartz, C. (2005) Introduction. In: Swartz, C. (ed.) *Understanding Digital Cinema: A Professional Handbook*. Oxford: Elsevier, 1-14.
- Sweney, M. (2009) Channel 4 may cut up to £75m from programme budget this year. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/may/06/channel-4-programme-budget-cut> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Sweney, M. (2010) BBC unveils iPlayer beta with ties to Twitter, Facebook and other channels. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/may/26/bbc-unveils-new-iplayer-beta> [accessed 26 May 2010].
- Taub, E. (2003a) Digital projection of films is coming. Now, who pays? *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/13/business/technology-digital-projection-of-films-is-coming-now-who-pays.html> [Accessed 12 September 2011].
- Taub, E. (2003b) DVD's meant for buying but not for keeping. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/21/business/dvd-s-meant-for-buying-but-not-for-keeping.html> [accessed 14 June 2011].

- Telegraph (2009). Stephen Fry's Twitter posts on David Eagleman novel sparks 6000% sales spike. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/6170777/Stephen-Frys-Twitter-posts-on-David-Eagleman-novel-sparks-6000-sales-spike.html> [accessed 22 February 2010].
- Thomas, D. (2002) Innovation, piracy and the ethos of new media. In: Harries, D. (ed.) *The New Media Book*. London: BFI Publishing, 82-91.
- Thompson, A. (2006) Distributors hold firm against day-and-date. *The Hollywood Reporter*. Available at: http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/search/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1002198452 [accessed 16 March 2009].
- Thompson, A. (2008) Frustrated indies seek web distrib'n: but still face challenging online marketing gap. *Variety*. Available at: http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_story&articleid=VR1117980978&categoryid=2508 [accessed 19 February 2008].
- Thompson, A. (2011) SnagFilms raises \$10 million from Comcast, NEA. Available at: http://blogs.indiewire.com/thompsononhollywood/comcast_invests_10_million_in_snagfilms# [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Thompson, C. (2005) The BitTorrent effect. *Wired*. Available at: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.01/bittorrent.html> [accessed 23 May 2010].
- Tourtellotte, B. (2011) YouTube unveils 'Life in a Day' film at Sundance. *Reuters*. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/01/28/film-sundance-youtube-idUKN2812563420110128> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Tozzi, J. (2008) Indie filmmakers hit their target. *BusinessWeek*. Available at: http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/jun2008/sb2008065_226261.htm [accessed 28 June 2011].
- Tryhorn, C. (2009) BBC must cut £400m from budget - Mark Thompson. *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/mar/19/bbc-budget-cut-mark-thompson> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Tudor, A. (1974) *Theories of Film*. London: Secker and Warburg/British Film Institute.
- Turan, K. (2002) *Sundance to Sarajevo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- UK Film Council (2006) *Statistical Yearbook 2005/06*. Available at: http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/1/r/Statistical_Yearbook_05-06.pdf [accessed 12 September 2011].
- UK Film Council (2007) *Statistical Yearbook 2006/07*. Available at: http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/5/8/Stats_Year_book.pdf [accessed 12 September 2011].
- UK Film Council (2008) *Statistical Yearbook 2008*. Available at: <http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/1/p/2008.pdf> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- UK Film Council (2009) *Statistical Yearbook 2009*. Available at: <http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/2/p/2009.pdf> [accessed 12 September 2011].

- UK Film Council (2010) *Statistical Yearbook 2010*. Available at: http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/e/q/Statistical_Yearbook_2010.pdf [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Utichi, J. (2010) Interview: Kevin Macdonald of 'Life in a Day'. *Cinematical*. Available at: <http://blog.moviefone.com/2010/07/23/interview-kevin-macdonald/> [accessed 3 November 2010].
- Vena, J. (2011) 'Justin Bieber: Never Say Never' DVD coming May 13. *MTV*. Available at: <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1661002/justin-bieber-never-say-never-dvd.jhtml> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Ventre, M. (2004) The new golden age of documentaries. *MSNBC*. Available at: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/5279181/ns/today-entertainment/> [accessed 25 May 2011].
- Vertov, D. (1984) *Kino-eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Michelson, A. (ed.) London: Pluto.
- Vicente, A. (2008) Documentary viewing platforms. In: Austin, T. and de Jong, W. (eds.) (2008) *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices*. London: Open University Press, 271-77.
- Viljoen, D. (1997) *Art of the Deal: The Essential Guide to Business Affairs for Television and Film Producers*, 2nd edn. London: PACT.
- Vlessing, E. (2009) New distribution model floated at Hot Docs. *Hollywood Reporter*. Available at: http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/film/news/e3ia74d58b9ff5575d74dae79743eb0caaa [accessed 18 May 2009].
- Wasko, J. (2004) The political economy of film. In: Miller, T. and Stam, R. (eds.) *A Companion to Film Theory*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 221-33.
- Wasko, J. and Erickson, M. (2009) The political economy of YouTube. In: Snickars, P. and Vonderau, P. (eds.) *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 372-86.
- Wasser, F. (2001) *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Waterman, D. (2001) Internet TV: business models and program content. Paper presented at the 29th Annual TPRC Research Conference on Information, Communication, and Internet Policy. 27-29 October. Washington. Available at: arxiv.org/pdf/cs/0109051 [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Waxman, S. (2009) SnagFilms finds online works for distributing documentary films. Available at: <http://www.thewrap.com/movies/article/snagfilms-finds-online-works-distributing-documentary-films-1886> [accessed 15 September 2011].
- Weiler, L. (2006) This conference is being recorded: Robert Greenwald. 14 December [audio interview]. *WorkBook Project*. Available at: <http://workbookproject.com/blog/2006/12/14/this-conference-is-being-recorded-robert-greenwald-brave-new-films/> [accessed 29 June 2011].
- Weiler, L. (2008) Navigating the digital divide. *Filmmaker Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.filmmakermagazine.com/issues/winter2008/digital.php> [accessed 28 June 2011].

- Weisenthal, J. (2008) Current TV: ad revenue drops at Al Gore's network; losses widen en route to IPO. *paidContent* Available at: <http://m.paidcontent.org/article/419-current-tv-ad-revenue-declines-in-latest-quarter-losses-widen-en-route/> [accessed 12 September 2011].
- Williams, R. (1974) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Routledge.
- Willis, H. (2005) *New Digital Cinema: Reinventing the Moving Image*. London: Wallflower Press.
- Winston, B. (2000) *Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1992). Posturing in qualitative inquiry. In: Le Compte, M.D., Millroy, W.L., and Preissle, J. (eds.) *The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. New York: Academic Press, 3-52.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994) *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation*. London: Sage Publications.
- Wolcott, H.F. (2008) *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*. Plymouth: AltaMira Press.
- Yin, R.K. (1984) *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, 4th edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Zeitchik, S. and Goldstein, G. (2008) Much-hyped movies fall flat at Sundance. *Reuters*. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/01/22/industry-sundance-slow-dc-idUSN2034822320080122> [accessed 18 August 2009].
- Zhu, K. (2001) Internet-based distribution of digital videos: the economic impact of digitization on the motion picture industry. *Electronic Markets*, 11(4), 273-80.

Films and TV/Web Programmes

- 10 MPH* (2007) Film. Directed by Hunter Weeks. USA: WonderPhil Productions. Available at: <http://www.10mph.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- 50 Documentaries to See Before You Die* (2011) TV/Web Series. Presented by Morgan Spurlock. USA: Current TV. Available at: <http://current.com/shows/fifty-documentaries/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- American Teen* (2008) Film. Directed by Nanette Burstein. USA: Paramount Vantage. Available at: <http://www.americanteenthemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) Film. Directed by Davis Guggenheim. USA: Paramount Vantage. Available at: http://www.climatecrisis.net/an_inconvenient_truth/about_the_film.php [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Battlefront* (2008) Cross-Platform Series. Produced by Raw Television. UK: Channel 4. Available at: <http://www.battlefront.co.uk/> [accessed 28 November 2011].

- Battleship Potemkin* (1925) Film. Directed by Sergei Eisenstein. Soviet Union: Goskino. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/details/BattleshipPotemkin> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- BLAST!* (2008) Film. Directed by Paul Devlin. USA: Louise Rosen. Available at: <http://www.blastthemovie.com/homepage/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Bonhoeffer* (2003) Film. Directed by Martin Doblmeier. USA: First Run Features. Available at: <http://www.bonhoeffer.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids* (2004) Film. Directed by Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman. USA: HBO/Cinemax Documentary. Available at: <http://www.kids-with-cameras.org/bornintobrothels/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Bowling for Columbine* (2002) Film. Directed by Michael Moore. USA: United Artists. Available at: <http://www.bowlingforcolumbine.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Britain from Above* (2008) Cross-Platform Series. Directed by Cassian Harrison. UK: BBC. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/britainfromabove/archive.shtml> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Bubble* (2005) Film. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. USA: Magnolia Pictures. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0454792/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) Film. Directed by Wim Wenders. Germany: Senator Film. Available at: <http://www.wim-wenders.com/art/buenavistasocialclub.htm> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009) Film. Directed by Michael Moore. USA: Overture Films. Available at: <http://michaelmoore.com/books-films/capitalism-love-story> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Capturing the Friedmans* (2003) Film. Directed by Andrew Jarecki. USA: HBO Documentary. Available at: <http://www.capturingthefriedmans.com/main.html> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- City of God* (2002) Directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. Brazil: Buena Vista International. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0317248/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter* (1994) Film. Directed by Deborah Hoffmann. USA: Women Make Movies. Available at: <http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c127.shtml> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Don't Look Back* (1967) Film. Directed by D.A. Pennebaker. USA: Pennebaker Films. Available at: http://www.phfilms.com/index.php/phf/film/dont_look_back/ [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Drifters* (1929) Film. Directed by John Grierson. UK: Empire Marketing Board. Available at: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/439877/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Etre et avoir* (2002) Film. Directed by Nicolas Philibert. France: Les Films du Losange. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0318202/> [accessed 28 November 2011].

- Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) Film. Directed by Michael Moore. USA: Lionsgate Films.
Available at: <http://www.fahrenheit911.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- FASTER* (2003) Film. Directed by Mark Neale. USA: New Video. Available at:
<http://www.fastermovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- FASTEST* (2011) Film. Directed by Mark Neale. UK: Omniverse Vision. Available at:
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1721677/> [accessed 8 March 2012].
- Favela Rising* (2005) Film. Directed by Matt Mochary and Jeff Zimbalist. USA:
HBO/Cinemax Documentary. Available at: <http://www.favelarising.com/>
[accessed 28 November 2011].
- Festen* (1998) Film. Directed by Thomas Vinterberg. Denmark: Scanbox
Entertainment. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0154420/>
[accessed 28 November 2011].
- Freakonomics* (2010) Film. Directed by Heidi Ewing, Alex Gibney, Seth Gordon,
Rachel Grady, Eugene Jarecki, and Morgan Spurlock. USA: Magnolia
Pictures. Available at: <http://www.magpictures.com/freakonomics/>
[accessed 28 November 2011].
- Funny People* (2009) Film. Directed by Judd Apatow. USA: Universal Studios.
Available at: <http://www.funnypeoplemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November
2011].
- Gaza/Sderot* (2008) Cross-Platform Series. Produced by Susanna Lotz, Joël Ronez, and
Alex Szalat. France: ARTE. Available at: <http://gaza-sderot.arte.tv> [accessed
28 November 2011].
- Helvetica* (2007) Film. Directed by Gary Hustwit. USA: Swiss Dots. Available at:
<http://www.helveticafilm.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Highrise* (2010) Interactive Film. Directed by Katerina Cizek. Canada: NFB. Available
at: <http://highrise.nfb.ca/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Home Page* (1999) Film. Directed by Doug Block. USA: Copacetic Pictures. Available
at: <http://old.d-word.com/homepage/index.html> [accessed 28 November
2011].
- Hoop Dreams* (1994) Film. Directed by Steve James. USA: Fine Line Features.
Available at: <http://kartemquin.com/films/hoop-dreams> [accessed 28
November 2011].
- Hospital* (1970) Film. Directed by Frederick Wiseman. USA: Zipporah Films.
Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0065853/> [accessed 28
November 2011].
- I'm Still Here* (2010) Film. Directed by Casey Affleck. USA: Magnolia Pictures.
Available at: <http://www.imstillheremovie.com/> [accessed 28 November
2011].
- In the Shadow of the Moon* (2007) Film. Directed by David Singleton. UK: Vertigo Films.
Available at: [http://www.channel4.com/programmes/in-the-shadow-of-
the-moon/4od](http://www.channel4.com/programmes/in-the-shadow-of-the-moon/4od) [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Independent America: Rising From Ruins* (2009) Film. Directed by Hanson Hosein.
USA: IndieFlix. Available at: <http://risingfromruins.com/> [accessed 28
November 2011].

- Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers* (2006) Film. Directed by Robert Greenwald. USA: Brave New Films. Available at: <http://iraqforsale.org/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Join Us* (2007) Film. Directed by Ondi Timoner. USA: Interloper Films. Available at: <http://www.joinusthemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* (2011) Film. Directed by Jon M. Chu. USA: Paramount Pictures. Available at: <http://www.justinbieberneversaynever.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Life in a Day* (2011) Film. Directed by Kevin Macdonald. UK: YouTube. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/lifeinaday> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Louisiana Story* (1948) Film. Directed by Robert J. Flaherty. USA: Lopert Films. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/details/LouisianaStory> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Lumo* (2007) Film. Directed by Bent-Jorgen Perlmutt and Nelson Walker III. USA: PBS. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/lumo/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- MacHEADS* (2009) Film. Directed by Kobi Shely. USA: filmDIY. Available at: <http://www.macheadsthemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Made in L.A.* (2007) Film. Directed by Almudena Carracedo. USA: California Newsreel. Available at: <http://www.madeinla.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- March of the Penguins* (2005) Film. Directed by Luc Jacquet. USA: Warner Independent Pictures. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0428803/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- McLibel* (2005) Film. Directed by Franny Armstrong and Ken Loach. UK: Spanner Films. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/?lid=161> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Michael Jackson's This Is It* (2009) Film. Directed by Kenny Ortega. USA: Sony Pictures Releasing. Available at: <http://www.thisisitmovieondvd.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Moana* (1926) Film. Directed by Robert J. Flaherty. USA: Paramount Pictures. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0017162/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Monterey Pop* (1968) Film. Directed by D.A. Pennebaker. USA: Leacock-Pennebaker. Available at: http://phfilms.com/index.php/phf/film/the_monterey_pop_festival/ [accessed 28 November 2011].
- My Kid Could Paint That* (2007) Film. Directed by Amir Bar-Lev. USA: Sony Pictures Classics. Available at: <http://www.sonyclassics.com/mykidcouldpaintthat/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Nanook of the North* (1922) Film. Directed by Robert J. Flaherty. USA: Pathé. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/details/PhantasmagoriaTheater-NanookOfTheNorth1922752> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- No End In Sight* (2007) Film. Directed by Charles Ferguson. USA: Magnolia Pictures. Available at: <http://www.noendinsightmovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].

- Note by Note: The Making of Steinway L1037* (2007) Film. Directed by Ben Niles. USA: Plow Productions. Available at: <http://www.notebynotethemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Objectified* (2009) Film. Directed by Gary Hustwit. USA: Swiss Dots. Available at: <http://www.objectifiedfilm.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Okie Noodling* (2001) Film. Directed by Bradley Beesley. USA: Redline Entertainment. Available at: <http://www.okienoodling.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- One Day on Earth* (2011) Film. Directed by Kyle Ruddick. USA. Available at: <http://www.onedayonearth.org/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (2004) Film. Directed by Robert Greenwald. USA: MoveOn.org. Available at: <http://www.outfoxed.org/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Power Trip* (2003) Film. Directed by Paul Devlin. USA: Devlin Pix. Available at: <http://www.devlinpix.com/film/power-trip> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (2008) Film. Directed by Gini Reticker. USA: Balcony Releasing. Available at: <http://praythediabacktohell.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Prison Valley* (2009) Cross-Platform Programme. Directed by Philippe Brault and David Dufresne. France: ARTE. Available at: <http://prisonvalley.arte.tv> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Promise Land of Heavy Metal* (2008) Film. Directed by Kimmo Kuusniemi. Finland: YLE. Available at: <http://www.promisedlandofmetal.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- RiP: A Remix Manifesto* (2009) Film. Directed by Brett Gaylor. Canada: NFB. Available at: <http://ripremix.com/> [accessed 12 April 2012].
- Roger and Me* (1989) Film. Directed by Michael Moore. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures. Available at: <http://www.michaelmoore.com/books-films/roger-and-me> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Routes* (2009) Cross-Platform Programme. Directed by Barry J. Gibb. UK: Channel 4. Available at: <http://www.routesgame.com> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Sarah Palin: You Betcha!* (2011) Film. Directed by Nick Broomfield. USA: Freestyle Releasing. Available at: <http://www.nickbroomfield.com/#2036176/Sarah-Palin-You-Betcha> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Shine a Light* (2008) Film. Directed by Martin Scorsese. USA: Paramount Vantage. Available at: <http://www.shinealightmovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- SlamNation* (1998) Film. Directed by Paul Devlin. USA: Cinema Guild. Available at: <http://www.devlinpix.com/film/slamnation> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Smart Hearts* (1999) Cross-Platform Series. Directed by Victoria Mapplebeck. UK: Channel 4. Available at: http://www.factionfilms.co.uk/html/docseries_smarthearts.html [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Spirit of the Marathon* (2007) Film. Directed by Jon Dunham. USA: Image Entertainment. Available at: <http://www.marathonmovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].

- Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* (1999) Film. Directed by George Lucas. USA: Twentieth Century Fox. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120915/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones* (2002) Film. Directed by George Lucas. USA: Twentieth Century Fox. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0121765/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Steal This Film* (2006) Film. Directed by The League of Noble Peers. Sweden: The Pirate Bay. Available at: <http://www.stealthisfilm.com/Part1/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Steal This Film II* (2007) Film. Directed by Jamie King and The League of Noble Peers. Sweden: The Pirate Bay. Available at: <http://www.stealthisfilm.com/Part2/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Steal This Film: Trial Edition* (2009) Film. Directed by The League of Noble Peers. Sweden: The Pirate Bay. Available at: <http://www.stealthisfilm.com/trial/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Super Size Me* (2004) Film. Directed by Morgan Spurlock. USA: IDP Films. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0390521/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Tapestries of Hope* (2009) Film. Directed by Michealene Cristini Risley. USA: Freshwater Haven. Available at: <http://tapestriesofhope.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Tarnation* (2003) Film. Directed by Jonathan Caouette. USA: Wellspring Media. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0390538/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Age of Stupid* (2009) Film. Directed by Franny Armstrong. UK: Dogwoof Pictures. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/films/ageofstupid> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Blair Witch Project* (1999) Film. Directed by Dan Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez. USA: Artisan Entertainment. Available at: <http://www.blairwitch.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Cove* (2009) Film. Directed by Louie Psihoyos. USA: Lionsgate. Available at: <http://www.thecovemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Doctor, the Tornado, and the Kentucky Kid* (2006) Film. Directed by Mark Neale. USA: New Video. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0861769/> [accessed 8 March 2012].
- The End of the Line* (2009) Film. Directed by Rupert Murray. UK: Dogwoof Pictures. Available at: <http://endoftheline.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Idiots* (1998) Film. Directed by Lars von Trier. Denmark: Scanbox Entertainment. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0154421/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Miners' Campaign Tapes* (1984) Video Series. UK: National Union of Miners. Available at: http://filmstore.bfi.org.uk/acatalog/info_14813.html [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) Film. Directed by Pare Lorentz. USA: US Resettlement Administration. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/details/PareLorentz-ThePlowThatBrokeThePlains> [accessed 28 November 2011].

- The Quiet One* (1948) Film. Directed by Sidney Meyers. USA: Arthur Mayer & Joseph Burstyn. Available at: http://www.archive.org/details/the_quiet_one [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Race for Space* (1958) TV Programme. Directed by David L. Wolper. USA: Wolper, Inc. Available at: <http://www.davidlwolper.com/shows/details.cfm?showID=1> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The River* (1938) Film. Directed by Pare Lorentz. USA: Paramount Pictures. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/details/gov.fdr.352.2a.2> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The 'Stupid' Show* (2009) Web Series. Directed by Franny Armstrong. UK: Spanner Films. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/stupid-show> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984) Film. Directed by Rob Epstein. USA: TC Films International. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088275/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Tribe* (2006) Film. Directed by Tiffany Shlain. USA. Available at: <http://www.tribethefilm.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Virtual Revolution* (2010) Cross-Platform Series. Presented by Aleks Krotoski. UK: BBC. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00n4j0r> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- The Yes Men Fix the World: P2P Edition* (2010) Film. Directed by Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno, and Kurt Engfehr. UK: VODO. Available at: <http://vodo.net/theyesmen> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- This American Life* (2007) TV/Web Series. Presented by Ira Glass. USA: Showtime/Current. Available at: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/tv-archives> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Touching the Void* (2003) Film. Directed by Kevin Macdonald. UK: Pathé Distribution. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0379557/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Trembling Before G-D* (2001) Film. Directed by Sandi Simcha Dubowski. USA: New Yorker Films. Available at: http://newyorkerfilms.info/index.php?page=4&load_movie=269&film=Trembling-Before-G-D-%282001%29 [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Uncovered: The War on Iraq* (2004) Film. Directed by Robert Greenwald. USA: Cinema Libre. Available at: <http://www.truthuncovered.com> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Up the Yangtze* (2007) Film. Directed by Yung Chang. Canada: NFB. Available at: <http://films.nfb.ca/up-the-yangtze/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Urbanized* (2011) Film. Directed by Gary Hustwit. USA: Swiss Dots. Available at: <http://urbanizedfilm.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Us Now* (2009) Film. Directed by Ivo Gormley. UK: TVF International/VODO. Available at: <http://watch.usnowfilm.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Valentino: The Last Emperor* (2008) Film. Directed by Matt Tyrnauer. USA: Truly Indie. Available at: <http://www.valentinomovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].

- Vanguard* (2008) TV/Web Series. USA: Current TV. Available at: <http://current.com/shows/vanguard/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Video Nation* (1993) TV/Web Series. UK: BBC. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/network/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Waiting for 'Superman'* (2010) Film. Directed by Davis Guggenheim. USA: Paramount Vantage. Available at: <http://www.waitingforsuperman.com/action/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005) Film. Directed by Robert Greenwald. USA: Brave New Films. Available at: <http://www.walmartmovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Waterlife* (2009) Cross-Platform Programme. Directed by Kevin McMahon. Canada: NFB. Available at: <http://waterlife.nfb.ca/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- We Live in Public* (2009) Film. Directed by Ondi Timoner. USA: Abramorama. Available at: <http://www.weliveinpublicthemovie.com/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Why Wal-Mart Works: And Why That Drives Some People C-r-a-z-y* (2005) Film. Directed by Ron Galloway. USA: Hanover House. Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0486944/> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Why We Fight* (1943-45) Newsreel Series. Directed by Frank Capra. USA. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=Why%20We%20Fight%20frank%20capra> [accessed 28 November 2011].
- Winged Migration* (2003) Film. Directed by Jacques Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud, and Michel Debats. USA: Sony Pictures Classics. Available at: http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/index_flash.html [accessed 28 November 2011].

Websites

- 4Docs. Available at: <http://4docs.org.uk> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- 4oD. Available at: <http://channel4.com/programmes/4od> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- ArtistShare. Available at: <http://artistshare.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- BBC iPlayer. Available at: <http://bbc.co.uk/iplayer> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Box Office Mojo. Available at: <http://boxofficemojo.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Brave New Films. Available at: <http://bravenewfilms.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Brave New Theaters. Available at: <http://bravenewtheaters.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- British Council Film Festivals Directory. Available at: <http://film.britishcouncil.org/festivals-directory> [accessed 10 November 2011].

- Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation. Available at: <http://britdoc.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Clay Shirky's Blog. Available at: <http://shirky.com/weblog> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Current. Available at: <http://current.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Demand 5. Available at: <http://channel5.com/demand5> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- DocAgora. Available at: <http://docagora.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Docspace. Available at: <http://docspace.org.uk> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Doculink. Available at: <http://doculink.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Flattr. Available at: <http://flattr.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- GigaOM. Available at: <http://http://gigaom.com/> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- GiveMeaning. Available at: <http://givemeaning.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Good Screenings. Available at: <http://goodscreenings.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Henry Jenkins' Blog. Available at: <http://henryjenkins.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Hot Docs. Available at: <http://hotdocs.ca> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Hot Docs Doc Library. Available at: <http://hotdocslibrary.ca/en> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Hulu. Available at: <http://hulu.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- IDFA. Available at: <http://idfa.nl/nl.aspx> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- IDFA TV. Available at: <http://idfa.nl/industry/idfa-tv.aspx> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- IMDb. Available at: <http://imdb.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Indie Screenings. Available at: <http://indiescreenings.net> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- IndieGoGo. Available at: <http://indiegogo.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- indieWIRE. Available at: <http://indiewire.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Available at: <http://archive.org/web/web.php> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Kevin Kelly's Blog. Available at: <http://kk.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Kickstarter. Available at: <http://kickstarter.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Lawrence Lessig's Blog. Available at: <http://lessig.org/blog> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- MoveOn.org Available at: <http://moveon.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- MovieMobz. Available at: <http://moviemobz.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- MUBI. Available at: <http://mubi.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- MySpace. Available at: <http://myspace.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Netflix. Available at: <https://netflix.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- OurStage. Available at: <http://ourstage.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Power to the Pixel. Available at: <http://powertothepixel.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Reframe. Available at: <http://tribecafilminstitute.org/filmmakers/reframe> [accessed 10 November 2011].

- Screen International. Available at: <http://screendaily.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Sheffield Doc/Fest. Available at: <http://sheffdocfest.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- SnagFilms. Available at: <http://snagfilms.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- SnagLearning. Available at: <http://learning.snagfilms.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Spanner Films. Available at: <http://spannerfilms.net> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Spotify. Available at: <http://spotify.com/uk> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Sundance Film Festival. Available at: <http://sundance.org/festival> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Sunny Side of the Doc. Available at: <http://sunnysideofthedoc.com/uk> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- The D-Word. Available at: <http://d-word.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- The Hollywood Reporter. Available at: <http://hollywoodreporter.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- The Numbers. Available at: <http://the-numbers.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- The Pirate Bay. Available at: <http://thepiratebay.org> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- The Wrap. Available at: <http://www.thewrap.com/> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Variety. Available at: <http://variety.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- VODO. Available at: <http://vodo.net> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Wikipedia. Available at: <http://wikipedia.com> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Wired. Available at: <http://wired.com/> [accessed 10 November 2011].
- Working Films. Available at: <http://workingfilms.org/> [accessed 10 November 2011].

APPENDIX A

The DocAgora WebPlex

A.1 Introduction

As web tools become more accessible and comprehensible, researchers are able to use online systems to experiment with innovative methods for data collection. These new methods, which allow the public to add data to repositories rather than requiring researchers to collect information from individual sources, have practical and theoretical implications that go beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, I only consider the use of such tools to gather information for my analysis and do not go as far as to explore how such methods might work in other circumstances. This appendix describes the experience and knowledge I gained from developing an online archive for information about distributors of documentary films.⁷⁴ This database, referred to as the WebPlex, existed as an open resource that allowed anyone to contribute to and edit the information it contained. Since much of my research examined the Internet and how it has affected the process of distribution, it made sense for me to investigate how the sharing of information on the Web might have an impact upon distribution as well. However, to use the Web effectively as a research tool, I had to do more than just collect data from online spaces. To make the most out of this process and find out the most about distributors, I had to provide information and tools to the public and promote those resources to the point that users felt compelled to contribute. Through this process, I have discovered that facilitating user-engagement is an enormous hurdle for any online participatory project to overcome.

⁷⁴ I initially intended this information to be presented as a chapter in my research, and I designed the WebPlex to provide the data for my core analysis. It has necessarily been abridged and adapted in into this appendix.

Although there are a number of hurdles to overcome in order to set up an open research database, the actual process of collecting and analysing data often becomes far simpler and faster once everything can be mediated through an online environment, rather than an offline one. The flexibility of being able to adjust the design to suit user preferences and address user feedback adds value to the data collection process, creating potential benefits for both the researcher and user. Additionally, gathering data via the Web also enables a wider sample to be taken than could be gathered through traditional survey methods. In the case of my research, it created the possibility for information, which otherwise might not be accessible, to be entered directly by filmmakers. It also enables filmmakers to easily contribute information to the database, on their own initiative, without my solicitation. If a database is well designed, information can be arranged and quantified more easily than through traditional methods of research. Such techniques are still very novel and have yet to be widely implemented. In my research for this project, I was unable to find an example of a thesis in the area of media arts that attempted to use the Web to gather data in the manner that I intended to do with this experiment.

One reason why students have not commonly employed user-generated content sites to carry out their media studies research and practice is because of the enormous amount of effort this involves. Even though Web 2.0 technology has simplified the process of web publishing and collaboration, creating and managing a successful online portal is a complex process that involves far more than simply building a functional design. New social expectations make it essential that researchers promote themselves, along with their work, within the communities and systems they are researching, in order to build credibility and trust. Ultimately, reputation and connections play an important role not only in getting projects funded and made, but also in helping ensure projects get seen. As Section 4.4.2 argued and Chapter 6 demonstrated, a filmmaker with a strong online presence and fan following can potentially eliminate his or her dependency on institutional support and increase long-term career sustainability. Those who are shy in social

networks and fear the Web's ability to record and make discoverable anything that enters into it are at a significant disadvantage to those who are eager to participate in the ongoing debates on the Web. I knew that building my own personal network could significantly increase public knowledge of the WebPlex, but there was no way to guarantee an increase in user participation. It is misleading to think the Web works on the premise of, 'If you build it, they will come'. Web users are generally looking for two ingredients: information and attention. While information is abundant, attention is scarce. Effectively filtering information is one way to attract attention. Developing a system with sophisticated filtering capabilities was a key aim and challenge of the WebPlex.

Information may be the currency of the future, yet without attention, information has little value. The Web measures attention and this attention can have significant social, economical, and cultural benefits. Although there is often a correlation between the two, the quality of the information posted on a website is often subservient to the website's ability to command (and sustain) attention. The WebPlex was designed to facilitate the exchange of information within the documentary community by gathering individuals' personal knowledge and experience of distributing documentary films and opening that information up to the public. The WebPlex was inspired by the belief that creating a website that enabled personal experiences to be collected and filtered would not only help documentary filmmakers decide which avenues of distribution are most relevant and fruitful for their particular films, but it would also help the industry grow by fostering greater transparency and accountability. It was my hope that the WebPlex would aggregate the latest information and debates related to documentary distribution, and subsequently help filmmakers make informed decisions about whom to partner with and where to distribute their films. My ultimate aim was to create a system that would provide distribution guidance to documentary filmmakers by allowing them to learn from other documentary filmmakers about what resources were most useful and how to best employ new models of distribution. Through such a system, I could gain information and insight into what

practices worked best for releasing documentaries in the new online market.

A.2 Partnership Support

At the 2008 Hot Docs International Documentary Festival in Toronto, I developed a partnership with DocAgora, an international non-profit organisation based in Canada. Founded by Canadian documentarian Peter Wintonick, the group included one other Canadian producer, Amit Breuer, and two Americans, Cameron Hickey and Neil Seiling. DocAgora served as a think tank, researching and promoting new forms, platforms, and ways of financing digital documentary. It also hosted events in partnership with documentary markets and festivals around the world, including: Hot Docs, IDFA, and Sunny Side of the Doc. At the time, DocAgora received funding from the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), which it shared with DOC Toronto and DOC National in the DocAgora Ontario Partnership. Through a designated grant from the OMDC, DocAgora had the necessary funds to cover the cost of creating and maintaining an open database website. In April 2008, the DocAgora team and I decided to collaborate on this project. We agreed that, in order to comply with the requirements of my PhD, I would be the sole manager of my research, which would be positioned in the distribution arm of the new DocAgora website. DocAgora would provide the technical support and funding necessary to produce the website and populate the other areas of it. I learned that DocAgora had approximately Can\$100,000 from the funding grant to develop the site within a two-year completion period. It was agreed that I would have the creative freedom I needed to implement my research, the site development would be completed within two years, and the WebPlex would have the means to continue beyond the end of my research. These elements, along with DocAgora's established reputation as an event producer and think tank, gave me confidence that the project would successfully come to fruition.

A.3 Goals for the WebPlex

My approach to developing the WebPlex aimed to answer some key questions about how documentary distribution has changed since the advent of the digital age. In order to understand how technology has altered documentary distribution, I wanted to employ technology to help me fairly compare the distribution options that existed and to uncover how they functioned, particularly in terms of each one's capacity to generate revenues for filmmakers. Since so little comparative information about distributors existed, it seemed like a worthwhile effort to design a space that could aggregate information that normally was shared by word of mouth. The WebPlex was designed so that anyone could enter information into distributor profiles, creating a clearer picture of the deals and services each one offered. Producers could then evaluate distributors and post comments about the experiences they had working with them. This key feature was aimed to help filmmakers relate to and understand the track record of unfamiliar distributors and enable them to make informed decisions about whether or not to partner with them, based on the experiences of others. Each time a member of the documentary community would add a bit of information to the WebPlex, the collective knowledge would grow. The WebPlex's usefulness increased as people could filter distributors based on user evaluations and relevant criteria. It was my hope that by gathering information from the documentary community at large, this website could enable me to survey key aspects of the documentary economy. People's participation in the site was critical to generate understanding of the kind of relationships filmmakers have with their distributors and the typical financial returns associated with various deals. The WebPlex was positioned to be a valuable tool for my investigation into how the Web facilitates the sharing of information and the impact it has had upon traditional media business models.

If this WebPlex could be developed and used to its greatest capacity, it could become a valuable research tool, not just for those wanting to understand the

political economy of documentary, but also for anyone looking to distribute documentary content across multiple platforms. Information that was once shared only via word of mouth or in private forum discussions could now exist in a publicly accessed, collaboratively filtered, and easily searchable online database. With each bit of information about distribution deals and services that was added to this resource, producers could gain greater insight and the ability to compare distribution offers and find partners that best suited their projects. Many distributors promise more than they can deliver and take more than they deserve. The WebPlex had the potential to debunk the hype surrounding various outlets and get to the truth of the matter to find out actual revenue returns from distributors. Ultimately, the aim of this experiment was to not only understand the impact technology has had on documentary distribution but to also witness its effect. By enabling information to be collaboratively filtered, the WebPlex had the potential to reveal how different distribution outlets measured against each other, causing the most favourable (both financially and otherwise) to rise to the top of the listing. The documented exchange of information through social media fosters the transparency needed to build a stronger documentary industry. As this was an experiment that depended on many user participants, the expected outcome was largely unknown. My initial predictions were that distributors would not take action to enter the descriptive information into their profiles; however, I believed that filmmakers would take an interest in the project and would contribute to this task. Nevertheless, even the worst-case scenario, in which no one contributed anything, could offer valuable insight into the challenges of collaborative systems on the Web.

A.4 Research Methods

A.4.1 Initial Design and Development

The WebPlex was developed offline during 2008 and went live, taking over the existing homepage of DocAgora.org in January 2009. It was organised into five main categories of information: Events, Funders, Distribution, Concepts, and Tools. The section entitled 'Distribution' was the area I developed, although I occasionally added to and edited content in other areas of the WebPlex. This section served as a data repository for information regarding media distributors (including sales agents) and distribution outlets. As the developer of the Distribution section, I determined the data fields and added information on over 380 entities into the database. The programming and graphic design elements, with which I had limited involvement, were implemented by outsourced developers, who were hired and managed by Cameron Hickey. Hickey served as the overall project manager, relaying my requests to the developers and overseeing the programming process. The site was built on Drupal, a content management system that, if implemented properly, allows for changes to easily be made to the text and data fields. The WebPlex had an open login system, which meant that users did not have to create a DocAgora account and instead could login using their Facebook, Google, or OpenID accounts (Figure A.1). Once people were logged in, they could add, rank, and filter information on the site. Administers reviewed activity on the WebPlex in order to make sure the user-contributed data was reasonably accurate and authentic. Because users needed to login, every single change was attributable. Administers could revert pages to remove fraudulent data and block users, if necessary.

Figure A.1 WebPlex Login Page

DOCAGORA | rethinking docmedia

News Resources Help About Contact

Login to DocAgora | Create Account | Login using Facebook

Search Resources

My Account

In order to proceed you need to login to our site.
You can do that in one of 3 ways:

Use an account already have somewhere else:

Connect with Facebook

Google Account

Log in

Log in

Log in

Register for a new DocAgora Account

E-mail Address

You will need to check this account now to complete registration

Register for a new Account

RESOURCES

EVENTS

FUNDERS

DISTRIBUTION

CONCEPTS

TOOLS

ADD NEW RESOURCE

The DocAgora WebPlex has been developed with the support and partnership of:

Ontario
Ontario Media Development Corporation

DOC
DOCUMENTARY ORGANIZATION OF CANADA
DOCUMENTARISTES DU CANADA

ASOC
CENTER FOR SOCIAL MEDIA
School of Communication
American University

About
Who We Are
Partners
Contact
Terms of Service

Help
FAQs

CC BY-SA

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Canada License.
2009 DocAgora Association.

My aim in designing the Distribution section was to gather data on individual distributors in order to assess how the Internet has altered the ways in which filmmakers work with distributors. To facilitate this task, I needed to identify categories of distributors that would allow for comparison and filtering functions to effectively work on the site. The classifications were as follows:

Exhibition

- Independent Theater
- Video On Demand (Internet)
- Video On Demand (Cable/Satellite)
- Broadcaster (Public)
- Broadcaster (Commercial)
- Broadcaster (Cable/Satellite)
- Cultural Institution (Museums)
- Other

Distribution

- Theatrical
- Non-Theatrical
- Home Video Sales
- Home Video Rentals
- Educational
- Mobile Devices
- Airlines
- Other

Representation / Consulting

- Producers Rep
- Sales Agent
- Strategist/Consultant
- Attorney
- Other

My investigation was primarily interested in companies that fell into the main classifications of Exhibition and Distribution. Most companies could fit into more than one category, and once a box was ticked, that category would open a specific set of data fields. Whenever the 'Other' box was ticked, it opened a blank field where users could enter text. Figure A.2 illustrates how the data fields were laid out for the Distributor profiles.

Figure A.2 Distributor Data Fields (Sample)

DOCAGORA | rethinking docmedia

Logged in as nikki | My Account | Actions | Administer | Logout

News Resources Help About Contact

Search Resources

DISTRIBUTION : Name : Edit

Name

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please fill in all fields below with the essential information.

Name:
Please enter the name of this distribution entity.

Full Name:
Please enter the complete name of the entity if it is different from the shorter name used above (e.g. BBC, British Broadcasting Corporation).

Business Functions:
What types of services/functions does this Distribution Entity provide?
Please check the box next to each service or distribution channel that this entity provides.

- Exhibition**
 - Independent Theater
 - Video On Demand (Internet)
 - Video On Demand (Cable/Satellite)
 - Broadcaster (Public)
 - Broadcaster (Commercial)
 - Broadcaster (Cable / Satellite)
 - Cultural Institution (Museums)
 - Other
- Distribution**
 - Theatrical
 - Non-Theatrical
 - Home Video Sales
 - Home Video Rentals
 - Educational
 - Mobile Devices
 - Airlines
 - Other
- Representation / Consulting**
 - Producers Rep
 - Sales Agent
 - Strategist / Consultant
 - Attorney
 - Other

Logo:
Please upload a logo (if any).

New Upload:

Maximum Filesize: 2 MB
Allowed Extensions: jpg jpeg png gif
Must be an JPEG, PNG or GIF image

Figure A.2 (Continued)

TERMS AND RESTRICTIONS

Please provide as much information as possible as to the typical terms involved in dealing with this entity.

Length of License:
What is the average duration of a contract?

Royalties Payment Schedule:
How often are royalties typically paid?

Immediately Bi-Weekly Monthly
 Quarterly Annually Other

Exclusivity:
Are exclusive rights required?

Non-Exclusive
 Exclusive

Territories:
Please select all territories in which this entity exhibits content, licenses content, or does business.

Copyright:
Does the content copyright remain with the creator/producer during the license period?

Other
 Owned by Distributor
 Stays with Filmmaker

Typical Release Window:
For how long does the average film get exhibited/promoted?

Explanation of Terms:
Please use this space to clarify the terms of an average deal.

Establishing the means for a positive user experience was critical for the success of the WebPlex. The homepage aimed to be aesthetically appealing and informative, providing users with links to blog posts, news, resource updates, and event listings (Figure A.3). The process of adding and editing content needed to be effortless in order to facilitate participation. The aim was to create a frictionless system and a website that users would want to revisit in order to explore the latest information and contribute new data. A bookmarklet tool was created to reduce the burden on users, allowing them to save web pages into the DocAgora database as they browsed online. Users could install the bookmarklet tool in their browser so that if they came across an interesting site, they just needed to click the 'To DocAgora' button to open a window in which the user (after logging in) could submit the link, along with a title and description, directly into the appropriate silo of the WebPlex. This feature was designed to allow users to make contributions effortlessly, without having to independently return to the DocAgora website to enter information. In order to ensure a positive user experience it was also important to make sure the categories of the WebPlex were clearly designed and enough information was provided on the site so that visitors understood how to use it. Entries in the database needed to be classified uniquely and capable of being defined, redefined, and organised by the community members. For this reason, the profiles had to be extensive and clear, with no overlapping fields or potential for confusion. With distributors, this was often a challenge as many broadcasters (e.g. the BBC, Channel 4, PBS) have strands (i.e. Storyville, 3 Minute Wonders, Frontline) that are separate and yet overlapping. This was satisfied by offering the ability to link two 'related' items in the database.

Figure A.3 DocAgora WebPlex Homepage

DOCAGORA | rethinking docmedia

Login to DocAgora | Create Account | Login using Facebook

News Resources▼ Help About Contact

Search Resources

What is DocAgora?

RESOURCES

- EVENTS (126)
- FUNDERS (79)
- DISTRIBUTION (382)
- CONCEPTS (4)
- TOOLS (43)

ADD NEW RESOURCE

Pitch Positive
Observations on the historical development, the business and art of existing public pitching systems for documentary media

NEWS	RESOURCE UPDATES	UPCOMING EVENTS
<p>Docmedia Goes Cross-Media: Over the past few years, cross-media has emerged as a ...</p>	<p>Films Media Group Updated by nikki on Tue, 03/08/2010 - 11:57</p>	<p>IFP Independent Film Week New York City, United States 19/09/2010 - 24/09/2010</p>
<p>Crowdsourcing Documentary In this interesting article about crowdsourcing, the ...</p>	<p>Films Distribution Updated by nikki on Tue, 03/08/2010 - 11:55</p>	<p>MediMed Sitges, Spain 08/10/2010 - 10/10/2010</p>
<p>Advice on Pitching Documentary Ideas Condensing a documentary idea into seven minutes or ...</p>	<p>Filmoption International Updated by nikki on Tue, 03/08/2010 - 11:53</p>	<p>DOK Leipzig Leipzig, Germany 18/10/2010 - 24/10/2010</p>
<p>Has the Drive to Fund "Social Issue" Docs Affected Their Form? In surveying more than a year of films and filmmaker ...</p>	<p>FilmFlyNet Updated by nikki on Tue, 03/08/2010 - 11:51</p>	<p>UNAFF Stanford, United States 22/10/2010 - 30/10/2010</p>
<p>B-Side Shuts Down As reported in filmmaker magazine, B-Side has ...</p>	<p>Filmclix Updated by nikki on Tue, 03/08/2010 - 11:44</p>	<p>CPH:DOX Copenhagen, Denmark 04/11/2010 - 14/11/2010</p>
<p>2010 Academy Award Nominees for Documentary Feature "Burma VJ" A Magic Hour Films ...</p>	<p>Filmmakers Library Updated by nikki on Tue, 03/08/2010 - 11:43</p>	<p>BAFICI Buenos Aires, Argentina 06/04/2011 - 17/04/2011</p>

Image of the WebPlex homepage on 3 August 2010. Available at: <http://www.docagora.org> [accessed 3 August 2010].


A.4.2 Key Features

Collaborative filtering can be an efficient way to measure public opinion, which is why it was integral to the design of the WebPlex. Many websites (i.e. RottenTomatoes, IMDb, TripAdvisor, Amazon) poll or survey users to assess their sentiment towards a particular item or business. The WebPlex, at least for my research purposes, aimed to be a community maintained recommendation system that allowed people to fairly evaluate distributors. For that reason, the data could not be curated by any one individual in particular, but instead had to be an amalgamation of ratings from the masses. An image of the ratings system employed on the site can be seen in Figure A.4.

Figure A.4 WebPlex Rating Feature (Sample)

Al Jazeera Channel

modify
share
</> embed
discuss
email



Other Contacts:
 Montaser Marai
 montaser@aljazeera.net
 974 48 96252
www.aljazeera.net

Al Jazeera is a television network headquartered in Doha, Qatar. Initially launched as an Arabic news and current affairs satellite TV channel with the same name, Al Jazeera has since expanded into a network with several outlets, including the Internet and specialty TV channels in multiple languages, and in several regions of the world.

Services Offered:
 Exhibition
 Broadcaster (Cable / Satellite)

Source
www.wikipedia.org

Related:
 Al Jazeera Documentary Channel

Overall Rating: 8.4/10

Responsiveness	9.0	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>
Flexibility	10.0	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Revenue Share	6.0	<div style="width: 60%;"></div>
Honesty	10.0	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Promotion	7.0	<div style="width: 70%;"></div>

★ Rate this Distributor

Collaborative filtering can help users predict the kind of experience they will get if they employ a particular distributor, but only if there is a rich data pool. According to Schafer et al. (2007: 298-99), for collaborative filtering to work, there needs to be four conditions:

- 1) There are many items
- 2) There are many ratings per item
- 3) There are more users rating than items to be recommended
- 4) Users rate multiple times

The first point is the only one I had direct control over — the other three relied entirely upon a high level of audience engagement. Users needed to view the WebPlex not as a static resource but rather as a dynamic space where contributions were made on a regular basis. Ultimately, it did not matter how much work I put into building the WebPlex, its value depended on how many people contributed ratings and opinions.

User ratings and comments were the primary aim of the site and therefore they needed to feature prominently in the information architecture. Unfortunately, due to problems with the site development, these features never functioned as initially intended. Comments needed to be highly visible and quantified on every level of the website architecture, so that users could immediately see what distributors were most discussed and what kind of sentiment they provoked. Ratings also needed to be easily interpretable, with each one's overall score clearly visible and featured when looking at a list of distributors (enabling them to be compared). Problematically, user ratings were only displayed on individual distributor profile pages. Another feature that failed to be developed was the search functionality. Advanced search features were planned to allow for users to enter specific criteria in order to determine the most relevant distribution partners for their unique projects and the kind of revenues they might expect to achieve. However, this feature never went beyond a simple search box, which only searched the name fields for matches instead of all text within the broader database.

A.4.3 Outreach and Response

The initial plan was to launch the WebPlex in November 2008 at IDFA, but the development fell behind schedule and the beta launch was pushed to April 2009. DocAgora hosted a dedicated event on 7 May 2009 at Hot Docs in Toronto, where the WebPlex was explained and demonstrated to a room of approximately fifty festival delegates. At that time, I had personally populated all the information in the distribution section, which contained more than three hundred distributor entries. I had gathered the majority of this information from the distributors' own websites and through online searches. At that point, I had not done any specific outreach to solicit user input as the WebPlex was still a work-in-progress. The beta launch was intended to introduce the WebPlex to the documentary community for the first time, and all five members of DocAgora (myself included) were at this event. Overall, the event created interest in and support for the site, and the verbal sentiments expressed during and after the event were largely positive. The discussion that

unfolded in the room centered on how much the documentary community needed an 'honest broker' to help gather unbiased information about potential business partners and opportunities. Although the site was open to the public after its debut at Hot Docs, very few people used it. As the site's functionality was still very limited, we decided to refrain from further promotion until more work had been done to improve the WebPlex.

Over the next year, some progress was made on the WebPlex, but major issues with the search functionality and the ratings system remained, hindering my plans to do targeted outreach. During this time, I continued to update the WebPlex with new information and I accrued an email list of over 250 filmmakers, who had worked with distributors listed in the database. My plan was to personally contact all of them and request each one's input. I also started periodically 'tweeting' related news through the DocAgora Twitter account, and ultimately gathered a small following, which has since grown to more than a thousand followers. Furthermore, I created a Wikipedia entry for DocAgora in order to increase public awareness of the WebPlex. All of these activities were done in preparation for a DocAgora event, which took place in June 2010 at Sunny Side of the Doc in La Rochelle, France. As an introduction to this event, which centred on a cross-media pitching competition, the WebPlex was promoted to a room of approximately one hundred people. Additionally, while at the event, Cameron Hickey and I also planned further development of the WebPlex and possible partnerships with other organisations that might generate greater user contributions.

Ultimately the improvements that the WebPlex needed to function properly were never made, so in August 2010, after Hickey confirmed that no further development could happen on the WebPlex (due to both technical and funding limitations), I began my process of outreach. I first contacted approximately two hundred distributors (whose email addresses were listed in the database) using the 'email' feature of the WebPlex, which sent correspondence via an online form. About a week later I began sending personal emails from my DocAgora email account to a group of about fifty filmmakers, tailoring the request to mention each

person's film and at least one distributor that represented it. I decided to outreach to filmmakers in small groups so I could adjust my plan to improve the response rate. I also appealed to the D-Word community, posting a request for members to rate and comment on distributors with whom they had worked. Although I knew the WebPlex had not been developed to a level that made it fully user-friendly, I did not imagine that these efforts would result in none of the filmmakers I emailed, or anyone from the D-Word, taking the time to rate or comment on a distributor. However, I did get one response from one D-Word member on 15 September 2010 which said:

DocAgora looks like a wonderful idea. It would be extremely useful to have a resource to compare, rate and rank all the different funders and distributors of documentaries.

But I must say that when I took a brief look at the site, it was very confusing and difficult to understand. The entries seem to be in completely random order, and in most cases the only info is the tagline from the website. Unless there is some sort of logical order to the information and some sort of way to sort through it (e.g. deadline order, or total resources, or ranking) its [sic] not useful ... and therefore there is no incentive to add ratings.

Sorry to be so negative but I think a rethink of the website will be crucial to turn this into something as useful as it potentially can be.

This comment essentially summarised my own feelings about the WebPlex's limitations and my concerns about prematurely conducting outreach, without having all the necessary improvements in place. It became clear that, without further development funding and a complete process of redesign, the WebPlex was unlikely to ever gain a significant number of user contributions.

In terms of distributors' outreach responses, for the most part my requests, which asked distributors to update their profiles, were largely ignored. However, I could tell that the emails I sent were read by at least some because I observed an increase in site traffic during this time. Ultimately, from the estimated two hundred emails I sent, I received five responses. Here is a summary of them:

One request for a spelling change in the name of the distributor

One comment of: 'Thank you, your work looks excellent'

One comment of: 'Thank you very much' along with a suggested

additions to include in the distributor's profile

One request for help logging in to the site

One request to be removed from the WebPlex, as expressed in these two separate exchanges:

How can it be that everyone can edit every profile? The information displayed then doesn't mean anything - please remove us until this is cleared, thank you.

I just don't agree to have a profile that anyone can change - Wikipedia doesn't work like that either! And if you keep it as is, you should declare that very clearly as anyone can put anyone else out of business, easily -- so to say.

This negative reaction came from a well-established, traditional distributor of documentary films who, after a few exchanges, accepted the promise that I would monitor her company's profile and ensure that nobody put her company 'out of business' by abusing the WebPlex. The lack of users contributing to the site made it easy to police such behaviour. Abuse of the WebPlex has happened, but it has always originated from spammers and promoters rather than any direct attacks on legitimate businesses entered into the database. In general, as demonstrated by the lack of response to my outreach, distributors were largely apathetic towards the WebPlex. Of course, such sentiment is likely correlated with the apparent lack of user engagement with the site.

A.5 Barriers to Success

Several limitations have contributed to the WebPlex's inability to inspire user contributions. To assess its shortcomings, it is helpful to consider Magnus Ramage's (2010: 73-77) 'simple method' for evaluating collaborative technologies. Ramage creates a layered framework for evaluation, placing the measurement criteria in expanding concentric circles. At the centre, he positions 'efficiency', a quality that requires the technology works as planned without crashing. It is possible to argue that the WebPlex worked, since, for the most part, there were initially no major bugs in the system, despite its usability limitations. However, Ramage's next layer,

'effectiveness', acutely captures a key failure in the WebPlex's development, as viewed through this paradigm. Ramage elaborates on 'effectiveness' stating, 'even if the technology works well technically, it may not be doing what the users and other key stakeholders actually need' (Ibid.: 74). The WebPlex's lack of filtering features thwarted its overall growth and relevance to the documentary community. The WebPlex never fully moved beyond effectiveness to accomplish Ramage's next layer, 'usability', which measures 'how easy the technology is to use'. And, consequently, the WebPlex never reached the subsequent layers of 'standards', 'individual effects', 'group effects', 'organisational effects', and 'societal effects' (Ibid.). Ramage's framework is useful for considering what qualities collaborative technologies must have in order to achieve the widest aim, 'societal effects'. Although the WebPlex certainly aimed to achieve this goal, the technological hurdles and inert development largely eliminated that potential.

As the technical development of the WebPlex was largely beyond my control, it is unproductive to devote much time to analysing where it went wrong. However, there are measures I might have taken to increase the chance of user contributions. Rather than aim to collect a vast array of data on distribution, it could have been more effective to narrow the scope and reduce the number of data fields for each entry. It is possible that WebPlex users were overwhelmed by number of blank fields requesting information within distributor profiles. Early on, I put in a request to the developers to hide some of these fields, but this change was never implemented. Another thing I might have done differently is to focus on quality rather than quantity. I aimed to provide a broad overview of the industry and therefore attempted to include every distributor of documentaries that I could find, ranging from major Hollywood studios to minuscule distributors in foreign markets. As most documentaries are distributed by only a small number of dedicated distributors, it could have been more effective to concentrate on gathering information on these distributors and then constructing original, in-depth profiles, rather than copying text found on other websites for the more than 380 entries I ultimately created.

As the problems with the site's functionality became more apparent, it affected my enthusiasm for the WebPlex and my ability to *sell* people on the idea of contributing to it. Although I often spoke about the WebPlex to the filmmakers I met at festivals, I felt I had to issue a disclaimer, saying it was a 'work-in-progress'. These reservations, along with the very low site traffic, deterred me from doing some of the things I had initially intended to do – such as writing blog posts, posting video interviews, and generating other original content to enhance the site. It seemed unwise to spend time on these activities until I was confident that the WebPlex could inspire the kind of user engagement I hoped for and build enough of an audience to make it worth the effort. So, rather than focusing my efforts on promoting the WebPlex, I worked on building my own network, through my annual attendance at Sheffield Doc/Fest, IDFA, and other international events. Once the WebPlex was fully developed, I intended to outreach to these contacts and personally ask for their contributions, hoping to gain some level of critical mass that would allow the site to grow naturally. Ultimately, the unresolved design issues effectively prevented me from accomplishing this goal.

In hindsight, the goals I had for this project were clearly too ambitious to achieve. I genuinely imagined that the WebPlex would provoke a reasonable level of audience engagement and discourse around documentary distribution. At one point, I even developed a 'Film' feature for the site that would allow filmmakers to create distribution profiles for their own films and reveal details about their distribution strategies, including the methods and partners they employed and revenues they generated. I have come to understand that people have short attention spans and limited free time. If Channel 4 has difficulty getting people to contribute information to its 4Docs wiki, there is little hope for DocAgora to produce better results. Nevertheless, we designed strategies that aimed to inspire user engagement. For example, there was a plan to integrate with The D-Word, which would allow users to click a link and feed forum discussions directly into relevant areas of the WebPlex. However, building the technology to enable such aggregations could not happen until a properly designed database and working functionality

were in place on the WebPlex. Integration with The D-Word would likely produce greater user engagement with the WebPlex, as long as people understood how to use the aggregation features and why they should adopt the habit of doing so.

A.6 Conclusion

Certainly, the Web has the potential to alter the way filmmakers select distributors for their films by offering access to more information. If this information is accurate, up-to-date, and insightful, it could shift the power that traditionally belonged to distributors (who decided whether or not to take on a project) over to the filmmakers (who can decide whether or not to take on a distributor). Despite the growth of the Internet, there has yet to be a singular source for accurate information about distributors available online. Most of what is available exists as publicity on the distributors' websites, rather than personal accounts of the experiences filmmakers have had working with these distributors. Such testimonies can be of great value to the documentary community. Without this knowledge, people are certain to repeat each others' mistakes. And without resources that work to archive and share this information, the documentary community will experience significant challenges in its development.

In conclusion, building a useful website requires appropriate planning and solid funding for development activities. The fact that nothing existed like the WebPlex was perhaps not so much an indication that it was a truly innovative idea but more likely a reflection of the implementation challenges. I became involved in this project with the hope that the WebPlex would be used by the documentary community and would play a central role in my research. The fact that this did not materialise is disappointing. However, the data collection and design process allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of distributors and how they work. The development process and outreach efforts enabled me to experience the challenge of launching a new online project. Many valuable lessons have come out of this experience. Perhaps the most important was the understanding that, despite

the progress of Web 2.0, building a collaborative website still takes substantial funding and resources. As technology improves, costs decline, but we are not yet in an age where anyone can contribute to the Web in this way. I was fortunate to have DocAgora's support in this endeavour as I would not have gotten so far if I had attempted to do this project on my own. Yet even DocAgora, a well-connected organization with significant funds to spend, still did not have the means to successfully carry out a participatory project of the scale of the WebPlex. It is possible that several years from now, circumstances will be different and technology will afford everyone the opportunity to build functional, collaborative sites. Perhaps then the WebPlex will re-launch. For now, creating a user-generated site that both works well and engages a community remains far too large a task for inexperienced independents to successfully manage.

A.7 References

Ramage, M (2010) Evaluating collaborative technologies - a simple method. In: Donelan, H., Kear, K., and Ramage, M. (eds.) *Online Communication and Collaboration: A Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, 73-77.

Schafer, J.B., Frankowski, D., Herlocker, J., and Sen, S. (2007) Collaborative filtering recommender systems. In: Brusilovsky, P., Kobsa, A., and Nejdl, W. (eds.) *The Adaptive Web*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 291-324.

APPENDIX B

Box Office Source Data

Data gathered from *Variety* Box Office report available at www.variety.com

Table B.1 Documentary Films Grossing at Least \$1 Million at the US Box Office, 1990 to 2010

Film	Year	Distributor	Gross Made that Year	Inflation Adjusted Gross (*)
Fahrenheit 9/11	2004	Lionsgate/IFC	\$119,114,517	\$138,966,067
March Of The Penguins	2005	Warner Independent Pictures	\$77,217,134	\$87,734,800
Michael Jackson's This Is It	2009	Sony	\$43,855,342	\$43,706,234
Earth	2009	Disney	\$31,900,245	\$31,791,784
Inconvenient Truth, An	2006	Paramount Classics	\$23,814,997	\$26,171,596
Sicko (2007)	2007	Lionsgate	\$24,540,079	\$26,122,073
Bowling For Columbine	2002	MGM	\$21,550,529	\$26,121,687
Madonna: Truth Or Dare	1991	Miramax	\$15,012,935	\$24,670,293
Capitalism: A Love Story	2009	Overture Films	\$13,862,120	\$13,814,989
Super Size Me	2004	IDP	\$11,474,599	\$13,386,948
Religulous	2008	Lionsgate	\$12,598,179	\$13,038,726
Winged Migration	2003	Sony Pictures Classics	\$9,829,751	\$11,728,294
Hoop Dreams	1994	Fine Line Features	\$7,830,611	\$11,635,795
Buena Vista Social Club	1999	Artisan	\$7,002,182	\$9,220,223
Mad Hot Ballroom	2005	Paramount Classics	\$7,241,097	\$8,227,399
Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed	2008	Rocky Mountain Pictures	\$7,614,755	\$7,881,036
Spellbound (2003)	2003	ThinkFilm	\$5,728,679	\$6,835,131
Touching The Void	2004	IFC Films	\$4,592,742	\$5,358,165
Paris Is Burning	1991	Miramax	\$3,256,482	\$5,351,276
Fog of War, The	2003	Sony Pictures Classics	\$4,198,566	\$5,009,488
Real Cancun, The	2003	New Line Cinema	\$3,779,140	\$4,509,053
Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room	2005	Magnolia Pictures	\$3,922,438	\$4,456,709
Step Into Liquid	2003	Artisan	\$3,681,803	\$4,392,916
Fifty	1999	Warren Miller	\$3,193,540	\$4,205,140
When We Were Kings	1996	Gramercy	\$2,969,504	\$4,182,725
Unzipped	1995	Miramax	\$2,847,956	\$4,124,241
Young@Heart	2008	Fox Searchlight	\$3,907,492	\$4,044,133
Born Into Brothels	2004	ThinkFilm	\$3,430,672	\$4,002,426
Capturing The Friedmans	2003	Magnolia Pictures	\$3,119,313	\$3,721,785
Grizzly Man	2005	Lionsgate	\$3,178,403	\$3,611,330
Good Hair	2009	Roadside Attractions	\$3,622,699	\$3,610,382
Freeriders	1998	Warren Miller	\$2,622,484	\$3,506,718
Brief History of Time, A	1992	Triton	\$2,221,465	\$3,501,645
Food, Inc.	2009	Magnolia Pictures	\$3,470,407	\$3,458,608
Wordplay	2006	IFC Films	\$3,096,625	\$3,403,050
My Architect	2003	New Yorker	\$2,725,444	\$3,251,843
Snowriders 2: Journey Co	1997	Warren Miller	\$2,287,639	\$3,130,552
Black Diamond Rush	1993	Warren Miller	\$1,990,721	\$3,045,645
Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Adventure	2001	Cowboy Pictures	\$2,400,825	\$2,992,427
Control Room	2004	Magnolia Pictures	\$2,556,717	\$2,982,818
Vertical Reality	1994	Warren Miller	\$1,941,478	\$2,884,914
Endless Winter	1995	Warren Miller	\$1,966,454	\$2,847,702
Snowriders	1996	Warren Miller	\$2,001,690	\$2,819,501
Riding Giants	2004	Sony Pictures Classics	\$2,276,368	\$2,655,746
Beyond The Mat	2000	Lionsgate	\$2,053,648	\$2,646,218
Man On Wire	2008	Magnolia Pictures	\$2,219,688	\$2,297,308

Table B.1 (continued)

Film	Year	Distributor	Gross Made that Year	Inflation Adjusted Gross (*)
Rhyme & Reason	1997	Miramax	\$1,608,277	\$2,200,869
Life And Times Of Hank Greenberg, T Corporation, The	2000	Cowboy Pictures	\$1,707,848	\$2,200,639
Hearts Of Darkness	1991	Zeitgeist	\$1,842,317	\$2,149,356
Story Of The Weeping Camel, The	2004	Triton	\$1,261,597	\$2,073,143
Brother's Keeper	2004	ThinkFilm	\$1,763,052	\$2,056,881
Microcosmos	1992	Creative Thinking	\$1,284,048	\$2,024,016
Neil Young: Heart Of Gold	1996	Miramax	\$1,432,888	\$2,018,309
Looking For Richard	2006	Paramount Classics	\$1,828,069	\$2,008,964
Celluloid Closet, The	1996	Fox Searchlight	\$1,408,575	\$1,984,062
Standing in the Shadows of Motown	1996	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,400,591	\$1,972,817
Blue	2002	Artisan	\$1,610,732	\$1,952,390
Baraka (1993)	1993	Miramax	\$1,265,446	\$1,936,032
Who Killed The Electric Car?	1993	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$1,226,521	\$1,876,480
Kid Stays in the Picture, The	2006	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,678,874	\$1,845,006
Murderball	2002	Focus Features	\$1,460,748	\$1,770,592
Steeper And Deeper	2005	ThinkFilm	\$1,531,154	\$1,739,711
Rivers And Tides	1992	Warren Miller	\$1,032,365	\$1,627,294
Startup.com	2003	Roxie Releasing	\$1,362,867	\$1,626,095
Every Little Step	2001	Artisan	\$1,283,356	\$1,599,596
Dogtown & Z Boys	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,587,167	\$1,581,771
Why We Fight	2002	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,296,427	\$1,571,417
Backstage (2000)	2006	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,426,122	\$1,567,243
American Movie	2000	Miramax	\$1,191,835	\$1,535,733
No End In Sight	1999	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,165,795	\$1,535,077
35 Up	2007	Magnolia Pictures	\$1,433,319	\$1,525,719
Rize	1992	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$957,956	\$1,510,004
Valentino: The Last Emperor	2005	Lionsgate	\$1,313,744	\$1,492,688
Anne Frank Remembered	2009	Vitagraph	\$1,477,177	\$1,472,155
It Might Get Loud	1996	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,036,598	\$1,460,111
Metallica - Some Kind Of Monster	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,451,903	\$1,446,967
X Games 3D The Movie	2004	IFC Films	\$1,208,621	\$1,410,049
Festival Express	2009	Disney	\$1,391,434	\$1,386,703
War Room, The	2004	ThinkFilm	\$1,174,079	\$1,369,750
Listen Up	1993	October	\$885,357	\$1,354,526
Eyes Of Tammy Faye, The	1990	Warner Bros.	\$776,699	\$1,345,119
Latcho Drom	2000	Lionsgate	\$1,029,591	\$1,326,675
U.S. Vs. John Lennon, The	1994	Shadow Distribution	\$867,985	\$1,289,771
In The Shadow Of The Moon	2006	Lionsgate	\$1,109,146	\$1,218,901
Fast, Cheap & Out Of Control	2007	ThinkFilm	\$1,134,652	\$1,207,798
Visions of Light	1997	Sony Pictures Classics	\$878,960	\$1,202,825
Road Scholar	1993	Kino International	\$724,804	\$1,108,893
	1993	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$673,579	\$1,030,523

Table B.2 Advanced Analysis of Table B.3 Data

Year	Year-End Inflation (%)	Inflation At 2009-End	Films Released	Box Office Revenue (*)	Revenue < \$10k (**)	%	Revenue \$50k (*)	%	Revenue \$100k- \$50k (**)	%	Revenue \$100k- \$1M (**)	%	Revenue > \$10M (**)	%	Average Revenue Per Film (**)	Films Not IMAX And < \$10M (**)	Average Revenue For films In Column I (**)
1990	5.39%	73.18%	4	\$2,207,644	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%	1	25%	\$551,911	4	\$551,911
1991	4.25%	64.33%	7	\$32,579,839	0	0%	3	43%	0	0%	1	14%	2	29%	\$4,654,263	6	\$1,318,258
1992	3.03%	57.63%	18	\$10,369,637	3	17%	3	17%	4	22%	4	22%	4	22%	\$577,202	18	\$577,202
1993	2.96%	52.99%	18	\$11,577,238	1	6%	6	33%	3	17%	2	11%	6	33%	\$643,180	18	\$643,180
1994	2.61%	48.59%	16	\$16,679,669	4	25%	5	31%	1	6%	3	19%	2	13%	\$1,042,479	15	\$336,258
1995	2.81%	44.81%	26	\$10,450,831	5	19%	7	27%	5	19%	7	27%	2	8%	\$401,955	26	\$401,955
1996	2.93%	40.86%	27	\$16,633,908	5	19%	6	22%	5	19%	5	19%	6	22%	\$616,071	27	\$616,071
1997	2.34%	36.85%	28	\$9,024,552	4	14%	7	25%	5	18%	9	32%	3	11%	\$322,305	28	\$322,305
1998	1.55%	33.72%	31	\$8,051,102	5	16%	12	39%	2	6%	11	35%	1	3%	\$259,713	31	\$259,713
1999	2.19%	31.68%	32	\$19,443,159	7	22%	8	25%	5	16%	9	28%	3	9%	\$607,599	32	\$607,599
2000	3.38%	28.85%	50	\$14,576,015	10	20%	13	26%	6	12%	17	34%	4	8%	\$291,520	50	\$291,520
2001	2.83%	24.64%	39	\$8,749,680	14	36%	12	31%	1	3%	10	26%	2	5%	\$224,351	39	\$224,351
2002	1.59%	21.21%	46	\$37,795,805	8	17%	12	26%	4	9%	18	39%	3	7%	\$821,648	45	\$259,425
2003	2.27%	19.31%	53	\$47,130,456	11	21%	13	25%	4	8%	17	32%	7	13%	\$889,254	52	\$680,811
2004	2.68%	16.67%	68	\$181,784,306	11	16%	15	22%	8	12%	24	35%	8	12%	\$2,673,299	66	\$445,929
2005	3.39%	13.62%	63	\$115,092,694	13	21%	16	25%	9	14%	19	30%	5	8%	\$1,826,868	62	\$441,256
2006	3.24%	9.90%	90	\$43,322,152	20	22%	38	42%	8	9%	18	20%	5	6%	\$481,357	89	\$192,703
2007	2.85%	6.45%	84	\$37,179,335	18	21%	27	32%	13	15%	23	27%	2	2%	\$442,611	83	\$133,220
2008	3.85%	3.50%	90	\$36,573,775	20	22%	30	33%	13	14%	23	26%	3	3%	\$406,375	89	\$264,439
2009	-0.34%	-0.34%	70	\$109,080,394	14	20%	23	33%	10	14%	14	20%	6	9%	\$1,556,291	67	\$295,036
Grand Total - 1990 decade			207	\$137,037,578	34	16%	57	28%	30	14%	54	26%	2	1%	\$662,017	205	\$491,373
Grand Total - 2000 decade			653	\$631,284,614	139	21%	199	30%	76	12%	183	28%	11	2%	\$966,745	642	\$309,503.76
Grand Totals			860	\$768,322,192	173	20%	256	30%	106	12%	237	28%	13	2%	\$893,398	847	\$353,521.73

Notes (*) Inflation data from <http://inflationdata.com>

(**) Inflation adjusted to 2009 end

Table B.3 Documentary Films Released in US Theaters, 1990 to 2010

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
1	Fahrenheit 9/11	2004	Lionsgate	\$119,114,517	\$138,966,067	13,832
2	March Of The Penguins	2005	Warner Bros.	\$77,217,134	\$87,734,800	21,595
3	Michael Jackson's This Is It	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$43,855,342	\$43,706,234	6,962
4	Earth	2009	Disney	\$31,900,245	\$31,791,784	10,022
5	Sicko (2007)	2007	Lionsgate	\$24,540,079	\$26,122,073	5,529
6	Inconvenient Truth, An	2006	Paramount Classics	\$23,814,997	\$26,171,596	5,444
7	Bowling For Columbine	2002	MGM	\$21,550,529	\$26,121,687	5,052
8	Madonna: Truth Or Dare	1991	Miramax	\$15,012,935	\$24,670,293	4,101
9	Capitalism: A Love Story	2009	Overture Films	\$13,862,120	\$13,814,989	4,086
10	Religulous	2008	Lionsgate	\$12,598,179	\$13,038,726	3,204
11	Super Size Me	2004	IDP	\$11,474,599	\$13,386,948	2,312
12	Winged Migration	2003	Sony Pictures Classics	\$9,829,751	\$11,728,294	2,493
13	Hoop Dreams	1994	Fine Line Features	\$7,830,611	\$11,635,795	2,679
14	Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed	2008	Rocky Mountain Pictures	\$7,614,755	\$7,881,036	3,444
15	Mad Hot Ballroom	2005	Paramount Classics	\$7,241,097	\$8,227,399	2,287
16	Buena Vista Social Club	1999	Artisan	\$7,002,182	\$9,220,223	1,581
17	Spellbound (2003)	2003	ThinkFilm	\$5,728,679	\$6,835,131	1,440
18	Touching The Void	2004	IFC Films	\$4,592,742	\$5,358,165	1,468
19	Fog of War, The	2003	Sony Pictures Classics	\$4,198,566	\$5,009,488	1,340
20	Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room	2005	Magnolia Pictures	\$3,922,438	\$4,456,709	1,228
21	Young@Heart	2008	Fox Searchlight	\$3,907,492	\$4,044,133	1,685
22	Real Cancun, The	2003	New Line Cinema	\$3,779,140	\$4,509,053	4,746
23	Step Into Liquid	2003	Artisan	\$3,681,803	\$4,392,916	829
24	Good Hair	2009	Roadside Attractions	\$3,622,699	\$3,610,382	1,248
25	Food, Inc.	2009	Magnolia Pictures	\$3,470,407	\$3,458,608	1,212
26	Born Into Brothels	2004	ThinkFilm	\$3,430,672	\$4,002,426	1,009
27	Paris Is Burning	1991	Miramax	\$3,256,482	\$5,351,276	805
28	Fifty	1999	Warren Miller	\$3,193,540	\$4,205,140	116
29	Grizzly Man	2005	Lionsgate	\$3,178,403	\$3,611,330	985
30	Capturing The Friedmans	2003	Magnolia Pictures	\$3,119,313	\$3,721,785	837
31	Wordplay	2006	IFC Films	\$3,096,625	\$3,403,050	1,160
32	When We Were Kings	1996	Gramercy	\$2,969,504	\$4,182,725	965
33	Unzipped	1995	Miramax	\$2,847,956	\$4,124,241	649
34	My Architect	2003	New Yorker	\$2,725,444	\$3,251,843	673
35	Freeriders	1998	Warren Miller	\$2,622,484	\$3,506,718	122
36	Control Room	2004	Magnolia Pictures	\$2,556,717	\$2,982,818	773
37	Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antart	2001	Cowboy Pictures	\$2,400,825	\$2,992,427	681
38	Snowriders 2: Journey Co	1997	Warren Miller	\$2,287,639	\$3,130,552	139
39	Riding Giants	2004	Sony Pictures Classics	\$2,276,368	\$2,655,746	635
40	Brief History of Time, A	1992	Triton	\$2,221,465	\$3,501,645	570
41	Man On Wire	2008	Magnolia Pictures	\$2,219,688	\$2,297,308	959
42	Beyond The Mat	2000	Lionsgate	\$2,053,648	\$2,646,218	1,053
43	Snowriders	1996	Warren Miller	\$2,001,690	\$2,819,501	135
44	Black Diamond Rush	1993	Warren Miller	\$1,990,721	\$3,045,645	157
45	Endless Winter	1995	Warren Miller	\$1,966,454	\$2,847,702	122
46	Vertical Reality	1994	Warren Miller	\$1,941,478	\$2,884,914	122
47	Corporation, The	2004	Zeitgeist	\$1,842,317	\$2,149,356	416
48	Neil Young: Heart Of Gold	2006	Paramount Classics	\$1,828,069	\$2,008,964	706
49	Story Of The Weeping Camel, The	2004	ThinkFilm	\$1,763,052	\$2,056,881	551
50	Life And Times Of Hank Greenberg, The	2000	Cowboy Pictures	\$1,707,848	\$2,200,639	529
51	Who Killed The Electric Car?	2006	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,678,874	\$1,845,006	755
52	Standing in the Shadows of Motown	2002	Artisan	\$1,610,732	\$1,952,390	635
53	Rhyme & Reason	1997	Miramax	\$1,608,277	\$2,200,869	868
54	Every Little Step	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,587,167	\$1,581,771	627
55	Murderball	2005	ThinkFilm	\$1,531,154	\$1,739,711	632
56	Valentino: The Last Emperor	2009	Vitagraph	\$1,477,177	\$1,472,155	383
57	Kid Stays in the Picture, The	2002	Focus Features	\$1,460,748	\$1,770,592	401
58	It Might Get Loud	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,451,903	\$1,446,967	572
59	No End In Sight	2007	Magnolia Pictures	\$1,433,319	\$1,525,719	613
60	Microcosmos	1996	Miramax	\$1,432,888	\$2,018,309	447
61	Why We Fight	2006	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,426,122	\$1,567,243	537
62	Looking For Richard	1996	Fox Searchlight	\$1,408,575	\$1,984,062	535
63	Celluloid Closet, The	1996	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,400,591	\$1,972,817	377
64	X Games 3D The Movie	2009	Disney	\$1,391,434	\$1,386,703	1,424
65	Rivers And Tides	2003	Roxie Releasing	\$1,362,867	\$1,626,095	383
66	Rize	2005	Lionsgate	\$1,313,744	\$1,492,688	584
67	Dogtown & Z Boys	2002	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,296,427	\$1,571,417	468
68	Brother's Keeper	1992	Creative Thinking	\$1,284,048	\$2,024,016	361
69	Startup.com	2001	Artisan	\$1,283,356	\$1,599,596	382
70	Blue	1993	Miramax	\$1,265,446	\$1,936,032	337

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
71	Hearts Of Darkness	1991	Triton	\$1,261,597	\$2,073,143	376
72	Baraka (1993)	1993	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$1,226,521	\$1,876,480	330
73	Metallica - Some Kind Of Monster	2004	IFC Films	\$1,208,621	\$1,410,049	570
74	Backstage (2000)	2000	Miramax	\$1,191,835	\$1,535,733	1,081
75	Festival Express	2004	ThinkFilm	\$1,174,079	\$1,369,750	398
76	American Movie	1999	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,165,795	\$1,535,077	403
77	In The Shadow Of The Moon	2007	ThinkFilm	\$1,134,652	\$1,207,798	600
78	U.S. Vs. John Lennon, The	2006	Lionsgate	\$1,109,146	\$1,218,901	441
79	Anne Frank Remembered	1996	Sony Pictures Classics	\$1,036,598	\$1,460,111	390
80	Steeper And Deeper	1992	Warren Miller	\$1,032,365	\$1,627,294	97
81	Eyes Of Tammy Faye, The	2000	Lionsgate	\$1,029,591	\$1,326,675	367
82	35 Up	1992	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$957,956	\$1,510,004	188
83	Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S	2008	Magnolia Pictures	\$910,873	\$942,725	433
84	Jesus Camp	2006	Magnolia Pictures	\$902,364	\$991,657	440
85	War Room, The	1993	October	\$885,357	\$1,354,526	236
86	Fast, Cheap & Out Of Control	1997	Sony Pictures Classics	\$878,960	\$1,202,825	345
87	American Teen	2008	Paramount Vantage	\$870,143	\$900,571	536
88	Latcho Drom	1994	Shadow Distribution	\$867,985	\$1,289,771	346
89	More Than A Game	2009	Lionsgate	\$855,523	\$852,614	383
90	Tyson	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$854,120	\$851,216	343
91	Ballets Russes	2005	Zeitgeist	\$781,491	\$887,937	316
92	Trembling Before G-d	2001	New Yorker	\$781,362	\$973,902	177
93	Listen Up	1990	Warner Bros.	\$776,699	\$1,345,119	397
94	Into Great Silence (US)	2007	Zeitgeist	\$771,725	\$821,475	279
95	F*ck	2006	ThinkFilm	\$751,379	\$825,731	351
96	First Descent	2005	Universal	\$750,805	\$853,071	352
97	Lost In La Mancha	2003	IFC Films	\$732,981	\$874,551	229
98	Fade To Black	2004	Paramount Classics	\$729,020	\$850,518	337
99	Cross, The	2009	Gener8Xion Entertainment	\$728,039	\$725,564	507
100	Encounters at the End of the World	2008	ThinkFilm	\$726,330	\$751,729	381
101	Visions of Light	1993	Kino International	\$724,804	\$1,108,893	189
102	11th Hour, The	2007	Warner Bros.	\$707,343	\$752,942	411
103	Cove, The	2009	Roadside Attractions	\$686,970	\$684,634	359
104	Wigstock: The Movie	1995	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$686,152	\$993,645	210
105	King Of Kong: A Fistful Of Quarters, The	2007	Picturehouse Films	\$677,914	\$721,616	270
106	Road Scholar	1993	Goldwyn Entertainment	\$673,579	\$1,030,523	209
107	Kurt And Courtney	1998	Roxie Releasing	\$666,980	\$891,868	194
108	To Be And To Have (Etre Et Avoir)	2003	New Yorker	\$661,666	\$789,462	185
109	Wildfire: Feel The Heat	1999	Primesco	\$654,764	\$862,170	289
110	Up the Yangtze	2008	Zeitgeist	\$651,538	\$674,322	246
111	Dust To Glory	2005	IFC Films	\$640,013	\$727,189	321
112	Anvil: The Story of Anvil	2009	Abramorama Entertainment	\$636,092	\$633,929	194
113	Shanghai Ghetto	2002	Menemsha Films	\$619,456	\$750,851	138
114	Going Upriver: The Long War Of John...	2004	ThinkFilm	\$614,138	\$716,490	382
115	Inside Deep Throat	2005	Universal	\$612,558	\$695,994	164
116	Filth And The Fury, The	2000	Fine Line Features	\$612,192	\$788,837	222
117	Hands On A Hardbody	1998	Providence Entertainment	\$563,482	\$753,474	175
118	Kurosawa And Mifune	2002	Cowboy Pictures	\$544,487	\$659,980	110
119	Wild Man Blues	1998	Fine Line Features	\$533,759	\$713,729	181
120	Great Day in Harlem, A	1995	Castle Hill	\$527,034	\$763,219	130
121	Weather Underground, The	2003	Shadow Distribution	\$523,662	\$624,803	206
122	Girl Next Door, The (2000)	2000	Indican Pictures	\$521,519	\$672,001	93
123	Trials Of Henry Kissinger, The	2002	First Run	\$511,454	\$619,940	120
124	Mr. Death	2000	Lionsgate	\$498,490	\$642,327	171
125	Leopard Son, The	1996	Discovery Channel Prods.	\$461,937	\$650,666	341
126	Tibet: Cry Of The Snow Lion	2003	Artistic License	\$461,137	\$550,202	176
127	Last Days, The (1999)	1999	October	\$460,885	\$606,877	261
128	Gunner Palace	2005	Palm Pictures	\$449,800	\$511,067	270
129	Heart Of The Game, The	2006	Miramax	\$445,374	\$489,446	190
130	I Am Trying to Break Your Heart	2002	Cowboy Pictures	\$431,940	\$523,560	150
131	Wonder Of It All, The	2009	Indican Pictures	\$424,575	\$423,131	137
132	Porn Star: The Legend Of Ron Jeremy	2001	Maelstrom Entertainment	\$421,516	\$525,384	71
133	Gypsy Caravan	2007	Shadow Distribution	\$420,974	\$448,112	198
134	Dark Days	2000	Palm Pictures	\$417,676	\$538,194	94
135	Trouble The Water	2008	Zeitgeist	\$411,750	\$426,149	182
136	Amandla	2003	Artisan	\$405,331	\$483,618	118
137	Still, We Believe: The Boston Red Sox...	2004	ThinkFilm	\$396,803	\$462,934	187
138	Bittersweet Motel	2000	Little Villa/JDF	\$391,653	\$504,663	126
139	Where in the World Is Osama Bin Laden?	2008	The Weinstein Company	\$384,955	\$398,417	276
140	Into The Arms Of Strangers: Stories Of T	2000	Warner Bros.	\$382,807	\$493,264	142

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
141	Genghis Blues	1999	Roxie Releasing	\$380,992	\$501,677	106
142	Grateful Dawg	2001	Sony Pictures Classics	\$360,251	\$449,023	211
143	Source, The	1999	Wellspring Media	\$355,234	\$467,759	128
144	Hunting Of The President, The	2004	Regent Releasing	\$353,284	\$412,162	147
145	Incident At Oglala	1992	Miramax	\$352,875	\$556,229	110
146	Keep The River On Your Right	2001	IFC Films	\$350,714	\$437,136	135
147	Sex Is...	1993	Outsider	\$346,557	\$530,205	44
148	Nico-Icon	1995	Roxie Releasing	\$343,789	\$497,855	71
149	For All Mankind	1990	Apollo	\$342,573	\$593,282	66
150	Hype!	1996	Lionsgate	\$338,701	\$477,081	139
151	Road To Guantanamo, The	2006	IDP	\$326,876	\$359,222	91
152	Last Waltz, The	2002	MGM	\$322,313	\$390,680	68
153	Trekkies	1999	Paramount Classics	\$318,246	\$419,055	1,188
154	42: Forty Two Up	1999	First Run	\$314,919	\$414,674	67
155	America's Heart And Soul	2004	Disney	\$314,402	\$366,800	213
156	Boys Of Baraka, The	2005	ThinkFilm	\$309,472	\$351,625	81
157	Grass	2000	Unapix	\$308,029	\$396,909	104
158	This Film Is Not Yet Rated	2006	IFC Films	\$306,020	\$336,302	174
159	Down From The Mountain	2001	Cowboy Pictures	\$302,339	\$376,840	140
160	Crazy Love	2007	Magnolia Pictures	\$301,027	\$320,433	159
161	Power and Terror: Noam Chomsky in Our Ti	2002	First Run	\$297,872	\$361,055	53
162	Bigger, Stronger, Faster	2008	Magnolia Pictures	\$296,181	\$306,538	150
163	God Grew Tired Of Us	2007	Newmarket Films	\$292,556	\$311,416	85
164	Singing Revolution, The	2007	Abramorama Entertainment	\$290,776	\$309,521	72
165	Scratch	2002	Palm Pictures	\$289,885	\$351,374	96
166	American Pimp	2000	Seventh Art Releasing	\$287,724	\$370,745	54
167	American Hardcore	2006	Sony Pictures Classics	\$279,665	\$307,339	156
168	Bonhoeffer	2003	First Run	\$279,330	\$333,281	79
169	Planet B-Boy	2008	Elephant Eye Films	\$273,621	\$283,189	68
170	Taxi To The Dark Side	2008	ThinkFilm	\$273,354	\$282,913	209
171	For The Bible Tells Me So	2007	First Run	\$272,846	\$290,435	92
172	Deep Water	2007	IFC Films	\$271,632	\$289,143	130
173	Outrage	2009	Magnolia Pictures	\$267,894	\$266,983	116
174	Paper Clips	2004	Slowhand Cinema Releasing	\$263,893	\$307,873	139
175	Gimme Shelter (re) '01	2000	Kit Parker Films	\$259,772	\$334,728	53
176	Superstar: Andy Warhol	1991	Aries	\$259,297	\$426,095	55
177	Short Cut To Nirvana: Kumbh Mela	2004	Mela Films	\$256,982	\$299,810	79
178	Morning Light	2008	Disney	\$255,904	\$264,853	152
179	Sex With Strangers	2002	David Keith Company	\$254,852	\$308,910	116
180	Place Called Chiapas, A	1998	Zeitgeist	\$254,155	\$339,850	47
181	Unmistaken Child	2009	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$253,146	\$252,285	78
182	Year Of The Horse	1997	October	\$252,941	\$346,141	142
183	Dancemaker	1999	Artistic License	\$252,735	\$332,792	87
184	Our Song	2001	IFC Films	\$251,281	\$313,201	79
185	Mayor Of The Sunset Strip	2004	First Look	\$249,070	\$290,580	120
186	Panama Deception, The	1992	Empowerment Project	\$248,623	\$391,899	63
187	Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten	2007	IFC First Take	\$248,362	\$264,373	105
188	Surfwise	2008	Magnolia Pictures	\$247,728	\$256,391	94
189	Life Apart, A	1997	First Run	\$243,237	\$332,861	60
190	Gay Sex in the 70s	2005	Lovett Releasing	\$242,608	\$275,653	55
191	Cruise, The	1998	Artisan	\$240,390	\$321,443	85
192	Manufacturing Consent	1993	Zeitgeist	\$239,301	\$366,112	22
193	Manufactured Landscapes	2007	Zeitgeist	\$236,418	\$251,659	113
194	Steep	2007	Sony Pictures Classics	\$235,215	\$250,378	168
195	Ram Dass Fierce Grace	2002	Zeitgeist	\$234,301	\$283,999	66
196	My Kid Could Paint That	2007	Sony Pictures Classics	\$231,574	\$246,503	185
197	I.O.U.S.A.	2008	Roadside Attractions	\$231,290	\$239,378	144
198	Standard Operating Procedure	2008	Sony Pictures Classics	\$226,807	\$234,738	179
199	Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till, The	2005	ThinkFilm	\$226,106	\$256,904	94
200	Ballad Of Ramblin Jack, The	2000	Lot 47	\$225,960	\$291,160	113
201	War Tapes, The	2006	SenArt Films	\$225,308	\$247,603	92
202	Cockettes, The	2002	Strand Releasing	\$220,165	\$266,865	73
203	Ayn Rand: A Sense Of Life	1998	Strand Releasing	\$219,456	\$293,451	57
204	Watermarks	2005	Kino International	\$218,975	\$248,801	118
205	Bus 174	2003	ThinkFilm	\$218,745	\$260,994	83
206	10 Questions For The Dalai Lama	2007	Monterey Media	\$217,407	\$231,422	109
207	New York Doll	2005	First Independent Pictures	\$216,642	\$246,151	92
208	Promises	2002	Cowboy Pictures	\$213,759	\$259,100	67
209	Beauty Academy of Kabul, The	2006	Shadow Distribution	\$213,288	\$234,394	121
210	Agronomist, The	2004	ThinkFilm	\$211,656	\$246,930	95

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
211	Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War...	2004	Cinema Libre	\$209,321	\$244,206	33
212	Yes Men, The	2004	MGM	\$208,891	\$243,705	83
213	Iraq In Fragments	2006	Typecast Releasing	\$205,873	\$226,245	133
214	Darwin's Nightmare	2005	International Film Circuit	\$205,714	\$233,734	93
215	Mondovino	2005	ThinkFilm	\$204,275	\$232,099	84
216	Sick (1997)	1997	Lionsgate	\$202,659	\$277,332	76
217	My Date With Drew	2005	DEJ Releasing	\$202,492	\$230,073	137
218	Lightning In A Bottle	2004	Sony Pictures Classics	\$201,711	\$235,328	134
219	Deliver Us From Evil	2006	Lionsgate	\$201,275	\$221,192	94
220	Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey	1995	Orion Classics	\$200,561	\$290,441	75
221	Enlighten Up!	2008	Balcony Releasing	\$199,696	\$206,679	72
222	That's Entertainment 3	1994	MGM	\$193,491	\$287,515	28
223	Saltmen Of Tibet, The	1998	Zeitgeist	\$191,145	\$255,594	60
224	Calle 54	2000	Miramax	\$187,308	\$241,355	48
225	Chop Suey	2001	Zeitgeist	\$179,914	\$224,248	39
226	Bush's Brain	2004	Tartan Films	\$177,110	\$206,627	57
227	This Old Cub	2004	Emerging Pictures	\$174,771	\$203,898	50
228	Soul Power	2009	Sony Pictures Classics	\$174,607	\$174,013	152
229	Protocols Of Zion	2005	ThinkFilm	\$173,525	\$197,161	74
230	Unreasonable Man, An	2007	IFC First Take	\$172,839	\$183,981	102
231	Touch The Sound	2005	Shadow Distribution	\$172,111	\$195,554	126
232	Man Named Pearl, A	2007	Shadow Distribution	\$169,002	\$179,897	141
233	Bridge, The	2006	First Stripe	\$167,106	\$183,642	59
234	Our Brand Is Crisis	2006	Koch Lorber Films	\$165,808	\$182,215	45
235	Constantine's Sword	2008	First Run	\$165,086	\$170,859	62
236	One Day In September	2000	Sony Pictures Classics	\$162,314	\$209,149	51
237	Five Obstructions, The	2004	Koch Lorber Films	\$160,440	\$187,179	38
238	Chris & Don: A Love Story	2008	Zeitgeist	\$159,697	\$165,281	74
239	Fassbinder	2003	Wellspring Media	\$159,256	\$190,015	44
240	Synthetic Pleasures	1996	Caipirinha	\$155,863	\$219,542	45
241	Nanking	2007	ThinkFilm	\$154,166	\$164,104	46
242	Ziggy Stardust...Spiders From Mars (re)	2002	Cowboy Pictures	\$153,463	\$186,015	47
243	American Dream	1992	Miramax	\$153,449	\$241,878	47
244	Gleaners And I, The	2001	Zeitgeist	\$152,866	\$190,535	49
245	Girls Rock!	2008	Shadow Distribution	\$152,862	\$158,207	144
246	Music From The Inside Out	2005	Emerging Pictures	\$152,053	\$172,764	40
247	Go Tigers!	2001	IFC Films	\$151,779	\$189,180	129
248	4 Little Girls	1997	Green Valley	\$148,809	\$203,640	16
249	Shooting Porn	1997	Caryn Horwitz Prod	\$148,737	\$203,541	9
250	Once In A Lifetime	2006	Miramax	\$144,601	\$158,910	59
251	Devil Came On Horseback, The	2007	International Film Circuit	\$142,413	\$151,594	65
252	Cave Of The Yellow Dog	2006	Tartan Films	\$141,803	\$155,835	94
253	Message To Love	1997	Strand Releasing	\$141,324	\$193,397	47
254	Sex Drugs And Democracy	1994	Red Hat Productions	\$139,958	\$207,969	26
255	My Winnipeg	2008	IFC Films	\$138,936	\$143,794	51
256	Modulations	1998	Strand Releasing	\$138,674	\$185,431	55
257	Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Te	2006	Seventh Art Releasing	\$136,574	\$150,089	34
258	Gigantic	2003	Cowboy Pictures	\$136,121	\$162,412	59
259	Perfect Candidate, A	1996	Seventh Art Releasing	\$135,679	\$191,112	62
260	Be Here To Love Me: Townes Van Zandt	2005	Palm Pictures	\$135,119	\$153,523	42
261	First Saturday in May, The	2008	Truly Indie	\$133,679	\$138,354	51
262	Stoked: The Rise And Fall Of Gator	2003	Palm Pictures	\$132,652	\$158,273	49
263	Brothers At War	2009	IDP	\$132,188	\$131,739	58
264	Nagoyqatsi	2002	Miramax	\$132,026	\$160,030	35
265	Troublesome Creek	1997	Artistic License	\$131,553	\$180,026	48
266	Concert For George	2003	Arenaplex	\$131,350	\$156,719	127
267	Call + Response	2008	Independent	\$130,600	\$135,167	28
268	Stolen	2006	International Film Circuit	\$130,600	\$143,523	69
269	Dig!	2004	Palm Pictures	\$127,067	\$148,244	53
270	Home Movie	2002	Cowboy Pictures	\$126,537	\$153,377	40
271	September 11 (11 Mins 9 Seconds 1 Image)	2003	Empire Pictures	\$125,994	\$150,329	47
272	Tie-Died	1995	ISA	\$125,297	\$181,448	114
273	Deep Blue	2005	Miramax	\$124,929	\$141,945	37
274	Stop Making Sense (re)	1999	Palm Pictures	\$124,528	\$163,974	41
275	Billabong Odyssey	2003	Arenaplex	\$124,500	\$148,546	70
276	Leni Riefenstahl	1994	Kino International	\$122,846	\$182,541	14
277	After Innocence	2005	New Yorker	\$122,538	\$139,229	47
278	Komediant, The	2002	New Yorker	\$122,356	\$148,309	46
279	Crude	2009	First Run	\$122,199	\$121,784	27
280	Fidel	2002	First Run	\$121,304	\$147,034	23

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
281	Revolution Will Not Be Televised, The	2003	Vitagraph	\$120,656	\$143,960	32
282	Stone Reader, The	2003	JETFilms	\$120,246	\$143,471	57
283	Broadway: The Golden Age	2004	Dada Films	\$119,855	\$139,830	76
284	Examined Life	2009	Zeitgeist	\$115,449	\$115,056	45
285	Bra Boys	2008	Berkala Films	\$113,730	\$117,707	48
286	Games People Play: New York	2004	Artistic License	\$113,622	\$132,558	19
287	Moon Over Broadway	1998	Artificial Eye	\$112,732	\$150,742	30
288	Sir! No Sir!	2006	Balcony Releasing	\$112,674	\$123,824	54
289	Sound And Fury	2000	Artistic License	\$112,036	\$144,363	55
290	In The Face Of Evil	2004	non-fiction films	\$110,497	\$128,912	35
291	Darfur Now	2007	Warner Bros.	\$109,107	\$116,141	89
292	Jimmy Carter Man From Plains	2007	Sony Pictures Classics	\$108,807	\$115,821	101
293	Ballerina	2009	First Run	\$108,732	\$108,362	43
294	War/Dance	2007	ThinkFilm	\$108,495	\$115,489	83
295	Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral On...	2004	First Run	\$107,005	\$124,838	32
296	King Corn	2007	Balcony Releasing	\$105,822	\$112,644	58
297	Daddy and the Muscle Academy	1992	Zeitgeist	\$105,397	\$166,135	7
298	Al Franken: God Spoke	2006	Balcony Releasing	\$103,800	\$114,071	61
299	Fighter	2001	First Run	\$103,466	\$128,962	30
300	Stevie	2003	Lionsgate	\$103,401	\$123,372	54
301	Sharkwater	2007	Rocky Mountain Pictures	\$102,908	\$109,542	108
302	FLOW: For Love Of Water	2008	Independent	\$102,506	\$106,091	80
303	Yousou N'Dour: I Bring What I Love	2009	Shadow Distribution	\$102,225	\$101,877	53
304	Yves Saint Laurent: His Life And Times	2004	Empire Pictures	\$101,690	\$118,638	23
305	Guerilla: The Taking Of Patty Hearst	2004	Magnolia Pictures	\$100,711	\$117,495	38
306	Trumbo	2008	IDP	\$98,340	\$101,779	19
307	Fellini: I'm A Born Liar	2003	First Look	\$96,446	\$115,074	19
308	Proud American	2008	Slowhand Cinema Releasing	\$96,435	\$99,807	756
309	Ernesto Che Guevara	1996	International Film Circuit	\$96,386	\$135,765	8
310	Imelda	2004	Unico Entertainment	\$95,960	\$111,953	27
311	Paragraph 175	2000	New Yorker	\$95,328	\$122,834	10
312	Biggie And Tupac	2002	Roxie Releasing	\$94,874	\$114,998	23
313	Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer	2004	Lantern Lane Entertainment	\$94,045	\$109,718	23
314	No Impact Man	2009	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$93,752	\$93,433	37
315	My Best Fiend	1999	New Yorker	\$93,423	\$123,016	35
316	Live Nude Girls, Unite!	2000	First Run	\$92,780	\$119,551	26
317	Jihad For Love, A	2008	First Run	\$92,336	\$95,565	32
318	Martha and Ethel	1995	Sony Pictures Classics	\$91,874	\$133,046	74
319	Weapons Of The Spirit	1990	First Run	\$91,638	\$158,702	21
320	Praying With Lior	2008	First Run	\$91,542	\$94,743	30
321	Art & Copy	2009	Seventh Art Releasing	\$91,398	\$91,087	34
322	Blindsight	2008	Spark Entertainment	\$89,780	\$92,920	35
323	Stairway to Heaven (re)	1995	Sony Repertory Pictures	\$89,726	\$129,936	9
324	Fetishes	1997	CVR	\$88,660	\$121,328	14
325	Black Gold	2006	California Newsreel	\$88,223	\$96,953	50
326	Kurt Cobain About A Son	2007	Balcony Releasing	\$88,034	\$93,709	46
327	America: Freedom To Fascism	2006	Cinema Libre	\$87,400	\$96,049	10
328	Brandon Teena Story, The	1998	Zeitgeist	\$87,316	\$116,757	25
329	Searching For The Wrong Eyed Jesus	2005	Shadow Distribution	\$85,772	\$97,455	64
330	51 Birch Street	2006	Truly Indie	\$84,692	\$93,073	22
331	Earth Will Swallow You, The	2002	Hanson Brothers	\$83,263	\$100,924	24
332	Unforeseen, The	2008	Cinema Guild	\$82,385	\$85,266	31
333	Better Living Through Circuitry	2000	Seventh Art Releasing	\$82,378	\$106,148	29
334	Lifestyle, The	2000	Seventh Art Releasing	\$82,284	\$106,027	15
335	I Have Never Forgotten You	2007	Luminous Velocity	\$81,982	\$87,267	64
336	Herb & Dorothy	2009	Arthouse Films	\$81,492	\$81,215	40
337	Emerald Cowboy	2003	Indican Pictures	\$81,460	\$97,193	36
338	Word Wars	2004	Seventh Art Releasing	\$81,345	\$94,902	20
339	Waco: the Rules of Engagement	1997	Somford Entertainment	\$79,338	\$108,571	40
340	Afghan Star	2009	Zeitgeist	\$78,526	\$78,259	33
341	Unmade Beds	1998	Chelsea Pictures	\$78,428	\$104,872	5
342	Future Of Food, The	2005	Cinema Libre	\$78,277	\$88,939	32
343	Lost Boys Of Sudan	2004	Shadow Distribution	\$74,881	\$87,361	45
344	How To Cook Your Life	2007	Roadside Attractions	\$74,129	\$78,908	47
345	Nomi Song, The	2005	Palm Pictures	\$74,113	\$84,208	17
346	Stranded: I've Come From A Plane That Crash	2008	Zeitgeist	\$72,829	\$75,376	47
347	Shoot Down	2008	Magic Lamp	\$72,265	\$74,792	42
348	Marcello Mastroianni: I Remember	1999	First Look	\$72,068	\$94,897	8
349	Air Guitar Nation	2007	Shadow Distribution	\$71,395	\$75,998	87
350	Crossing the Bridge	2006	Strand Releasing	\$70,935	\$77,954	25

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
351	Hybrid	2002	Indican Pictures	\$70,865	\$85,896	57
352	Bustin' Down The Door	2008	Screen Media Films	\$70,488	\$72,953	42
353	Business of Being Born, The	2008	International Film Circuit	\$69,991	\$72,439	16
354	Bright Leaves	2004	First Run	\$69,818	\$81,454	46
355	Zoo	2007	ThinkFilm	\$69,704	\$74,198	31
356	Baraka (re) '02	2002	Vitagraph	\$68,803	\$83,397	3
357	Manda Bala (Send A Bullet)	2007	Slowhand Cinema Releasing	\$68,646	\$73,071	55
358	Pray The Devil Back To Hell	2008	Balcony Releasing	\$67,895	\$70,269	31
359	Radiohead: Meeting People is Easy	1999	Seventh Art Releasing	\$67,275	\$88,585	16
360	Rock School	2005	Picturehouse Films	\$64,310	\$73,070	49
361	Paris Was a Woman	1996	Zeitgeist	\$64,303	\$90,575	6
362	Big Bang, The	1990	Triton	\$63,828	\$110,540	19
363	End of the Road	2000	Slow Loris Films	\$63,473	\$81,788	10
364	Darshan	2006	IFC First Take	\$63,361	\$69,631	33
365	Lagerfeld Confidential	2007	Koch Lorber Films	\$63,301	\$67,382	16
366	Long Night's Journey Into Day	2000	Seventh Art Releasing	\$63,208	\$81,446	14
367	Horse Boy, The	2009	Zeitgeist	\$63,099	\$62,884	18
368	Carlos Castaneda: Enigma Of A Sorcerer	2004	Indican Pictures	\$62,233	\$72,605	25
369	Shake Hands with the Devil (2005)	2005	Independent	\$62,013	\$70,460	12
370	Barenaked In America	2000	Shooting Gallery	\$61,666	\$79,459	32
371	Maya Lin: Strong Clear Vision	1995	Ocean	\$61,067	\$88,434	18
372	Freebird: The Movie	1996	Cabin Fever Entertainment	\$60,932	\$85,826	26
373	Yo Soy, Del Son a La Salsa	1997	Nova Creative Releasing	\$60,700	\$83,066	28
374	Throw Down Your Heart	2009	Argot Pictures	\$60,236	\$60,031	20
375	Way We Get By, The	2009	International Film Circuit	\$59,306	\$59,104	49
376	Bloodline	2008	Cinema Libre	\$59,292	\$61,365	20
377	It's All True	1993	Paramount	\$59,062	\$90,360	16
378	Maxed Out	2007	Magnolia Pictures	\$58,828	\$62,620	17
379	Voices Of Iraq	2004	Magnolia Pictures	\$57,999	\$67,665	20
380	Only The Strong Survive	2003	Miramax	\$57,581	\$68,702	46
381	Yes Men Fix The World, The	2009	Shadow Distribution	\$56,545	\$56,353	17
382	America The Beautiful	2008	First Independent Pictures	\$56,083	\$58,044	30
383	War Photographer	2002	First Run	\$56,055	\$67,945	3
384	Vajra Sky Over Tibet	2006	Direct Pictures	\$55,534	\$61,029	10
385	Boys: The Sherman Brothers' Story, The	2009	Disney	\$55,513	\$55,324	19
386	Rape Of Europa, The	2007	Menemsha Films	\$53,661	\$57,120	12
387	Naked In Ashes	2005	Paradise Filmworks	\$52,499	\$59,650	23
388	Frank and Ollie	1995	Disney	\$52,334	\$75,787	54
389	Screamers	2006	Maya Releasing	\$52,034	\$57,183	9
390	Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story	2008	InterPositive Media	\$52,023	\$53,842	33
391	Kestrel's Eye	2000	First Run	\$51,731	\$66,658	18
392	Under Our Skin	2009	Shadow Distribution	\$51,722	\$51,546	41
393	Goebbels Experiment, The	2005	First Run	\$51,711	\$58,755	19
394	Shakespeare Behind Bars	2006	International Film Circuit	\$51,631	\$56,740	36
395	Hiding And Seeking	2004	First Run	\$50,881	\$59,361	17
396	Regret To Inform	1999	Artistic License	\$50,598	\$66,626	18
397	Divan	2004	Zeitgeist	\$50,323	\$58,710	25
398	Transformation: The Life And Legacy Of..	2007	Reel Diva Consultants	\$49,919	\$53,137	1
399	Burma VJ	2009	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$49,342	\$49,174	17
400	Alice Neel	2007	SeeThink Productions	\$49,309	\$52,488	13
401	This So-Called Disaster	2004	IFC Films	\$48,053	\$56,061	11
402	Ghosts Of Cite Soleil	2007	ThinkFilm	\$47,793	\$50,874	22
403	Terror's Advocate	2007	Magnolia Pictures	\$47,724	\$50,801	17
404	Woodstock (Dir. Cut)	1994	Warner Bros.	\$47,720	\$70,909	14
405	Lung Ta: the Forgotten Tibet	1992	Zeitgeist	\$47,208	\$74,413	2
406	Hip Hop Project, The	2007	ThinkFilm	\$46,208	\$49,187	42
407	Line King: Al Hirschfeld, The	1996	Castle Hill	\$45,711	\$64,387	18
408	Arguing The World	1998	First Run	\$45,331	\$60,615	2
409	Body of War	2008	The Film Sales Company	\$44,876	\$46,445	18
410	Billy The Kid	2007	Elephant Eye Films	\$44,809	\$47,698	14
411	Sobibor	2001	New Yorker	\$44,611	\$55,604	18
412	In A Dream	2009	International Film Circuit	\$44,442	\$44,291	28
413	William Eggleston: In The Real World	2005	Palm Pictures	\$44,435	\$50,487	9
414	Carpati: 50 Miles, 50 Years	1996	Artistic License	\$44,431	\$62,584	13
415	Get Bruce!	1999	Miramax	\$44,337	\$58,381	11
416	Wittgenstein	1993	Zeitgeist	\$44,291	\$67,762	4
417	State Of Mind, A	2005	Kino International	\$44,204	\$50,225	23
418	Secret Lives: Hidden Children...WWII	2003	Cinema Guild	\$43,985	\$52,480	28
419	On The Ropes	1999	Wellspring Media	\$43,953	\$57,876	47
420	Moving The Mountain	1995	October	\$43,635	\$63,190	17

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
421	CSNY: Deja Vu	2008	Roadside Attractions	\$43,451	\$44,970	45
422	Benjamin Smoke	2000	Cowboy Pictures	\$43,430	\$55,962	22
423	Divine Trash	2000	Wellspring Media	\$42,982	\$55,384	28
424	My Flesh And Blood	2003	Strand Releasing	\$42,897	\$51,182	20
425	Feed	1992	Original	\$42,796	\$67,458	3
426	Timothy Leary's Dead	1997	Strand Releasing	\$42,692	\$58,422	20
427	Crips and Bloods: Made In America	2009	Argot Pictures	\$42,488	\$42,344	8
428	Dare Not Walk Alone	2008	Indican Pictures	\$42,400	\$43,883	22
429	Watermelon Woman, The	1997	First Run	\$42,162	\$57,697	6
430	Etoiles: Dancers Of The Paris Ballet	2002	First Run	\$42,150	\$51,091	14
431	Tom Dowd & The Language Of Music	2004	Palm Pictures	\$40,919	\$47,739	16
432	Catwalk	1996	Arrow Releasing	\$40,863	\$57,558	10
433	Deep Blues	1992	Tara Releasing	\$40,858	\$64,404	5
434	Refusenik	2008	Abramorama Entertainment	\$40,766	\$42,192	12
435	Licensed To Kill	1997	Deep Focus Prod	\$40,672	\$55,658	4
436	Tying The Knot	2004	IDP	\$40,576	\$47,338	13
437	Bob Marley: Time Will Tell	1992	IRS Releasing	\$40,570	\$63,950	4
438	Dharma Brothers, The	2008	Balcony Releasing	\$40,462	\$41,877	13
439	Girlhood	2003	Wellspring Media	\$40,437	\$48,247	22
440	Rape Of The Soul	2006	Slowhand Cinema Releasing	\$39,975	\$43,931	18
441	Brother Minister	1995	C.Connect	\$39,766	\$57,587	4
442	Roman Polanski: Wanted And Desired	2008	ThinkFilm	\$39,394	\$40,772	49
443	Personal Journey, A	1998	Miramax	\$39,075	\$52,250	3
444	Cats Of Mirikitani, The	2007	Independent	\$38,925	\$41,434	11
445	Tsahal	1995	New Yorker	\$38,773	\$56,149	3
446	Ayurveda: The Art of Being	2002	Kino International	\$38,214	\$46,320	11
447	Anthem	1997	Zeitgeist	\$38,213	\$52,293	17
448	Beautiful Losers	2008	Independent	\$38,025	\$39,355	12
449	Paper Dolls	2006	Strand Releasing	\$37,896	\$41,646	16
450	Year Of The Yao	2005	Fine Line Features	\$37,837	\$42,991	16
451	Incident At Loch Ness	2004	Abramorama Entertainment	\$37,675	\$43,954	12
452	Tell Them Who You Are	2005	ThinkFilm	\$37,629	\$42,754	28
453	Fuel	2008	Intention Media	\$36,647	\$37,929	15
454	Sacco And Vanzetti	2007	First Run	\$36,607	\$38,967	15
455	Excellent Cadavers	2006	Icarus Films	\$36,503	\$40,115	12
456	We Live In Public	2009	Abramorama Entertainment	\$36,028	\$35,906	8
457	Turandot Project, The	2001	Zeitgeist	\$36,004	\$44,876	21
458	Blossoms Of Fire	2000	New Yorker	\$35,763	\$46,082	6
459	Louise Bourgeois	2008	Zeitgeist	\$35,706	\$36,955	28
460	Twist (1993)	1993	Triton	\$35,631	\$54,513	12
461	Awesome: I F%#!'in' Shot That	2006	ThinkFilm	\$34,899	\$38,352	35
462	Decade Under The Influence, A	2003	IFC Films	\$34,837	\$41,566	12
463	Me & Isaac Newton	2000	First Look	\$34,661	\$44,662	14
464	Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madame	1996	In Pictures	\$34,402	\$48,457	4
465	Real Dirt On Farmer John, The	2006	CAVU Pictures	\$34,298	\$37,692	13
466	Your Mommy Kills Animals	2007	Independent	\$34,000	\$36,192	1
467	Pressure Cooker	2009	Independent	\$33,973	\$33,857	11
468	Of Time And The City	2009	Strand Releasing	\$32,677	\$32,566	13
469	Return With Honor (1999)	1999	Ocean	\$32,615	\$42,946	12
470	My Country, My Country	2006	Zeitgeist	\$32,506	\$35,723	26
471	Long Way Home, The	1997	Seventh Art Releasing	\$32,256	\$44,141	18
472	Been Rich All My Life	2006	First Run	\$32,118	\$35,296	19
473	Pinochet Case, The	2002	Icarus Films	\$32,051	\$38,849	2
474	Dalai Lama Renaissance	2008	Independent	\$31,526	\$32,628	17
475	Uncovered: The War On Iraq	2004	Cinema Libre	\$31,481	\$36,728	7
476	Children Of Chabannes, The	2000	Castle Hill	\$31,403	\$40,464	9
477	Hats Off	2008	Canobie Films	\$31,082	\$32,169	11
478	Tibet: A Buddhist Trilogy	2006	Truly Indie	\$31,029	\$34,099	7
479	Superstar In A House Dress	2004	Abramorama Entertainment	\$30,927	\$36,081	4
480	Sans Soleil / Jetee, La	2003	New Yorker	\$30,878	\$36,842	3
481	Case Of The Grinning Cat, The	2006	Icarus Films	\$30,877	\$33,932	12
482	Soul In The Hole	1997	Northern Arts Entertainment	\$30,697	\$42,008	10
483	Sisters In Law	2006	Women Make Movies	\$30,296	\$33,294	11
484	Gunnin' for That #1 Spot	2008	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$30,282	\$31,341	17
485	Our Daily Bread	2006	Icarus Films	\$30,240	\$33,232	17
486	Romantic	2006	Kino International	\$30,202	\$33,191	18
487	American Swing	2009	Magnolia Pictures	\$30,156	\$30,053	4
488	Lipstick & Dynamite	2005	Koch Lorber Films	\$30,113	\$34,215	16
489	Our City Dreams	2009	First Run	\$30,104	\$30,002	11
490	Who Gets To Call It Art	2006	Palm Pictures	\$30,034	\$33,006	5

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
491	Betrayal - Nerakhoon, The	2008	Cinema Guild	\$29,890	\$30,935	21
492	Moving Midway	2008	First Run	\$29,427	\$30,456	22
493	Reel Paradise	2005	Wellspring Media	\$28,933	\$32,874	32
494	Fighting For Life	2008	Truly Indie	\$28,900	\$29,911	6
495	Hearts And Minds (re)	2004	Rialto	\$28,754	\$33,546	5
496	Southpaw	2000	Shooting Gallery	\$28,365	\$36,550	38
497	Forever	2007	Icarus Films	\$28,237	\$30,057	19
498	Wrestling With Angels: Tony Kushner	2006	Balcony Releasing	\$28,172	\$30,960	16
499	1991: The Year Punk Broke	1992	Tara Releasing	\$27,806	\$43,830	16
500	Beyond Vanilla	2003	Strand Releasing	\$27,396	\$32,687	7
501	Guest of Cindy Sherman	2009	Independent	\$27,053	\$26,961	4
502	24 City (Er shi si cheng ji)	2009	Cinema Guild	\$26,978	\$26,886	15
503	Let It Come Down: Paul Bowles	1999	Zeitgeist	\$26,527	\$34,930	11
504	Abduction: The Megumi Yokota Story	2006	Sagewood Cinema Ventures	\$26,456	\$29,074	8
505	Jung (War) in the Land of the Mujaheddin	2001	Human Rights Watch	\$26,167	\$32,615	3
506	American Casino	2009	Argot Pictures	\$26,155	\$26,066	9
507	Garden, The	2009	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$25,193	\$25,107	18
508	Lake Of Fire	2007	ThinkFilm	\$25,110	\$26,729	32
509	Dear Jesse	1998	Cowboy Pictures	\$24,981	\$33,404	17
510	Who The Hell Is Juliette?	1998	Kino International	\$24,958	\$33,373	9
511	Trudell	2006	Balcony Releasing	\$24,688	\$27,131	19
512	Order of Myths, The	2008	Cinema Guild	\$24,682	\$25,545	16
513	Lou Reed's Berlin	2008	Third Rail Releasing	\$24,058	\$24,899	5
514	Primo Levi's Journey	2007	Cinema Guild	\$23,934	\$25,477	6
515	Silverlake Life	1993	Zeitgeist	\$23,894	\$36,556	2
516	Massoud, L'Afghan	2002	New Yorker	\$23,833	\$28,888	5
517	Emmanuel's Gift	2005	First Look	\$23,728	\$26,960	10
518	Riding the Rails	1997	Artistic License	\$23,658	\$32,375	8
519	Mandela	1997	Palm Pictures	\$23,332	\$31,929	14
520	American Storytellers	2003	Indican Pictures	\$23,168	\$27,643	11
521	Islam: What The West Needs To Know	2006	Quixotic Media	\$22,939	\$25,209	3
522	James Ellroy: Demon Dog of American Crime	1998	First Run	\$22,742	\$30,410	4
523	High Lonesome	1994	Tara Releasing	\$22,705	\$33,738	8
524	Family Fundamentals	2002	Deep Focus Prod	\$22,688	\$27,500	8
525	Ballet	1995	Zipporah	\$22,446	\$32,505	2
526	Giuliani Time	2006	Cinema Libre	\$22,392	\$24,608	6
527	Yang Ban Xi: The 8 Modelworks	2006	Shadow Distribution	\$22,311	\$24,519	23
528	Naked Fame	2005	Regent Releasing	\$22,137	\$25,152	11
529	Power Trip	2004	Artistic License	\$22,088	\$25,769	21
530	Steal A Pencil For Me	2007	Seventh Art Releasing	\$22,025	\$23,445	6
531	Czech Dream (Cesky Sen)	2007	Independent	\$21,968	\$23,384	15
532	Street Fight	2006	Argot Pictures	\$21,927	\$24,097	13
533	Nursery University	2009	Variance Films	\$21,882	\$21,808	10
534	Voices In Wartime	2005	Cinema Libre	\$21,676	\$24,628	14
535	Dr. Bronner's Magic Soapbox	2007	Balcony Releasing	\$21,624	\$23,018	15
536	Windmill Movie, The	2009	The Film Desk	\$21,582	\$21,509	22
537	Earth Days	2009	Zeitgeist	\$21,348	\$21,275	25
538	Get Back	1991	New Line Cinema	\$21,327	\$35,046	5
539	Three Of Hearts	2005	ThinkFilm	\$21,146	\$24,026	7
540	Eat This, New York	2004	Organic Pictures	\$21,088	\$24,603	8
541	Small Wonders	1996	Miramax	\$20,844	\$29,360	10
542	Frontrunners	2008	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$20,706	\$21,430	7
543	Walt & El Grupo	2009	Disney	\$20,521	\$20,451	18
544	Cuba Feliz	2002	Empire Pictures	\$20,456	\$24,795	11
545	Visual Acoustics	2009	Arthouse Films	\$20,402	\$20,333	7
546	Louis Prima: The Wildest!	1999	Roxie Releasing	\$20,261	\$26,679	2
547	Zizek!	2005	Zeitgeist	\$20,177	\$22,925	4
548	Glass: A Portrait Of Philip In 12 Parts	2008	Koch Lorber Films	\$20,018	\$20,718	3
549	Ground Truth, The	2006	Focus Features	\$20,013	\$21,993	8
550	Hell House	2002	Seventh Art Releasing	\$19,979	\$24,217	6
551	League Of Ordinary Gentlemen, A	2005	Magnolia Pictures	\$19,780	\$22,474	11
552	Man Who Bought Mustique, The	2001	First Run	\$19,686	\$24,537	5
553	Party Monster (1998)	1998	World of Wonder Productions	\$19,630	\$26,249	4
554	Imaginary Witness	2007	Shadow Distribution	\$19,316	\$20,561	24
555	Off The Menu: The Last Days Of Chasen's	1998	Northern Arts Entertainment	\$19,285	\$25,787	7
556	Orwell Rolls In His Grave	2004	Sag Harbor-Basement Pict.	\$19,257	\$22,466	6
557	Paulina	1999	Turbulent	\$19,118	\$25,174	4
558	Skin Too Few: The Days Of Nick Drake, A	2002	Roxie Releasing	\$18,963	\$22,985	3
559	Venus Boyz	2003	First Run	\$18,837	\$22,475	15
560	Letter To True, A	2004	Zeitgeist	\$18,825	\$21,962	4

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
561	Lord, Save Us From Your Followers	2008	Thunderstruck Films	\$18,780	\$19,437	1
562	Saving Marriage	2008	Regent Releasing	\$18,699	\$19,353	6
563	Wink and a Smile, A	2009	First Run	\$18,563	\$18,500	10
564	Suicide Killers	2006	City Lights Pictures Releasing	\$18,239	\$20,044	1
565	Genesis	2005	ThinkFilm	\$18,206	\$20,686	5
566	Hugh Hefner: Once Upon a Time	1992	IRS Releasing	\$18,154	\$28,616	6
567	S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine	2004	First Run	\$18,080	\$21,093	11
568	Walking On Dead Fish	2008	Variance Films	\$18,062	\$18,694	5
569	Rebels With A Cause	2000	Zeitgeist	\$17,963	\$23,146	5
570	Can Mr. Smith Get To Washington Anymore?	2006	At Risk Films	\$17,907	\$19,679	6
571	Matador, The	2008	City Lights Pictures Releasing	\$17,597	\$18,212	7
572	Not Quite Hollywood	2009	Magnolia Pictures	\$17,517	\$17,457	14
573	Ever Again	2006	Rocky Mountain Pictures	\$17,304	\$19,016	12
574	Paul Monette	1998	First Run	\$16,998	\$22,729	3
575	Hidden In Plain Sight	2003	Seventh Art Releasing	\$16,803	\$20,048	4
576	Balseros (Cuban Rafters)	2003	Seventh Art	\$16,783	\$20,025	3
577	Patti Smith: Dream of Life	2008	Palm Pictures	\$16,696	\$17,280	2
578	American Cannibal	2007	Lifesize Entertainment	\$16,567	\$17,635	4
579	Devil's Miner, The	2006	First Run	\$16,445	\$18,072	8
580	So Much So Fast	2006	Balcony Releasing	\$16,411	\$18,035	12
581	I Like Killing Flies	2006	ThinkFilm	\$16,214	\$17,818	4
582	China Blue	2007	Argot Pictures	\$16,205	\$17,250	6
583	7th Street	2003	Other	\$16,150	\$19,269	7
584	Trying To Get Good	2008	Reel Source	\$16,148	\$16,713	3
585	Weed	1998	Doug Wolens	\$16,119	\$21,554	9
586	No Restraint	2006	IFC First Take	\$16,032	\$17,618	25
587	Who The #&% Is Jackson Pollock	2006	Picturehouse Films	\$16,032	\$17,618	6
588	In Search Of Peace	2001	Seventh Art Releasing	\$16,005	\$19,949	2
589	Coming Out Under Fire	1994	Zeitgeist	\$15,922	\$23,659	3
590	Blockade	2007	Icarus Films	\$15,911	\$16,937	3
591	Words Of My Perfect Teacher	2006	International Film Circuit	\$15,899	\$17,472	11
592	If I Die Tonight	2009	Indican Pictures	\$15,898	\$15,844	8
593	Meeting Resistance	2007	International Film Circuit	\$15,824	\$16,844	6
594	Last Cigarette, The	1999	New Yorker	\$15,818	\$20,829	7
595	Pop & Me	2000	Seventh Art Releasing	\$15,645	\$20,159	9
596	Fire on the Mountain	1996	First Run	\$15,586	\$21,954	3
597	Killing Kasztner	2009	Independent	\$15,475	\$15,422	2
598	Blessed Is the Match: Hannah Senesh	2009	Balcony Releasing	\$15,338	\$15,286	6
599	Full-Tilt Boogie	1998	Miramax	\$15,313	\$20,476	6
600	Sorrow And The Pity, The (2000)	2000	Milestone	\$15,164	\$19,539	3
601	Khachaturian	2003	Seventh Art Releasing	\$15,084	\$17,997	3
602	One Bright Shining Moment	2005	First Run	\$15,017	\$17,062	9
603	Last Call At Maud's	1993	Frameline	\$14,906	\$22,805	0
604	Through The Fire	2006	Cinema Libre	\$14,769	\$16,230	8
605	Carmen Miranda	1995	International Cinema	\$14,528	\$21,039	1
606	Art Of Amalia, The	2000	Avatar Films	\$14,445	\$18,613	2
607	Bombay Eunuch	2001	Gidalya Pictures	\$14,433	\$17,990	6
608	Times of Harvey Milk, The	2000	New Yorker	\$14,415	\$18,574	4
609	Desert Bayou	2007	Cinema Libre	\$14,350	\$15,275	2
610	Trial In Prague, A	2001	Cinema Guild	\$14,200	\$17,699	3
611	Screwed (1997)	1997	Cinema Village Features	\$14,010	\$19,172	3
612	To The Limit (Am Limit)	2008	First Run	\$13,976	\$14,465	13
613	Protagonist	2007	IFC Films	\$13,850	\$14,743	7
614	Maestro	2004	Artrution Productions	\$13,533	\$15,788	3
615	Photographer, His Wife, Her Lover, The	2006	Icarus Films	\$13,526	\$14,864	14
616	Last Dance	2002	First Run	\$13,393	\$16,234	6
617	Dear Zachary	2008	Oscilloscope Pictures	\$13,327	\$13,793	10
618	Gimme Shelter (re) '94	1994	Roxie Releasing	\$13,283	\$19,738	4
619	Inmigrante, El	2007	Indican Pictures	\$13,079	\$13,922	16
620	I Trust You To Kill Me	2006	First Independent Pictures	\$12,854	\$14,126	3
621	Tickle in the Heart, A	1997	Kino International	\$12,700	\$17,379	3
622	Freestyle: The Art Of Rhyme	2004	Palm Pictures	\$12,600	\$14,700	2
623	Writer Of O	2005	Zeitgeist	\$12,549	\$14,258	5
624	Ballot Measure 9	1995	Zeitgeist	\$12,153	\$17,599	1
625	Last Broadcast, The	1998	Wavelength	\$12,097	\$16,176	5
626	Legend Of Leigh Bowery, The	2003	Palm Pictures	\$11,989	\$14,305	2
627	New York In The Fifties	2001	Avatar Films	\$11,882	\$14,810	3
628	History Lessons	2001	First Run	\$11,609	\$14,470	8
629	First Basket, The	2008	Laemmle/Zeller Films	\$11,597	\$12,003	9
630	Crop Circles: Quest For Truth	2002	Open Edge Media	\$11,562	\$14,014	1

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
631	Verdict On Auschwitz	2007	First Run	\$11,543	\$12,287	9
632	Sputnik Mania	2008	Balcony Releasing	\$11,441	\$11,841	2
633	Aristide And The Endless Revolution	2005	First Run	\$11,435	\$12,993	4
634	Two Mikes Don't Make a Wright	1993	October	\$11,174	\$17,095	1
635	Last Party, The	1993	Triton	\$11,156	\$17,068	3
636	Black Tar Heroin	2000	Roxie Releasing	\$11,124	\$14,334	1
637	So Goes The Nation	2006	IFC First Take	\$11,118	\$12,218	15
638	Children Underground	2001	Cinemax	\$11,115	\$13,854	2
639	Glastonbury	2007	ThinkFilm	\$11,058	\$11,771	15
640	MCS: A True Testimonial	2004	Avatar Films	\$10,888	\$12,703	3
641	Gendernauts	2000	First Run	\$10,883	\$14,023	4
642	Forgiving Dr. Mengele	2006	First Run	\$10,810	\$11,880	9
643	In The Pit (En El Hoyo)	2007	Kino International	\$10,675	\$11,363	10
644	Jupiter's Wife	1995	Artistic License	\$10,622	\$15,382	2
645	Gotta Dance	2009	Mitropoulos Films	\$10,583	\$10,547	7
646	Three Rooms of Melancholia, The	2005	Icarus Films	\$10,528	\$11,962	4
647	Fast Trip, Long Drop	1995	Drift	\$10,524	\$15,240	2
648	Yiddish Theater: A Love Story	2007	Independent	\$10,401	\$11,072	12
649	Plagues & Pleasures On The Salton Sea	2007	Tilapia Films	\$10,333	\$10,999	5
650	I'll Sing For You	2004	First Run	\$10,272	\$11,984	7
651	My Voyage To Italy	2001	Miramax	\$10,228	\$12,748	1
652	Black Is, Black Ain't	1995	Tara Releasing	\$10,171	\$14,729	1
653	Stagedoor	2006	Independent	\$10,159	\$11,164	2
654	Silver Screen: Color Me Lavender, The	1998	Planet Pictures	\$10,139	\$13,558	2
655	Mule Skinner Blues	2002	Steel Carrot	\$10,106	\$12,250	5
656	Crossing The Line	2007	Kino International	\$10,063	\$10,712	7
657	Bosna!	1994	Zeitgeist	\$9,867	\$14,662	1
658	Twilight: Los Angeles	2000	Offline Releasing	\$9,856	\$12,700	2
659	Something To Cheer About	2007	Truly Indie	\$9,777	\$10,407	10
660	Jew In The Lotus, The	1999	Blind Dog Films	\$9,712	\$12,788	4
661	Operation Filmmaker	2008	Icarus Films	\$9,700	\$10,039	5
662	Last Mogul, The	2005	ThinkFilm	\$9,680	\$10,999	4
663	Unknown Soldier, The	2007	First Run	\$9,602	\$10,221	2
664	Chelsea on the Rocks	2009	Independent	\$9,580	\$9,547	5
665	I Wasn't Made For These Times	1995	New Yorker	\$9,504	\$13,763	1
666	In Search of Kundun	1999	In Pictures	\$9,500	\$12,509	1
667	Shadow Boxer	2000	Swerve Films	\$9,397	\$12,108	2
668	King Leopold's Ghost	2006	Aloha Releasing	\$9,356	\$10,282	3
669	John Sayles Retro	2002	IFC Films	\$9,294	\$11,265	3
670	Settlers, The	2003	First Run	\$9,281	\$11,074	2
671	Sex Positive	2009	Regent Releasing	\$9,276	\$9,244	4
672	Biker Dreams	1998	Castle Hill	\$9,268	\$12,393	3
673	E-Dreams	2002	Seventh Art Releasing	\$9,249	\$11,211	2
674	Casting About	2007	Kino International	\$9,210	\$9,804	8
675	Robert Blecker Wants Me Dead	2009	Independent	\$9,168	\$9,137	2
676	Ister, The	2006	Icarus Films	\$9,160	\$10,066	8
677	Salvador Allende	2006	Icarus Films	\$8,974	\$9,862	8
678	Without The King	2008	First Run	\$8,922	\$9,234	4
679	Didn't Do It For Love	1998	First Run	\$8,921	\$11,929	2
680	Hole (Dong), The	1999	Wellspring Media	\$8,876	\$11,688	3
681	American Journey, An	2009	Lorber Films	\$8,868	\$8,838	1
682	From Journals of Jean Seberg	1996	Planet Pictures	\$8,868	\$12,491	1
683	Senorita Extraviada	2003	Other	\$8,858	\$10,569	2
684	Bounce: Behind The Velvet Rope	2001	Artistic License	\$8,779	\$10,942	2
685	Angry Monk	2007	Icarus Films	\$8,745	\$9,309	4
686	Objectified	2009	Independent	\$8,668	\$8,639	1
687	I Was a Jewish Sex Worker	1997	Greycat	\$8,526	\$11,668	1
688	Twist of Faith	2005	Artistic License	\$8,352	\$9,490	7
689	Flying: Confessions Of A Free Woman	2007	Artistic License	\$8,287	\$8,821	1
690	Lalee's Kin: Legacy Of Cotton	2001	Home Box Office	\$8,136	\$10,141	1
691	In The Mirror Of Maya Deren	2003	Zeitgeist	\$8,077	\$9,637	3
692	Occupation: Dreamland	2005	Rumur Releasing	\$8,019	\$9,111	3
693	Kids of Survival	1996	Geller	\$7,944	\$11,190	2
694	One Day In The Life Andrei Arsenevitc	2001	Icarus Films	\$7,939	\$9,895	1
695	Resident Alien	1991	Greycat	\$7,867	\$12,928	2
696	L'Chayim, Comrade Stalin	2003	Cinema Guild	\$7,768	\$9,268	3
697	Kill Your Idols	2006	Palm Pictures	\$7,754	\$8,521	5
698	Oblivion	2009	Icarus Films	\$7,748	\$7,722	1
699	Beautiful Truth, The	2008	Cinema Libre	\$7,586	\$7,851	3
700	Predictions of Fire	1996	Artistic License	\$7,577	\$10,673	4

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
701	loudQUIETloud: A Film About The Pixies	2006	Roxie Releasing	\$7,506	\$8,249	3
702	Following Sean	2006	Shadow Distribution	\$7,485	\$8,226	3
703	American Gypsy	2000	Little Dust Prods	\$7,447	\$9,596	2
704	Eleven Minutes	2009	Regent Releasing	\$7,265	\$7,240	6
705	Rock The Boat	1999	Tell The Truth Prod.	\$7,242	\$9,536	2
706	Saint Of 9/11	2006	IFC Films	\$7,137	\$7,843	2
707	Freedom On My Mind	1994	Tara Releasing	\$7,120	\$10,580	1
708	Summercamp!	2007	Argot Pictures	\$7,110	\$7,568	5
709	Fall Of Fujimori, The	2006	Cinema Libre	\$7,080	\$7,781	2
710	Quantum Hoops	2007	Independent	\$7,075	\$7,531	2
711	Storefront Hitchcock	1998	MGM	\$6,996	\$9,355	2
712	Jaundiced Eye, The	1999	Somford Entertainment	\$6,986	\$9,199	11
713	Camden 28, The	2007	First Run	\$6,984	\$7,434	2
714	Speaking In Strings	1999	Seventh Art Releasing	\$6,859	\$9,032	3
715	Operation Homecoming	2007	The Documentary Group	\$6,795	\$7,233	1
716	Cachao	1993	Cineson Prods	\$6,793	\$10,393	1
717	112th & Central	1993	Flatfield	\$6,770	\$10,358	2
718	Lyrical Nitrate	1991	Zeitgeist	\$6,729	\$11,058	1
719	Rhythm 'n' Bayous	2001	Mug-Shot Prods	\$6,702	\$8,353	1
720	Magical World of Chuck Jones	1992	Warner Bros.	\$6,682	\$10,533	2
721	Skid Row	2007	Screen Media Films	\$6,627	\$7,054	3
722	Mardi Gras: Made In China	2006	Independent	\$6,617	\$7,272	3
723	Sunset Story	2005	Vitagraph	\$6,593	\$7,491	1
724	Cinemania	2003	Loop Filmworks	\$6,513	\$7,771	1
725	A Cuban Legend: The Story of Salvador Go	2002	Wanderman Filmworks	\$6,424	\$7,787	2
726	Not Bad for a Girl	1996	Horizon	\$6,152	\$8,665	1
727	Scottsboro: American Tragedy	2001	Social Media Prods	\$6,123	\$7,632	1
728	Life Of Jesus	1998	Wellspring Media	\$6,029	\$8,062	1
729	Poisoned By Polonium: Litvinenko File	2008	Kino International	\$6,024	\$6,235	4
730	Leap of Faith, A	1996	Cinema Parallel	\$6,008	\$8,463	1
731	Looking For An Icon	2007	Icarus Films	\$5,948	\$6,331	3
732	Full Battle Rattle	2008	Mile End Films	\$5,927	\$6,134	2
733	Some Nudity Required	1998	Seventh Art Releasing	\$5,853	\$7,826	2
734	Krzysztof Kieslowski	1998	First Run	\$5,789	\$7,741	1
735	Fallen Idol: The Yuri Gagarin Conspiracy	2009	Indican Pictures	\$5,736	\$5,716	5
736	Deadly Currents	1992	Spotlight	\$5,729	\$9,030	2
737	Ritchie Boys, The	2006	Menemsha Films	\$5,726	\$6,293	2
738	Condo Painting	2000	USA	\$5,710	\$7,358	2
739	Gogol Bordello Non-Stop	2009	Lorber Films	\$5,443	\$5,424	5
740	I Remember Me	2001	Zeitgeist	\$5,243	\$6,535	4
741	Lawyer Walks Into A Bar, A	2008	Indican Pictures	\$5,156	\$5,336	10
742	Angels In The Dust	2007	Cinema Libre	\$5,043	\$5,368	1
743	Risk/Reward	2004	Organic Pictures	\$5,034	\$5,873	2
744	Running On The Sun	2000	Keystone Family Pictures	\$4,949	\$6,377	1
745	With All Deliberate Speed	2004	Discovery Docs	\$4,920	\$5,740	5
746	Everything's Cool	2007	City Lights Pictures Releasing	\$4,890	\$5,205	2
747	Hemp Revolution, The	1995	Tara Releasing	\$4,766	\$6,902	1
748	Twisted: A Balloonumentary	2008	Independent	\$4,641	\$4,803	3
749	Klezmer On Fish Street	2004	Castle Hill	\$4,636	\$5,409	2
750	Black White + Gray	2007	Arthouse Films	\$4,580	\$4,875	2
751	Cowboy Del Amor	2006	Emerging Pictures	\$4,438	\$4,877	2
752	Wonderland (1997)	1997	Wellspring Media	\$4,434	\$6,068	3
753	Sacred Stage	2005	First Run	\$4,410	\$5,011	1
754	Blood And Tears	2007	ThinkFilm	\$4,364	\$4,645	3
755	WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception	2004	Cinema Libre	\$4,216	\$4,919	3
756	Hellhounds On My Trail	2000	Wellspring Media	\$4,152	\$5,350	1
757	How To Draw A Bunny	2004	Palm Pictures	\$4,148	\$4,839	1
758	Dialogues With Madwomen	1994	Light-Saraf Films	\$4,131	\$6,138	1
759	God And Gays: Bridging The Gap	2008	Indican Pictures	\$4,085	\$4,228	5
760	Heavy Metal In Baghdad	2008	Arts Alliance America	\$4,070	\$4,212	2
761	Wall (Mur)	2005	Lifesize Entertainment	\$4,015	\$4,562	1
762	Visiting Desire	1997	B. Productions	\$3,940	\$5,392	1
763	Out Of Place: Memories Of Edward Said	2006	Icarus Films	\$3,897	\$4,283	3
764	Swenkas, The	2005	Seventh Art Releasing	\$3,875	\$4,403	2
765	Fastpitch	2000	Artistic License	\$3,847	\$4,957	6
766	Last Dispatch	2006	Fabrication Films	\$3,836	\$4,216	1
767	Saints And Sinners	2004	Avatar Films	\$3,826	\$4,464	1
768	Split Decision	2001	First Run	\$3,810	\$4,749	5
769	Forget Baghdad	2003	AFD Theatrical	\$3,742	\$4,465	2
770	Warrior Of Light	2003	New Yorker	\$3,617	\$4,316	1

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
771	Moog	2004	Plexifilm	\$3,604	\$4,205	1
772	Journeys With George	2003	Independent	\$3,588	\$4,281	1
773	Double Dare	2005	Balcony Releasing	\$3,549	\$4,032	1
774	Haunted World Edward Wood Jr	1996	Wood-Thomas Prod	\$3,549	\$4,999	1
775	Tigrero	1994	Arrow Releasing	\$3,543	\$5,265	1
776	Sister Helen	2003	R & R Films	\$3,541	\$4,225	1
777	W.I.S.O.R.	2001	Artistic License	\$3,480	\$4,338	1
778	Commune	2006	Five Points Media	\$3,456	\$3,798	1
779	whaledreamers	2008	Monterey Media	\$3,420	\$3,540	12
780	Chuppa: The Wedding Canopy	1994	Geo Entertainment	\$3,325	\$4,941	1
781	Harlem Diary	1995	Discovery Channel Prods.	\$3,273	\$4,740	2
782	Tell The Truth And Run	1996	Goldsmith Prods	\$3,204	\$4,513	1
783	Backyard, The	2003	HIQI Media	\$3,200	\$3,818	2
784	McLibel	2005	Cinema Libre	\$3,195	\$3,630	2
785	Fraude	2008	Maya Releasing	\$3,190	\$3,302	9
786	Brothers In Arms	2004	First Run	\$3,189	\$3,720	6
787	Beyond Barbed Wire	1997	Mac&Ava	\$3,109	\$4,255	1
788	Grin Without A Cat	2008	Icarus Films	\$3,100	\$3,208	2
789	Who Does She Think She Is?	2008	Artistic License	\$3,081	\$3,189	1
790	Choice Of Weapons (2002)	2002	Outrider	\$3,077	\$3,730	1
791	Execution Of Wanda Jean, The	2002	Seventh Art Releasing	\$2,998	\$3,634	1
792	Stolen Childhoods	2005	Balcony Releasing	\$2,994	\$3,402	1
793	Wetlands Preserved	2008	First Run	\$2,970	\$3,074	2
794	Mau Mau Sex Sex	2001	7th Planet Prods	\$2,963	\$3,693	2
795	Stealing America: Vote By Vote	2008	Direct Cinema	\$2,944	\$3,047	1
796	Painting the Town	1992	Zeitgeist	\$2,897	\$4,566	1
797	Beautopia	1999	Wellspring Media	\$2,870	\$3,779	2
798	Monterey Pop	2001	Pennebaker Hegeudus Films	\$2,819	\$3,514	1
799	Afghan Stories	2003	Seventh Art Releasing	\$2,809	\$3,352	1
800	Charcoal People, The	2001	Cinema Guild	\$2,660	\$3,315	1
801	Wallowitch & Ross	1999	First Run	\$2,627	\$3,459	2
802	Herbie Hancock: Possibilites	2006	Magnolia Pictures	\$2,493	\$2,740	2
803	Rank	2006	IFC First Take	\$2,485	\$2,731	2
804	Out Of The Past	1998	Zeitgeist	\$2,457	\$3,285	1
805	Isn't This A Time!	2005	Seventh Art Releasing	\$2,428	\$2,759	1
806	Rocky Road To Dublin	2006	Icarus Films	\$2,412	\$2,651	2
807	Toward The Within	1995	Tara Releasing	\$2,388	\$3,458	2
808	Locked Up Time	1992	Zeitgeist	\$2,371	\$3,737	1
809	You're Gonna Miss Me	2007	Palm Pictures	\$2,324	\$2,474	1
810	Exit: The Right To Die	2006	Icarus Films	\$2,315	\$2,544	3
811	Big Question, The	2006	ThinkFilm	\$2,249	\$2,472	4
812	Workingman's Death	2006	Seventh Art Releasing	\$2,214	\$2,433	2
813	Hell's Highway	2003	Kino International	\$2,171	\$2,590	1
814	Stripped	2002	Dylan	\$2,151	\$2,607	1
815	Stealing The Fire	2002	Friedman-Nadler Prod	\$2,139	\$2,593	1
816	Plastic People Of The Universe	2002	Ceska Televize	\$2,124	\$2,575	1
817	People Say I'm Crazy	2004	Palo Alto Pictures	\$2,122	\$2,476	1
818	Lord Save Us From Your...	2009	Independent	\$2,060	\$2,053	2
819	Justice	2006	Icarus Films	\$2,047	\$2,250	2
820	Homo Sapiens 1900	2000	First Run	\$1,947	\$2,509	1
821	Decent Factory, A	2005	Icarus Films	\$1,900	\$2,159	1
822	Oswald's Ghost	2007	Seventh Art Releasing	\$1,796	\$1,912	1
823	Dust (Staub)	2008	Icarus Films	\$1,728	\$1,788	2
824	Hidden Wars of Desert Storm	2001	Free-Will Prods	\$1,724	\$2,149	1
825	On the Rumba River (Le Batelier de la Rumba)	2008	First Run	\$1,698	\$1,757	1
826	Sugar Curtain, The	2007	Icarus Films	\$1,688	\$1,797	3
827	Persons Of Interest	2004	Icarus Films	\$1,672	\$1,951	1
828	Angel's Ladies	2000	Picture This Entertainment	\$1,551	\$1,999	1
829	Gospel According to Philip K. Dick, The	2001	First Run	\$1,513	\$1,886	1
830	Making Grace	2005	First Run	\$1,497	\$1,701	5
831	Unborn In The USA	2007	First Run	\$1,476	\$1,571	1
832	Revolution OS	2002	Seventh Art Releasing	\$1,473	\$1,785	1
833	Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wil	2005	First Run	\$1,430	\$1,625	1
834	Tudjman	1997	Capstone	\$1,423	\$1,947	1
835	Keeping It Real: The Adventures of Greg	2001	Avatar Films	\$1,358	\$1,693	2
836	This Is Not An Exit	2000	First Run	\$1,353	\$1,743	1
837	On the Bridge	1993	Direct	\$1,251	\$1,914	1
838	Fear of Fiction	2000	Pow Wow Prods	\$1,184	\$1,526	1
839	Food Beware	2009	First Run	\$1,181	\$1,177	1
840	Creature	2000	Seventh Art Releasing	\$1,108	\$1,428	3

Table B.3 (continued)

	Film	Year	Distributor	Gross made that year	Inflation adjusted gross (*)	Engagements
841	Empire In Africa, The	2006	Cinema Libre	\$1,088	\$1,196	3
842	Young at Hearts	1995	Outsider	\$1,036	\$1,500	1
843	Fire This Time, The	1994	Blacktop	\$1,032	\$1,533	1
844	Beyond Hatred	2007	First Run	\$950	\$1,011	2
845	Standing By Yourself	2002	Cheapo Films	\$948	\$1,149	1
846	Act Of God	2009	Zeitgeist	\$922	\$919	1
847	America Betrayed	2009	First Run	\$897	\$894	2
848	Dear Babe	1995	Cinema 4	\$895	\$1,296	1
849	Brakhage	1999	Zeitgeist	\$779	\$1,026	2
850	I For India	2008	Icarus Films	\$722	\$747	2
851	Hit Them Hard! (Senta A Puat)	2001	BSB Cinema	\$717	\$894	1
852	Beyond Belief	2008	The Film Sales Company	\$667	\$690	1
853	Cool & Crazy On The Road	2003	First Run	\$624	\$745	2
854	Jesus, You Know	2004	Leisure Time Features	\$604	\$705	1
855	Home Page	1999	Copacetic Films	\$597	\$786	1
856	Back To Normandy	2008	Kino International	\$503	\$521	1
857	Wild Bill: Hollywood Maverick	1996	Wild Bill Pictures	\$372	\$524	1
858	Won't Anybody Listen	2001	Seventh Art Releasing	\$295	\$368	1
859	Hollywood Chinese	2008	Independent	\$217	\$225	1
860	Made In Jamaica	2009	ArtMattan Productions	\$181	\$180	1

APPENDIX C

Field Research

Table C.1 List of Field Research Events

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution Forum for Independents	26-Oct-07	Is Theatrical Dead?	Ira Deutchman (Emerging Pictures)	A presentation about the importance of theatrical releasing that considered its place in the digital age.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution Forum for Independents	26-Oct-07	Audiences and Digital Distribution	Peter Buckingham (UK Film Council)	A presentation that considered what audiences want and how the industry can cater to those needs.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution Forum for Independents	26-Oct-07	The New Distributors	Michael Gubbins (Screen International), David Straus (Withoutabox), Joe Neulight (Withoutabox), Paula Le Dieu (Magic Lantern), Sara Pollack (YouTube), Kelly DeVine (The Reframe Project)	Individual presentations and panel discussion about the growth of on-demand, online distribution services, and what opportunities are available to filmmakers and rights holders to reach core and global audiences. Discussion of the changing role of the distributor.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution Forum for Independents	26-Oct-07	Adventures in Self Distribution	Liz Rosenthal (Power to the Pixel), Arin Crumley (Filmmaker), Susan Buice (Filmmaker), Lance Weiler (Filmmaker), Jeremy Nathan (Filmmaker), Matt Hanson (Filmmaker)	A panel that discussed the benefits and challenges of self-distribution.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution Forum for Independents	26-Oct-07	Distribution Case Study: Brave New Films & Iraq for Sale	Robert Greenwald (Brave New Films)	A virtual presentation explaining how Greenwald financed and distributed his films independently of mainstream media.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-07	Financing Docs that Cause Change	Jess Search (BRITDOC), Claire Aguilar (ITVS), Bruni Burres (Sundance Institute Documentary Fund), Sandi DuBowski (Filmmaker), Katrina Sedgwick (Adelaide Film festival & AFF Investment Fund)	A panel that explored the international sources of finance for documentaries about social issues and what models of participation and outreach can help these projects get developed.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-07	Self Distribution and the Online Opportunities	Charlie Phillips (FourDocs), Simon Chambers (Filmmaker), Maxyne Franklin (BRITDOC), Barry Gibb (Digitalis Media), Belinda Harris (Babelgum), Mike Lamond (Green.tv)	A panel that offered tips about short film self-distribution and how to exploit the growing number of broadband channels and potentially generate revenue online.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-07	Current TV	Emily Renshaw-Smith (Current TV), Lina Prestwood (Current TV), David Scalenghe (Current TV)	A group presentation on Current.tv which also afforded eight filmmakers a chance to pitch to the commissioners, with one winning a thousand pounds to make a short documentary.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-07	The ABC of Factual Commissioning	Andy Glynn (DFG), Lee Kern (Twinklebum UK), Kate Vogel (Channel 4)	A panel that explained how newcomers could get their first factual commission.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-07	Who's Who	A large number of broadcasters and distributors	An event that introduced the attending decision makers to the rest of the festival delegates.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	09-Nov-07	DigiDocs 360: Doc 3.0	Jonathan Kingsbury (BBC Future Media & Technology), Paula Le Dieu (Magic Lantern), Tom Savigar (The Future Laboratory), Thomas Wallner (Xenophile), Ruiyan XU (POV)	A panel that explored the benefits of incorporating new media and interactivity into documentary. Offered case studies of projects that have successfully exploited multiple platforms and digital technologies.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	09-Nov-07	DigiDocs 360: What Does the Future Look Like?	Frank Boyd (Unexpected Media), Roy Ackerman (Diverse Production Limited), Nick Cohen (BBC), Matt Locke (Channel 4), Kuldeep Nazran (Tonic), Femke Wolting (Submarine)	A panel that explored how to produce hybrid documentaries across multiple platforms.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	09-Nov-07	Distribution in the Digital Age	Debra Zimmerman (Women Make Movies), Julie Goldman (Cactus 3), Diana Holtzberg (Films Transit Int.), Peter Jager (Outlook Films), Catherine Le Clef (Fortissimo Film Sales), Elizabeth Radshaw (TVF International), Jan Rofekamp (Films Transit Int.), Charles Schuerhoff (WGBH Int.)	A panel that explored the changing landscape of distribution, including topics such as splitting up rights, DRM, and day-and-date releasing.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	09-Nov-07	Debate: All Documentary is a Lie	Lizzie Francke (EM Media), Nick Fraser (BBC Storyville), Alan Hayling (Renegade Pictures), Lee Kern (Twinklebum UK), Nicky Taylor (Renegade Pictures), Robert Thirkell (Producer), Peter Wintonick (Necessary Illusions)	A public debate about whether or not all documentary is inherently fake.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sheffield Doc/Fest	10-Nov-07	DigiDocs 360: Emerging Revenue Models?	Julianne Pierce (Blast Theory), Franny Armstrong (Spanner Films), Sandi DuBowski, Emily Renshaw Smith (Current TV), Thomas Wallner (Xenophile)	A panel that explored new revenue models for documentary including online, micropayments, fundraising, etc. Considered how value can be created from content distributed for free.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	11-Nov-07	Copyright, Licensing & Free Speech	Pat Aufderheide (American University), Gioia Awantaggiato (Doc-It), Hubert Best (Best & Soames), Matthew Cummins (PACT), Julie Goldman (Cactus 3), Jamie King (Filmmaker), Michael McMahon (Primitive Entertainment Inc.)	A panel that discussed licensing and copyright issues facing documentary filmmakers and what initiatives are encouraging fair use and fair dealing.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	11-Nov-07	<i>Age of Stupid</i>	Franny Armstrong (Spanner Films)	A presentation of the work-in progress and discussion of its financing methods.
IDFA	23-Nov-07	Meet the Experts	Debra Zimmerman (Women Make Movies)	A small group meeting to discuss Women Make Movies.
IDFA	25-Nov-07	The Ever Evolving Documentary Market Place	Jan Rolfkamp (Films Transit Int.), Diana Holtzberg (Films Transit Int.)	A joint presentation that explored how to make a quality film that is also sellable internationally, how to choose a strategy for the release of a documentary, and the importance of festivals
IDFA	26-Nov-07	New Forms of Financing	Neil Seiling (DocAgora)	A presentation overview of new forms, net systems, and new players in the world of financing documentary content.
IDFA	28-Nov-07	New Forms of Distribution	Neil Seiling (DocAgora), Jamie King (Filmmaker)	A presentation and discussion of the distribution strategies for <i>Steal This Film III</i> .
Hot Docs	21-Apr-08	Open Source/Fair Use	Sean Famel (Hot Docs), Pat Aufderheide (American University), Brett Gaylor (EyeSteelFilm), Marco Visalberghi (DocLab)	A presentation on Open Source Cinema followed by a discussion on the topic of fair use.
Hot Docs	22-Apr-08	Doc Forecast: The Next Five Years	Ed Hersh (StoryCentric), Raja Khanna (GlassBOX Television), Tom Quinn (Magnolia), Jan Rolfkamp (Films Transit Int.), Rachel Wexler (Bungalow Town Productions)	A panel that considered the changing landscape of the industry and what the outlook for documentary is over the next five years.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Hot Docs	23-Apr-08	How Online Platforms will Save Creative Documentary	Jenn Kuzmyk (C21media.net), Jane Tattersall (MySpace Canada), Gavin McGarry (Joost), Stephanie Sharif (AOL True Stories)	A panel that explored the potential revenue models for online distribution and how documentary might engage new audiences through the Web.
Hot Docs	24-Apr-08	Who is Who in Digital Docland	Neil Seiling (DocAgora), Peter Wintonick (DocAgora), Paula Le Dieu (Magic Lantern), Karol Martesko-Fenster (Cinelan), Joël Ronez (ARTE), Andreas Ua'Siaghail (Resovelabs), Lance Weiler (From Here to Awesome)	A panel that discussed leaders of innovation in documentary storytelling and distribution.
Hot Docs	25-Apr-08	Short Circuits: Trends in Docs in the Digital Docspace	Ingrid Kopp (Shooting People), Jeremy Boxer (Cinelan), Klara Grunning-Harris (ITVS), Noam Muscovitch (lthentic.com), Mark Cranwell (Babelgum)	A panel that explored how short documentaries are being distributed on mobile platforms and the Web and the benefits and drawbacks that offers.
Royal Holloway MA Documentary Class	09-May-08	Current TV Presentation	Emily Renshaw-Smith (Current TV)	A presentation about Current's user-generated platform and how its commissioning process works.
BRITDOC	23-Jul-08	Have You Seen This? The Digital Distribution Panel	Jamie King (Filmmaker), Matt Dentler (Cinetic Media), Andrew Creighton (Vice), Gaurav Dhillion (Jaman)	An panel that reviewed the latest experiments and trends in digital distribution. Websites, films, and case studies were used to illustrate the most significant developments online.
BRITDOC	24-Jul-08	Selling the D-Word	Jess Search (BRITDOC), Mark Stringer (Pretty Green), BJ Cunningham (Freelance), Paul Cackett (Everything Works)	An panel that examined why documentaries struggle to compete with fiction at the box office. The discussion explored documentary from a marketing perspective to consider if they could be rebranded and repositioned in a more commercial way.
BRITDOC	25-Jul-08	Feature Doc Development	Tanya Seghatchian (UK Film Council), Cara Mertes (Sundance Institute), John Battsek (Passion Pictures), Julie Goldman (Cactus 3)	An panel that provided an overview of the development of feature documentaries and considered what qualities contribute to their success at the box office.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
BRITDOC	25-Jul-08	Brave New Finance	Elizabeth Radshaw (TVF International Distribution), Christopher Hird (Filmmaker), Chris Atkins (Filmmaker), Franny Armstrong (Filmmaker)	A panel that considered sources of funding beyond traditional broadcast financing and how this worked for <i>The End of the Line</i> , <i>Taking Liberties</i> , and <i>The Age of Stupid</i> .
Independent	12-Aug-08	Semi-Structured Interview	Christian Bauer (Scooterfilm)	via telephone
Independent	05-Sep-08	Semi-Structured Interview	Markus Neuart (Cyclefilm)	in person
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	15-Oct-08	Semi-Structured Interview	Cay Wesnigk (Onlinefilm.org)	via telephone
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	15-Oct-08	Structured Interview	Manual Cristobal (Perro Verde Films)	via email
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	15-Oct-08	Structured Interview	Timo Vuorensola (Filmmaker)	via email
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	17-Oct-08	Semi-Structured Interview	Sara Pollack (YouTube)	via telephone
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	17-Oct-08	Semi-Structured Interview	Fabio Lima (MovieMobz)	via telephone
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	18-Oct-08	Semi-Structured Interview	Slava Rubin (IndieGoGo)	via telephone
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	19-Oct-08	Structured Interview	Adam Erlebacher (PlaceVine)	via email
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	Fractured Audiences	Alex Johnson (Digital Strategist)	A presentation that considers who audiences are and how they are behaving differently in the digital age.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	The New Exhibitors	Michael Gubbins (Screen International), Brian Newman (Tribeca Film Institute), C. Cay Wesnigk (Onlinefilm.org), Sara Pollack (YouTube), Fabio Lima (MovieMobz)	Individual presentations and a panel discussion about the kind of deals, strategies, and revenues that are emerging in the online exhibition space.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	The New Cross-Platform Financiers: Audiences, Sponsors, and Brands	Lis Rosenthal (Power to the Pixel), Slava Rubin (IndieGoGo), Adam Erlebacher (PlaceVine)	Individual presentations followed by a question and answer session that considered how audiences and brands can be used to finance films.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	Should We? Could We? Would We? - Films in the Age of Cross-Media Production	Chirsty Dena (Cross-media Strategist)	A presentation that offered ideas about how cross-platform storytelling provides artistic and economic benefits.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	Distribution Case Study: <i>We Are the Strange</i>	M dot Strange (Filmmaker)	A presentation that offered a case study of the animated film <i>We are the Strange</i> and discussed how audiences were involved in the production and distribution of it.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	Distribution Case Study: <i>Star Wreck: In the Pirkinning</i>	Timo Vuorensola (Filmmaker)	A presentation that offered a case study of <i>Star Wreck: In the Pirkinning</i> and discussed the success it achieved through online crowdsourcing.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	Distribution Case Study: <i>Steal This Film</i>	Jamie King (Filmmaker)	A presentation that offered a case study of <i>Steal this Film</i> and revealed how Jamie King built a large audience for his film by giving it away and then gained donations from those who viewed it.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	A New Model for Discovery and Distribution: From Here to Awesome	Lance Weiler (Filmmaker)	A presentation that demonstrated how to enhance the discovery of films through new business models.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	22-Oct-08	Collaboration: A Case Study	Arin Crumley (Filmmaker)	A presentation that considered new tools for collaboration and how two-way filmmaking can establish stronger bonds with audiences.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	23-Oct-08	A Guide to Licensing Digital Media	Gregor Pryor (Reed Smith)	A presentation that offered an overview of key issues related to making content available across new digital platforms and discussed what to consider when negotiating digital distribution agreements.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	23-Oct-08	View, Share, Remix: The Power of Opening Content	Matt Hanson (Filmmaker)	A presentation that argued for the value of open content by exploring how filmmakers can take advantage of it to engage audiences.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	23-Oct-08	Making Content for the Web and TV	Saskia Wilson-Brown (Current TV), Emily Renshaw-Smith (Current TV)	A joint presentation and question and answer workshop that covered issues surrounding television distribution for filmmakers, including how to cater to audience needs.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	23-Oct-08	Building Online Identity	Alex Johnson (Digital Strategist)	A presentation that discussed how digital tools could be used to create a recognisable and lasting identity online. Offered advice for how filmmakers could build their brand in the digital world.
Power to the Pixel: The Digital Distribution and Film Innovation Forum	24-Oct-08	Think Tank	Various speakers from the previous days events and special guests.	A think tank discussion that focused on how to create a sustainable ecosystem for filmmaking.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-08	My Tube, Your Face	Jan Bednarz (Freelance), Marvin Belle (Directors Notes), Brian Hill (Century Films), Dan'l Hewitt (Bebo), Richard Thomson (Endemol Digital Media), Gav Rowe (Big Balls Films)	A panel that considered how social networking sites have exploited the market with popular factual shows. Discussion focused on how filmmakers have used social networks to attract new audiences.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-08	DigiDocs 360: Digital Commissioners - Funding for New Platforms	Frank Boyd (Unexpected Media), Andra Sheffer (Bell Broadcast & New Media Fund), Nick Cohen (BBC), Jon Gisby (Channel 4), Dan'l Hewitt (Bebo)	A panel that explored the growing demand for 360-degree commissioning and stories that span across media platforms.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	07-Nov-08	Theatrical Documentaries R.I.P.?	Simon Chinn (Producer), Jess Search (Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation), John Smithson (Darlow Smithson Productions), Molly Thompson (Indie Films), Himesh Kar (UK Film Council)	A panel that considered why critically acclaimed feature documentaries have underperformed at the box office and how documentaries might succeed in the theatrical market.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sheffield Doc/Fest	07-Nov-08	What's Happening in the US Documentary Television Market	Peter Hamilton (Peter Hamilton Consultants), Lisa Weinbrenn (Discovery Europe), Malvina Martin (National Geographic Television US), Dawn Porter (A&E Television Networks), Anna Garwood (Travel Channel US), John Lindsay (KETC, PBS - St. Louis)	A panel that discussed which US networks schedule documentaries and what they spend on them.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-08	Distribution - That Old Chestnut	Danielle DiGiacomo (IndiePix), Debra Zimmerman (Women Make Movies), Esther Van Messel (First Hand Films), Simon Kilmurry (PBS POV), Ryan Harrington (IndiePix), Mark Adams (ICA Films), Peter Jager (Autlook Film Sales)	A panel that discussed how to position a documentary in the marketplace and how the digital revolution has impacted the distribution landscape.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-08	Nick Broomfield Masterclass	Jason Wood (City Screen Ltd), Nick Broomfield (Lafayette Films)	A public interview with Nick Broomfield that provided a retrospective of his 25 year career.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	08-Nov-08	The BRITDOC Saturday Service: ... And the Word Was Change	Maxyne Franklin (Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation)	A forum discussion that explored how strategic partners can offer films greater public influence and outreach. Considered how third sector and broadcasters might work together to develop new funding opportunities and create effective campaigns.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	09-Nov-08	DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus Masterclass	Nick Fraser (BBC Storyville), DA Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus (Pennebaker Hegedus Films)	A public interview with Pennebaker and Hegedus that reviewed some of the films they have produced over the years.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	09-Nov-08	<i>Man on Wire</i> : James Marsh Masterclass	David Thomson (Film Critic), James Marsh (Director)	A public interview that explored the success of <i>Man on Wire</i> and what influence it has had on the director's filmmaking career.
IDFA	21-Nov-08	<i>Britain from Above</i>	Cassian Harrison (Director)	A presentation about the BBC cross-platform documentary <i>Britain from Above</i> .
Power to the Pixel Online	21-Nov-08	Structured Interview	Brian Newman	via email
IDFA	22-Nov-08	Meet the Experts	Karen Cooper (Film Forum)	A small group meeting to discuss New York's Film Forum.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
IDFA	22-Nov-08	Media and Rights: Traditional and New Media Licensing	Wendy Bernfeld (Rights Stuff)	A presentation that addressed how the boundaries of licensing rights are blurring and the advantages of selling as narrowly as possible.
IDFA	23-Nov-08	The Market Place: From MG to DIY	Debra Zimmerman (Women Make Movies), Diane Weyermann (Participant Media), Franny Armstrong (Spanner Films), Stephanie Rockman (Joost)	A presentation and panel discussion that covered the distribution windows for documentary and various release options available to filmmakers.
IDFA	23-Nov-08	CrossDocs Case Studies	Serge Gordey (Producer), Joël Ronez (ARTE France), Daniel Cross (EyeSteelFilm), Brett Gaylor (EyeSteelFilm)	A presentation of two case studies: <i>Gaza/Sderot</i> and Open Source Cinema
Hot Docs	05-May-09	Distribution for a New Era	Anais Clanet (Wide Management), Udy Epstein (7th Art Releasing), Ruth Diskin (Ruth Diskin Films Ltd.), Susanne Guggenberger (Autlook), Laure Parsons (Zeitgeist Films), Annie Roney (ro*co Films International), Louise Rosen (Louise Rosen Ltd.)	A panel that discussed release windows in the documentary market: theatrical, broadcast, DVD and online. Discussion focused on how filmmakers could adapt their sales techniques to suite the new economy.
Hot Docs	06-May-09	Creative Film Financing	Robert West (Working Films), Mitzi Goldman (Documentary Australia Foundation), Sheila Leddy (The Fledgling Fund), Mehernaz Lentin (Filmmaker), Peter Raymont (White Pine Pictures), Elspeth Revere (MacArthur Foundation), Velcrow Ripper (Filmmaker)	A panel that examined alternative funding sources for documentary. Offered case studies of films that secured funding from non-traditional sources.
Hot Docs	07-May-09	DocAgora WebPlex	Amit Breuer (DocAgora), Cameron Hickey (DocAgora), Nikki Nime (DocAgora), Neil Seiling (DocAgora), Peter Wintonick (DocAgora)	A joint presentation that introduced the DocAgora WebPlex to the documentary community.
Hot Docs	07-May-09	What's Next for Film Festivals?	Cameron Baily (Toronto International Film Festival), Geoff Gilmore (Tribeca Enterprises), Janet Pierson (SXSW Film Conference and Festival), Sky Sitney (SilverDocs)	A panel that examined how the role of film festivals is changing and how new paradigms are helping documentary films find wider audiences.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Forum	12-Oct-09	Adventures in P2P	Jamie King (VODO)	A presentation that explored how P2P networks could be used to monetise content and the business model of the online platform VODO.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	Releasing Films Across Platforms: The New Distributors	Michael Gubbins (Journalist), Scilla Andreen (Indieflix), Efe Cakarel (The Auteurs), Karol Martesko-Fenster (Babelgum)	Individual presentations and a panel discussion about new divides and release strategies for independent films.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	How To Be "Better Than Free"	Brian Newman (former head of Tribeca Film Institute)	A presentation that argued for finding ways to create value from free content online.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	A 'Free' Distribution Case Study: <i>Sita Sings the Blues</i>	Nina Paley (Filmmaker)	A presentation on <i>Sita Sings the Blues</i> and how the animated film made money while being distributed freely.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	Brands and Partnerships: Raising Money and Increasing Reach	Hunter Weeks (Filmmaker)	A presentation of how brands were used to support the production of the documentaries <i>10 Mph</i> and <i>Ride the Divide</i> .
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	What Did They Do? Lessons Learned in Cross-Media	Christy Dena (Cross-Media Strategist)	A presentation of lessons learned from cross-media projects.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	Cross-Media Business Models: Financing Beyond the Big Screen	Peter Cowley (Endemol UK), Ben Grass (Pure Grass Films)	A series of presentations that considered how cross-media partners can expand the value and audience of content.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	14-Oct-09	Distribution Case Study: <i>Age of Stupid</i> : A Global Release Campaign	Franny Armstrong (Filmmaker), Lizzie Gillet (Producer)	A joint presentation on <i>The Age of Stupid</i> that included information about how audiences were involved in its funding and distribution.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	15-Oct-09	A Guide to Cross-Media Deals: How Can You Achieve Multi-Platform Success?	Gregor Pryor (Reed Smith)	A presentation and workshop about the legal issues to consider in developing strategies to take advantage of new revenue streams.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	15-Oct-09	How to 'Dance With the Devil': Creating Branded Content	Rachel Mordecai (Digital Content Strategist)	A presentation and workshop that explored the different elements of branded entertainment and how to work with brands to create quality content.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	15-Oct-09	Crowdsourcing Your Fans and Funds	Slava Rubin (IndieGoGo)	A workshop that explored how to build a fan base and self-fund and distribute films.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	16-Oct-09	Think Tank	Various speakers from the previous days' events and special guests.	A think tank discussion that focused on the need to create a sustainable model for independent cross-media projects.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sheffield Doc/Fest	04-Nov-09	New Business Models	Frank Boyd (Crossover), Alex Connock (Ten Alps), Andy Taylor (All3Media), Jeremy Silver (Media Clarity), Melanie Hayes (Channel 4)	A panel that explored freemium, branded, micropayments, subscription models to find out where the money is.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	04-Nov-09	The Creative Studios of the Future	Frank Boyd (Unexpected Media), Mark Atkin (Crossover), Nigel Fischer (The Culture Company), Matt Locke (Channel 4), John McVay (PACT), Alex Amsel (Tuna), Femke Wolting (Submarin), Patrick Crowe (Xenophile Media)	A panel that explored cross-platform models for content development and distribution. Considered how companies have to adapt to a multi-platform environment and how independents can compete in this new distribution landscape.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	05-Nov-09	Working Your Film	Jess Search (The Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation), Robert West (Working Films), David Bond (Green Lions), James Franklin (Pixeco)	A panel that addressed how social justice documentaries have affected government policy, consumer choice, corporate behaviour, etc. Showed how the Web could be used to promote documentaries and their associated causes to a maximum effect.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	05-Nov-09	Documentary Filmmaking: Making a Sustainable Living	Danielle DiGiacomo (IFP/Bugle B), Andrea Meditch (Cactus Three), David Bond (Green Lions), Samantah Buck (Living the 6 LLC), Beadie Finzi (The Channel 4 BRITCOC Foundation), Teddy Leifer (Rise Films), Julie Goldsman (Cactus 3)	A panel that explored how it is possible to make a sustainable living as a non-fiction filmmaker.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-09	Shooting People Present: Digital Bootcamp	James Mullighan (Shooting People), Ingrid Kopp (Shooting People NY), James Franklin (Pixeco)	A joint presentation that considered the opportunities for self and project promotion outside traditional 'windows'. Explored social networking sites, blogs, vlogs, and tech advice with case studies and group discussion.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-09	Campaigning Documentaries: The Thin Line Between Passion and Propaganda	Claire Fox (Institute of Ideas), Jess Search (the Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation), Nick Fraser (BBC Storyville), Ceri Dingle (WORLDwrite), Kevin Toolis (manyriversfilms)	A panel that fostered a debate about NGOs involvement in documentary film and the pitfalls of social action funding partnerships in campaign filmmaking.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sheffield Doc/Fest	07-Nov-09	<i>The Age of Stupid: A Masterclass with Franny Armstrong</i>	Emiy James (Filmmaker), Franny Armstrong (Filmmaker)	A presentation that explored how <i>The Age of Stupid</i> managed its success without a broadcast commission and presales. Discussion about how the filmmakers pitched the film to potential funders and what efforts they made to ensure the film got seen.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	07-Nov-09	What Filmmakers Can Learn from Pirates	Jess Search (The Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation), Amelia Andersdotter (Pirate Party), Jamie King (Filmmaker), Peter Wintonick (Necessary Illusions/Eyesteel), Andrew Robinson (Pirate Party)	A panel discussion that addressed how piracy might benefit filmmakers.
IDFA	20-Nov-09	Case Study: Cross Media Projects	Alexandre Brachet (Filmmaker), Serge Gordey (Filmmaker), Katerina Cizek (Filmmaker)	A series of presentations on cross-platform case studies.
IDFA	20-Nov-09	Financing and Producing: Starting Smart	Debra Zimmerman (Women Make Movies), Mila Aung-Thwin (EyeSteelFilm), Heino Deckert (Deckert Distribution), Olaf Grunert (ARTE)	A panel that explored traditional and alternative financing models and how they work internationally.
IDFA	20-Nov-09	Master Class: Frederick Wiseman	Peter Wintonick (DocAgora), Frederick Wiseman (Filmmaker)	An interview with Wiseman about the films he has made over the years.
IDFA	21-Nov-09	Meet the Experts	Andrew Mer (Snag Films)	A small group meeting to discuss SnagFilms
IDFA	22-Nov-09	Seize the Future: The Cutting Edge of Distribution	Peter Broderick (Paradigm Consulting)	A presentation that described how a growing number of filmmakers are using new distribution models to maximise audiences and revenues.
Sunny Side of the Doc	22-Jun-10	The New Distribution Conundrum (Distribution On-Line)	Tim Sparke (Mercury Media), Claude Esclatine (France Télévisions), Lionel Faucher (Akamedia), Candice Morrissey (YouTube), Marc Tessier (France Télévisions)	A panel that discussed new distribution models emerging online and how producers can decide where to put their content.
Sunny Side of the Doc	22-Jun-10	Branded Content, A New Partner?	Christophe Bochnacki (Upside Television), Mark Eaves (Drum PHD), Simon Willis (BBC)	A panel that explored the growth of advertiser funded programming and branded content and what opportunities exist.
Sunny Side of the Doc	22-Jun-10	Presentation: Link TV - View Change	Patrice Barrat (Link TV), Lorraine Hess (Link TV), Kim Spencer (Link TV)	A joint presentation that demonstrated how Link TV's ViewChange digital platform used interactive documentaries to engage audiences with social issues.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sunny Side of the Doc	22-Jun-10	Alternative Financing: From Foundations to Crowd Funding, All the Current Models	Louisa Bolch (Filmmaker), Peter Broderick (Paradigm Consulting), Christopher Hird (Filmmaker), Sarah Moses (Filmmaker), Kim Spencer (Link TV), Ben Tsiang (CNEX)	A series of presentations followed by a question and answer session that discussed the latest trends in alternative financing.
Sunny Side of the Doc	23-Jun-10	Meet the Distributors	Andrea Hock (Autlook Films), Stefan Kloos (Medien GmbH), Catherine Le Clef (Fortissimo Films), Tim Sparke (Mercury Media), Hanne Skjodt (Danish Film Institute)	A panel that addressed current developments in digital distribution, trends in TV sales, and the importance of using festivals and markets to promote documentaries.
Sunny Side of the Doc	23-Jun-10	Show Me the Money	Peter Worsley (Eagle Rock Entertainment), Steve Comeau (Collideascope), Clair LeProust-Maroko (Capa Press), Luc Martinon (Hors-Ecran), Alexandre Michelin (MSN Europe), Lina Prestwood (Current TV), Martin Rogard (DailyMotion)	A panel that discussed what economic opportunities exist for documentary online.
Sunny Side of the Doc	23-Jun-10	VODEO.TV, The French Online Platform of Documentary	Frederic Sitterle (VODEO.TV)	A presentation about the online platform VODEO.TV focusing on its economic model.
Sunny Side of the Doc	24-Jun-10	iPad and Applications	Marc de Verdelhan (Apple), Matthieu Kopp (Aquafadas)	A presentation that showed how iPad applications have introduced new methods for documentary distribution.
Sunny Side of the Doc	24-Jun-10	BIPS: Cross Media Projects and Presentation of DocMedia Creative Showcase	Peter Wintonick (DocAgora), Amit Breuer (DocAgora), Cameron Hickey (DocAgora)	A presentation that reintroduced the WebPlex to the public and was followed by a series of pitches.
Independent	06-Aug-10	Semi-Structured Interview	Peter Broderick (Paradigm Consulting)	via telephone
Independent	26-Aug-10	Semi-Structured Interview	Jamie King	via instant messaging (Skype)
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Forum	12-Oct-10	A Peek into the Future: The Advertiser's Perspective on the Opportunities and Challenges Created by Digital Convergence	Jean-Paul Edwards (Manning Gottlieb OMD)	A presentation that considered trends in advertising and new revenue-generating model.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Forum	12-Oct-10	New Bedfellows: Tips for Digital Success Via Alternative Distribution Models and Partners	Wendy Bernfeld (Rights Stuff)	A presentation that reviewed emerging business models and different ways rights holders could monetise their content and finance content online.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Forum	12-Oct-10	Adventures in Interactive Video: Engage, Measure, Monteise	Abe McCallum (Clickthrough)	A presentation that explored the potential for interactive video to create new types of storytelling experiences and new methods of monetisation.

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	12-Oct-10	Case Studies: <i>Prison Valley</i> and <i>Waterlife</i> - Adventures in Interactive Documentary	Rob McLaughlin (NFB), Joël Ronez (ARTE France)	Two presentations of case studies that used interactive platforms to tell documentary stories.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Film Forum	12-Oct-10	Think Tank	Various speakers from the previous days events and special guests.	A think tank discussion that focused on how independents can fund and develop cross-media projects.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Forum	12-Oct-10	The Game-ification of Life	Michel Reilhac (ARTE France)	A presentation that considers how game dynamics work in daily life and can benefit creative content.
Power to the Pixel: The Cross-Media Forum	12-Oct-10	Case Study: <i>Collapsus</i>	Tommy Pallotta (Submarine), Femke Wolting (Submarine)	A presentation of the documentary <i>Collapsus</i> that examined how the story was told through different media and released online.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	04-Nov-10	Games and Documentaries	Matt Locke (Channel 4), Paul Bennun (Somethin' Else), Margaret Robertson (Hide & Seek), Phil Stuart (Preloaded), Nick Cohen (BBC)	A panel that discussed how documentary makers are developing games to help tell their stories.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	04-Nov-10	The New Reality of Multiplatform - <i>Seven Days</i>	Adam Gee (Channel 4), James Kirkham (Holler), Tania Alexander (Studio Lambert)	Examined the case study of Channel 4's <i>Seven Days</i> , a documentary programme that is short and edited during the week of transmission that allows the audience to interact via the Web with the subjects.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	05-Nov-10	Digital Documentary Distribution: How, Where and Why to Host Your Film Online	Adam Benzine (C21 Media), Mark Cranwell (Babelgum), Andrew Mer (SnagFilms), Tim Sparke (Joining The Docs and Mercury Media), Nick Broomfield (Filmmaker), Andrew Creighton (VBS)	A panel that considered digital and online distribution and the shifting landscape for filmmakers. Offered filmmakers advice on how to manage digital rights.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	05-Nov-10	Kevin Macdonald: <i>Life in a Day</i>	Stuart Cosgrove (Channel 4), Kevin Macdonald (Filmmaker), Joe Walker (Editor)	A public interview with Kevin Macdonald about the production and distribution of <i>Life in a Day</i> .
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-10	Semi-Structured Interview	Andrew Mer (Snag Films)	In person

Table C.1 (continued)

Event	Date	Activity	Participants	Notes
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-10	Ain't Too Proud to Beg: Adventures in Crowdfunding	Helen Jack (Shooting People), Ingrid Kopp (Shooting People), Emily James (Filmmaker), Michael Norton (Buzzbank), Slava Rubin (IndieGoGo), Deborah Burton (Buzzbank), Michael Auret (Filmmaker), Barbara Tonelli (Touscoprod), Prof. Stephen Reicher (University of St. Andrews)	A panel that explored how communities are engaging with film and pledging financial support. Examined how crowdfunding could help artistic communities flourish, circumnavigating around strict broadcaster priorities, declining budgets, and inflexibility.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-10	Involving Communities - Introduction	Peter Wintonick (Eyesteelfilm/DocAgora), David Vadeloo (Community Prophets)	A joint presentation about how documentary makers are empowering communities to co-create projects and what impact this can have.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-10	Making Change: An Introduction to Advocacy-Driven Distribution	Caitlin Boyle (Film Sprout), Robert West (Working Films), Iris Lamprecht (Film Tiki), Franny Armstrong (Indie Screenings), Sara Mosses (Working Films/Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation)	A panel that explored power of community screenings and audience outreach campaigns to seed grassroots support for independent film, earn filmmakers revenue, and contribute to social change. Explored how advocacy and distribution could be combined to rally audiences around a film.
Sheffield Doc/Fest	06-Nov-10	The Good, The Brand, and The Ugly	James Mullighan (Shooting People), Andrew Creighton (VICE), Marc Cave (Erasmus), Vida Toombs (VBS), Will Rowe (Protein), Kat Byles (Homeless World Cup), Jane Mote (UKTV)	A panel that discussed how brand marketers are working with producers of opportunities to create brand partnerships. Explored the new multi-partnership model by exposing expectations and funded examples through case studies and discussions.

Table C.2 Key Qualitative Interviews

Company	Person	Interview Date	Interview Medium
IndieGoGo	Slava Rubin, Co-Founder	18-Oct-08	Phone
MovieMobz	Fabio Lima, CEO	17-Oct-08	Phone
Onlinefilm.org	Cay Wesnigk, CEO	15-Oct-08	Phone
Paradigm Consulting	Peter Broderick, President	06-Aug-10	Phone
SnagFilms	Andrew Mer, VP Content Partnerships	06-Nov-10	In Person
Tribeca Film Institute	Brian Newman, CEO	21-Nov-08	Email
VODO/Steal This Film	Jamie King, Founder	26-Aug-10	Instant Messaging
YouTube	Sara Pollack, Film and Animation Mana	27-Oct-08	Phone