

KAREN HELMERSON: —and I think a few of you, at least, were at some of them, in late 2002. And there was also an EMF Panel retreat at the Pocantico Conference Center, in Spring of 2003, which also feeds into these findings and why we're here also, again today. And then there are ongoing quarterly Media Arts Breakfast Groups in New York City that we dialogue with. So we brought all of this together, and I'm going to just summarize the Statement of Issues.

First of all, the first issue on the list is: To develop key strategies for effective advocacy. To discuss issues of definition, largely stemming from the Rockefeller Foundation report, *Celluloid to Cyberspace*. And this is Issues of Definition of what we have known as the field. To develop collaborative methods for strategically using existing resources—how can we work together, pool together what we have, to maximize that? To devise more effective ways to represent the field to policy makers. Develop sustainable methods of convening, statewide as well as nationally. Encouraging and cultivating leadership. And addressing the ways that media art changes. In our presentations today we have, of course, Liza and Elizabeth, and we'll have Lori, [who] are pulling directly from these issues. And they're going to illuminate them for us a little bit.

And then just a quick EMF report, in light of these findings. I just want to share with you some of our activities of the program over the last year or two, in response to these issues and to these statements. First of all, the EMF program has been working with the Ford Foundation Communications Policy Funders Network to include creative content and

HELMERSON (Cont.): culture in media policy dialogue. It really isn't there at the level that we feel it should be. We'll talk a little bit more about that later. We've also been conducting youth media and new technology focus groups to inform EMF guidelines. We've been working with NAMAC as a representative body for the media arts nationally and locally. We've also been promoting a New York State funder-to-funder network for information sharing and new media education for funders. It's remarkable how many funders are out there that are supportive, but really need and want to learn more about the media arts and how it's evolving and changing. And then finally, we've been working to develop appropriate guidelines—every two years, the entire agency revisits guidelines across programs—for appropriate language, as the technology changes. And for, also, interdisciplinary new media work within NYSCA across programs. This is a big issue that's coming up more and more.

So these activities reflect national movements—we're not alone here in this—in changing modes in grant making. And for example—and this is the last thing I'm going to share with you before I wrap up here—is Grantmakers in the Arts is a national organization of funders. And in their promotion for their upcoming fall session, or national meeting, they say, quote/unquote, "This meeting will explore new kinds of relationships between arts organizations, showcase cross-disciplinary collaborations, and look at the intersection of arts and culture with other sectors of our society and the economy." So there are new relationships being made, and new dynamics, if you will, or new paradigms. "The conference will examine strategies to maintain the philanthropic community support for

HELMERSON (Cont.): arts and culture, while lending the power of the arts to challenges facing other sectors, again. The conference will aim to foster a dialogue about working effectively with intentions that are often created by competing needs, including the artistic vision of an emerging generation of artists.” These are very large issues on the table.

So on a final note, then, EMF has also been working very closely with ETC, Experimental Television Center, to better define technical assistance support for New York State, and to promote the value of organizational and professional development through technical assistance. And this is not monies for project support; these are monies for your organizations, and the staff within your organizations, to plan for new programming, to plan for new media, to attend conferences, convenings, to work with consultants in assisting the exploration of new opportunities and new ways of working to further your organization, whatever way it is best for you. And following Lori’s presentation later, Sherry’s going to get up and tell us a little bit more about TA. So I just want to let you know, also, as part of our statewide meeting, you know, really what we’re doing. And we are listening to you, and we are pulling from the field, and we are, you know, making effort to follow through on some of these things.

So with that, I’m going to turn it over now and go to the advocacy and statewide networking portion of this Statement of Issues. And we have Liza and Elizabeth, offering really, two very different models of advocacy. From international and national to local,

HELMERSON (Cont.): and from communications policy to consortium building. But these are both forms of representation. And representation is becoming more and more important across the boards for all sectors, for arts, for culture. And the first model I think I'm going to have is that of the Center for International Media Action, and that's Liza, followed by Elizabeth, with her consortium.

LIZA DICHTER: Hi. Thank you very much, Karen. I have to say that I arrived late last night from Brazil, from a conference for about 175 people around the world who work on community media, citizens media, independent media—what do we call it, what do they call it? —arts, as well. And the intersections between the work that you all do—to the little bit I know about it, and the more I'm hoping to learn—with this community of folks are pretty interesting, and a lot of weave there. And the reason that it made as much sense as it did for me to come here, despite being kind of midstream in traveling, was because there were some really exciting things for me. One is NAMAC, which is an organization, as I've explained to the NAMAC folks here, I've known about and seen and kind of admired for a while, in the ways that it works to provide resources broadly across a whole constituency set, and to look at a role of feeding, of being the infrastructure for a field. Also because Karen, I have begun to know; and she recently hosted a meeting I attended—a couple other people were there, Gaylon(sp?) was there. And it was a really well run meeting. And (laughs) I was really excited, because we go to a lot of meetings, all of us, I'm sure. And a lot got done in it, and so I felt like that was another really good reason to do this. But also, the big reason was also that the work that you all do is very

DICHTER (Cont.): much the work that my work hopes to support. And the reason for that is because what I work on is essentially media and communications policy, broadly written. And that includes regulatory policy—things like the FCC, things like Public Access cable allocations, copyright, as well as kind of de facto policy of the way that the economic structure forces things to be and shapes the environment.

The work that I do at the Center for International Media Action was started, in a formal way, last year. Myself and two other women founded the organization. We had been working together in a variety of ways, primarily on a project called Media Channel, which was a website that I had helped start with some other folks, that looked to be an aggregation place for all kinds of organizations concerned with media in some social, political, cultural capacity. And we were featuring art, and we were linking to activism, and we were featuring people's articles, and really kind of covering the space, in a sense, providing links out to a number of groups that are here in the room. We used to link to your material, when it seemed like we could fit it into this international and more global context. But one of the things that was happening there was a sense that there were some actually specific real needs that people had in trying to either work together, know about each other, in trying to align their work with others' work, without having to take on new projects; that there were some challenges that we kept hearing about when people talked about wanting to work together or see how their work related, build campaigns, other kinds of things. And there seemed to be some role for something almost institutional, or

DICHTER (Cont.): fixed in some way, that could dedicate itself to projects for the in-between space. And so that's what we started doing.

And we experimented with a number of different ways to do this. One of the things that we did was immediately after the big FCC media ownership vote in June of 2003, which I imagine lots of you heard about, we surveyed all of the organizations who'd taken an official stance on that policy issue. Because we had this wide range of groups, who had not ever, in some cases, gotten involved in media policy before, in some cases had, we created a directory, which, in the first place, told the story of what it looks like when a multiplicity raises its voice about a particular policy issue. It wasn't coordinated top-down, this wasn't a lot of specific strong campaigns where everybody agreed to the same this or that; it really was a plurality of voices, sharing the opportunity to do something. It was a—the vote was on a minor regulatory issue, really, in some cases; there was some impact, but it was a place to channel a lot of our frustrations. [The] directory, then, features all of the organizations, with some information about the overview of what went on during that policy fight, and also some ways you might contact with these other organizations. If you're looking for press, maybe you look for a group that has a high profile, or has a very different approach than you. If you're looking for endorsements, maybe you look for a group that has a certain kind of national advocacy profile—the National Organization of Women, things like that. And if you're trying to share a campaign or looking for a lot of outreach, maybe you look for a group with large membership. That kind of thing.

DICHTER (Cont.): Other things that we've done have been hosting meetings and providing listservs. The meeting that I just attended in Brazil, we actually organized and— so to try to figure out how do you organize spaces for this kind of thing? And we also produced materials that take some of the best things that certain groups are doing, package them together and make them available for everybody to reuse. Part of the premise of our work has been that it's very hard to take on new work; we're all maxxed out. I mean, everybody is, right? There's just no room for other projects. So if there's ways that we can align what we're already doing, that amplify whatever it is that are some shared goals, there's some value there; so to play some of the role in helping to do that.

The philosophy behind what we're doing is really that in a sense of a shared— there's some shared concerns here: communication, media technology; communication infrastructure; laws and regulations; who has the control? Who has the power? How does the money flow? It affects lots of us in different ways. And in the places where we have some shared goals, how can we know who else is doing what, and actually build on each other's resources? And some of the ways we do that is to help folks see each other, know who else is out there; and some of it is other kinds of facilitation. So I'm happy to talk more about that at any point with anybody who's interested specifically in what we do; but in terms of being here, the things that I'm able to contribute, that I'm aware of, that might be useful, and the things that I'm really interested to learn from you all do center a lot around policy. What are the policy issues that are actually threatening to our work?

DICHTER (Cont.): Well, copyright policies and copyright technologies that would prevent us from taking a recording and putting it in a pastiche, together with other things, to get youth to edit together a bunch of commercials and comment on them; being able to record something off the news, and then show it as part of a film festival, with a theater troupe acting in front of it, being prevented from doing that. What happens with the rollout of broadband technologies in our regions? What about our access to both Public Access cable, what about our access to the internet infrastructure? What about, in fact, the fact that globally, trade policy, if it were, and when it does include media and culture could be used to prevent government subsidies of media and culture—like community radio, like media arts centers.

So those are some of the places where I see kind of some of the things that I've been working on. And I have a couple of examples here of stuff I'm happy to share with folks that some of the groups I work with have produced: *The Cartoon Guide to Spectrum Policy*, about what's happening in the wireless space. Another example is *Digital Futures: A Need to Know Policy Guide for Independent Filmmakers*, which talks a lot about copyright and digital policy. And from you all, of the things that are of real interest to me are: Where have you seen, or have you experienced policy interfacing with your work? And what are the things that scare you? And what are the doubts or possibilities that you see in trying to make change in all of that. So I don't know how that is in the time you want me to go, but I'll stop there and...



HELMERSON: Well, it's great, if you feel you've got your major points out. And if you have, then I will just ask Elizabeth to continue; and then when Elizabeth is through, we'll go ahead and open up for discussion a bit.

ELIZABETH MERENA: Thank you all for being here. Liza and I talked briefly. You know, we didn't know each other at all, so I think Karen has really organized whatever she thinks we have in common to present to you. And we both agreed that the dialogue part is the best, most important, because then we hear directly from you. I could certainly talk for an hour, but that isn't what I'm going to do. Just a quick background from me is I've been at the State Arts Council for almost twenty years, and I've worn a couple of different hats. And it's nice to see some of my former life at the Council here in this room today. I know many of you from different ways. So even though I'm here as Director of Visual Arts Program, I do have a thorough background in film and media; so don't think I wouldn't have an opinion on that, too.

What I did a few years ago—four, about—was look at the applicants to my program, which, so you know, is the second smallest program at the Council; it's very tiny. And what I was seeing was a set of groups that were about twenty-five and thirty years old, who still were not very stable, who still were overworked, who still had capacity problems and infrastructure problems. And as a funder, we can certainly go through and do the grants over and over and over, but we can also try to take initiative and put

MERENA (Cont.): together some kind of way to help you, above and beyond, you know, just giving you the dollars to pay for your rent.

The result of this was for me to work with about six or seven organizations throughout the state, who worked primarily with visual artists and the process of art making. So in a similar way, I felt like these people had not a large enough profile for the hard work that they did. Exhibition groups have a real visual presence and a public profile that... The process of art making was really overlooked. So I brought them together, having reviewed them over and over and over all these years, and realizing they'd never met each other, they never got together. And it was just so obvious to me that there was this commonality. And they all got in the room, however you do the same thing—either by, you know, command, NYSCA meeting or whatever. (laughs) And eventually, they did decide that there were a number of things that they did share.

One of the first things I did after the meeting—and I'm speaking to your future. You know, if you decide to work together, even outside NAMAC or within NAMAC, the lessons that I learned here is what I'm bringing to you. It took us quite a bit of time to get to where we are. There's a report out in the hall that I brought to you, which I think is certainly discipline specific in some ways, but also really able to be used even for performing arts groups that are trying to put together networks. We first decided that, yes indeed, there was no competition among them. You know, they all did come as individual groups; but all of the things in common, really helped them forge patterns together. The

MERENA (Cont.): trust was built. And then one of the first goals was to get outside money and have NYSCA step back, so that they could continue on their own.

Oh, I should just tell you who they are, so you have an idea. It's CEPA Gallery in Buffalo, which apparently, you're going to soon(?); Harvest Works is a new member; Islip Art Museum—the Carriage House project out there, where they do a lot of installation work; Women's Studio Workshop; Lower East Side Print Shop. You know, I'm...

VOICE: Dudeney(sp?).

MERENA: Dudeney Paper Mill; Center for Photo[graphy] at Woodstock just came on; and Smack Mellon Studios, in Brooklyn. So there's a lot of interface between what they do and what you do. And with those names, I'm sure you understand exactly where they are, as far as structure.

After they decided they wanted to work together, we put out a call for proposals for consultants to come in and organize meetings with them. They self-determined that they needed to have capacity building workshops, board-staff meetings together. I mean, all the details of that are in the report, so I'm not going to go into it. But what was great was that when we got this response, to have people come and work with them, that was one, of course, that stood out head and shoulders above the other responses. And of course,

MERENA (Cont.): they were the most expensive. And I thought: Well, do we do this or not? And it was the time to spend the money, so that's the other lesson. You know, once you decide you want to work together, when it comes right to go outside your own impetus and to get outside professionals come in, really get somebody good, because it's been the real benefit, and they're still with us. They helped write the report that's out there. There was a point at which we decided, also, to let people out if they didn't want to continue. And that's a good lesson. You know, if you walk away from, you know, a meeting a year-and-a-half and thought: This is not where my interests are, that's ok. So that was a brilliant thing we did. Nobody left, really. Well, one group left.

As far as what Karen said about informing a collaborative plan and findings from the field, I wouldn't say that this group, this consortium, has done more than just try to stabilize itself at this point. We have not really come up with any true findings yet. What they are in the midst of doing now, and what's come organically out of their process, is that they want to write—and they use this word—a manifesto (laughs) to explain to visual artists what they should expect when they go onsite and come to work at these please, because their field in particular—and probably with individual artists working in yours—people sometimes are let down in their expectations, and the technical assistance that was promised isn't there. This is one big issue that's come up. You know, explaining to someone that's going to Utica that you can't get to New York City in two minutes. You know, just basic, a whole big list of what artists can expect. And that's what the point of view from this group has been. It's all been about the process of art making,

MERENA (Cont.): rather than many other issues that we could be talking about. And that kind of advocacy is going to be articulated better when they get this next description done, because what we're finding is a whole 'nother set of artists will work in places where they're losing money. And that is not what we want to be able to— we don't want to support that model. We want to show them it's their choice; if they go somewhere to make work, that they can come out with no money, paying for the experience, or maybe with some money in their pocket. And the groups in the consortium are the latter group.

And let's see, what else did I want to bring? I don't think too much. I was going to echo again the duplication of efforts aspect. They have figured out all sorts of ways to cut time. They share reports that they've made to funders, they share grant applications. I mean, they've really become a cohesive unit. And it has resulted in— well, first, the NYSCA seed money; and then we went to NEA, and they came in and assisted; and then Warhol was next; and then Ford. So we sort of came up through the grassroots, whereas you came with the big money first, in a way. It's two different ways of working.

DICHTER: I'm not so sure. (they laugh)

MERENA: Well, you mentioned Ford.

DICHTER: Oh, ok. Right, right, right.

MERENA: I mean, these groups could never have approached any of these funders individually, because their budgets are so small they can't apply there. So that was the other impetus for the consortium, was to give them some strength in numbers, and to get a budget together that, you know, would make some notice, certainly, within the funding climate. And we did propose to GIA, the Grantmakers in the Arts, a panel discussion for the fall meeting. I think it might get accepted. So we're going to take that forward one more time.

HELMERSON: I'd like to address a very simple item real quickly, before you open it to discussion again. Just Elizabeth was saying, you know, whatever I think it is that they have in common... Again, what's really going on here is that I think Elizabeth and Liza have at least three things in common, and one of which is they're fabulous resources. They are resources that I'm hoping you will take advantage of, by virtue of the material that they've brought today, as well as by contacting them and talking to them about the work that they've been doing—Liza, of course, more with directly policy, communications policy, and Elizabeth with the consortium building. But the whole idea here, again, is models—models for organizing, and models for representation; and people bringing the resources together that they have to offer to build toward whatever their goals and needs are, through common interests and common practice, without trying to create, necessarily, new work. That's also very tricky. But that's what I see them as having in common, are ways of effecting representation for the things that they need, and see need being done, and doing so by bringing people together with, again, the various

HELMERSON (Cont.): resources. And in your packet, there is a resource list, as well, that Sherry got together for you. So we encourage you to look at that. There's a resource list on the NYSCA web site, as well. So again, this is all about networking, information sharing, and time for us to just— not really conclude anything or come to any major, you know, decisions here, but again, to know that there are resources. We're going to be supporting your interests in learning and thinking about ways in which you can take advantage of those resources, again, through TA.

In your packet, there's a little sheet that's called a discussion tool. We don't need to follow that directly. (laughs) But it does ask... You know, it helps, again, focus thought, or focus things that I know the EMF program would like to learn more about from you. For example... Like, I pulled mine out already. You know, in regard to the advocacy and statewide networking concept, you don't need to start with this question necessarily, but I would like to know what is advocacy for your organization? What do you relate to that was presented to you here just now? What kind of representation would benefit your goals? Which model is more appropriate for your organization—a communications policy model? Is that really where your work is largely focused right now? Or is it maybe consortium building, as Elizabeth was talking about; ways in which to work more locally to effect change or representation, to get things accomplished? Or maybe both. So these are the kinds of things that if we understand better as a program, as the Electronic Media and Film Program, we can better serve you; and likewise, NAMAC can also better serve you on a national level, as well.

HELMERSON (Cont.): But I'm going to give it back to Liza and Elizabeth and the group for at least, you know, some discussion, questions. Anything?

MERENA(?): I just wanted to clarify the consortium chose also not to become a 501c3. They did want to be a loose-knit organization. They did not want to be competing for money... Period. With any other, you know, service organization. The visual arts program does not have or fund a service organization throughout the state. I don't know that they, as a discipline, have ever clamored for one, actually. There's been NAAO, the National Association of Artists Organizations, which is getting some new life in it. But for the most part, they have worked independently. And it does not necessarily have a long-term future. I mean, they may accomplish what they need, and disband after learning who they are. They've discussed national outreach and finding like-type groups that would help them advance the dialogue of putting artists' rights first and foremost. But they haven't made any big steps toward that yet.

HELMERSON(?): Got any volunteers? (laughs)

WOMAN: I have a question if...

HELMERSON: Great, please.



DICHTER(?): One of the questions that comes up for me—and I'm looking at Hye Jung to see, because I know that she was involved with Videazimut, which was an international organization—but I'm thinking about the negative experiences we might've had, the challenges we might've faced. My sense is that most folks that I meet share all these intentions all the time. Very few people are like, "I don't want to talk to anybody else who does related work." I mean, it just doesn't happen that often. But for some reason, no matter how long we've been doing the work, we've seen lots of barriers. And I've got some stories about some things I've seen among the groups I've worked with. But I'm just wondering if there're some things that kind of are flags for you all, especially coming here and thinking: Are we going to be expected to do one of these kind of na-na-na—whatever it is that is your thing that you've seen that's been a challenge, or a barrier in some cases.

HYE JUNG PARK(?): (inaudible) question (inaudible) Liza, in terms of (inaudible) policy, you know, educating or (inaudible) who's your target, and what is the strategy for organizing, and how do people have the access to these materials?

DICHTER: Ok. So to sort of quickly respond to that, in terms of our organization and... There's two questions around target. There's the target for our work, and then the target for the advocacy that we support. For our work, it's pretty project specific. And so for example, this directory, we had a couple of different audiences, in terms of people who might use it. One was groups that are doing work around communications policy on some

DICHTER (Cont.): level and are looking for new allies, or looking to broaden their connections. Another one, for example, was journalists and researchers who are going to be capturing the story of what happened during that FCC struggle, and how that story's being told, and what we learn from that as a policy advocacy moment.

In the conference we just ran in Brazil, it was a real— the goal was really about connecting academics who do study and theorize and write about all of this kind of stuff that you all do around the world, whether from development perspective in anthropology, or a sociology perspective, or media studies, connecting with practitioners who do this kind of work; as well as in— whether it's community radio, or whether it's a more arts framed experience, or whether it's community newspapers; and also with advocates and activists who are engaged with advancing, fighting for spaces, all kinds of things in different communities. So that goal there was folks who were interested in building some international bridges around exactly those kinds of things.

There was something else you asked about, besides targets.

VOICE: Oh, yeah. About two years ago, (inaudible) have no idea where (inaudible) more user-friendly (inaudible).

DICHTER: In terms of materials? Yeah. Some of the things that we've done—for example, you'll see out there a bright pink piece of paper, *Ten Ways to Support Independent Media*. It's something that's been reproduced in zines and it's been given out at various conferences. Groups are allowed to... Well, it's copyleft; you're welcome to reuse it and mush it around and add your own things. A lot of what we've doing has been on a pretty direct level, because we haven't had a website developed yet. We're in the process of developing it. And when we do that, there'll be some questions around what the use is going to be. It's something where people can actually, for example, put up their own fliers for other people to download. One of the things that happens a lot in the work that we do is people never have materials to bring to different places. And I've seen some people I know, who have the habit—I do—of picking up extras of other people's stuff, and we form our own kind of information hubs, and we take it to the next place. CIMA's trying to do some of that with our website and things like that. So I don't know if that... I mean, at this point, for us, what we're trying to do is not only help folks find us as a resource, but also find each other. And so some of that is the creating of directories, some of that is bringing together meetings, some of it is another flier you'll see out there, is just instead of a big directory with hundreds of groups, there's a version that's much smaller. This one's organized— this is all national organizations doing work on a variety of policy and media education, policy education issues. So, I mean, that's— you know, for us, it's really kind of about, in some case, just creating spaces where information can be exchanged; in some cases, it's gathering together things and putting it back out. So I

DICHTER (Cont.): don't know if that get at it. But I'm definitely interested, also, in the question that I posed (inaudible).

(inaudible voice)

DICHTER(?): Well, it's actually—I brought some information, and if folks afterwards want to get some details on the law and the tax issues right now. For the most part, actually, if you're staying away from specifically endorsing a candidate, you have a lot of leeway. We can be advocating for ourselves in general, and as nonprofits, for the rights of nonprofits. We can be advocating for ourselves, in specific, for Public Access television legislation or licensing. It also depends on who we're trying to influence. But in my work, a lot of what we do... Another project we're working on is with Consumers Union. Consumers Union is a national organization that is the publisher of *Consumer Reports Magazine*—you know, best cars, best video cameras. They rate consumer products. They also have an advocacy entity, which pushes for things like product safety labeling, which has pushed for a lot of things, also, in the media and telecommunications space, including fixed phone rates in low income communities, including laws that affect your cable bill. And so they are looking to produce a big website to kind of share their knowledge and educate folks about these different areas in media and internet communications, telephone policy, cell phone, even things like the cell phone directories. Should there be a phone book directory for cell phones? And how do you get listed or not listed? Things like that. And digital rights management, some of the things I mentioned earlier about

DICHTER (Cont.): copyright. So we're working with them. And they mostly do lobby work. And their approach is: Let's find a policy, let's look at what the policy is, let's take an analysis, let's articulate a public interest position, and let's do the kind of insider Washington work that it takes to be the other voice, other than the industry voice, that is a very powerful voice in the regulatory environment.

Our perspective is that one of the things that's kept a lot of advances in communication policy happening is that you have a lot of lobbying groups saying, "Here's a policy position. We've got to get the public to stand up behind it, because we need to protect our media," or protect our arts or whatever. And they make a lot of noise, but they turn around and there isn't necessarily a lot of people lining up behind them. Well, what's the problem there? We also see that there's a lot of community based groups, constituencies like artists, like filmmakers and other folks, who have real issues with the system as it is, but aren't necessarily engaging in the policy space. We're looking to find a way that we can create channels where the lobbying groups, the groups that have policy expertise, can actually be more like a technical assistance, can be more in support of the expressed interests of organizations that have a vested interest in these policy issues. So it's not about a policy— an analyst coming down and saying, "Look, the next copyright law is going to screw us all, because we won't be able to tape the news and replay it in the classroom, or cut it up and put it into a film," but it's actually about us getting the information about what the issues are going to be and saying, "That's really going to be a

DICHTER (Cont.): problem for me.” We need to make sure how to fight it, and having the policy groups help provide more of the strategic and tactical support for doing that. So that’s kind of...

And our work is actually kind of one step removed, because we see our work as really supporting the interconnections and supporting the relationships, and helping these different groups in different approaches, different procedures, different methods. Some groups are great at making noise and sitting down outside of a corporation and putting a lot of pressure. Some groups are good at negotiating locally. Some groups have the policy analysis. Some groups... An association of filmmakers might have a lot of members, and might be able to kind of galvanize those members; but that’s a different role than going in and being on the Hill every day and kind of playing the schmooze Washington game. So it’s about finding out how we can identify who has what kinds of role, and how those might be aligned to support each other. And one of the big pieces that’s also missing is the communication about this stuff. We are media and communicators, right? We’re making media, we’re making radio, we’re making little films, making all of this stuff. So one of the things that’s been really exciting in the work that Nicole and Mediarights is doing is taking some of the media content that’s being produced about these issues, connecting it to the issues themselves, and allowing filmmakers to do what they do best, which is tell stories and educate and inspire, around these exact issues that will affect their ability to do just that.

HELMERSON: Could I jump in for a second, because what also in— or rather—excuse me. I met Liza, again, through the Ford Communications Policy Funders Network. And what was happening there—and again, one of the reasons I brought Liza here is because the work that she’s doing is work that is already known to us, again, by some of the organizations that we’ve all worked with—AIVF, again, NAMAC, some other alliances. But what was happening at the table—and I thought why Liza is a good connector for us, if you will—was... A little anecdotal story. Sitting at Ford one day with some really remarkable funders—I mean, some pretty big philanthropic families; you know, I was rather impressed—and we’re talking about communications policy. Now, this is a little bit of my background, having worked with Videazimut, actually, and you know, cable and this sort of thing. So that’s why I was there. And I see, as a result, the connection between the media arts and what they’re doing for us. But I realized that the type of conversation that they were having, I couldn’t effectively join, as the director of electronic media and film at a state arts council. I could join as a communications policy person, and someone who is engaged in advocacy for the media arts at a certain level, but I couldn’t really bring this back to NYSCA, in the way that they were talking about communications policy. And that was almost a year ago. And I said to certain people there, I said, “Well, you know, this is all great, but there’s some language that’s missing here.” And I just said, “Where’s the art?” You know? And these people looked at me like I had just walked in the door, and I’d been sitting with them for a couple of hours. So I realized that there was a lot of work to be done in building out language within in communications policy that would represent us and represent the media arts in

HELMERSON (Cont.): communications, in cable, in internet. Because a lot of what's going on, and a lot of what Liza's just been talking about, really is foreign to us in a certain way, although it directly impacts our lives. Whether we're running organizations, or making art, or we want to, whatever we do in the future is going to hit us hard.

So a few of us at that table started realizing that we needed to find what the intersection was between media arts and communications policy, really, in the public interest. So that's where this idea of culture came up. Because we started looking at it very closely. What is policy, media policy? Well, it's communication. Well, what forms of comm— what is communication? Well, it's information, it's communicating one-way or two-way, it's sending information out; but it's also expression. And that's where the creative part started coming in, where the culture started coming in. So we started breaking it down into these levels, and realized: Well, you know, what is common here between the arts, media arts, and communications policy in the public interest, through culture, is content. And content is the big rub for everybody, whether it's the FCC, whether it's us going up over the internet, whether it's copyright, et cetera, et cetera.

So over the past year—and again, this is how I met Liza; she was brought into some of these discussions—we started looking at content as the driver for policy in the public interest, when it comes to communications media. And content is something that we all share. So all of a sudden we had a bridge with communications policy as the media arts. But what was missing, and what we're still sort of working toward—and again, that's



HELMERSON (Cont.): why I see— you know, whether it's through consortium building, at one end of the spectrum, or the direct work, you know, that Liza and the Center for International Media Action is doing—is helping to bring that creative voice to the table. And in the most recent Funders Network meetings—I mean, it's always difficult to get out of my mouth, Funders Network—for communications policy was the awareness of who was not at the table. And who's not at this particular Communications Policy Funders Network table are the artists. And what was really great about this realization was that it was these communications policy people that were saying that and realizing that, and realizing they had to get the artists to the table.

So how do we do that? I'm not asking you to do that, but it is a question that we really do need to address at a certain level. And for example, there's just— there's a Center for Creative Voices that just had a couple of events on the West Coast, that was really very successful. They were drawing in the big names from Hollywood and L.A. But they're just brand new and they're coming up on the radar screen. And that's... Sorry. (laughs) Welcome to Dorothy Thigpen from Third World. (laughs) I just got all distracted.

But anyhow, that's a lot of what this is all about, too. Where do we fit into all this? Why is it sounding so foreign to us? And it is foreign to us, at a certain level; but again, it's something that we are actually being invited to join. We're invited to the table. So now we just have to figure out how to get there, how to do it, you know, in the best way.

DICHTER: And just really quickly, because I know that I've taken up a lot of time here, really quickly, to say that one of the things that came out of this international meeting in Brazil was the— we were really looking towards is: How do we talk about the value that's happening for media that's not trying to achieve the same things that Disney's trying to achieve? There's something very different, and it's— when people are able to be involved in production that maybe nobody sees; or when people are able to be doing things within their own community; or, for example, at the conference, there were people making radio stations and TV stations that literally broadcast from one room down the hall. Why? What was it doing there? The articulation that you're all doing in your funding advocacy for your own selves in other kinds of ways, to talk about the impact is an impact that we need to articulate in a communications policy space, because otherwise, the policies won't support that kind of work to happen. And we know that it isn't— I mean, I think all of us in this room probably share the feeling that we know that it's not just that there's importance of, like, that either Fox gets to have three channels or two channels, or whether or not the Victoria's Secret fashion show should be forced to be shown or not forced to be shown, or any of those things; that there's actually entirely societal and cultural roles that communicative technologies and the use of them play; and that figuring out the ways that we articulate those—particularly in the U.S. space, where we don't have the same kind of development model; I mean, communications for development, it's all good for public health to have this or that—that there's other kinds of ways that we look to you all, who really know the stories and really know the examples, so that we can begin to challenge the dominant framework that, even in a

DICHTER (Cont.): public interest side of things, is articulating the importance of media. Diversity of voices, you know, this and that. There's something else there, too, right? I mean, there's something else about the capacity to be able to communicate within a community, about the capacity to be able to have internet and film and other kinds of venues exist, and be even sometimes subsidized, if we feel that the commercial is simply not going to provide for certain societal roles that we feel make a huge difference.

HELMERSON: Can we have...? I should also introduce Debby Silverfine, our deputy from NYSCA, who's just come in, again, as well as Dorothy Thigpen. So welcome. (laughs) Can someone take a stab at it, that question? What was that question? I keep losing the sheet. You know... (inaudible voice; laughs) She put it away on me. You know, what are your goals? I really do want to tackle this just a little bit. I'd like to get a better sense of what— how your— oh, go. (inaudible voice) I see you're getting ready. (laughter)

WOMAN: When you say advocacy, you're really talking about media policy now, because your advocacy (inaudible) organizations— because there's different types of...

HELMERSON: Right.

MERENA(?): I mean, we— media rights has a lot of different types of advocacy. I'm very interested in learning more about the lobbying issue, because we... You know, a lot of funders are asking us now, "Make sure you don't leak to websites that are doing lobbying, because we're going to get cracked down on," and everyone is scared. So that's an issue that I would love to know more about.

But also, what we do is we, as you just mentioned... Giving awards to media policy activists every year is part of the Media that Matters Film Festival. And the idea is to connect filmmakers and artists, media makers, with media policy people, and to try and put it in a language that's easy for them to understand, and that they can take action and get information on our website. Media rights is really about connecting the media makers with the activists and community organizations, so that community organizations can use media for social change; and realizing that a great sort of niche marketing technique for a lot of social issue films is to really make your work available to the people who need tools, who are doing advocacy and activist work on a specific subject. So those are some of... What we're doing is we're connecting those two groups of people. And our issues are constantly changing. This year in our film festival, we have a lot of issues on sustainable development. We've got two films on AIDS in Africa. So these are— we're doing advocacy for these issues, because these are the issues that our jury selected, and we're making a DVD and distributing it to community organizations and libraries across the country. And we're repacking films by issue, with discussion guides, so that they can really be used as a tool, and are enhanced by the presence of other films on this DVD. So

MERENA(?) (Cont.): if you have a DVD with, like, animation and youth made work and documentaries in the same package, with the discussion guide, then it becomes more powerful. So we use advocacy as kind of a marketing tool for film. (laughs) And then also, we also work with a lot of partner organizations and are always trying to not sort of recreate what other people are doing, but try and partner with them. So when you talk about working with other organizations, a question that I had for you guys was that... Has there ever been sort of nonprofit mergers? Any examples, sort of like the corporate merger, where, like, nonprofit organizations have merged together to become stronger and kind of take over the world? (laughter) I wonder if there's, like, similar mergers in the nonprofit media arts field. And (inaudible voice) whether that helps us raise a lot of money or if it deters us from making money.

(inaudible voice)

MAN: IFT Minneapolis merged with the state(?) (inaudible) center, whose name I can't recall.

WOMAN: They do a lot of photography work.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

JANE MINTON(?): It's— IFP in Minneapolis merged with another organization in Minneapolis-St. Paul about five years ago, four years ago. And it was kind of tricky. But IFP Minneapolis took on the... I mean, one of the things that's kind of interesting anyway (inaudible; cough) IFP(?) model, there are six, soon to be seven, IFPs throughout the country. And there is no governing body or national body that funds us or anything; we're all separate organizations. So Minneapolis, in merging with another organization that was local, took on photographers and doing classes, which they hadn't done previously. But it's going strong. Jane Minton, who had been the Executive Director of IFP North—that's what it used to be called—is the director both. And I think the board of the photography group— I mean, some of them have now merged into IFP (inaudible).

MAN: And they also have maintained their own spaces, haven't they?

WOMAN: Do they?

MAN: I'm not sure. But it is an interesting case study, and it seemed like... NAMAC actually provided them some technical assistance to work through the kind of negotiation, you know, of that tricky, really emotional space, too. And it really seems like that they did it really well, and has worked to sustain both visions of the organization.

WOMAN: There's another IFP example. There's a new organization in Miami called The Alliance, which was a theater, merged with IFP, what had been IFP South, which was a small IFP chapter that was really failing, that IFP Los Angeles and IFP New York wanted to see closed to solve its problems. And they were (inaudible)

WOMAN: So it's usually one organization is overwhelming(?) the other (inaudible) like a corporation (inaudible)

WOMAN: One(?) organization, generally, I think, needs a lot of... It doesn't have an infrastructure, doesn't have the capacity to really raise more money. Yeah.

MAN: Or has some other kind of, like, really dire(?) (inaudible)

MAN: Like a building.

WOMAN: Right.

MAN: Yeah. (laughter)

WOMAN: In that space.

MAN: For(?) their constituency or, like, serving a real need in the organization, but maybe not as fully— you know, that needs a lot of infrastructure development.

HELMERSON: (inaudible)

WOMAN: Could I say one more?

HELMERSON: Oh, sorry. And Carole. Yeah. Carole and then Sacha.

CAROLE PARKINSON: I had some good news. (laughter) Which is— in terms of sort of getting space (inaudible) Big Mouth Productions, which is our sort of sister organization, a semi-nonprofit—some of it(?) for profit—did a documentary called *Deadline* about the death penalty and Governor Ryan's decision to give clemency to people on death row. And it's going to be on NBC this Friday. It's the first independent documentary to be bought by NBC. And it's in the *New York Times* cover of the Arts section today, so pick it up. That's a good— it's a coup for our side.

SACHA YANOW: Well, I had a question about how the governance of the IFP chapters happens. (Voice: That's, like, a whole day) If there's not one... (laughter) They must have one— not...



MINTON(?): It's very complicated. I mean, IFP... Just for those of you who don't know, we're all separate membership based organizations; our members are independent filmmakers. For New York, I'd say a lot of the membership base is kind of half documentary, people doing documentary work, half doing dramatic, narrative work. About three years ago... So basically, there was an IFP in New York. It was called IFP. Then, I guess maybe two years later, there were some independent people starting an IFP in Los Angeles. IFP Los Angeles, probably about six years ago, five years ago, became huge. I mean, it's an organization (inaudible)

WOMAN: (Over Minton) Was there communication between the coasts? There must have been, they have the same name.

MINTON(?): Yeah. (inaudible) Well, this is the thing. About six years ago, IFP in Los Angeles—which had been faltering for a long time, and New York had been the larger one—sort of blew up. There's about six-thousand members. So of the nine-thousand or so IFP members nationwide, a majority of them are out of Los Angeles—for a variety of reasons. In terms of what has become—you know, what's sort of happened to independent film, independent film has gone from being this very sort of niche, not necessarily everybody knowing what it is, to now being grand, you know, and sort of the consumer (inaudible, cough), whatever. About three years ago, four years ago, we formed IFP National. We hired a guy named Morgan Rumpf, who now works at, I think, DGA—Directors Guild. So Morgan was originally tasked, with no money from any of the IFPs...

MINTON(?) (Cont.): New York and L.A. put up \$100,000 out of cash reserves to pay him a salary and form a website. And that sort of was right before September 11<sup>th</sup>. So for us, it was like: That's it. There's no more money from IFP New York. We can't fund this. There's never been any kind of agreement about... I mean, in a weird way, IFPs all compete with each other. You know? So we go to the same potential funders as IFP L.A. would go to, IFP Minneapolis, or Chicago or anywhere.

WOMAN: So the administrator just dissolved...?

MINTON(?): There's a national— so that position basically went away, because it wasn't— it was no longer subsidized by the two larger organizations. And there isn't really a kind of structure for IFPs to really... We can collaborate on certain programs, but we don't actually fundraise together.

WOMAN: But under the administrator, did the other chapters happen? You have six chapters (inaudible)

MINTON(?): (Over Woman) Yeah. See, here's the thing. There's still an IFP National. I'm president of the board of IFP National's structure is to support the local IFPs in each city. So it doesn't really have a... It doesn't have any funding, and it doesn't have its own members, and it doesn't have its own programs.

WOMAN: It's an umbrella.

MINTON(?): So it's kind of an umbrella. So when somebody wants to... Like Santa Fe. There's going to be soon an IFP Santa Fe. They have to get approval from these other IFPs. That's kind of the only thing that it's doing right now. So I think for our organizations collectively, we have to take sort of the next step. We need to give National some muscle. But I think, you know, to took twenty-four years, twenty-three years to even create an national structure.

WOMAN: And New York Women in Film is a similar thing, (Minton[?]: Yes) because there's New York Women in Film, there's Women in Film in L.A., and there's Women in Films all over the world, and they have, like, an international (inaudible)

MINTON(?): We have sort of the same structure, basically, where— although they— all the Women in Films do have some small amount of money—like five bucks or whatever—that goes to the national.

WOMAN: Oh, ok. Well, that's another... There's an international. Is that (Minton[?]: Right) (inaudible)

MINTON: (inaudible) international, yeah.

WOMAN: Yeah.

HELMERSON: I'm going to ask if we can turn to Rachel for a moment; she's been waiting patiently.

RACHEL GREEN: Oh. Well, (inaudible) mine have sort of been dropped, but... I was going to say that my organization, Rhizome, formed— didn't merge in the sort of technical sense, but formed a legal affiliation with the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. And I think one of the reasons why that affiliation has been so successful for both parties is because we share office space, and have a really open kind of communication with a lot of infrastructure that sort of supports the possibilities of collaboration. But it's not a merger, it's an affiliation; we don't fundraise together. We're separate organizations in every way. I mean, legally. But...

WOMAN: You both have your own 501c3s?

GREEN: We do.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

GREEN: We do. But I think, just to build on what you said, I think from a programming point of view, the New Museum felt they needed support(?), more strength in new media, which is obviously an expertise of Rhizome. And Rhizome felt... Well, Rhizome needed many things, including free office space. (laughter) And also, I think, knew that they would sort of benefit, that Rhizome would benefit from being in a very progressive visual arts context, and having the physical space, exhibition space, et cetera.

WOMAN: So just to follow through on that question, then, with the visual arts groups, something that's interesting that's just happening now in Buffalo is a shared administrative merger, if it will be considered that, between a literature group, a smaller gallery, and then CIPA(sp?). it's CIPA, Big Orbit and Just Buffalo. And they're putting together this pilot project to share administrative resources, because none of them has the capacity to hire a development director independently on their own. So they're going to share this. It's just in its infancy. But I think it's an interesting model, and we can see if it bears fruit. Again, the only reason this can work is because there's this trust factor together with them. So they are sharing office space, they're sharing some equipment; and yet they're doing all of their own programming, very separately. And it's very clear to the public that they're still very separate, too, which was... That took a year to figure that component out. And they're working in conjunction with Canisius College Business Management program to analyze the steps as they go along, to keep it a non-profit rather than business model, and yet take the creative parts, and yet the pragmatic aspects, and put them together.

WOMAN: That's interesting.

MAN: Another example of a model to maybe look at is the Ninth Street Media Arts Film Center in San Francisco, who are up to seven media arts organizations, who decided to go in and buy a building together in San Francisco, who had all been (inaudible) in various ways, sharing space and sort of feeling disempowered by the rental market of San Francisco. And in that case, there was a nonprofit that was formed as the consortium, to sort of formalize it that way, to help with the capital campaign, which was a really multi-million dollar project. And they also have— *we* have an interesting structure with our three... Three?

WOMAN: Four primary partners.

MAN: Four primary partners, and then a series of basically renters, who— where we went out to the— against the mortgage from (inaudible, cough) partners. And the organizations are— the main organizations are Frameline, National— Film Arts Foundation, NAATA, and San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. So in terms of, like, looking at that other model of actually... You know, you can, like, form a whole other nonprofit entity, for the purpose of reaching that goal.

MAN: Is that a necessity, or can you go through one of the...?

MAN: You know, I think in our case, it was just that it made the most sense in terms of fundraising and capital campaign, and to really show— part of it was to really show unity. And the organizations that were willing to, like, really invest in working together and not everyone just... All the separate organizations do their own capital campaign, but there's a development director who's assigned to the— who's hired by the consortium to, like, raise the big bucks. And I think it also— my assumption is that makes an easier transaction for foundations who can come into one organization and make a large gift, instead of being sought after by all these individual organizations.

MAN: Yeah. We've actually started a consortium in Woodstock with all the arts groups and the galleries, and are actually in the process of trying to figure out whether we have to form an umbrella or not.

WOMAN: Can you just talk to us about how that went, and just (inaudible) to group, and just explain why you're doing it (inaudible)

MAN: (Over Woman) Well, It's being done to raise awareness, and to pool resources for publicity throughout the state, and to get people to actually come to Woodstock. And instead of everyone doing it... (END OF SIDE ONE OF AUDIOTAPE)

MAN: We've already pooled some money to take some ads out together and try to create some sort of a unified front for the arts in Woodstock, the arts colony, which has no local support. (laughs) So we're trying to create that support within the not for profit.

MAN: I think too that, in our case, joining together becomes really much more of a... You know, the whole idea of duplication of services and how— became really attractive, I think, in terms of creating a real argument about how these organizations can really come together and work through, you know, the administration of a building, and to really work towards duplication of services, and maybe the technology...

WOMAN: Yeah, there's... Well, in addition to just kind of having an actual physical space for, you know, the rental benefits, they're really interested in kind of building the infrastructure that all the organizations could benefit from—and specifically around a large grant from the Irvine Foundation to fund technology infrastructure for the building, and to look at how the organizations could sort of tap into, you know, one server room, one kind of fiber optic network or whatever, and really benefit from that technology, where any— maybe one organization, especially the smaller ones, wouldn't have the kind of funding to get that kind of hardware, have a T1 line, things like that.

WOMAN: So when your e-mail goes down, you can't go to your neighbor to get  
(inaudible, laughter)



MAN: Oh, I didn't think of that.

WOMAN: Well, you know what? Who raised the money to get— who got the money from the Irving Foundation?

WOMAN: Well, see, that's kind of where the structure of consortium comes in, because it really was... So there's a consortium of four major partners that also had a few other kind of outside partners to help buy the building. They're the ones who essentially acquired the grant, which then includes the tenants as beneficiaries.

WOMAN: So it's like a co-op.

WOMAN: It's like a co-op, but what's interesting, and kind of came out in kind of building-wide meetings we've been having recently, is that that's essentially a temporary structure, until... Because there's also the Ninth Street Independent Film Center, which is the title of the building, [which] has its own kind of entity that eventually will kind of take over as owner of the building outright. And I believe that the consortium organization will kind of dissolve. So one thing that came up earlier—and I was really interested in what Elizabeth was saying—is how, you know, collaborations and consortiums sometimes have temporary uses. And I was recently at the ACM conference in Tampa, and people were really talking about that, is when we're working together on projects, sometimes it doesn't make sense to sort of build these twenty-year

WOMAN (Cont.): commitments, but to build a year-long commitment around something that we can benefit from, and then evaluate: Do we need to keep working together and kind of funding this project, or have we gotten what we need out of it and it can be dissolved, and...? You know, it's interesting to think about how we as people can work in those different capacities. So whether that means you're acquiring a large space in a local community with other local organizations or just doing the temporary statewide kind of collaborative working group, is...

WOMAN: No, I the consortium as it exists now has plans for another year-and-a-half. And the key word there is evaluation. And they've been doing that, with the help of this consultant that they've been working with, which is Larson Allen in Minneapolis, on a constant basis. And it's a really good marker. And you just can't take on too much at once.

GREEN: This might be a sort of gratuitous comment, but I know for Rhizome that the sort of happy situation we find ourselves in now would not have been possible if we didn't have a sort of affiliation advocate, or a visionary, as well as an amazing lawyer from Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. So I think that he really helped drive and create a comfortable structure for the New Museum and for Rhizome, and to kind of keep us not just organizationally in control, but also, from a legal, state point of view, everything was really easy. Plug for VLA. (laughter)

WOMAN: (inaudible) did you have your hand up earlier, or did you...?

WOMAN: Yeah, I just have, like, a couple of questions in general. One is that I'm pretty sure that most of the people in this room are used to already collaborating. You know, whatever we do, we always have cosponsors, we have partnerships, you know. We have long-term partnerships, short-term partnerships, you know, all of these different things. And what I'm curious is, what's the difference between a lot of the work that we've been doing on that type of level and what you folks are really thinking about? And then the other thing is that... I belong to a national organization called NALIP, the National Association of Latino Independent Producers. And you know, we came about because there was a crisis within the Latino media making community when the Corporation for Public Broadcasting defunded our Latino minority consortia. And when we started talking, we decided that our problem went beyond Public Television. So we organized a conference. There was, like, just a loose group of people who came together. We organized a national conference. And we were surprised at the people who came out of the woodwork. And also, we were very surprised that half of the people at the conference were under thirty-five, and that they were graduates of film schools, some of them are going on to graduate school, as opposed to the over thirty-five that either have come up through the Hollywood track or through the independent grant funded media world. And as a result, after five years of working together, we really had to come to terms with the fact that the only thing that holds us together is the fact that we're Latino—and that means a whole slew of different things to many people; that we work in media, which is

WOMAN (Cont.): just as complicated; but that what we have is the fact that we want to grow people within our field. So we had really interesting discussions, such as who should fund our projects. You know, we got a very huge grant from HBO last year, and there were people wondering if we were selling out. But then it's a question of looking at the whole landscape. And when people look at the whole landscape, then you see that, well, you know, NYSCA gives us money, Ford gives us money, HBO gives us money, you know, the Writers Guild; and that we're really trying to create this very complex community in all sorts of ways that really takes time and energy to do. So I think about that and I go, "Ooh," you know. Is this what they want here? You know, all of these people from very, very different interests within media; but to come together and to try to figure out how do we create a better agenda for ourselves? How do we create a better landscape for ourselves, and the future makers who are going to be coming through our organizations. So you raise a lot of questions for me.

HELMERSON(?): Good. I'm glad, actually. I'd like to just respond to one very quickly, and anybody, please, also respond. But to answer your question directly, what are some of the things that I know I'm thinking from the programs point of view, rather, is for me, these questions are coming up, or I'm finding I need to learn more, because I'm running into these phrases—such as with GIA. Like, taking support, the philanthropic support for arts and culture into new sectors of our economy. You know, I don't know what that means. But here you have a national organization of funders who are really looking to inseminate or to integrate or collaborate—I don't know what they're intending, really, or

HELMERSON (?) (Cont.): talking about. But they're talking about working with new sectors of our society and our economy, and getting the media arts and culture into those sectors, where it formerly really has not been. And to me, that's actually rather exciting. So it goes back to this idea of new collaborations. You know, taking the spirit of collaboration that we understand, the concept of basic collaborations; but all of a sudden, picking it up and putting it someplace where we haven't experienced it before, with partners that we haven't experienced before. And I thought that was really interesting, the way we were talking about—the conversation came up with mergers, you know, and how people are starting to work together differently.

But also, there was one other thing that's come up. I'm seeing this in different ways. I have to be a little careful about what I'm going to say next, only because I am still relatively new to funding, as a funder. And a lot of the people that I'm working with have been in that field, you know, for fifteen, twenty, thirty years, you know, well outside of NYSCA—I'm talking about all the agencies I'm really becoming involved with. But what I think is happening—is definitely happening for me—is that funders appear to be working differently together. Or when I first took this job, one of the things that I was told was that funders don't work together very well. You know, because they're competing for funds to support their constituents, also. This is actually something that was said to me. Now, maybe this was a pretty broad statement; maybe it was only true over here, and not true over here. But what I've seen a lot lately is funders really talking more to each other, trying to figure out how to make their resources—some diminished—

HELMERSON (?) (Cont.): more strategic. So there's a kind of collaboration, also. And by necessity, funders have to work interdisciplinary, by virtue of their missions and their mandates.

And then that's a third element. That was just the third thing I wanted to say, is that what's pushing this for me, also, is this whole concept of interdisciplinary new media. Now, ironically—you know, again, for those of us who've been around for a while—much of it looks like the work of the sixties and seventies. But there is something about multidiscipline, cross-discipline, interdisciplinary—I don't know exactly where the term's going to settle down yet—new media. And so that's pushing, also, you know, new ways of working. So I'm finding it a very interesting time, where I know I have to do a lot of homework, and talk to a lot of people; but that's partly what it is for me.

...Oh, I didn't mean to quiet you all. (laughter)

WOMAN: Do you...

HELMERSON(?): Claude.

CLAUDE MEYER: I just want to jump in for a second, because I... It seems to me that one thing we're really experiencing is an identity crisis. And I think it's true for organizations as well as for artists. I think for artists, the term independent has been ripped out from under us. There are many organizations that work marginally with what has come to be known independent film. But most of the people, for example, that I'm concerned with at the Arts Council are really community based producers. And I think it's actually true for organizations, too. I think this identity crisis is critical in ninety percent of the organizations that I deal with; that there's a lack of focus, that there's a lack of goods and services—product, if you will. And people are sort of scrambling after—they're trying to define themselves according to funding, in order to get grants. And I think, you know, as we move forward—especially from the policy point of view—to articulate goals, I think we need to take a step back and really discover who we are. There's people—I mean, there's many, many people in this room that have very, very defined programs, very solid programs, very worthwhile programs. But we've been so marginalized.

For me, at this juncture, after about twenty years at the Arts Council, it's become a moral issue of how arts are supported, how organizations are supported that come to us with, for example, very worthwhile programs that could benefit from a real grant and that could benefit from a \$50,000 grant or a \$75,000 grant, that walk out with \$5,000. And, you know, we sort of say, "Good luck." (Woman: Right) It's become for me a moral issue,

MEYER (Cont.): that we're not really doing what we're supposed to be doing. And I don't know if people have a response to that, or even if it's to the point, but...

WOMAN: What do you think we're supposed to do?

WOMAN: Change the president. (laughter, inaudible voice)

MAN: For starters.

DOROTHY THIGPEN: That would take care of everything (inaudible)...

HELMERSON: Dorothy?

THIGPEN: ...a lot of these problems (inaudible) time. No, I'm listening. I'm kind of going full circle from what you said when I came in, about mergers, because that's come up in my mind too, because there are a few on Third World Newsreel in New York. And there are a few organizations that I feel are very similar to us, doing the same things. But it's very unique within the whole field, I... You know, it's something very unique. As a matter of fact, today we're having a screening— we had a press conference and a screening. We collaborated with the ACLU and the New York Civil Liberties, because we created a tape to help, before the RNC happens, and we're getting it out there, to tell protestors what to do and what not to do. And they came to Third World. But there are a



THIGPEN (Cont.): lot of other type of grassroots level advocacy, social issue, political type groups. There are a few others. They're all doing things around, you know, the RNC coming to New York. And it's just... Right now, I'm listening to this conversation, because it's really, really hitting a real core— a real nerve with me, because... And I was listening to what Vinnie(sp?) said. Since we're Third World Newsreel, we collaborate with a lot of different groups of different (inaudible) Latino (inaudible), Korean groups, African-American groups. And there are other groups that do a lot of social issue political things, but aren't necessarily dealing with all the different cultural groups like that. But I do know we need to... I'm sorry I'm going off on a tangent, but...

HELMERSON: No, it's ok.

THIGPEN: ...I do know that we need to... Third World Newsreel and some other groups right now really need to have a serious conversation about duplicating services, how we can really, really do what we do effectively. You know, because it's very, very important. And especially right now. And...

WOMAN: You know, I wondered if there's a— if you guys— if the New York State Council on the Arts is thinking about this and trying to facilitate this. Because I know that one successful thing about that Workspace Consortium is you've got key components that are necessary to move forward, one of which is funding and monetary support for a group or for exploration in this area. And I didn't know whether the New York State

WOMAN (Cont.): Council had a organizational stability... Is there anywhere groups like what you're— you know, would like to get together with a couple of other groups and try and find some money to, if Dorothy had decided— or she put together a small consortium... Or is technical assistance? (laughs)

SHERRY MILLER HOCKING: Oh, I'll do my pitch now. (laughter)

WOMAN: Ok.

HOCKING: Seems like an opportune moment. (laughs) One of the purposes of the Technical Assistance Program, which is funded by the New York State Arts Council, is to help with exactly these kinds of issues and problems. And I know that we've worked—we've been lucky enough to work with, actually, probably most of the groups in this room over the years. But yes. I mean, Dorothy, let's talk about this, because these are the kinds of things that this program is really set up to try to help with. (inaudible voice) And I'm very interested in Elizabeth's model. I've been lucky enough to have a couple of conversations with Larry Rose(?) about it. And it's something that I personally would really like to pursue with some or all of us here today.

WOMAN: Again, Dorothy, I'd just say that I think getting someone from the outside that is familiar with your discipline-specific efforts, just away from the norm, can encapsulate... I mean, they can just look at— they're trained professional people that really can work. I mean, we've all sat through bad consultancy meetings. You know, way to many, Beni; I know what you're talking about. But, you know, if you're lucky to collaborate with someone, it can save you so much time, it takes the burden off the group to come up with these answers, and you can get this momentum going. And that's their job, to do this. (inaudible voice) So that's the kind of crossover...

WOMAN: One of the things that's important with, I think, Third World Newsreel and a couple of other groups, it operates and it was born out of more of a collective...

WOMAN: As were these artist centered groups that are in the Workspace Consortium, and...

WOMAN: Yeah. And, you know, a lot of them still operate, and a lot of the people, the thirty-five and under group, a lot of the community type artists, you know, still operate and want to operate in that model. And I also have had an initial conversation with a foundation around the idea of looking at the consortium model with PBS—you know, the Latino Consortium, the National Black Programming Consortium—and kind of looking at that, and looking at how maybe we could get some ideas around that model for our groups.

WOMAN: Well, that'll probably harken back to— I mean, the artist centered nature of the origins of these places, and making sure that the organizations surrounding that production effort become more stable. That's what we've learned in this Workspace Consortium.

DICHTER: One of the things that—just really quickly speaking about—that we've seen also, though, is, depending on the goals, if it's not: We're all doing the same kind of things, let's just figure out some good stuff to do together, but its: We're all doing slightly different things that have some really connected value—we're doing production, we're doing exhibition, we're doing distribution, we're doing advocacy, policy work, whatever the range is—that you actually find some very different organizing models within those groups. And those can raise some really big challenges about how do works work together? We just saw this down in Brazil, with the anarchist media collectives, that nothing was going to be planned until they got there, and everybody could be onsite, and everybody had a chance to have a voice; and these academic theorists, who wanted—who had submitted papers and which got selected. And the notion of having something selected was, like, outrageous to the anarchists, right? We had a lot of interesting conversations around that. But more specifically, some of the groups in D.C., and certain 501c3 models versus some community based models versus some which are constituency and membership based, that as we looked to work together, to kind of just understand that we are— (inaudible) sometimes have different organizing models, different political values, different senses of how we think change is made, where we think leadership

DICHTER (Cont.): should come from, how we run meetings, all of these kinds of things; and kind of being really clear about who we are and how we do things, what we want and what we have individually, as we're in the process of coming together can really help, so that we can say, "Alright, you know, I understand that your group works this way and my group works this way, but we've identified where some have and some needs are that are worth it to conquer some of that." And again, outside professionals can be really helpful, really, also respecting that some of us are really comfortable in certain kinds of models, and other folks aren't, and...

HELMERSON: I'm going to jump in here for a second, playing moderator for the sake of time. I'm going to invite Debby to say—she was waiting for a moment. But then I'm going to have to wrap it up, because we still have Lori. And we're doing fine, but... This is great. I mean, what I had hoped to happen, you know, is actually happening. We're warming up, we're starting to talk to each other, we're stimulating our ideas and thoughts, and we actually have some to do things on the list here. So this is good.

DEBBY SILVERFINE: I thought I'd just mention a few things, because the question came up, where's NYSCA's attention around this? And I'd say some of it is still nascent, and some of it's sort of organic, and that we went out and had a lot of meetings with groups this past winter, asking about how we're doing, and what do you see as issues out there in the field? And only segments of the constituency talked about collaboration issues; many were really dealing with basic survival issues. And I think taking it back to

SILVERFINE (Cont.): our Council, they're looking at certain efficiencies and economies, and not trying to force marriages that don't want to exist, but trying to be open and try to figure out where we can be responsive. And different things have been happening in very different fields. Our chairmen have personally funded an effort that has never come into NYSCA, for a number of the regional theaters to share product, because so much goes into developing a play, and then it's gone. And there's a consortium of about a dozen theaters that are willing to sign on and make things, and they get restaged locally. But they've just begun working, and they have a lot of hurdles about how to do that successfully. And that's one whole area around programming and survival. And we've looked at a few other... I mean, Elizabeth talked with you about the work she's been doing, and... We had nothing to do with a few of the museum models out there, but they all come to our door now, where the Center for Jewish Culture and History set out, thinking that they had a lot in common, and their biggest problem was real estate issues. And I think for people in downstate and the city, real estate's a driving force. But they came together, and they spent so much time on trying to figure out how to develop the real estate side, they're only now getting around to understanding the relationship of the organizations and governance. And they're a good five years into it, and now just starting to deal with things that they probably should've done before they signed the lease together. So there are a lot of things percolating out there that haven't added up to any sort of agency strategy. (laughter) But it's coming.

HELMERSON: This was good, this is great. I got a lot out of it, so I want to say thanks. One quick question, and then we're going to take, like, about a five-minute break or so and get set up for Lori. If you could raise your... Let's see, how do I ask this question? Raise your hand if you have met for the first time face-to-face at least one person here who you've only spoken to before. Oh, me too. (laughter) Great. Great. That was really one big, large purpose of this whole thing, too. That's great. Ok, with that, there's a green room back in the corner, if you haven't seen it, through the vault. (laughter) There's a restroom right here. There are certainly refreshments. And because we are behind, just five minutes or so, and we'll go on with new technologies.

WOMAN: I'm going to leave these two books up here, three books, for anyone to look at them during the break, and...

HELMERSON: Thank you.

WOMAN: These are (inaudible)

HELMERSON: Thank you guys very much. It was great. Perfect.

(END OF SESSION)