





**PENNSYLVANIA CABLE NETWORK /  
THE CABLE CENTER**

## **PENNSYLVANIA CABLE NETWORK/ THE CABLE CENTER**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Cable now reaches into 73,559,550 households in the U.S., providing an ever-expanding source of information and entertainment. A portion of that programming is local or regional, some as local as the town level. Few, if any, partnerships exist between cable networks and archives for the preservation of these collections. This study examines a statewide cable system and its partner archive, an international center devoted to the preservation of cable history and programming.

The agreement between the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN) and The Cable Center provides for cataloging of the materials at The Cable Center, giving PCN, academics, and the public access to resources where there had previously been little or none. Digitization of the media collections at The Center utilizes new technology to provide even wider access.

The Cable Center serves as a secondary archive for PCN, while informal selection practices give the Cable Network some control over the growth of their collection. Part of a planned new building at PCN is set aside to house their growing collection more coherently.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Pennsylvania Cable Network produces and distributes local programming twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. A primary function is to televise most of the legislative activity in the state. Viewers with interest in a specific bill or legislation are able to watch committee meetings and debates to observe the legislative process in action. This service is valuable in educating the public and informing the citizens of the state.

In addition to legislative coverage, PCN provides wide-ranging programming that includes public affairs, entertainment, sports, educational, and cultural programs. During its existence, PCN has created a wealth of historical material about the State of Pennsylvania and its people. Some of the programs from this prolific cable production and distribution operation are now being preserved in a collaborative partnership between PCN in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, and The Cable Center in Denver, Colorado.

A partnership between these two entities, one a statewide cable network and the other an international nonprofit educational cable resource center, is the focus of this study. Both organizations are relatively new, working to establish and grow their own internal operations and financial support, as well as undertaking the process of crafting a mutually beneficial agreement. The formal part of the relationship was finalized in 2002.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Pennsylvania Cable Network was organized in 1979 by a coalition of eleven of the state's individual cable companies, under the umbrella of Pennsylvania State University, as the first cable network set up for distance learning. By 1994, the physical network had switched from a microwave system to satellite signal distribution. The programming emphasis was also changing from a purely educational focus to one of primarily nonpartisan public affairs coverage.

In 1996, PCN formally ended its relationship with Pennsylvania State

University. The network now distributes approximately one hundred hours of new programming each week, with primary focus on coverage of the legislature.

PCN offers in-depth live programming in such key areas as legislative coverage and special events. Often, programs are gavel-to-gavel, unedited events that would rarely, if ever, appear on local station newscasts or public affairs programming. In addition to the legislative coverage, PCN produces several series showcasing local Pennsylvania business, history, culture, and its people. Among these are PCN Tours, PA Books, PCN Profiles, high school sports championships, and an annual live broadcast of the Pennsylvania State Farm Show. Special programming that would be unlikely to appear on commercial or public television – such as a forty-hour series on former Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo – are part of what makes PCN unique.

PCN Tours is a popular series that tours businesses and industries across the state. PA Books is a weekly show that interviews authors of books about the state. PCN Profiles is a weekly in-depth interview with prominent Pennsylvanians.

In addition to having local cable systems pay a per-viewer fee for broadcast, PCN provides its programming to teachers for use in the classroom. “PCN in the Classroom,” a location on the PCN web site ([www.pcn.com](http://www.pcn.com)), is a free instructional resource for teachers. Lesson plans based on PCN televised shows are available via the web site, and videos of PCN programs are available by request for educational use. PCN airs a weekly live call-in program so students with homework problems can interact with teachers.

The Pennsylvania Cable Network is based in Camp Hill at the Barco Durantz Complex. PCN employs nearly thirty full-time staff and additional freelance technicians as needed. Its annual budget of approximately \$3 million is primarily derived from subscription fees paid by the cable companies. PCN is governed by a board of directors drawn from the cable operators in the network.

The Cable Center, now in Denver, Colorado, on the University of Denver’s campus, began operation at Penn State University in 1985 as the National Cable Television Center and Museum. It moved to Denver over a period of years and was established there by 1997, when Denver was home to most of the major cable system operators, and was considered to be a prominent place for the archival collections. The Barco Library within The Cable Center is partially funded by a donation from the Barco family, the same family that was instrumental in initially funding PCN. The rest of the funding for the Barco Library comes from general operating funds and other areas of The Cable Center. The Center has twenty-five employees; most are full-time.

The mission of The Cable Center is to develop and actively promote educational, training, and research programs to address issues facing the cable and telecommunications industry on a global basis. The connection with the University is not formal, but there is considerable interaction between The Cable Center and the University.

In addition to providing educational and training initiatives, The Cable Center is also dedicated to conserving and displaying the business, history, technology, programming, and contributions of industry leaders. It also aims to highlight the industry’s role in the advances of telecommunications. The Television Programming Archive within the Barco Library is a major part of





The Cable Center. It has plans to create course work, seminars, festivals, and cultural programs using the archive. Its departmental mission “. . . is to increase knowledge, appreciation, use and enjoyment of cable programming by acquiring, preserving and providing access to a representative collection that highlights the impact cable programming has had on almost all aspects of society.” Developing a representative library of cable programming is part of the Cable Center’s overall mission. It has three goals:

1. Raise public awareness of excellence and achievement in cable programming.
2. Establish the center as a leading repository for locating, obtaining and utilizing cable programming for research, teaching, and learning.
3. Make cable programming a central part of educational programs.

The Special Collections and Archives cares for a variety of materials, including programming, technology, oral histories, documents, and photographs. The PCN collection is the first of many planned program collections. In 2003, The Cable Center will begin to receive what will be one of its largest collections from HBO. The archive plans to become a leading physical and electronic repository of original cable programming, both national and local, in digital format.

## THE AGREEMENT AND RIGHTS

The partnership between PCN and The Cable Center is unusual because The Cable Center functions as a secondary archive for PCN. The agreement took about two years to negotiate and was signed in the fall of 2002. It is the goal of The Cable Center to select representative programs from the several thousand hours produced by PCN. PCN remains primarily responsible for overall archival functions at the network. Ownership of the physical property is being transferred, but the copyright resides with PCN.

The rights PCN transferred to The Center are given in perpetuity, are nonexclusive, and grant The Center rights to exhibit the programs. The Cable Center also holds the right to use the PCN programming by any means and in any media anywhere so long as the use is connected to The Cable Center’s not-for-profit educational, historical, and informational mandate.

PCN does require that any of its programming made available by The Cable Center over the Internet be posted in a format that cannot be downloaded. The Center has obtained the right to use PCN programming with consent for advertising and promotional purposes that are consistent with the Center’s purposes. The Cable Center is responsible for obtaining releases and authorizations from recognizable individuals who appear in PCN programming.

## SELECTION

The earliest materials in this collection date from 1994, when the transition to a broader range of programming took effect. PCN has an informal selection process for retaining materials. There is no written policy, but often the vice president of Programming meets with a producer to decide which programs are to be kept. Criteria used include the subject matter, its timeliness, and its suitability for future televising. Collection and retention of material is a continual process that is building a comprehensive library of Pennsylvania’s history and culture, as well as PCN’s own history.

Programs retained by PCN are divided into three categories:

1. Those permanently stored. PCN automatically saves all programs in the series PCN Tours, PA Books, PCN Profiles, and the annual Gettysburg Battlefield Tours. These shows usually reflect events or topics that are not time sensitive.
2. Those stored on a temporary, long-term basis (annual events, for example).
3. Those stored on a temporary, short-term basis (current events that are time or topic sensitive, such as select election-related events).

Programs with a high potential for repeat televising are stored near the main offices and arranged alphabetically within the series. A second tier of shows is housed a bit further away and is arranged chronologically. The oldest programs and production materials are stored in often cursorily labeled boxes in a separate garage building that provides some climate control.

The Cable Center plans to acquire several hundred representative programs from PCN's series and programs. It is unrealistic, at least at this time, to collect copies of all materials since PCN creates thousands of hours of new programming a year. The Center will make these selections according to the guidelines of the its published Collection Development Policy. (See Appendix for copy of policy) This published policy defines priorities and assists staff in making selection and deselection decisions. The collection is to reflect the diversity of cable programming as a whole and to document its history. Procedures are also in place for the deaccessioning (structured removal) of materials, should that need arise.

## MUTUAL BENEFITS

Both parties characterize the partnership as positive. A good collaborative relationship developed during the process of negotiating the agreement. In addition to preserving the PCN programming, the partners are pursuing other mutual interests, such as collaborative work on a number of oral history projects and research assistance from The Center for a book project that PCN has undertaken.

For PCN, one of the appealing aspects of the partnership with The Cable Center is that materials will be cataloged in more detail by The Center, and the information will be shared not only with PCN for its internal use, but with a larger audience of libraries around the world. This partnership has also provided a framework for PCN to work with other Pennsylvania organizations, such as the state historical society or a university, which may assist with future archival endeavors. It is likely that PCN will take steps to ensure that its programming archive is more widely accessible and preserved.

PCN holds the distinction of donating the first programming collection at The Cable Center. This contribution has assisted in setting policies for future acquisitions. Through the web access provided by The Cable Center, PCN materials are accessible on a wider scale than just the state level.

## INTELLECTUAL CONTROL

PCN maintains a Microsoft Access database that tracks everything that is televised. In addition, paper files are used to record information about participants and technical credits. Paper records also include traffic logs, logs of individual shows, graphics, and automation notes. Descriptions of programs include the topic of the individual program and names of key participants, locations, and sponsoring organizations or guest interview information. Program length and time code information is also listed.

The Cable Center outsources cataloging activity to the University of Denver, which catalogs materials using Library of Congress standard MARC records. Collection records are available to on-line library databases such as OCLC and RLIN.

The Center's digital media backbone will handle a thousand hours of digitized media files through dual redundant servers with a storage capacity of one terabyte. This setup, combined with the Center's interactive network, allows end-users immediate access to the digitized archives for research, analysis, and entertainment. A video ingest system enables The Center to prepare a large portion of the basic digitization, as well as real time streaming, in-house. Currently, eighty hours of video content from various sources has been digitized as part of a pilot project.

The Cable Center undertook the pilot project to create the beginning of its Digital Collection. The Center worked with Virage, a company based in San Mateo, California, which provides technology to make video searchable.

Virage processing includes digitization of the video content followed by the extraction of metadata, which is then indexed in ways that are meaningful, making it possible to search the video by key word, subject, name, or date. As a result of the search one is able to view high quality streaming video clips. Currently, eighty hours of streaming video are available on The Cable Center's web site ([www.cablecenter.org](http://www.cablecenter.org)). The Digital Collection has been available only since late 2002 but already has received thousands of uses.

## REVENUE

Sales of cassettes of the popular PCN Tours series bring PCN \$9,000 per year. Requests for copies of public affairs programming are sold for \$46 per program hour. This revenue is used to offset operating costs for regular programming. The Cable Center has not yet addressed revenue potential from the television programming archive collections. It does not anticipate doing so until there is a larger volume of programming.

## CONCLUSION

This study looks at two organizations that are some distance apart geographically, but which share a commitment to preserving cable television history. One generates the material and has its own selection and indexing policies, while the other takes a sample of the programming and makes it widely available to the public. Their relationship is evolving, but their current practices may benefit all types of television collections.

## THE CABLE CENTER

### Collection Development Policy (Edited)

The Programming Archive is central in supporting the educational programs of the Cable Center and is essential in achieving the following goals:

- Raise public awareness of excellence and achievement in cable programming
- Establish The Center as one of the leading central repositories for locating, obtaining and utilizing cable programming for research, teaching and learning
- Make cable programming a central part of educational programs

This policy has been written for anyone that is interested in knowing more about The Cable Center's collecting practices and intentions.

#### Collection Development Aims

The Cable Center aims to develop a collection of digital audiovisual and related materials of enduring cultural significance.

A television production or program may have many attributes - for example, information content, entertainment value, historical content, creative or artistic work, political or social content, or technical achievement. The Cable Center recognizes all these aspects without any one aspect being automatically dominant, and measures the cultural significance of those materials by the extent to which their inclusion in the collection will help achieve one or more of the collection development aims set out in the accompanying guidelines. The principal aims are to build a collection which is:

- A history resource
- A record of cable's creative achievement
- A reflection of the role and impact of the cable television on society and culture

#### Key Collecting Principles

- The collection should reflect the diversity of cable television programming and include material from the beginning of cable programming in the 1970's to the present
- Material will be added to the collection if it improves the quality of the total collection (for example, by filling an identified gap or providing a better example)
- Supporting material (scripts, posters, stills, other documentation, props and artifacts) will be collected where it is integral in understanding cable's programming heritage
- Where appropriate external experts may be used to assist in determining significance
- The Cable Center's programming archive is essentially a collector and documenter of cable's heritage rather than a producer

#### Collection Development Guidelines and Procedures

The Collection Development Guidelines are a practical guide to implementing The Collection Development Policy and provide information about The Programming Collection's development priorities at a broad content or "Sector" level.

Selection and Acquisition Procedures provide information about how material is acquired and which formats are preferred. When making selection and acquisition decisions, materials are sought in the condition, formats and quantities best suited to preservation or access purposes.

Deselection and Disposal Procedures describe how and why some materials may be removed from the collection. These items are disposed of responsibly by a due and accountable process.



## Collection Development Guidelines

The guidelines break The Programming Archive into broad sectors. The concept of Sector is to provide a profile of the collection based on broad topic or type of content.

### Sectors:

- Potentially embrace all types of cable television programming
- Are useful broad indexes to profile the collection and thereby assist collection development (both selection and deselection) and facilitate broad access to the collection

The following are some of the broad collections sectors. Descriptions of the present collections and policies and priorities for future collection activities will be defined for each and will include a description of the collection, current collection strengths, desired strengths, collecting aims and priorities, acquisition strategies and preservation responsibilities:

Advertisements  
 Award Presentations/Special Events  
 Brand Development  
 Comedy  
 Current Affairs  
 Documentary  
 Drama  
 Features  
 Instructional/Promotional/Training/Education  
 International Programming by Region  
 Local Original Programming  
 Music  
 News  
 On-Air Promotional Campaigns  
 Oral History  
 Original Movies  
 Religion  
 Sports  
 Talk  
 Variety/Quiz/Game/Talent Show

The collecting level is indicative of the depth of collecting intention NOT the collecting priority.

Note: While The Cable Center builds its core programming collection the short-term objectives may be different than the long-term collecting objectives.

### **A collecting level will be set for each sector, as follows:**

**Extensive collection:** a full range of materials, subjects and viewpoints is sought.

**Representative collection:** a selected range of material is collected to obtain a representative coverage of subjects and viewpoints, with significant coverage of some key areas.

**Basic collection:** a small range of significant items are collected to introduce or define a sector, or to provide support materials for other part of the collection.

**Reserve collection:** items acquired for display purposes only, items held in trust for other organizations and items identified for deselection.

## Deselection

Deselection is the process whereby staff make a curatorial judgment to remove a particular work, or group of materials, from the collection. As with selection and acquisition, deselection is an essential part of developing a collection. It is neither financially nor physically possible to protect and care for every item that has been acquired through the years. The retention of unwanted collection material inevitably restricts the capacity to properly care for and protect more valued material. With expected inevitable changes in policy focus, technologies, resources, circumstances, procedures, perspectives, analyses and client demands, we will find it necessary to revisit earlier selection decisions and deselect accordingly.

Deselection is a careful and thorough process. It is based on the selection policy and associated guidelines, with a rigorous evaluation of the worth of items recommended for deselection. All relevant issues, including copyright and contractual obligation, are considered. All deselection recommendations are written in the form of a Deselection Recommendation Memo and are subject to internal review. Depending on the size and significance of the recommendation the review is conducted by the senior management of The Cable Center. In some instances the review may include public consultation. The justification for deselection is formally recorded.

### Deselection is usually recommended on the following grounds:

- Surplus copies: Where additional copies are held beyond the needs of The Programming Archive. The number of copies needed will be determined by the role of the item in the collection and the suitability of the copy for the role. Where items are held as an access resource only, or where the copy is not of sufficient quality to serve as preservation material The Programming Archive may retain only one copy;
- Deterioration of copies: Where the audio or visual content of the copy has deteriorated to the extent that copying and/or retention is not practical;
- Duplicate copies: Where the duplicate copy (or copies) of a particular work are inferior to other copies held of that work;
- Ethical and practical considerations:- Where material held by The Programming Archive may fit more properly within the collecting environment of another institution or where that institution is better placed (in resource terms) to accord the material a higher preservation priority;
- Lesser significance or marginal relevance:- Where, in particular subject areas, The Programming Archive holds works which are of lesser significance or relevance compared with other works held in that subject area;
- Over-representation: Where, in particular subject areas, The Programming Archive holds more works than is judged appropriate to adequately represent that subject area.
- Format obsolescence/technological change: Where particular formats of a work (or groups of works) are replaced by formats more suitable for access or preservation.

Disposal is the physical process of removing (or destroying) the material which flows from the deselection decision. Disposal is carried out responsibly and ethically. Depending on the particular case, material may be returned to its source, offered to another institution or offered for sale. Destruction is the final option, and is sometimes appropriate, having regard to the condition of the material or the lack of other options.

