TV in Congress
Visual Anthropology Video in Philadelphia

The House of Representatives intends to run its own television system for recording Congressional activities. Such is the recommendation of the House Rules Committee in a 3-2 vote last February. Congress approved of the concept of House TV coverage last fall, after years of avoiding it.

The resolution was no surprise to those who supported an alternative plan for a network pool, made up of the three major networks and PBS, to share responsibility for the televising. The decision reflects the desire of Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.) to keep the House floor clear of broadcasters. He was also granted authority to define who will control the recordings once they are made.

O'Neill and his backers on this issue consider the videotaping as a resource for the representatives—a reliable, untainted record of their proceedings. Its availability to, and use by, the public is merely a convenient by-product, and apparently an unappealing one.

Plans have been made for three fixed automatic cameras covering the House chamber, remote controlled by two or three technicians. It's a lot like a bank security system. To protect the Members from sandblasting TV images, the cameramen shall only record the recognized speakers. Even then, camera use is subject to regulations.

Critics feel House coverage should be a public resource and something not done shabbily. They feel media professionals should be involved in the design and implementation of a worthwhile system. Broadcasts of the Canadian House of Commons, for example, are designed and staffed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The current plan's cheapness and restrictions also cause endless technical and legal problems. The lighting casts shadows and reflects off balding heads, but the representatives fear the increased heat of better illumination. The sound system is said to be terrible. O'Neill will be presiding over the question of access to the tapes. Finally, attempts to solve the merely technical questions, by permitting test recordings by the networks have been confidently conformed.

So, although Congress finally approved television coverage of its activities in October, 1977—in the wake of operational systems in 44 state legislatures—it has succeeded in postponing the inevitable until 1979, safely after the next elections.

Ann: Cooper, at the Congressional Quarterly has written two succinct and comprehensive articles on the televising of Congress in the CQ Weekly Report: Dec. 17, 177; Feb. 11, 78; and one on the Canadian House's broadcasts: Jan. 7, 78.

---Steve Spector

The National Institute of Education is spending approximately $4.2 million for a children's program called "Freestyle." The target audience is children nine to 12 years-old.

"Freestyle" is designed "to reduce negative affects of sexual stereotyping on the development of children's interests and career aspirations," says Mary- lou Randour from NIE.

Endorsed by the National Education Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, "Freestyle" will be thirteen 30-minute shows produced in Los Angeles by PBS station KCET-TV. The air date is scheduled for October first 1978.

Plans are being made to add captions for the deaf.

Video is alive in Philadelphia, but in its infancy. The Walnut Street Theatre Film/Video Center is the magnet for video activities. Besides the Walnut, there are occasional video shows at Elage Gallery and the Institute of Contemporary Art. Nexus Gallery has received a grant to document their activities on video.

One of the major projects of Walnut Street Theatre is a series of mini-courses called, "Looking at Video," dedicated to the concept that educating an audience to become video-literate is essential for the growth of video art.

The first mini-course included as guest lecturers: John Hanhardt, curator of Film and Video at the Whitney Museum of American Art, who spoke to the subject: "What is Video?" and showed representative tapes. Joan Jonas whose tapes included "Organic Honey" and "Freedom" created with Willoughby Miller, with his self documentary conceptual art.

The second mini-course, scheduled for later this month includes guest lecturer Stan VanDer Beek, one of America's foremost experimentalists. Douglas Davis, art critic for Newsweek and a dedicated fan of his own work, and Richard Foreman, outstanding playwright, director, and video artist.

Other video activities include a weekly Tuesday video put-on by the Video Lounge of the Nexus Gallery. The Lounge includes work by local independent video artists such as Doris Chase. Future plans for the Video Lounge include an evening with Amy Greenfield, Annoson Kenney, and the Best of the Best of Philadelphia Video.

The Video Lounge at the Walnut Street Theatre welcomes the submission of tapes for consideration for its Fall cycle. The tapes could be 1/2 or 1/4 inch format. For information contact Linda Stryker, video co-ordinator, Walnut Street Theatre Film/Video Center (215) 574-3580.

The Conference of Visual Anthropology was held at Temple University on March 8-11, under the affable and admissible direction of Jay Ruby and his staff. The conference attracted some 700 persons from colleges, universities, non-profit institutions, and film and video houses. Well organized, in excellent facilities, an avalanche of film and video material demanded one's attention. For this reason, the excellent final program is a gem of a resource. It is annotated with time, running times, running times, and even the equipment used to create the film or video piece. Video was very much in evidence, shown in an auditorium with six monitory and one Advent up front. Werner Herzog after which a fiery discussion period was led by Amos Vogel. The Wednesday night program was "Japanese and French Ethnographic films, to work in progress, to satire and put-ons. It was great—write Jay Ruby at Temple to see if any of the annotated programs were left over. Offer to pay him—they're worth it.

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