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The Video Tape Recorder, Television and the High School Media Specialist

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THE VIDEOTAPE RECORDER, TELEVISION AND THE
HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALIST

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Library Science Department
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE	2
Limitations	3
2. VTR AND THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TV	4
INSTRUCTIONAL TV	5
COMMERCIAL TV	7
3. USES OF TV AND THE VIDEOTAPE RECORDER	8
VTR AND TV	8
VTR AND ORIGINAL PRODUCTION	9
THE VTR AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH	10
4. TV, VTR AND THE MEDIA SPECIALIST	13
INSTRUCTION IN THE USE OF TV AND THE VTR	14
PLANNING WITH THE TEACHERS	15
5. CONCLUSION	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY	18
APPENDIXES	20
A. Cost of VTR Equipment	20
B. Sample Evaluation Forms	21

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Raised in a multi-media environment, the adolescent of today enters secondary school having been exposed to a multitude of vicarious experiences and an abundance of knowledge. As a young child, the teenager has watched TV, listened to records and tapes, gone to movies, read newspapers and magazines, and listened to radio. When he/she arrives at high school he/she is an experienced viewer and listener. Many times, however, young people are confronted with a traditional classroom approach to instruction, one in which the teacher does most of the talking and books are the primary media used. As Charles Callaci, present Executive Director, Western Educational Society for Telecommunications puts it:

Today's youth, sensually bombarded from infancy and approaching adulthood having been visually inundated with television, psychedelic art, mod films, comic books, stereophonic heavy rhythmical beats at great intensity; vivid, erratic and often frenetic clashing colors in contemporary styles ranging from wardrobe to sport cars, have been conditioned to require experiences of a more profound nature than listening to someone talk.¹

It is not unusual, then, for the teenager to feel school is irrelevant to his/her life. Books are not the center of learning outside of class. The young person acquires much more knowledge and enjoyment in a much shorter time from TV and radio.. It is more

¹ Charles Callaci, "Basic Principles for Instructional Television," American Annals of the Deaf, 115:588, October, 1970.

common for students to watch a television drama than to read a novel. Although reading has its place, the teen of today is much more likely to identify with individuals on TV than in books. The visual experience is something with which the young person is familiar. Therefore, why not use TV, one of the major forms of communication media in our time, for instructional goals?

PURPOSE

An important part of using TV to teach centers around the use of the video tape recorder. A basic videotape recording unit consists of a videotape recorder, a playback monitor, a television camera and a microphone.

Integral to any discussion of the VTR is an investigation of the different aspects of using television for educational purposes. The first step in this paper, therefore, will be a careful exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of television and, indirectly, videotaping, in secondary education.

Without careful planning the VTR can become just another piece of mechanical equipment lost in the closet of a junior or senior high school. An inquiry into the various uses for the videotape recorder is the paper's second objective. Through an investigation of the different uses of the VTR, the educator can best adapt TV to his/her instructional goals.

A third and final investigation will be an exploration of the role of the media specialist in relationship to videotaping. Just what are the specific responsibilities of the media specialist in this important method of instruction?

Limitations

Obviously not all the aspects and uses of the VTR can be discussed in one research paper. It is hoped that readers will use their own knowledge and imagination to develop new and innovative uses for the VTR and television. Hopefully the suggestions included will serve as points of departure for the imaginative educator. For the media specialist it is a reminder of the important responsibility he/she has in forming and supporting the curriculum of the school through the use of TV and the VTR.

Very little writing has been done on how to use TV and the VTR to meet instructional objectives in the classroom. The majority of information on educational television deals with the actual programming rather than how to incorporate the shows into the classroom. In the area of videotaping, most of the writing is concerned with using the VTR camera to produce programs. The responsibility of the media specialist in promoting TV and the VTR has been almost entirely neglected in professional literature. Far too often, more attention is given to how far from the monitor a student should sit, instead of how media specialists and teachers can incorporate TV and the VTR into classroom learning. A great deal of discussion needs to take place concerning this issue.

Chapter 2

VTR AND THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TV

Because videotaping allows for recording both commercial and instructional television, the possibilities for using it are almost unlimited. And using the video tape camera has numerous uses in the school curriculum. Obviously, one of the advantages of all three types of television (commercial, instructional and original recording) is its appeal as a visual form of communication. A teenager's world is filled with visual experiences in our modern age of mass communication. As was mentioned earlier, young people today spend a great amount of time in front of a TV set, listening to the radio and going to movies. Because teens are geared to a visual presentation of ideas, and educators should accept responsibility for training them to be active, intelligent viewers, the use of television in instruction should play an important role.

For the slow, as well as the advanced student, a visual presentation has the advantage over a traditional classroom lecture or presentation. The resources at the command of both commercial and instructional TV are beyond those of a classroom teacher and, therefore, can tremendously broaden and enhance the learning experience for a high school student.

About the potential of TV, Caleb Gattegno, author of

Towards a Visual Culture, has this to say:

So many effects can be produced on the screen simply by making use of these facilities that even today, so early in the history of television, we can be confident that we can attempt miracles that can; fuse contradictions; bombard the mind with selected impressions; generate simultaneously or at chosen moments, impacts whose effects are calculated; force the mind to absorb what may never be met in one's life; enable one to discover the frontiers of one's senses and perhaps push beyond them so as to produce new dimensions for seeing, hearing, feeling, creating.²

INSTRUCTIONAL TV

The various educational television stations on the air today, eliminate the need for an individual school system to develop its own closed circuit system except in special situations. School districts would be foolish to try and develop their own closed circuit system when educational television (ETV) offers so much. Why duplicate what educational television is already providing? By videotaping programs from ETV, schools can take advantage of the shows best suited to enhance their curriculum objectives. The programs then can be presented at the appropriate point in the teachers' plans.

The publication Instructional Television: A Guide for Teachers and Administrators lists many of the advantages of educational TV including the following:

Magnifies demonstrations and illustrative materials. The TV lens enlarges small objects to full screen size for intimate inspection.

Makes it possible to upgrade the curriculum and to enrich the educational program more easily than ever before. This

²Caleb Gattegno, Towards a Visual Culture: Educating Through Television (New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1969), p. 9.

is accomplished by providing an effective way to introduce new courses and by bringing to the classroom special services such as talks by scientists, costly experiments, and special demonstrations.

Keeps all content material completely up to date.

Makes it possible for outstanding teachers to reach more students and gives receiving teachers more time for planning, study, and guidance.

Provides greater equality of opportunity for all pupils. In culturally deprived areas and in the most affluent districts children participate in the same lessons and special events. They have the same variety of courses and the same studio teacher. With television the small high school can offer courses which otherwise would be available only in the large high school.

Helps the student assume more responsibility for learning by requiring him to watch and listen carefully, giving his full attention to the telelesson.³

Alongwith advantages come some problems. With instructional television there is no form of immediate feedback from the students to the studio teacher. This is where the classroom teacher is especially important in filling gaps and answering questions. The pacing of materials and the presentation is predetermined in ETV and may cause some difficulties which must be handled by the classroom teacher. Another problem may be one of scheduling programs to coordinate properly with class periods and instructional units. However, videotape recorders eliminate these problems by preserving on tape the desired program. Videotaping allows the flexibility needed to permit preparation and questions regarding programs. The instructor is able to use only the programs desired, at the time most suitable and in the most meaningful order for a particular

³James H. Gay-Lord (ed.), Instructional Television: A Utilization Guide for Teachers and Administrators (Richmond: Virginia State Department of Education, n.d.), p.9.

class. The regimentation of ETV programs being shown constantly at the same time during the day can be avoided by using the videotape recorder.

COMMERCIAL TV

Though much of commercial TV is considered mediocre, the resources, again, are far beyond those of the classroom teacher. The uses of TV will be discussed in a later section of this paper. It is important to remember that numerous specials on commercial TV are extremely useful in supporting and complimenting the curriculum. Even poor programs can be used in classes analyzing television as a media of communication. Videotaping solves some of the same problems presented by instructional television by providing greater flexibility in utilization.

Chapter 3

USES OF TV AND THE VIDEOTAPE RECORDER

Because of the unlimited uses of videotaping, it is impossible to give a complete list of suggestions. Ideas given here are just a point of departure for the media specialist and the classroom teacher. The uses of the VTR are restricted only by the unwillingness to experiment.

VTR AND TV

In using videotaped television programs in the classroom, careful consideration of objectives must be observed. An instructor must keep in mind his/her role and use television in a way that will enhance the learning experience for the student. As educator Charles F. Hunter states:

Teaching involves the arousal of the student's desire to learn, assessing his readiness to study the subject, creating opportunities to utilize learning, evaluating his accomplishments, adapting the matter at hand to queries, facilitating that kind of discussion which leads to clarification of the subject, and rewarding the final accomplishment.⁴

Television provides one of the ways to motivate the student of today and accomplish these goals.

⁴Charles F. Hunter, "Training Teachers for Television Utilization," The Farther Vision: Educational Television Today, Allen E. Koenig and Ruane B. Hill (eds.) (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 303.

By reading ahead in program guides and publications and manuals circulated by the educational stations in one's area, material can be found to enhance learning in practically any subject. For instance, "The Underwater World of Jack Cousteau" is an excellent visual presentation for a biology class studying marine life. The program "Soul" on educational TV deals with different aspects of the life of black Americans and could be incorporated into literature and social studies classes. The special series on Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth bring history alive for students in secondary schools. Controversial topics of current interest are discussed on "The Advocates".

These various programs can be used in numerous ways depending on the objectives established by the course instructor. Sections of programs can be replayed and discussed by students. The teacher may want to stop the tape to supplement the information provided. Or the assignment to view the program in the instructional materials center (IMC) may be made.

Videotaping television shows that may be of interest to students, but may have no formal place in the curriculum, should be the responsibility of the media specialist. Just as many students read fiction for pleasure, they can now enjoy such programs as Charlie Chaplin movies in the IMC.

VTR AND ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

For years the athletic departments in many schools have been aware of the potential of the VTR camera in their specific area. Taping games for later viewing has been an effective method of

changing behavior in athletes. A lesson should be learned by instructors from these coaches. With the cost of a tape such things as guest speakers, special community activities, musicals, dramas, demonstrations and special events can be recorded for use in the classroom. Again, the use of the VTR is limited only by one's lack of imagination.

Many schools now have a course in mass media or the art of communication. The VTR can be used in these classes for actual laboratory experience for students in producing and directing their own television productions. What better way to learn the uses and abuses of television than to actually participate in producing a program?

Besides specific classes devoted to the study of television as a communication medium, the VTR can be used in other classes. For example, role playing and dramatizations in English classes can be recorded and played back for discussion. Speech students can evaluate their speeches recorded on videotape. Biology teachers can videotape a dissection so all students can clearly observe the process. Demonstrations in home economics and shop may be taped to eliminate the waste involved in presenting the same technique or process five or six times during the school day. Discussions in any class can be videotaped for later evaluation by teachers and/or students.

THE VTR AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Not only students, but teachers as well, can benefit from the application of TV to education. By watching educational TV

critically, a teacher can pick up hints on how to improve his/her own methods of instruction. The approach taken by the television teacher may give the classroom instructor a special insight into how to make instruction more effective. For, example , watching such TV moderators as David Susskind and William Buckley may give an instructor a feel for leading discussions that will help him/her in the classroom.

But perhaps even more valuable than observing the television teacher or host, is observing oneself in action in the classroom. By recording a class, an instructor can evaluate himself/herself and note strengths and weaknesses. Improvement of teaching techniques is an important result of using the VTR in this fashion.

An investigation into the uses of videotape recordings in teacher education was one of the objectives of the Multi-State Teacher Education Project conducted in Florida, Maryland, Michigan, South Carolina, Utah, Washington and West Virginia. According to an M-STEP publication, "It is especially notable that the immediate playback feature of the videotape recorder, as opposed to the weeks later playback possibilities inherent in sound film applications, presented intriguing possibilities for use in laboratory experience classrooms."⁵

Self evaluation should not stop when student teaching comes to an end. Using the VTR can help instructors to determine techniques

⁵Howard E. Bosley, "Video Processes Are Changing Teacher Education," Video Processes in Teacher Education Programs: Scope, Techniques, and Assessment, ed. Howard E. Bosley (Baltimore: Multi-State Teacher Education Project, 1968), p. 5.

that are successful and those that need revising. Once the awkward feeling of being taped wears off, the teacher will find periodic self-evaluations of this kind quite useful in his/her professional growth.

Chapter 4

TV, VTR AND THE MEDIA SPECIALIST

The purpose of the instructional materials center is to enhance the learning process by providing materials to support the curriculum and the needs of students. Today this encompasses not only books and non-print (filmstrips, records, etc.) but also television. The addition of TV and VTR broadens the responsibilities of the media specialist as far as circulation services, instruction and planning are concerned.

CIRCULATION SERVICES

The media specialist is responsible for seeing to it that all teachers are made aware of scheduling on both commercial and educational television. He/she should not be content to simply send out schedules and ETV manuals once a year, once a month or even once a week. Knowledge of the curriculum in each area and daily conversations with teachers will provide the necessary information to enable the media specialist to be a public relations person for television. When a program especially relevant to a particular course is scheduled, the media specialist should alert the teacher. This responsibility implies an awareness of course objectives and unit plans. Close contact with teachers will provide this knowledge.

Of course, the responsibility for videotaping rests with the IMC staff. The simplicity of the process should allow for clerks or dependable students to tape the television programs. The media

should be available to advise teachers and students doing original production. Night programs may pose occasional problems but every effort should be made to record requested programs whether TV to tape or original recording using the VTR camera.

Scheduling replay for classes, another part of the IMC services, may become a problem when teachers begin to utilize the VTR extensively. At this point the need for more equipment should be recognized and the media specialist must present purchase proposals to the principal. A list of the estimated cost of videotape equipment can be found in Appendix A. Doing business with a reliable dealer who insures good repair service is strongly recommended.

INSTRUCTION IN THE USE OF TV AND THE VTR

The media specialist must be aware of the proper ways in which to use television and the videotape recorder. Obviously, a mechanical knowledge of how the videotape recorder operates is essential. Reading the manual and a little practice accomplishes this task. Teachers can easily be taught how to use the equipment and the proper conditions for classroom viewing. But using tapes properly in the learning experience is vitally important information that must be conveyed to teachers.

Through workshops, in-service programs and individual instruction the media specialist should pass on the following information on how to use TV and the VTR most effectively.

1. Consider the viewer in determining what programs can be used most effectively.

2. Determine the objectives for the presentation. These may be objectives for a unit or lesson for which the program is being used.
3. The pre-telecast period should consist of a discussion of the objectives with the students. Creating interest and pointing out important things to look for in the program should be part of this discussion.
4. Observe student reaction during the program and not negative and positive reactions for discussion later.
5. Follow-up should consist of discussion to clear up questions students may have and to react to the program. Related activities to strengthen skills and concepts may follow.
6. Evaluation should follow a TV presentation just as it does other learning activities. This can be done by the teacher or with the teacher and students participating in the evaluation. Helpful ideas can be found in the sample evaluation forms in Appendix B.

PLANNING WITH THE TEACHERS

The media specialist is not only responsible for circulation services and instruction in the use of TV but he/she must assist the teacher in planning lessons in which videotaped recordings of TV programs are to be used.

Available study guides should be given to the instructor. For programs that are part of a unit, bibliographies should already have been prepared. For television programs that are a unit in themselves, bibliographies should be sent to the teacher. This should include books and other non-print available on the topic. Visiting with the teacher and presenting thoughtful suggestions may bring new ideas on utilization. The media specialist should volunteer to participate in discussions or be a discussion moderator in small group discussions of television programs.

The media specialist should make a point of visiting classes and observing students watching and discussing TV. Only through actual contact can one know how effective television is in instruction. Suggestions can also be made where the use of TV is less than totally effective. Encouraging teachers to properly use the VTR, is an important part of the media specialist's responsibilities. As Charles Adams, assistant professor of library science at UNI has stated;

The media specialist must initiate a total school program of dialogue and experimentation. Television must be placed on an equal basis with books, periodicals, and filmstrips. It must become the school's objective to foster and encourage televiewing during school hours.⁶

⁶Charles W. Adams, "The Media Center and ETV," Library Lines, 11:3, Spring, 1972.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The potential of videotape recording is limited only by the unimaginative media specialist. It can be used for taping commercial and educational TV programs and for original production using the VTR camera. The visual appeal of the medium of television is one of the reasons it can be used as an important part of a students' learning experiences.

Learning takes place when there is a change in behavior. New methods, such as the VTR, are being developed constantly to make teaching more effective in this quest for change. Just as media specialists have provided books to encourage change in the past, it is now time for them to encourage and pressure instructors into using the VTR to achieve instructional objectives.

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Appendix A

COST OF VTR EQUIPMENT*

VTR	\$ 700-\$ 900
Lightweight VTR	\$ 600-\$ 800
DC Battery VTR	\$1000-\$1250
Carts	\$ 50-\$ 85
Monitors: 8"-9"	" 170-\$200
10"-12"	\$ 200-\$ 250
18"-19"	\$ 220-\$260
22"-24"	\$ 250-\$ 500
Video Cameras	\$ 150-\$ 400
Viewfinder Cameras	\$ 350-\$ 600
Zoom Lenses	\$ 150-\$ 600
Microphones	\$ 10-\$ 100
Duplicator Switches	\$ 15-\$ 50
Genlock Unit	\$1350-\$1500
Titling Unit	\$ 50-\$ 75
Rear Projection Screen	\$ 12-\$ 30
Carousel Slide Projector	\$ 120-\$ 150
I.A.C. Booth	? ?
Stereo Phono Unit	\$ 50-\$ 150
Stereo reel-to-reel tape deck	\$ 100-\$ 200
Stereo Cassette Unit	\$ 130-\$ 200
Synchro Unit for Carousel	\$ 25-\$ 30
4 way carrel (per position)	\$ 75-\$ 90
Video Projector	\$2750-\$3000

* Charles Thompson, "Instructional Television: The Closed Circuit System and the Portable Videotape System. American Annals of the Deaf, October, 1970, p. 614.

Appendix B
(See following pages)

SAMPLE EVALUATION FORMS*

Robert M. Diamond, A Guide To Instructional Television
(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.), pp.267-274.

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