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STUDY

DOCUMENTARY AND NEW DIGITAL PLATFORMS

an ecosystem in transition

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FOREWORD

This study from the Documentary Network provides a portrait of an ecosystem in transformation. We have tried to give a snapshot of the creation, production, and distribution of documentaries in a rapidly-changing digital environment. An analysis of the situation is an opportunity to think about the future, with enthusiasm and caution at the same time.

Digital platforms offer new possibilities for both the specifically-dedicated documentary content created for the web, and the production and distribution of linear documentaries.

For filmmakers, the platforms throw into question the entire creative process that has existed until now. This widening of the documentary field challenges creators to think differently about their relationship to reality, to the work, and to the audience. The exploration of transmedia is only in its infancy; its creative potential and rich possibilities are attracting the growing interest of filmmakers.

However, this form of creation is struggling to obtain recognition. With broadcasters still the dominant force in the new ecosystem, public and private financiers continue to conventional economic models which do not take the new reality into account.

Documentary creation on the new platforms should be able to develop with appropriate resources, without straining budgets allocated to linear documentaries produced for theater and television release which should continue to develop. It is essential to find new sources of money. One way of increasing resources would be to involve the Internet service providers. As for the funds currently intended to finance the multiplatform productions and dedicated to experimental creation and innovation, a portion of these envelopes could be reserved for documentary on the new platforms in order to encourage its development. The granting of specific funds could allow these digital works to exist independently or in complement of linear documentaries created for television.

The new platforms can also be an effective tool in the circulation of work. The documentary is not threatened by the multiplatform: time passed in front of various screens accumulates. The television viewer is not a species facing extinction; the number of hours spent watching television increases each year, along with interest in documentaries. Online distribution platforms and broadcaster portals serve as audience-multipliers. They increase the influence of documentaries. But today this new form of distribution does not automatically generate significant economic returns. For the most part, the platforms that disseminate documentaries on the Internet are not profitable. New ways of managing rights need to be found which can boost the public profile of works, and can also be a real source of revenue for the creators and producers.

Documentary Network

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THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

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In November 2009, as part of the Documentary Forum of the **Rencontres Internationales du Documentaire du Montreal (RIDM)**, the **Documentary Network** published a paper called **Pour une politique canadienne du documentaire (For a Canadian documentary policy)**.

After recalling the historic, social, and cultural importance of the documentary, this paper underlined, with concrete examples, the growing interest of Canadians in documentary films, and identified the obstacles created by the lack of a national strategy promoting the genre. In the absence of such a strategy, institutional support for documentary has taken the form of add-ons to existing programs and policies created for other types of audio-visual production.

The paper argued that there is a reluctance to recognize the importance of documentary by public decision-makers, as well as inadequate and ineffective support mechanisms, a situation that the Canadian government, like all the agencies involved in documentary creation and production, would be well advised to address.

To this end, the paper proposed the creation of a Canadian documentary film policy, which would embrace all the dimensions of film production - training, research, development, financing, marketing, distribution, exporting, and conservation.

While our initiative to strengthen the documentary genre met a positive reception from the federal government, the suggestion to immediately create a working group that would make recommendations was considered premature. Instead, **Heritage Canada** invited the **Documentary Network** [Observatoire du documentaire] to participate in current discussions addressing dramatic films, co-production, and digital media. It encouraged the Documentary Network to continue to identify the gaps in present policy, the challenges posed by this new environment for documentary filmmakers, and the steps and policies that could help them to thrive.

In continuity with this aim, we have embarked on a new study called **Documentary and the Digital Platforms**, looking at models developed in the United States, Europe and elsewhere, to explore the use of digital platforms for financing, creation, promotion, marketing, and distribution of documentaries.

The main objectives underlying this new study are:

- To identify the most innovative ways to integrate digital platforms into the phases of development, direction, promotion, and distribution of documentaries.
- To identify new forms of writing and innovative means of financing, new models of distribution and marketing on digital platforms.
- To try to measure in each of the above cases the potential and limitations of these new models.

Our intention is to support the creators, producers, and distributors of Canadian documentary who are faced with new challenges, particularly given the requirements of the **Canada Media Fund (CMF)**.

The purpose of this introduction is to outline a few directions for future action. Our goal is still to obtain if not a comprehensive Canadian documentary policy, at least a set of policies that can support documentaries more effectively.

First I would like to recall some changes in public policy on documentary film, which have come about since the publication of **Pour une politique canadienne du documentaire**.

👉 **NEW DEVELOPMENTS SINCE NOVEMBER 2009**

CRTC: Recognition of the long-form documentary as being “of national interest”

In July 2009, the **CRTC** initiated a consultation process on a group-based approach to the licensing of private television services, as well as on certain issues relevant to conventional television.

During this process, in March 2010, the **CRTC** adopted a new regulatory policy¹, which substituted the notion of programs “of national interest” for the notion of “priority programming” adopted in 1999. As a result, the **CRTC** restricted the number of categories of programming recognized to be of “national interest” to those formerly recognized as being a priority, *with the expressed goal of channeling the support of the designated broadcasters’ groups² towards programs “which serve the national interest in a clear way” and “which need ongoing regulatory support”*. (Paragraph 70).

Only three categories of programming presently meet these criteria, according to the **CRTC**: long-form documentaries (category 2b), dramas (category 7) and certain Canadian awards shows celebrating the country’s creative talent.

Clearly, the **CRTC** now fully recognizes the importance of documentary. It also acknowledges that ongoing regulatory support mechanisms are needed for this type of production.

The **CRTC** is not satisfied with a theoretical recognition of long-form documentaries as being of national importance, and so has decided to impose, in the next round of group license renewals, mandatory spending on Canadian programming, specifically on the creation and acquisition of programs of national interest.

In the case of dramatic programming, the **CRTC** has indicated that an obligation to spend 5% of gross revenues from each designated group over the new license period seems appropriate. In terms of documentaries, the percentage will be determined at the time of group license renewals, based on their historical spending on Canadian documentary during the previous license period. The **CRTC** will be able, if judged appropriate, to implement a gradual increase in the percentage over the new license period.

Of course these new obligations will apply only to the three English broadcaster groups (**CTV, Canwest, & Rogers**) and will have no impact on the other English broadcasters, or on any of the French broadcasters. However the **CRTC** intends to correct one of the gaps mentioned in the document **Pour une politique canadienne du documentaire** by requiring that all conventional television broadcasters, specialty channels and Pay TV, indicate in a specific line in their annual reports the programming expenditures devoted to long-form documentary.

¹ Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2010 – 167.

² By “designated groups” the **CRTC** means private ownership groups whose revenue from English conventional television stations exceeds \$100,000,000, and who own at least one specialty or pay TV service in English, such as CTV, Canwest, and Rogers.

So it will at least be possible to measure the evolution of expenditures allocated by all broadcasters - conventional, specialty, and pay - on Canadian documentaries each year.

It would be useful, if the CRTC, having required the same breakdown from the provincial educational networks, were to publish collective statistical and financial data for this category of broadcasters.

This information would be particularly helpful in analyzing the evolution of French-language documentary financing, taking into account the significant weight that **Télé-Québec** and **TFO** represent in the financing and broadcasting of Canadian documentaries, particularly of the “auteur” variety; these channels obtained 15% of the total envelope for documentaries allocated to the French broadcasters by the **CMF** in 2010-2011.

Since we are referring here to public television services mandated by provincial governments and operating in distinct territories, the disclosure of data on Canadian programming by broadcasting sector, broken down by the language of the license-holder, would not cause any particular problems in terms of competition.

It should be noted that on November 1, 2010, during a public consultation, the **CRTC** adopted a regulatory policy which clarifies the definition of Canadian long-form documentary, distinguishing it clearly from reality programming, and emphasizing its critical analysis of a subject and minimum length of 22 minutes.³

It should also be noted that in December 2010, the CRTC introduced changes to the definition of a Canadian program, granting an additional Canadian content value of 25% to Canadian programs in one of the official languages or an aboriginal language dubbed in Canada into the other official language or another aboriginal language. The CRTC also extended the notion of dubbing (applied only to standard post synchronization up to then) to voice-over translation, widely used in translating documentaries⁴. This should improve documentary distribution in both official language markets.

CMF: Recognizing special characteristics of the documentary in the guidelines

Following the announcement by Minister Moore of the creation of the **CMF** on March 9, 2009, the **Fund** embarked on a long consultation process during the summer and fall of 2009, leading to the adoption in March 2010 of its first guidelines.

Two clauses among the guidelines were formulated in response to the reality of documentary.

- The maximum portion of the performance envelopes that the broadcasters can devote to affiliated or in-house production is set at 15% for all genres, except for documentary where it is limited to 7.5%.
- In the English language market, where the “auteur” or POV documentary has been flagrantly ignored, a program has been established in the Convergent Stream, which

³ Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2010 – 808. Definition of television program categories

⁴ Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2010-905 Revision of the definition of a Canadian program to include Canadian programs that have been dubbed in Canada and outside Canada

permits creators of “auteur” documentaries to submit projects that don’t yet have Canadian broadcast licenses.⁵

These are the seeds of a recognition that “there are unique circumstances surrounding this genre” as stated by the **CMF**, which justify the adoption of specific public policies.

From September to November 2010, the **CMF** held a new consultation process in view of the adoption of its 2011-2012 guidelines. During this process, a whole series of questions were debated, including:

- The pertinence of putting in place in the **CMF**'s second year the obligation that all financed projects in the Convergent Stream be enhanced by a rich and substantial digital media component.
- The conditions to be implemented to ensure a better return on capital investment. (**RCI**)
- The mechanisms needed to measure the size of the audience on the new digital platforms.

At the end of this process, the CMF maintained the distinctions already mentioned in its 2010-2011 Guidelines and introduced new ones in its *2011-2012 Program Guidelines*, concerning the nature and weighting of performance factors, notably the Audience Success one; the CMF also noted its intention to continue discussion with the industry with a view to adjusting the performance envelopes in a way to introduce a more genre oriented model... This seems to indicate the CMF is willing to recognize that the *unique circumstances* surrounding documentaries - as *programs of national interest* - justify maintaining or even expanding policies **tailor-made for this genre**.

⁵ An eligible Canadian broadcast license is still necessary by the deadline (December 6, 2010 in the first year), but is not a prerequisite at the time of the application.

SOME THOUGHTS INSPIRED BY THE STUDY

In supplying the context for **Documentary and the Digital Platforms** by Documentary Network (referred to as the “Study”), it’s not our intention to provide a synopsis, nor a point-by-point commentary, but rather to offer some reflections and suggest appropriate steps to take.

We will consider three points raised by the Study:

- The new relationship between documentaries and their audience, when digital media are involved.
- The audience reach of the new digital platforms and the relative importance of television and digital platforms in the viewing of documentary video content.
- Financing and revenues, in particular the question of who should pay for the rich and substantial content designed for the new platforms.

👉 **A dynamic new relationship with the audience:** The role of the web and social media in expanding the audience for documentaries.

One of the most stimulating aspects of the Study is the light it sheds on the increased capacity of documentaries to connect with their audience when they take advantage of the web and social media.

On the one hand, this increased capacity has the potential to involve an audience in all the stages of production: development, financing, shooting, editing, launching, and marketing; on the other hand, it can be used, to differing degrees, by all the forms of web-based and linear documentaries, whatever the creative approach or the sub-genre.

In the most interactive case, this relationship with the public opens up the possibility of co-creation and co-production of documentaries. To use the wording of the **CNC** (Le Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée) from the Study’s chapter on the new production environment⁶, this definitely applies to the *participatory projects* whose content and artistic approach depend on the active contribution of web-users. This model is particularly well adapted to the social and political documentary, which has a tradition of citizen intervention and mobilization around a cause. It is equally appropriate for interactive works, which integrate the unique qualities of the web into the creative and narrative processes, and offer the participants navigational options, which allow them to explore the content and personalize it as they wish.

But even linear documentaries, which constitute the vast majority of films supported by the **CMF**, can take advantage of the web and social media at different stages of development. Whether to encourage internet-users to help finance a project, to pique interest at the outset, to sustain this interest throughout the production and post-production phases, to publicize the launch on traditional and digital platforms, to encourage debate, reactions, exchange and commentary during the broadcast period, and finally to extend and deepen the content of the actual project.

⁶ Study, page 17

In the short and medium terms, the web and social media will undoubtedly increase the visibility of projects, stimulating interest and bringing together communities of common concern; such communities involve faithful followers who can exchange information, and explore additional relevant content.

In brief, the web and social media are excellent tools for promotion and marketing, which documentary filmmakers can use to deepen the interest of both the television and Internet audiences in the documentary genre. It should be stressed that documentary audiences have been growing steadily over the last few years. In 2009, Canadians devoted on average 32.2 million hours per week to the long-form documentary on national television, a growth of 18% over the 2005 statistics. Let's remember that during the same period the growth in the audience for drama grew only by 4%, while the audience for music, dance, and variety programming diminished by 26%.⁷

➤ **Audience reach:** The relative importance of television and the new digital platforms in the viewing of documentary video content.

Measuring the size of the audience attracted by the new platforms is still problematic.

The criteria used to measure the success of a web documentary, for example, are extremely varied and disparate; they include the number of individual visitors on the relevant site, the number of fans on Facebook, the number of subscribers on Twitter or on listserves, the number of “co-producers” in the participatory aspect of the project, the number of people streaming content and/or downloading the complete work.

The data gathered by the Study's authors on the cases they have listed is mostly limited and anecdotal. It consists mainly of the number of people who have shown curiosity or interest in a project at any stage of its evolution. It's difficult to infer from this the number of additional spectators who have watched the whole film, via conventional broadcast or new media platforms, after showing initial interest.

New media literature often suggests an impressively high percentage of users, especially among young generations. It's important to be aware that this data is often the result of research with net-users,⁸ and that it measures more accurately the range of a given platform than the time spent watching. The classic question posed in this type of investigation measures the percentage of respondents who, for example, have watched at least one video on the Internet or by smart phone in the previous month. It says nothing about the total number of viewing hours which these respondents have devoted during this month, nor on the number of hours that the general population devotes to videos on these two platforms.

The only study which, to our knowledge, addresses representative samples of the whole population and which uses a uniform recognized methodology is Nielsen's **Three Screen Report** in the USA. It measures the inaccuracies emerging from research that targets only respondents utilizing a given technology for a particular purpose.

⁷ Source: CRTC Broadcasting Policy Monitoring Report, 2006 and 2007. Communications Monitoring Report, 2008, 2009, 2010.

⁸ Which at once excludes one quarter of the population in Quebec as well as Canada who do not possess a computer with Internet access at home.

Thus, Table 1 indicates the number of hours : minutes devoted on average each month by the respondents using each technology to watch videos on television (direct or pre-recorded), on all types of computers via the internet, and on mobile phones.

Table 1

Number of hours : minutes devoted each month by the respondents using each technology to watching video content on television, on the Internet, and on mobile phones.
(USA, total population having access to each technology)

	Direct TV	Pre-recorded TV	Subtotal TV	Computers via Internet	Mobile phone	Subtotal Internet + mobile	Total
1 st trimester 2009	153:27	8:13	161:40 (96%)	3:00	3:37	6:37 (4%)	168.17 (100%)
1 st trimester 2010	158:25	9:36	168:01 (96%)	3:10	3:37	6:47 (4%)	174.48 (100%)
Annual Growth	3.2%	16.8%	3.9%	5.6%	Nil	2.5%	3.9%

Sources: Nielsen, Three Screen Report, Television, Internet, and Mobile Usage in the US

This first table indicates that in the first trimester of 2010 – as in the first trimester of 2009 – 96% of the total viewing hours, which take place on the three different platforms, occur on television (direct and pre-recorded) and only 4% on the new digital platforms. It’s interesting to note that television consumption, far from being reduced by the availability of video content on other platforms, increased from 2009 to 2010 at a rate of 3.9%, while the other two platforms only increased at 2.5%⁹. The consumption of pre-recorded videos (on demand and personal digital recorders) contributed substantially to this increase with the greatest annual increase (16.8%)

However, this table presents biased information which does not accurately reflect the relative strength of each of the three screens; in fact, it overestimates the relative weight of the new digital platforms in the consumption of video content by the entire American population, since it only measures only the average consumption of respondents who have access to the appropriate technology and have used it effectively.

What it shows essentially is that in the first trimester of 2010:

- The average person (from a total of 292 million Americans who watched video content on television) devoted 158 hours, 25 minutes each month to it.
- The average person (from a total of 134 million Americans who watched video content on a computer) devoted 3 hours, 10 minutes each month to it.
- The average person (from a total of 20.3 million Americans who watched video content on a mobile phone) devoted 3 hours, 37 minutes to it each month.

⁹ A similar phenomenon can be observed in the francophone Quebec market. According to BBM, over the course of 52 weeks in 2009-2010, francophones devoted an average of 32.4 hours per week to direct TV viewing. This statistic has increased constantly since 2005-2006 when it measured 29.2 hours per week. It should be noted that increased viewing was stronger in this period among 12-17 year olds, (15%) and 18-34 year olds (14%) than for the general population (11%). Which suggests that even the generations devoting the most time to the new technologies are not reducing their TV viewing.

If the first table gives the impression that the monthly consumption of video content on mobiles telephones is larger (3 hours, 37 minutes) than that on computers (3 hours, 10 minutes), it's because it does not take into account the fact that the number of people owning a mobile phone equipped with the necessary viewing capacity represents only 15% of the number of people using all types of computers linked to the internet with enough bandwidth and speed to view video content.

Once this factor is taken into account, it should be noted that the average daily consumption by an individual who uses a mobile phone (4 minutes) is in fact 5 times smaller than the average daily consumption by an individual who uses a computer (20 minutes), which is 88 times smaller than the consumption by an individual who watches TV (37 hours, 43 minutes), as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of hours: minutes devoted each week to viewing video content on television, on the Internet, and via mobile phone (USA, total population)

	Direct TV	Pre-recorded TV	Sub-total TV	Computers via internet	Mobile phones	Sub-total internet & mobility	Total
1 st trimester 2010	35: 34	2: 09	37: 43	0: 20	0: 04	0: 24	38: 07
<i>Population Percentage</i>			99%			1%	100%

Sources: Nielsen, Three Screen Report, Television, Internet and Mobile Usage in the US

In short, if you look at the results of Table 1, taking into account the number of people having access to each technology, it becomes clear that in the first trimester of 2010, 99% of the time spent by the entire population viewing video content was via television, versus 1% spent on the other two platforms.

This data is American, but nothing indicates that Canadian statistics would differ significantly from American, especially when it comes to the English market. Most studies suggest, however, that the rate of penetration of the new technologies is slightly inferior among francophones. That being said, a poll carried out between October 15 and December 13, 2009, based on 6000 telephone interviews with French-speaking adults living in Quebec and francophone areas of Ontario and New Brunswick, (for a study by the Media Technology Monitor (MTM)), indicates that among francophones 18 years of age and older the average daily time spent viewing internet television in the 4th trimester of 2009 was 15 minutes¹⁰, versus 20 minutes in the first trimester of 2010 among the entire American population (over 2 years). If the different definitions of content are taken into account, the American audience being larger than the Canadian, and the difference in terms of the age of the respondents (18+ / 2+), the results are very similar.

This data includes all types of video content or Internet television, but there are no indications that the division of viewing hours on the three platforms is very different for documentaries.

There's no doubt that important changes are in progress, and that the rate of penetration of the new video platforms is witnessing sustained annual growth.

¹⁰ Source: OTM 2009, Television personelle: en tout lieu et en tout temps 2009. Analysis of the French language market, page 31. Cited with permission of Radio Canada.

But the fact is that today (in the first trimester of 2010), the new platforms capture only 1% of the total hours that Canadians devote to viewing video content. We can draw certain conclusions.

- **The first, I believe, is that there may be no real urgency in spending energy, resources, and considerable effort in rapidly developing realignment mechanisms to measure the viewing public for CMF programs as soon as they are available on the web and on mobile phones.**

It will probably take several years before accumulated viewing hours on the Internet and mobile telephones represents a significant percentage of the total viewing hours of television programs supported by the CMF's Convergent Stream, in a way that would affect the Audience Success Factor. What's important is to gradually implement means of measuring the impact of the new platforms, without rushing to do so.

- **The second, and in my opinion, more important conclusion is that the attainment of objectives established at the creation of the CMF are at risk if the financial resources necessary for multiplatform digital content are taken from the funding of television programmes.**

This is a serious risk that will be evaluated in the next chapter.

👉 Questions of financing and revenues : Who should finance the enhanced digital content designed for the new platforms ?

In addition to conventional sources like public financing, recoverable money from investments, non-recoverable money from broadcast rights, license fee top-ups, grants, fiscal measures (tax credits), distribution revenue, contributions from private funds, and private or institutional sponsors, the Study identifies, with examples, new avenues of finance and new sources of revenue for Canadian documentaries, which include:

- Participatory financing by internet-users
- Revenue generated by an access fee or through advertising when there is no access fee, when documentaries are placed online and viewed on-demand.

However, the analysis shows that the contribution from these sources to the financing of any one film - let alone the Canadian documentary genre as a whole - remains extremely modest.

The Study indicates that while the financial participation of citizens can, in special cases (because of the reputation of the director, subject-matter associated with a popular cause, etc), generate significant funds, most of the filmmakers on sites like *Tous coprod* and others have modest objectives.

The Study also suggests that, as more projects of all genres (dramatic features, classic documentaries, web documentaries, dramatic webisodes, etc.) entice internet-users to participate financially, the average amount gathered by each project is likely to shrink. Not to mention the fact that the competition to access part of this revenue source is already pushing directors and producers to offer more and more in return: profit-sharing, free tickets, visits to the shoot, confidential updates on the progress of the film, credits in the film titles, etc. Obviously this increases the producer's costs, thus reducing the net contribution to production financing represented by the internet-participants.

In short, this practice is an excellent means of promotion; it creates expectation and a buzz around a project in the development stage, but the net contribution to the financing of a documentary production is marginal and will remain so; expansion of this means of financing carries its own limitations.

Documentaries that are available in their entirety for users to view by streaming or by downloading on the net in exchange for a voluntary contribution or a pre-determined fee – a practice that at first view seems promising – have not made significant revenue in the process.

The fact that so many titles are available – each site mentioned in the Study is offering between 1000 and 5000 documentaries – means that the revenues dispersed by these distribution platforms go towards a large number of productions, limiting the potential revenue for each documentary. It must be remembered as well that all the sites promoting fee-access are faced by competition from sites, often owned by producers or public broadcasters such as the **NFB**, **tou.tv**, or **telequebec.tv**, which offer free access.

Among the free sites, we must include those which offer free access to documentaries by carrying ads; the Study establishes, however, that it's necessary for an individual production to attract a phenomenal number of visits or viewers for the ad revenue to become significant for the producer. Finally, let's remember that the viewing of video content via the web and mobile telephone only accounts for 1% of the total viewing hours of video content, as opposed to 99% by direct or pre-recorded television.

In short, it's important to recognize that exhibiting documentaries designed for conventional platforms on new digital platforms does not generate significant financial returns. The same is true for enhanced digital content developed to accompany television documentaries, which adds significant production costs but does not by itself generate compensatory revenue to offset these costs.

For the moment, it's essentially up to the broadcasters and independent Canadian producers to assume most of the cost of the enhanced content, as opposed to the companies who control the platforms and derive substantial revenues from them. This situation does not make sense.

In fact it's the **CMF** – from the amounts received from the BDUs which are a percentage of revenues generated *by broadcast distribution only* – as well as the broadcast corporations holding licenses and the independent producers, who have to share the costs involved in producing the digital content¹¹, without much hope of returns on their investment.

This small prospect of significant revenue from the specific content is a result of the fact that the considerable sums Canadian consumers spend to access the new platforms, prior to any consumption of creative content, go in particular to:

- Purchasing equipment permitting access to these new platforms, such as desktop and portable computers, digital notebooks, smart phones, MP3 players, etc
- Subscribing to the Internet and telecommunication services for mobile phones.

¹¹ See chapter the role of the broadcaster, page 36

And these expenditures are substantial; they generate billions of dollars in annual revenues for the Canadian telecommunications companies that furnish the services (as well as for the manufacturers of the equipment).

In 2009, the Canadian telecommunications industry (telecommunications plus broadcasting) generated revenues of 55.4 billion dollars, of which 74% from the telecommunications industry and 26% from the broadcasters, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Distribution of revenues from Canadian communication enterprises in 2009
(in billions of dollars)

Telecommunications	\$41.0			74%
- mobile phones		16,4		
- Internet service		6,6		
- local and long-distance phone service		12,7		
- others		5,3		
Broadcasting	\$14.4			26%
- provision of broadcast service		7,5		
- broadcasting programs		6,9		
- television			5,4	
- radio			1,5	
Total Communications	\$55.4			100%

Source: CRTC, Watchdog report on communications, 2010

Even the historic cable providers (those which prior to 1994 worked only in the broadcast sector, like Rogers, Shaw, Videotron, and Cogeco) today make two thirds (66.5%) of their total revenues from telecommunications activity, particularly the Internet and mobile phone penetration. So they make only one third of their total revenues from broadcasting, the activity on which calculation of their contribution to Canadian programming is based.

In this context, where is the economic logic behind a system that requires the broadcasting sector to finance the costs of the rich and substantial content for the web and mobile phones? To do this, some of the funds to be allocated to Canadian programs for broadcasters holding licenses are redirected to finance the new content. And this is without any requirement for contributions from corporations making 23 billion dollars in revenue from the provision of internet and mobile phone service, which is 4.3 times more revenue than all the television services combined (5.4 billion dollars).

It seems to me that there is room to question the legitimacy of this system and its impact on the objectives that were established at the creation of the **CMF**.

I don't doubt the pertinence of a global strategy which aims at enhanced content for Canadian audiovisual productions on the new digital platforms but I argue that the chances of increasing the multiplatform consumption of Canadian cultural content are not good if the first side-effect is to reduce the number, quality, and appeal of Canadian television programs by reducing their financing. In my opinion, such a strategy can lead to an impasse if it is not rapidly accompanied by measures that ensure a fair financial contribution to the digital content from all the corporations that profit from its appeal to Canadians. This is not the place to explore the concrete forms which a more balanced contribution could take; there are models here in Canada in other fields, as well as in the European Union, notably in France, which could stimulate discussion on the subject.

If one of the main objectives at the creation of the **CMF** was to give Canadians the chance to see what they want, when they want, on the platform of their choice, then it is necessary to respect this choice and to concentrate our efforts towards creating products which satisfy it; in other words, to focus our resources on television programming itself, which still captures 99% of the viewing hours of the entire population of video content.

So if there is an issue on which documentary filmmakers – like all producers and television broadcasters – should focus their energy in the months to come, I believe it is to convince the government bodies of the need to ensure a fair and equitable contribution to the financing of Canadian creative content for television, the web, and mobile phones from the entire Canadian communications industry, which generates revenue from the use of these platforms by consumers.

Michel Houle
Cultural and communications industry consultant

I. THE NEW WORLD OF PRODUCTION

Today documentary film can be found not only on the web and on social networks, but it has entered the mobile universe and is increasingly visible in the world of games. It's a renewed ecosystem where the mandate is not to replace television but rather to zero in on the special strengths of the new platforms – the mode of access, the amount of time devoted to viewing, the screen size, etc.

The director Luc Bourdon gives us his vision of documentary filmmaking: “The *documentary director must commit himself to these new languages and forms of knowledge, to new collaborations. In addition to image, sound, and editing, he must use interactivity. He will be increasingly close to the content, master of his work, more of a producer than ever before, closer to his rights as an “author”. In this period of transformation, he must combine creativity with an economic model that doesn't exist. He must be ingenious. Tomorrow's documentary filmmaker will be someone who heats things up, initiates, pushes the boundaries, takes a position.*”

1. A new relationship with the audience

In less than twenty years, the internet and the web have transformed our way of life. The possibility of seeing and speaking to each other, of exchanging photos and animated images at the speed of light, across the planet, is a reality that no visionary could have foreseen. This new relationship with time, space, and information - this hyper-mobility - radically alters our way of absorbing cultural works. The social networks, information-sharing, blogs and cell phones generate a new form of cultural mediation, demanding a more direct link between a creative work and its “author”. For filmmaker Katerina Cizek, the impact on the creative process is undeniable: “*In Europe, more than 50% of the internauts surf the web with their cell phones and not their computers. This is a radical shift - how can we deliver documentaries via mobile phones? How can we make this mobility part of our thought processes?*”

Mike Walsh, author of the essay [Futuretainment](#), points out that the relationship between the audience and the content is in the midst of changing. Not only are we in the era of “time-shifting” – viewing and adapting programs when desired, free of the constraints of schedules, but we also live in the era of “screen shifting” –being able to select content that interests us on the platform of our choice: television, portable computer, iPad, or cell phone. This new combination of content and platforms allows each person to have a multi-dimensional viewpoint, and the space between the filmmaker and the public is shrinking.

While the change affects the whole society, this phenomenon is particularly evident in the Internet generation.

According to Don Tapscott¹², this generation between 13 and 33 years of age:

- is increasingly independent of the programming schedule of a particular television channel, and has a greater tendency to adapt web content if it can put a personal stamp on it. This generation would be able to live without television, but not without the Internet.

- naturally creates content and doesn't hesitate to share it on the social networks. It wants to interact with the content and has no relationship to the passive consumer.

¹² Don Tapscott is a Canadian entrepreneur and consultant, originally from Alberta, who is now in Toronto. He runs the nGenera think tank, founded in 1993, which focuses on the social impact on NTIC.

In his essay [New platforms for DocMedia] *Nouvelles plateformes pour DocMedia*, Peter Wintonick also describes “*the borderless culture jammers digital dreamers, skeptics. They are simultaneously producers and users of the media. They have inherited the baggage of documentary film and transformed it into docmedia.*”¹³

For Samuelle Ducroq-Henry specialist in new information technology and communication, it's the use of online games that has changed behaviour: “*the younger generation are protean, changing constantly according to experience; it's a generation that immerses itself in experience and practice, and lives in the world of games.*”¹⁴

1.1 NEW FORMS OF WRITING

How can writers use the best aspects of the digital platforms and the new technological tools to reinvent the world of narrative, to describe reality, at the same time better capturing the public, especially that of the Internet generation?

In order to better understand what lies behind the phrase “new forms of writing”, let's define the term more clearly, at the same time acknowledging that the definition is not carved in stone.

In this chapter, new forms of writing refer essentially to **transmedia** projects. According to a generally-accepted definition, transmedia story-telling occurs on several platforms. One approach or point of view appears on the Internet, another on a blog, another in the form of a linear documentary on television, as well as on dedicated sites, on community platforms, and all these different support-systems interact to give a totality of information. A work constructed in this way is experienced in its totality, to the extent that the “viewer” explores and takes advantage of the varied elements.

All the **cross media** elements – i.e the expansion of the linear documentary to several platforms (mobile phone, social networks, internet sites, online distribution platforms, etc) - are considered an integral part of the marketing strategy of the original work, and not as purely creative assets.

As for the definition of the **webdocumentary** or **interactive documentary**: the webdocumentary is a form of documentary conceived specifically for the web and broadcast online. It's navigable and interactive, and is usually characterized by non-linear narrative, a specialized script, and multi-media content.¹⁵ The webdocumentary is thus distinct from online journalism and short multi-media works; it's a form which presupposes that filmmaker's “point of view”.

The Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée [National centre for film and the animated image] (CNC France), which supports documentary projects destined solely for the Internet or mobile screens, proposes a classification for web projects and the “narrative styles” appropriate to them.¹⁶

- *Programs or linear series*: they're very similar to conventional productions. The web provides a window for alternative dissemination that connects to a new audience, and allows a more liberated tone.

¹³ Upcoming book to be published by the **British Film Institute** and edited by Brian Winton.

¹⁴ Publication by the **Fédération des établissements d'enseignements privés**, inserted in **La Presse** and **Le Devoir**, September 11, 2010.

¹⁵ <http://www.webdocumentaire.eu/pages/un-collectif-de-professionnels-pour-le-webdocumentaires>

¹⁶ Aide aux projets pour les nouveaux médias, [assistance to new media projects] cinema and television 2007-2009 – approved projects – Annual report of CNC

- *The “revamping” of certain pre-existing programs:* these are projects based on television series for which complementary material is developed specifically for the Internet.
- *Interactive works:* these are principally documentaries which integrate the special aspects of the web in their creative and narrative approach. An integral part of the project is the internaut’s ability to navigate through the video material. The work must be absorbed in its totality; the formal artistic elements (interface, web design, navigation, chat rooms) all contain content critical to the overall meaning of the work.
- *Participatory projects:* these are projects in which the content and artistic approach depend on the participation and/or contributions of internauts.

We have chosen to focus on **participatory projects** and **interactive works**, which both have a proven track record for documentary.

Participatory Projects: Several writers are now experimenting with new ways of story-telling on the web, which permit internauts to collaborate in the narrative by modifying the contents. The participatory possibilities are part of the conception and development of the project. It’s a relatively unusual form of creation, since it invites the audience to take part in a creative stage which is unfamiliar to them.

For Michel Reilhac, head of the film department at **Arte France**, it’s essential to consider this new relationship with the public: *“The internet has opened up the possibility of including the audience’s participation, which means that we can no longer consider passive story-telling as the only option. Video games have given us a taste and an appetite for personal involvement in the action; that is not going away and is triggering a new rapport with narrative and story-telling.”* While making this point, he insists on the primary role of the “auteur” or creator, and the importance of a strong artistic vision. He expresses some reservations about projects which are left wide open to the internauts’ involvement and which end up suffering in quality.¹⁷

The Virtual Revolution (United Kingdom, 2010)

A **BBC** production co-produced with **The Open University**.

Documentary series, online “open source” documentary.

Digital Emmy Award, MIPTV for Digital Program – Non-Fiction, Cannes 2010.

The Virtual Revolution, an ambitious **BBC** documentary project, sets out to show how in the twenty years of the internet’s existence, it has transformed our life. In the spirit of the web, the directors of the project adopted the form of an “opensource documentary”, a documentary which allows the internauts to access the material shot online, and to become a vital part of the creative process. *“The web has become what it is today, due, among other things, to the online community and its members who have shaped it ... The intent of this project is to adopt this philosophy of participation: to share ideas, by adding video excerpts online before editing, to ask advice from the online community, to transform the content and alter the approach.”*¹⁸

This approach demanded an openness in spirit and decision-making to the internauts’ ideas and opinions, since they became collaborators in the work. Their contribution to the content had to be taken into account by the director because the social media doesn’t tolerate unfulfilled promises. But it was also clear that the production crew, not the internauts, controlled the story, had the overall perspective on the subject, and defined the limits of collaboration.

¹⁷ Conference: Le cinéma à l’ère du transmedia, [Cinema in the cross media era] **Observatoire des medias interactifs**, March 17, 2010

¹⁸ Dan Gluckman, **South by South West Festival**, in March 2010 – panel on Interactive Documentaries: A Multidimensional Narrative

The website started well before the various shooting periods. It was composed principally of the blogs of crew members, plus some story elements -the identity of the participants, the stakes in the story, the paths of exploration - that were posted online. Everything was calculated to attract the interest and the participation of the internautes.

The social networks played an important role in what the crew called "*the social experience of viewing*" until the television broadcast, and subsequently the blogs and debates continued. During the broadcast, a message was sent every three seconds with **#bbcrevolution** on Twitter, and the discussion in real time extended the addition of content.

From the beginning, the crew had no illusions about the two distinct publics who were going to interact : the « online experts » who had participated from the outset, developing the themes, relaying information, etc, and **BBC2's** base audience who preferred the linear content.

The project's outcome? Four documentary films and a huge library of content for the public (texts, video clips, audio extracts, links shared on Delicious, photo albums on Flickr, tweets, etc).

Interactive works: In the case of interactive works, the nature of the internaut's online adventure is determined by his personal schedule and his willingness to participate. The internaut remains in a closed ecosystem; he acts, but inside a space prescribed by the creator, without the ability to alter the contents of the project.

This type of work seems more like the **Serious Games** format, in which the duration and quality of the interaction with the internaut are the priority, preoccupations which frequently concern documentary directors. As filmmaker Katerina Cizek expresses: "*The documentary has a lot in common with the game; narrative elements, interfaces, metaphors, emotions, focus on the real, characters.*"

Prison Valley (France, 2010)

Directed by: David Dufresne, Philippe Brault

Produced by: Alexandre Brachet, **Upian** and **Arte** France

Content: Webdocumentary, 59 minute documentary, and hundreds of additional items on the internet (blog, social networks, textings, iPhone app, photo album, photo exhibition)

Budget : 220,000 euros

Financial structure: **Arte** (60,000 euros), **CNC** (90,000 euros from «aide aux nouveaux medias»[Assistance to new media]), **Upian** (70,000 euros)

April 22, 2010: **Upian** and **Arte** upload their webdocumentary **Prison Valley**, an interactive movie which invites internautes to immerse themselves in the American incarceration industry, specifically at Prison Valley in Colorado.

Prison Valley uses interactivity in the most relevant way. The internaut can watch a documentary of 59 minutes in one sitting, but he is also invited to leave the film space to interact with the protagonists, the place, physical objects, etc. following a route defined by the director. «*It's what's required by the documentary form.*» explains Alexander Brachet, the producer. «*The viewer can't see the description of a character he hasn't met, visit one of the prisons before it appears in the narrative or jump ahead to the ending.*» This process permits the director to maintain control of the story, and at the same time hook the viewer with a zipper in his hand.

Distinctively original, **Prison Valley** draws in the internautes by linking them to their social networks. The internaut begins by creating a profile on his Facebook or Twitter account, after which he can access content on **Prison Valley**. By leaving a footprint on the networks, he ends up promoting the project.

The Facebook identification allows the internaut to pick up the story where he left off in his previous visit. It also permits him to see other visitors and to make contact with them. And the community takes a new direction.

Numerous structural references to the world of video games recall the pleasure experienced by the internaut while navigating in this environment. The reporters' room which functions as a link between different chapters; the evidence gathered in order to advance, and the encounters with the protagonists are part of the game plan. Two fundamental aspects co-exist: a documentary approach which respects journalistic standards, but also a playful sensibility towards serious information which can engage a larger audience. In other words, an inventive approach to the documentary which can enhance the internaut's reflections.

On September 22, 2010 the **Prison Valley** site had registered more than 220,000 hits, including 600 to 1000 new visits recorded each day. 22% of the visitors went to the end of the linear storyline of 59 minutes. The linear story of **Prison Valley** was offered in six serials on **Yahoo France**, **Liberation**, and **France Inter**, which generated an additional 400,000 supplementary visits.¹⁹

The budget: 220,000 euros, financed by the producer **Upian**, the channel **Arte** and the **CNC** (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée). **Prison Valley** earned 30,000 euros for each of the two originators. « *We're not complaining* », says one of the two, the photographer Philippe Brault, « *but given that it was a year and a half of work, 15 hours a day, it was well-earned* » Philippe Brault and his partner David Dufresne can also count on the author's copyright as a basis for the televised version of **Prison Valley**.²⁰ The production house **Upian** spent 50,000 euros in the adventure. But the founder of this company which specializes in multi-media production, Alexandre Brachet, has found financial stability thanks to being a beneficiary on the Internet: « *We don't make webdocumentaries unless we stand up for certain values, and enjoy creation and innovation on the Internet.* »²¹

The Challenge (France 2010)

Directed by Laetitia Moreau

Produced by What's up Films, Honkytonk, Canal Plus and Canal Plus Interactive
Webdocumentary, 52 minute television documentary.

The webdocumentary **The Challenge** is an equally telling example. At the request of her producers, the well-known director Laetitia Moreau (*Qu'allons-nous faire de nos parents*, [What are we going to do about our parents] 2007; série *Vallon des pins*, [series: Valley of the pines] 2006) directed a webdocumentary in parallel with a film she was preparing on the **Chevron-Texaco** trial in Ecuador, *Une idée simple et révolutionnaire*, [A simple revolutionary idea], broadcast on **Canal Plus** in March 2010. At first, the webdocumentary was not part of the channel's mandate. The producers' motivation was to attract an audience for the television documentary, an objective which they achieved. In the end, **The Challenge** is a work that stands on its own, but is complementary in substance and form to the television documentary.

The Challenge invites the internaut play the role of an "independent journalist" and research the pollution caused by oil extraction in equatorial Amazon. While remaining as accurate as possible and respecting the role-playing structure imposed by the producers, the webdocumentary allows the internaut real involvement by placing him at the heart of the story.

¹⁹ Statistics provided by director David Dufresne, according to Google Analytics

²⁰ <http://www.rfi.fr/france/20100831-le-webdocumentaire-peine-trouver-modele-financement-viable>

²¹ <http://numerico.wordpress.com/2010/03/03/quelle-viabilite-economique-pour-web-docu-2/>

Laetitia Moreau feels this is a more subjective vision, allowing more militant engagement which, in her words, “*did not have any place in television production*”. The director was also able to introduce archival images which had been taken out of the linear documentary.

For Laetitia Moreau, it's important for documentary filmmakers to embrace the webdocumentary track. “*When the word “web-doc” is pronounced, we sometimes have the impression that we’re entering a fourth dimension. It’s not true. It’s a different approach. Just as exhilarating, because it allows us to try new types of writing, which revolutionize the form. For example, the usual hierarchy of a linear production no longer makes sense, it’s necessary to invent a new one. It’s an incentive to reconsider everything, a tremendous subject for reflection and creation. So it’s vital not to leave this domain to the programmers or webmasters, no matter how smart they are. The journalists and documentary filmmakers must invest in it so that their knowledge, their power of observation becomes part of it.*”²²

Does the participation of internauts in the development and direction of a film lead towards the development of “Wiki films”? How should we think about the creative process when participants can intervene in the story? Should the documentary creator/filmmaker still be at the top of the direction/production hierarchy? There are so many questions, which can only be answered through needed experimentation with these new creative models. At base, this is a technological evolution of the cinema machine which has the mission to tell stories.

Joel Ronez, head of the interactive department at **Arte**, explains the public's current expectations, irrespective of age. He puts the internaut activity in perspective; “*If you analyze the audience for a web program, 80% of the people are there to see and consume; they are passive and don't feel like creating the program. In this case, the interactive dimension lies in the power to choose one's involvement. After that, you have 15%– 19% of occasional users who want a little more; to leave a comment, to vote, to recommend the program to a friend, to subscribe to a newsletter or an RSS feed....Finally , you have a small percentage of involved users. They will go from the producing and furnishing of elements, which will eventually be reintegrated in the work, to full-scale participation in the game. The entire success of the web program consists of addressing all these spectators at the same time.*”²³

For the moment, it's important to note that the internauts who participate are few in number compared to the mass of people attracted to a given project. The passive observers who only watch what is offered remain the majority, while the active participants can be counted in the tens. Is it possible to develop in spectators a real willingness to participate, a spontaneous desire to interact? That is the challenge in creating successful cross media projects which require the public's involvement to access the work's content.

²² <http://television.telerama.fr/television/l-titia-moreau-realisatrice-du-challenge-c-est-une-vision-plus-subjective-un-projet-plus-militant.52845.php>

²³ <http://television.telerama.fr/television/arte-lance-arte-webdocs-sa-plate-forme-documentaire-sur-internet.52886.php>

1.2 CROWD FUNDING

Another kind of public mobilization which is developing on websites dedicated to participatory financing is **Crowd Funding**, when internauts become involved financially in support of cherished projects.

The process is not in itself new: Paule Baillargeon, director of *La Cuisine Rouge* [The Red Kitchen] and Pierre Falardeau, director of *15 février* [February 15] 1839, appealed for private subscriptions, but the fund-raising took place mostly within a small circle. It required complex organization and a huge investment of energy on the part of the directors and producers: organization of benefit evenings, etc.....

In this area, one of the great advantages of the Internet has been the availability of tools which simplify the means of collecting funds and increase the number of investors. But the web doesn't spark fund-raising spontaneously; there is still work to do to mobilize the community and gain the loyalty of donors.

Some independent producers launch themselves in the adventure by creating a dedicated website specifically to finance the film. Given the proliferation of web offerings, it's a calculated risk, and often the most successful projects depend on a well-known personality with potential "clientele".

For [Age of Stupid](#), the production house **Spanner Film** received 450,000 pounds. Admittedly, this British feature film is about an explosive subject, the effects of climate change, and it stars an Oscar-nominated actor Pete Postlethwaite. On their fundraising site, the producers deliver a detailed expose of the difficulties facing independent filmmakers, <http://www.spannerfilms.net/node/1253/#crowd>. The director and producers decided to make the documentary totally accessible online. Their objective was to contact 58 million spectators before the Copenhagen Summit on climate change (December 2009). They reached their objective, at the same time financing the film through the scale of their activism. On September 22nd 2009, the premiere was broadcast via satellite transmission to more than 700 theaters in sixty countries. And in the rest of the world, the film was available free for one month by streaming online. The producers plan to approach this mobilized "community of spectators" for their next production.

On another site dedicated to funding a feature documentary about David Lynch titled [LynchThree](#), the creators, who are independent filmmakers, have centered their communication strategy on the image of Lynch, hoping to attract "*his fanbase across the world*". However, they pushed this exercise so far that that they confused the internauts. The rumour circulated on the web that David Lynch was launching a subscription in order to write his autobiography. The filmmakers were forced to mention on their homepage that "*David Lynch is neither a producer, nor a director of this film....there have been several erroneous articles in the press saying that he is asking his fans for donations.*"

Elsewhere, we are witnessing the emergence of several platforms dedicated to participatory financing, which handle a variety of projects. These initiatives to mediate between the director and the audience on the net tend to follow two different philosophies:

- In the first instance, it's a system of profit-sharing for the beneficiaries. The fundraising site functions according to the rules of co-production, which transform the internaut into an investor. The contributing internaut bets on the future revenue of the film, from which he will receive dividends. The director and the producer give up part of their rights to the internauts and to the co-production site. This is the system proposed by [TousCoprod](#), [we-are-producteurs.com](#) set up by Luc Besson, and [peopleforcinema.com](#).

- In the second instance, platforms are emerging that facilitate donations from the public to the film director or producer. The filmmaker or production house retains all the rights. The platforms [Kickstarter](#), [IndieGoGo](#) and [Babeldoor](#) have been constructed for this purpose.

Whatever the system, - profit-sharing or patronage - participatory financing via the Internet corresponds normally to certain basic rules:

1. The internauts take a risk on a film for an amount equal or superior to a chosen “compensation”, usually an object or service connected to the film production.
2. The funds are collected for a limited time period, in the hopes of reaching or surpassing a minimum financial goal determined by the director or producer of the project.
3. As long as the goal has not been reached, the contributions of the participants are registered and held, without any outflow of the capital.
4. The director of the project doesn’t receive the cash, and the contributors can’t recuperate their “compensation” until the financial goal has been reached.
5. The filmmaker, in order to be successful, often establishes a goal of around \$10,000.
6. In financially supporting a film, the internaut immediately acquires the status of a “privileged” spectator and he is asked to help promote the film through his networks.
7. To attract the internaut, the platforms offer gifts to the contributors, such as an invitation to the premiere, a DVD, a credit in the film titles, etc.

Kickstarter

The platform [Kickstarter](#) is an American site which permits every author, developer, designer, and filmmaker to seek funds for a creative project. **Kickstarter** taps into community aid, donations, and generosity. The site makes it clear in the FAQ section that the financial contributors are not investors, and that the leadership of the project retains 100% ownership.

In fact a bank account or an American address is required to launch a project on the platform. **Kickstarter** sees a royalty of 5% of the total funds collected if the project meets with success. Amazon (which processes the payment) also imposes credit card fees which run from 3 – 5%.

Like all the platforms of this type, the director of the project must reward his “*backers with gifts or other promises*” in exchange for the funds, the importance of which depend on the amount given.²⁴ The director Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque submitted her documentary on the Sudan [The Waiting Room](#), produced by Périphéria. She established a goal of raising \$10,000 in 30 days, an objective she surpassed by 5%, which covered the cost of using the platform. However, the director was very active in mobilizing her own networks. In fact, her donors were for the most part from a circle of acquaintances that she had pulled together. In the end, it’s not easy to stand out from the proliferation of projects, since the platforms gamble on both amateurs and professional artists in order to be profitable.

Tous coprod

[TousCoprod](#), is a participatory financing platform reserved for producers. It supports them in the development, production, and distribution phases of their films, in return for a percentage of the revenue and certain privileges. The platform was launched in the autumn of 2010 in Canada.

As explained on the company’s website, the payment formula is as follows: “*Coprod collects your share of the film’s revenue: after reimbursing the cost of making the film,*

²⁴ <http://www.vincentabry.com/kickstarter-pour-rechercher-un-financement-9290>

touscoprod turns over 80% of the profits during the first 3 years of exploitation, and keeps 20% to pay itself back."

The film's producer must be ready to offer a certain number of gratuities to the co-producers; *"In becoming a co-producer of the film, you are a stakeholder in its creation and you have access to special services, such as"*

- updates and privileged information regarding the project
- your name appearing in the trailer of any film that you co-produce
- the possibility of your name appearing in the end credits. You can react to news updates, and comment on creative choices made by the filmmakers. You can ask the producer questions, make suggestions. Essentially, you breathe life into the project!

The platform does not focus its communication on the financial payback to the internauts because that remains uncertain. It prefers to emphasize the quality of services which will compensate them for investing. According to Barbara Tonnelli, founder of the site, *"we can't promise something if we can't deliver"*; which throws in question the credibility of other sites which present themselves as forms of investment.

In October 2010, four documentaries were housed on the platform.

In France

Les rêves dansants – Sur les pas de Pina Bausch [Dancing dreams – in the footsteps of Pina Bausch]- Documentary by Gerd Haag, produced by **TAG/TRAUM Filmproduktion**, Cologne. Distribution France: **Jour2fête**. Distribution assistance: 10,555 euros collected, 121 co-distributors, 106% of the financial goal reached 5 days before the deadline.

Fin de concession, [Concession's end] documentary by Pierre Carles. **CP Production**. Production assistance. 716 euros collected; 549 co-producers, 115% of the goal reached 19 days before the deadline.

L'oeil de l'astronote, [The astronaut's eye], documentary by Stan Neuman, produced by **Les Films d'ici**. production assistance: 4384 euros collected 4 months before the deadline.

In Canada

Les ailes de Johnny May, [The wings of Johnny May], documentary by Marc Fafard, produced by **Productions Thalie, Kien Productions France, CNC, ONF, Telefilm Canada**. The objective is production support of \$40,000 and the deadline is November 1st, 2011.

Peopleforcinema

This platform dedicated to distribution financing boasts: *"Contrary to the participatory financing models supporting production, we've chosen to connect you with the distributors because they reimburse their investment by prioritizing the principal film partners: (authors, actors, producer, co-producers, etc.) So you are going to receive money from the moment of the first public screenings."* Extract from the site peopleforcinema.com. In this instance, the internauts take the same risk as the distributors: if the film fills the theatres, they multiply their original investment, if the film is not popular, they can say goodbye to real profits, but they will still have received "marginal benefits": an invitation to the premieres, privileged information, etc. To make the platform profitable, its founders are associated with the major corporation **UGC** (production, distribution, commercialization). The **peopleforcinema.com** site has access to the mailing list of 250,000 subscribers to **UGC**, enlarging the investment potential and permitting the site to better target its clientele. *"UGC has attracted an impressive base of subscribers to its unlimited pass, whose film tastes we understand very well."*

*We know from the outset which subscribers to target for each film”, explains Serge Hayat, co-founder of **peopleforcinema.com**. For **UGC**, the benefits come from the buzz that films can generate on **peopleforcinema.com**. Those who gamble on a favorite director or actor are motivated to publicize the work through their social networks. Because it’s really “viral marketing” that **peopleforcinema.com** is selling to distributors like **UGC**. With this model, independent cinema is attracting a growing audience.*

Buzz or reality for independent cinema?

In the music sector, independent labels which jumped into the adventure of participatory financing are having problems: **MyMajorcompany**, which created a phenomenon around the singer Grégoire, has not been able to repeat this success, **Spidart** has gone bankrupt, and **Sellaband** is having difficulty staying afloat.²⁵

It’s not clear if the participatory financing platforms open to independent productions and cinema “d’auteur” can survive if they accept all projects. Some of them, like **touscoprod.com** have a tendency to reproduce the blueprint of conventional productions by betting on directors who have a certain reputation, and/or projects that already have solid financial backing and some guarantee of being produced. Others, like **peopleforcinema.com** support majors like **UGC**.

With a few exceptions, the amounts collected represent a small percentage of the global production budget. Participatory financing of a film should above all be seen as a commercial and promotional strategy to create the famous “buzz” so sought after by distributors.

1.3 THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL NETWORKS

When they are engaged from the very beginning of a production, these networks become an important asset in establishing an audience. It’s worth noting that since the emergence of the social media, the idea of the audience has been replaced by the notion of a “community of spectators”, terminology which reflects the new rapport between creators and consumers of a work.

A growing number of projects use the social networks in the research phase to hook an audience. Without having to resort to the latest interactive applications, some producers launch blogs in which different members of the production crew describe their creative approach even before shooting starts. This permits the audience to experience the content in another way, and to explore its possibilities.

The internauts follow and comment on the development and production phases, and according to viral marketing strategies, their comments form a pyramid attracting more and more people to the film’s release. Increasingly interconnected, each new viewer in a social network multiplies the audience by his contacts and “friends” by sharing information. The links that are created between potential spectators and the production crew are thus reinforced.

In Quebec, a study carried out in October 2010 by **CEFRIQ** (Centre francophone d’informatisation des organisations) [Francophone centre for organizational information] has found that the usage of social media has intensified. « *In fact, more than three quarters (78%) of Quebec internauts have visited or contributed content to at least one type of social media, whether social networks (sites like Facebook), blogs or microblogs. Furthermore, these social networks have registered the strongest growth rate: internaut participation has grown from 34% in 2009 to 48% in 2010. Despite growing concerns about protecting personal privacy, two thirds of Quebec internauts read*

²⁵ <http://www.suite101.fr/content/les-acteurs-du-financement-participatif-sur-internet-a15764>

online opinions and recommendations about a product or service prior to purchase, and 74% of them confirm that this information influences their choices. »

Thus the growing use of the social media by internautes is creating new communication opportunities for the dissemination of documentaries. The analysis of its impact on marketing strategies is recent, but interesting to mention because of the light it sheds on the promotion of cultural works.

According to the [Social Media Marketing Report](#) 2010, a study carried out with 1356 marketing professionals, 91% of the interviewees use social media to promote their business. This figure demonstrates that the social networks have taken over as a communication tool in only a few years. The principal advantages from their usage, according to marketing experts, are increased exposure of the business (85%), a larger number of people subscribing to a mailing list (63%), new professional partnerships (56%), improved referencing of the site (54%), new prospects (52%), and lower global marketing expenses (48%).

According to this data, the principal return on investment in the social media can be measured mainly in qualitative spin-offs (improvement of the label's image and better relations with the consumer) and not in quantitative increase of sales, a limitation in their use.

However it's necessary to note that relatively few users of the social networks are very active in the circulation of the information needed to attain a critical mass of internautes. *Pownar*, a study by **CNN** on information disseminated on the social networks based on 2300 people polled in 11 different countries (November 2010), reveals that only 27% of users share information. But this minority is very active, since it disseminates 87% of all the information shared on the social networks.

In terms of dissemination, it appears that 43% of the information shared is by means of the social networks (**Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace**), 30% by email, 15% by **SMS**, and 12% by instant messaging. On average, a user shares 13 links per week, and receives 26 suggestions via the social networks or email.

King Corn (United States, 2007)

Directed by Aaron Wolf (2007)

A production of Ian Cheney, and Curt Ellis, **Mosaic Films**

Linear documentary broadcast on **ITVS** and **PBS**, online educational resource, blog

[King Corn](#) is an interesting case study in terms of the use of the social networks. « *A shocking documentary which examines the social, environmental, and economic consequences of the over-production of corn, by focussing on its impact on our health and waist size.* » King Corn, official synopsis.²⁶

At first, the film travelled widely to festivals around the world. Then it attracted 1.2 million viewers to its **PBS** broadcast on the program [Independent Lens](#).²⁷ Clearly, the documentary had found its target audience of people with the same preoccupations as the filmmakers.

²⁶ Taken from the website of **RIDM** [Rencontres internationales du documentaires de Montréal], where the film was shown in 2009.

²⁷ <http://www.valleyadvocate.com/blogs/home.cfm?aid=10742>

But the filmmakers wanted to reach a wider audience beyond this obvious one. So they launched an ambitious networking plan. They created a simple but effective blog, then developed press relationships outside the usual circles, getting the film spoken about in forums not normally interested in documentary. It was a very effective strategy. The filmmakers were invited on *Good Morning America* on ABC, and they made the cover of **The Washington Post**. The press campaign was centered principally on the film's thesis and the stakes involved. So, without having seen the film, the public was drawn to its content. During a series of community screenings, the directors targeted the Corn Belt in the USA (an agriculture zone of intensive corn cultivation in the mid west), reinforcing their legitimacy.

It was at this point that the online presence of **King Corn** began to take off. During screenings, the directors promoted public action tools: an ABC of the stakes in corn production, a petition, online networking with communities and pressure groups, etc., and they invited the latter to organize free screenings. A YouTube channel with extracts and trailers was established, and even a video "Mash Up" contest was launched on the [Filmocracy](#) window of the PBS site. Thus the internauts became multipliers who transmitted the content, sent out alerts, and announced the online availability of the DVD, boosting sales appreciably.

The **King Corn** example is not revolutionary, but the role of the social networks was a determining factor in the film's success. The distribution strategy was mapped out from the beginning, and followed throughout the production. It reduced costs and maintained, via the blog and the action tools on the web, a direct and special link with the audience who came to the screenings, watched the film on television, and finally bought the DVD. Today, three years after its launch, the film continues to have regular community screenings (more than 130 in 2010) and good DVD sales.

The Cove (United States, 2009)

A film by Louie Psihoyos

Produced by Paula DuPré Pesmen and Fisher Stevens, **Diamond Docs**

A feature-length documentary, website, web and mobile campaign, social networks...

Some statistics (as of November 2010) :

465,000 Facebook fans

12,000 fans on Twitter

20,000 subscribers to email updates

75 festival prizes, including an Oscar

1,300,000 have taken some kind of action to stop the dolphin slaughter in Japan

6 theatres have shown the film in Japan

*Famous in the 60s for the television series Flipper, the former dolphin trainer Ric O'Barry is today a relentless defender of cetaceans. In Taiji, Japan, he is organizing opposition to the hidden slaughter of thousands of dolphins that takes place annually. With a team from the Oceanic Preservation Society, O'Barry is trying to reveal Taiji's dark secret to the entire world. Despite the hostility of local police and fishermen, O'Barry and his accomplices assemble an outstanding crew: underwater cameramen and sound recordists, special effects experts, oceanographers and well-known free divers embark on a covert operation in order to bring back images from a small isolated cove...official synopsis **The Cove***

Having premiered at **Sundance** in January 2009, **The Cove** has been a resounding success. While the communication strategy made use of all the media platforms - mobile, the web, the social networks, and conventional media - it was principally the mobile platforms and the web which played a big role in the film's success. The web campaign was based on the usage of [Takepart.com](#) which plays the role of aggregator of sites focused on social, political, and environmental engagement, and thus contacts internauts by means of different platforms. This site permits inclusion of petitions, letters to political

personalities, polls, etc. A special **Facebook** application has been developed, in addition to the fan page, and **Facebook** is also used for Q & A sessions with leader Ric O'Barry. **The Cove** uses the services of [Zannel](#), a multimedia twitter to stimulate dissemination and video content-sharing, and [Call2action](#), a site which suggests « Widgets » of fund-raising for different causes. The site insists that ease and speed are necessary for the internaut to respond to an appeal for action. The video prompting people to sign a petition was seen 100,000 times in its first week online.

In January 2010, the film was nominated for an Oscar, and ended up winning the coveted award. During his thank you speech, Ric O'Barry held up a placard with **Text Dolphin 44144** written on it so that viewers could follow the campaign. This mobile-accessible number permitted its users to register and receive updates via MSM alerts.

Today the film continues its career with both screenings as well as DVD sales. The online petition on Facebook now has more than 1,750,000 signatures, and the Japanese authorities have given into the demands of the petitioners to regulate the commercial fishing of dolphin. The film's internet site is still very active and accessible in more than 50 languages.

The new tools of the social networks are easy to access, but they require a lot of time and energy to have a real impact on the promotion of a documentary. It's not enough to open a Facebook or Twitter page to interest people in a film. The impact of the social media depends on a data base, the management of profiles and activities, conversation with the internauts, the downloading of new content, etc. In return, these efforts enable a solid referencing system to develop that returns people to the film site, which is essential for the work's visibility.

Director Patricia Chica *“from the moment of the arrival of the ephemeral Friendster (ndrl: created in 2002) immediately understood that the social networks could transform the way she contacted her potential audience. “The creation of MySpace online was a crucial moment for me,” she says. “I got known by means of my first page Patriciatronica, where lots of people follow me. And, by the way, I post a lot of content online and I keep up my online relationships. For an independent director and filmmaker, it's important to make oneself visible.” This online presence has done a lot for the international reputation of Rockabilly 514. “I play a lot on the social networks. I have an online vlog (video blog), I'm also on YouTube and Twitter, as well as having my website [PatriciaChica.com](#). Putting my work online is a risk I take. Obviously, I don't post my complete works, but rather trailers and secondary extracts. People who follow me on the networks are those who are going to buy tickets to see my films. I reply to them, I interact with them. It's a question of respect.”*²⁸

After the film's launch, there's still the challenge of maintaining editorial activity on the site and the associated networks to ensure their longevity. To lighten the work of the director and producers, one solution is to appeal to the activism of the groups directly concerned by the issues in the film, so they continue to nourish the online discussion, update the information and extend the lifespan of the film.

²⁸ Taken from the article by Sophie Bernard « *Patricia Chica raconte des histoires visuelles [Patricia Chica tells visual stories]* », Le lien multimedia [The multimedia link], August 30, 2010

2. New production models

2.1 RETHINKING THE STRUCTURE OF PRODUCTION

Digital culture drives us to rethink the traditional structure of production. It pushes us to develop new partnerships and innovative ways of doing things.

New partnerships

Projects on the web assume the involvement of new creative teams with the latest expertise. Conventional production crews are no longer appropriate. While overlaps exist between the new digital industry and documentary filmmakers, and each party needs the other, a gulf separates them. Everyone feels the need for better cohesion.

Claire Buffet, a producer at **Turbulent**, a new media company which has specialized for many years in the production of original web projects, says: *“The world of the web, like the world of documentary, has its own phases of production and exhibition. The production cycle is different, with a lot of interdependence, iteration, and interrelationships. On the web, the phases do not flow from one to the other, but occur simultaneously. The new media is an industry conditioned by the scarcity and high cost of manpower. It’s principally an industry of permanent employees. Manpower is expensive and the competition is ferocious. I think that the two industries would benefit from learning more about each other, so as to reduce mutual misunderstandings and misconceptions; it would permit better working knowledge of the stakes for each industry in the creation of a common project.”*

Brett Gaylor, a director who works in both documentary and on web projects for **EyeSteelFilm**, emphasizes the financial aspect; *“People working for the web and new media must understand where documentary filmmakers come from. The salaries are different, the competition for funding is different, and we’re not discussing comparable amounts of money. Working for the web is not free, and there is not much money in the world of documentary.”*

For the moment, Benoît Beaudoin, head of Interactivity for **TV5**, suggests that television producers do commissioned work for new media companies, as opposed to co-producing. *“Television producers don’t have the same philosophy as web producers, and their ways of working are different, which can create conflicts. TV producers want to push the content, while digital creators talk of user-experience and the audience. The two parties will find a way of working together, but not necessarily on all projects, at least for the moment.”*

Ghassan Fayad, director and founder of the **Kung Fu Numerik Company**, has a different opinion. **Kung Fu Numerik** conceptualizes and creates websites, web tools and interactive content. Producer and director Ghassan Fayad prefers to work as a co-producer, not as a service-provider. *“Both companies are making an investment. And that puts us on an equal footing in terms of sharing ideas. For me, participation in a project is more than a simple financial agreement, it’s really the creation of a common mission.”*

Marc Guidoni, (independent producer, member of the Producer’s Network, and consultant) presented **3 timely recommendations**, based on the experiences of cross media actors, at the **Sunny Side of the Doc**²⁹:

²⁹ http://www.sunnysideofthedoc.com/fr/newsletter_8.php

- *Directors and writers, who are more than ever central to a project, must seek help from technology specialists. It's necessary to be daring, to construct teams with creators who come from different backgrounds, and to strengthen considerably the funds devoted to project development.*
- *It's essential for a project to have a very strong vision uniting the creative and production sides; established directors believe their role is going to evolve over the next 5 years towards that of a "multiplatform-super-artistic-director", in charge of a team of directors who specialize in each platform. To integrate this universe of content, there will also have to be a super-producer who insures a cohesive image.*
- *Even if conventional television is the central axis (since that is presently where the money can be found), it's no longer possible to adopt the editorial slant of a single partner when financing cross media programs. It's necessary to play with "coopetition" (cooperative competition).*

The platforms and the content converge, but the capabilities must also converge, crossing genres and formats. To respond to this need, different initiatives are taking place:

Launched in September 2009, **Espace Infusion** [Space infusion] connects cross-disciplinary teams, facilitates networking, provides guidance, and strategic advice. *"We involve ourselves upstream from the idea. We want to be facilitators, to support ideas. We don't get involved in the chain of rights; people who come to see us leave with knowledge"* says Veronique Marino, in charge of **Espace Infusion**.

Frank Boyd has been circling the planet for 5 years with **CrossOversLabs**, an immersion program in digital media. The purpose of the program is to inspire confidence in the cross media ecosystem. *"We want to invite more people from the industry to come together to understand the new reality, and the new potential. It's necessary to be familiar with digital culture; new platforms are not secondary to television but distinct systems from which we must derive the greatest potential. Professional development programs are absolutely essential."*

In 2010, the Toronto chapter of **DOC** (Documentary Organization of Canada) launched the program **DocSHIFT**, to encourage new creative partnerships and to help develop innovative interactive documentaries. The two-year project includes: convergence laboratories dedicated to idea generation, refinement and analysis; inspiring project presentations, networking events, and training workshops; an incubation project of 5 months that will produce interactive documentary projects and prototypes; business-focused case study research on interactive documentaries world-wide.

The **NFB** has included training in its digital strategy. **First Person Digital, Engage-toi, Newscreen, and Calling Card** are programs, which integrate workshops from seasoned production professionals to help artists, whether emerging or experienced, prepare for the multiplatform world.

New practices

It's not only the make-up of crews but also the life span of projects that is transforming, calling for innovative ways to plan productions.

Julie Duhaime, chief of services for new media at **Télé-Québec**, expresses this evolving relationship with time: *"The digital media stream implies a new given for producers; allowing the time necessary to breathe life into a project once it goes online. Very often, the producer does not plan for this phase, which continues after the development and production periods are over."*

Furthermore, the life cycle of a web project is very different from that of a one-off documentary. How should we conceptualize the new life span, and plan the promotional end of things?²⁹

Brett Gaylor was confronted with these new production demands as part of the collaborative online editing platform ([opensourcecinema](#)) for his documentary **RiP! A remix manifesto**: “During film production, the internauts played with the film extracts, and we invented a contest to encourage them to participate. But it was a lot of work. This openness to collaboration depends on the existence of a process allowing us to filter, modify, follow-up, evaluate, and respond. It’s not expensive to do, but it costs time. And time is money. But the process remains very close to the approach of the documentary filmmaker. Creating relationships, building confidence with the protagonists, enlarging the vision, etc.”

As far as the profitability of web-documentary production, Claire Leproust, director of digital development at the **Capa** agency, remains cautious: “We’re at the beginning of the story, we can’t make premature conclusions. But it’s obvious that long term, one has to find a new way to adapt to the Internet, which is a more interactive media.” For her, it’s evident that “if one wants to make web documentaries as a business, one has to standardize the narrative style.” In other words, industrialize the web documentary process by using the same software for each production in order, according to her, “to avoid being bothered with that aspect of it every time one wants to produce some interactive event on the Internet.”³⁰

With this in mind, **Klynt** software, developed by the French production company **Honkytonk**, allows its users to have significant cost advantages.

Up till this point, the non-linear editing software **Klynt** was used only internally. Constantly improved and made up to date for each new production, **Klynt** became in two years an indispensable creative tool for **Honkytonk** productions. For Arnaud Dresse, the director: “Without **Klynt**, it would be economically impossible to manage **The Challenge**, the webdocumentary by Laetitia Moreau broadcast on the website of **Canal Plus**. The software allows us to reduce by 2/3 the web development costs for each project, which represent, in general, 30% to 40% of the global budget.” With its unique editing interface, permitting the user to easily mix and match photos, videos, sound and text, **Klynt** allows webdocumentary directors to gain time by allowing them to master the contents. It also allows them to save money, since professional developers are no longer necessary at each stage of creation and editing. For **The Challenge**, for example, it was Laetitia Moreau’s editor, Alex Ramonet, who was in charge of the software.³¹

With this formatting of content, is there still room for the director’s POV? The web is rekindling a debate about the difference between the “auteur” or POV documentary and conventional fact-based films.

³⁰ The digital media component must be available to the Canadian public in a meaningful way; what is meaningful in a particular instance will case basis, but in general, in the absence of an acceptable distribution/exploitation plan to the contrary, the CMF considers that making the project available to the Canadian public for at least 3 months contemporaneously with the associated Television Component will be meaningful; Source: **CMF Performance Envelope Program Guidelines 3.2.DM.5** depend on the nature of the project and its distribution plan. The CMF will make this determination on a case by

³¹ <http://numerico.wordpress.com/2010/04/09/klynt-la-solution-pour-la-creation-sur-internet/>

2.2 FULLY-ENGAGED WEB PARTNERS

NFB

The **NFB** is fully-engaged in the production of new works which explore the potential of the varied digital platforms. In this framework, the content must respond to pre-defined themes and subjects chosen by the **NFB**.

*“After several months of research and exchange with various industry players, the interactive stream of the French program at the **NFB** is taking flight.”* says Hugues Sweeney, director of the French digital program of the **NFB**. Since June 2010, the productions in the interactive stream of the **NFB** can be found in a collection at interactif.onf.ca. *“There are interactive documentaries, animated videos, photographic, art, essays, visual treatment of data and factual content, mobile and locative media, social media with content generated by the public. New projects are constantly being developed and added.”*²⁴

On the last project submission at the **NFB**, about twenty projects for the interactive stream had been deposited. In the experimental stream of the **CMF**, the **NFB** is presenting a project submitted from the previous July 5th. Web projects, which are part of film co-productions, are also underway. The **NFB** can decide in the framework of a multiplatform co-production to support only the digital aspect.

What does it mean to co-produce interactive works with the **NFB**? Hugues Sweeney emphasizes the mutual desire to work together. *“Co-producing with the **NFB** means making common decisions on the direction, the crew, and the content. Certain services that the **NFB** can offer remain undefined. But in general, it’s a collaboration on the creative end of things.”* Projects produced and co-produced by the **NFB** must end up exclusively on the **NFB** website and the marketing team at the Board will take charge of launching them.

Hugues Sweeney confirms that in the near future, 20% of French programs will be interactive. *“We hope to put online an average of 12 projects per year. Short, medium, and long projects. We want a diversity of ideas; productions which not only last, but which feature outstanding directors.”* The projects are selected according to criteria established by the **NFB**.³³ *“Themes which feature the editorial priorities of the program, a strong directorial point of view, experimentation with interactivity. Works which are found at the meeting point of animation, and documentary, always with an eye on real life.”*

In June 2010, during the Sunny Side of the Doc 2010 at La Rochelle, Monique Simard, director of the French program and Jérôme Clément, president of **ARTE** France and vice-president of **ARTE**, came to an agreement. With a view to audiovisual cooperation, the two institutions decided to *“produce works and new media projects which further explore documentary writing; facilitate and diversify the financing of innovative and quality programs; enrich the content, themes, and quantity of regular programs; exchange and share their expertise, experience, and projects.”*³⁴

³² <http://interactif.onf.ca>

³³ <http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/eng/directing-co-producing-film/digital-projects.php>

³⁴ <http://blogue.onf.ca/2010/06/28/nouveau-partenariat-entre-lonf-et-arte/>

Some examples of current and future productions on interactif.onf.ca

[PIB](#) is a bilingual cross-Canada webdocumentary, which bears witness to the long-term effects of the economic crisis on the lives of Canadians. In total, 14 hours of original material are available, consisting of 150 short films and 100 “photographic essays”, for a total budget of 1.5 million dollars. This documentary series has recorded 235,000 hits. H  l  ne Choquette, co-director and coordinator of the work says: *“PIB is a pilot project, let’s not forget that. The narrative originality stems from the fact that we follow and post stories in real time, or almost real time. We wanted to explore this web-based approach of “Canadians observing Canadians”. Would the instantaneous element allow us to take documentary in a new direction? We wanted to see, for example, if an encouraging message from an internaut would comfort our protagonists, without affecting the outcome of the story. We wanted to measure the influence of the virtual community on people living in the four corners of the country.”*³⁵

[100 mots pour la folie](#), [100 words for insanity] is an interactive video clip produced with the independent rock group Malajube which explores current perceptions of mental illness. The internaut is invited to enter words and emotions evoking mental illness in a search engine which links these key words to film extracts from the **NFB** archives.

[La t  te de l’emploi](#) [The boss] a series of films on racism at work, [  cologie sonore](#) [Sound Ecology], a web documentary on noise pollution, [  prouvette avec David Suzuki](#), [The Test Tube with David Suzuki], the interactive documentary [Sacree montagne](#) [Sacred Mountain] which allows interactive immersion in Mount Royal Park, etc

[Ma tribu c’est ma vie](#) [My gang is my life] examines the impact of new media on interpersonal relationships by focusing on eight marginal characters, who are music fans and solidly connected to similar people by the internet and social media. The internaut must judge how much space social media occupies in his life via a chat box, which posts his commentaries on a screen; he is asked to respond to a series of questions that will determine his role in the webdocumentary. He can access everything that other internauts have written. This form of interactivity is a metaphor for a certain kind of behaviour, that of using several mediums at the same time (for example, television, internet). The director Myriam Verrault gives us her perception of the webdocumentary: *“For me, cinema takes place in a screening room and not before a computer screen. I was reticent to throw myself into a webdocumentary project for the simple reason that I had the impression that I was participating in the slow death of classic documentary, which a number of experts have been predicting since the explosion of the web. Having done it, I feel that the webdocumentary is not the normal evolution of documentary, but a totally different medium with its own codes. Because of its interactive character, the web is not just a new way to boost a broadcast, but the message itself. The documentary filmmaker does not owe his survival to the webdocumentary. On the other hand, the webdocumentary is an astonishing medium with an under-exploited potential, and the world of journalism has quickly understood this by investing in it first. It would be a pity if documentary filmmakers leave this fantastic medium to the journalists and deprive the webdocumentary of the heart of the classic documentary tradition, a point of view.”*

³⁵ <http://gdp.nfb.ca/blogue/francais/l%E2%80%99edito-pib-notre-approche-documentaire/>

The Press

Clearly webdocumentary production is seen as an important investment for newspapers which are trying to capture the attention of younger readers. Falling revenues have led to the creation and maintenance of a strong editorial identity capable of attracting a new audience.

“We are already producers of both static and animated imagery; the webdocumentary is a new way of highlighting them. The internet represents a huge expansion in information. The cost isn’t negligible, but it’s a way for Reuters to make its presence felt. The traditional models of journalism and photo-journalism are no longer the only way that young generations want to see the world.”

Explains Ayperi Karabuda Ecer, director of the Image and Graphics department at the **Reuters News Agency**³⁶. **Reuters** thus participates in a variety of projects, such as: [Bearing Witness: five years of the Iraq war](#), a webdocumentary combining photos and videos created by the agency; [Times of crisis](#), on the financial crisis with MediaStorm.

When **Le Monde.fr** produced [Le corps incarcéré](#) (June 2009), [The incarcerated body] a webdocumentary on the prisoner’s relationship with his body behind bars, the objective was the same as **Reuters**. *“The webdocumentary doesn’t really attract advertisers,”* admits Boris Razon, editor in chief of the site **LeMonde.fr**, *“but we are not thinking only about profits. The webdocumentary permits us to stand out in a very competitive information market.”*³⁷ Although it’s accompanied by ads, it’s not the number of clicks (scarcely more than those for an average article) which has enabled this project to make a 30,000 euro profit, but the fact that it won the VISA pour l’Image-RFI-France 24 award for a webdocumentary, reinforcing the innovative image of the paper.³⁸ In the case of an internal production, directed by teams of journalists from the web sector, the cost of a webdocumentary is estimated to cost between 30,000 and 60,000 euros.

With [Thinking Space](#), **The Economist** selected opinion-leaders from among their readers who were asked to describe a place that inspired them. The webdocumentary is open to bloggers, who are invited to reply to a series of questions and post their replies on the blog. To increase the visibility of the site, **The Economist** added social networking tools such as **Facebook**, which attracted 23,400 fans in November 2010.

In order to renew the content while maintaining an economically viable model, newspapers have developed a policy of buying webdocumentaries. **LeMonde.fr** paid 3,000 euros to post [Voyage au bout du charbon](#) (November 2008) [Journey to the end of coal], and [Les arbres du Kilimanjaro](#) (July 2010)[The Trees of Kilimanjaro] sold for 2500 euros.

³⁶ <http://www.la-croix.com/Webdocumentaire-le-reportage-a-l-ere-du-multimedia/article/2404502/5548>

³⁷ <http://www.rfi.fr/france/20100831-le-webdocumentaire-peine-trouver-modele-financement-viable>

³⁸ <http://numerico.wordpress.com/2010/03/03/quelle-viabilite-economique-pour-web-docu-2/>

The NGOs

Strengthened by using the new platforms to sensitize a younger audience to their missions, the NGOs were among the first to produce webdocumentaries and serious games, as well as to explore new types of writing and communication.

Online games enable NGOs to interact with millions of people at the same time, particularly the young. It's on this basis that [Games for Change](#) was created, an NGO that brings philanthropists, academics, and public figures from civil society together with the game industry, in order to explore the manner in which digital games can trigger social change.³⁹ Supported by this NGO, the Indian online learning community **ZMQ** has created simple games for mobile phones. Exploring themes with a social impact, such as HIV/AIDS and climate change, these games have been sent to 64 million people.

In Canada, [Pax Warrior](#), created by Sean Hopen and Andreas Ua'Siaghail in 2004, is a trend-setting project which has become a reference point for serious games. This game "expanding the new form of interactive documentary" targets young people from 15 to 24 years old, aiming to sensitize them to the horrors of the Rwandan genocide by having them understand from the inside the process of decision-making and of conflict-resolution. The players put themselves in the shoes of Commander Romeo Dallaire, head of the **UN Observers Mission**, which is trying to keep the peace. Produced at the **New Media Lab of the Canadian Film Center** by **23 YZee**, a Toronto company making interactive products, hundreds of user-licenses have been sold to schools around the world.⁴⁰

-[Against All Odds](#), a game designed for children from 12 to 15 years of age and produced by **UNHCR** (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), allows the players to experience being a "refugee" in 12 steps, from the experience of persecution to the request for asylum.

-[Protégeons l'eau!](#) [Let's protect water], accessible on the site [La voix des jeunes de l'Unicef](#), [**UNICEF's** Voices of Youth] is an interactive game of strategy and survival with the goal of supplying drinking water to an African village; it enables young people to learn a lot about water, the environment, and sanitation.

-With [Emergency Response Unit](#), a game created by the **Red Cross**, the players follow a simulated training and take part in virtual emergency operations on the ground

-Nicholas Kristof, columnist for the **New York Times**, is presently creating in collaboration with about 50 NGOs, an online game inspired by the success of his book [Half the Sky](#) on the oppression of women. This project will include an app for cell phones, a television broadcast, and an online documentary.

As far as the production of webdocumentaries is concerned, let's consider:

-The **International Red Cross** (IRC), the **Thomson Reuters Foundation** and **Media Storm** who together produced the webdocumentary [Surviving the Tsunami](#).

-**Doctors Without Borders** recently joined **VII Photo Agency** to explore malnutrition in [Starved for Attention](#). On the dedicated site, there's an invitation to sign a petition, a blog which follows the campaign, links to **Facebook** and **Twitter**, etc.

-In the same way, [Témoins du dedans](#) [Witnesses from within] is a webdocumentary initiated and funded by **UNICEF's** Program of Expanded Assistance to Returnees (PEAR). This program provides a portrait of the evolution of the humanitarian crisis in the republic of Congo through the eyes of 5 Congolese, aged 19 to 23 years old. Launched in May 2010, the project gained the financial support of **CNC** and the newspaper **Le Monde**, which is paying for its website for a two year period.

³⁹ <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/VVOS-89TPLL?OpenDocument>

⁴⁰ <http://www.techlearning.com/searchgsa.aspx>

2.3 THE ROLE OF THE BROADCASTERS

The **CMF** officially launched its activities on March 26, 2010. The new rules of the **CMF** make allowances for a transition period for television, one that has been underway for several years.

Supplementary rights

For several years, supplementary rights have been slipped into agreements between producers and broadcasters. The great majority of broadcasters demand exclusivity for all the digital rights. Are these rights being exploited? And what is the best way forward?

On the Web :

Broadcasters presently offer, or will offer in the near future, whole documentaries which can be viewed in their entirety free of charge exclusively on their own websites. At the moment, **Canal D** shows very few original Quebec productions on its own website **canald.tv**, broadcasting mainly foreign films. But once the **CMF** finances the purchase of the digital rights of future productions, the latter will have a new life online. **Canal D** will offer more documentaries on the web.

It's the same situation at **Radio-Canada** where documentaries have not been available for webcast, but are beginning to be shown on **tou.tv**. The fact that the audience loves documentary will inevitably lead to more choice on **tou.tv**. In an interview given to the **Rue Frontenac** journal in October 2010, Geneviève Rossier, director of the Internet and Digital services for **Radio-Canada**, and Jérôme Hellio, director of Internet content and digital services, recognize that the **tou.tv** model "*is not profitable for the time being*", but they state that the series available on this platform have not undermined the first tv broadcasts. "*I don't think that there was any cannibalization of the viewers. The platforms work well together.*" says M. Hellio.⁴¹

At **Télé-Québec**, all the new documentaries (whether one-offs or series) will be available online in their entirety immediately following their television broadcast, continuing until the end of the season, or for a period of 3 months. Each tv broadcast is the springboard for a new webcast. Finally, in terms of the documentary offerings on the **TV5** website, online videos will be emphasized in the months to come.

Mobile Phones :

The broadcasters demand mobile and wireless phone rights almost automatically, but they don't have any concrete strategies to exploit them. What's more, the definition of mobile and wireless distribution stipulates that "*the Television Component is made available to the Canadian public on a mobile or wireless device by a mobile/wireless service provider, including on a live, scheduled, or on-demand basis. More precisely, this refers to content made available directly by a mobile/wireless service provider; it does not include content made available via the Internet, whether or not that content is viewed on a mobile/wireless device.*"⁴²

On November 8, 2010, **Bell** announced the conclusion of a partnership with **Radio-Canada** to webcast French content on the smart phones of **Bell Mobility**, the on-demand service of **Bell Tele Fibe** and the portal **sympatico.ca**. "*The clients of **Bell Mobility** and of the on-demand service of **Bell Tele Fibe**, as well as some 2 million individual visitors per month on the French side of **sympatico.ca**, will have access to more than 250 hours of programming, including series,*

⁴¹ <http://ruefrontenac.com/spectacles/tv/29135-toutv>

⁴² CMF – Performance Envelope Program Guidelines 2010-2011.

documentaries, and public affairs shows. The content is accessible on **tou.tv**, the on-demand video service of **Radio-Canada's** website. Visitors to the site **sympatico.ca** and the clients of **Bell Tele Fibe** can access this content free of charge."⁴³

Jacinthe Brisebois, director of programming at **ARTV**, alluded to this type of agreement during the last broadcasters' round table at **Doc Circuit** in November 2010. "*The cable providers required us to sign an agreement with them. They demanded these rights to defray their own costs. So, there are now broadcasting rights on different web and mobile phone platforms, but the programming is available only to the broadcaster's subscribers. It's part of the license fee, with no supplementary revenue for producers because there isn't any specific income connected to a particular broadcasting medium.*"

All these new digital rights are included in the license. It's important to note that the acquisition of supplementary rights does not imply extra revenue for producers. What's more, when these rights are not exploited, it considerably reduces the capacity of the producer (as well as the creators) to exploit the full potential of the project in Canada and internationally, and to access the potential financial returns of commercialization.

As far as **digital content** is concerned, the broadcasters demand that all the content be housed exclusively on their sites, for at least one year, in line with the demands of the **CMF**. But it's still too soon to define norms in terms of archival material, the return of content to producers, and the possibility of non-exclusivity when there is more than one broadcaster, etc.

In the [Report 3 – Emerging and Digital Media: Opportunities and Challenges](#) (adopted by Committee June 15, 2010; presented to the Chamber June 17, 2010), several participants emphasized the question of broadcast rights. Maureen Parker of the **Writers Guild of Canada** argued that a national strategy on digital material must trigger commercial conditions, which will permit "*creators to access their fair share of the revenue flowing from their work.*" She explained that "*Broadcasters demand more rights from producers, without any increase in the license fee. For example, if a broadcaster exploits a television program by permitting users to download it on iTunes, most of the time the broadcaster keeps the resulting revenue, with no money going to the producer. We believe that an agreement must be made between producers and broadcasters about this, because in the absence of such an accord, the broadcaster is the only party to profit from the new usage. We want to be assured, in collaboration with independent producers, that part of this revenue goes to the creators.*"

A more detailed breakdown:

Astral

Jean-Pierre Laurendeau estimates that with the obligation to finance the digital component, **Canal D** will in 2010-2011 license about 10 fewer hours of documentary. From his viewpoint, web projects are not all necessary. "*If a project is attractive for the web, **Canal D** will go there. But this doesn't apply to all projects, especially one-off documentaries, because their life-spans are tied to television promotion and so are quite limited.*" This vision is shared by Sylvie de Bellefeuille, director of original programming. "*We prefer our producing partners to suggest content for **canald.com** rather than spending our precious few dollars on the creation of exclusive websites.*" For Jean-Pierre Laurendeau, television is guaranteed both a future and an audience, "*but practices are changing and evolving very rapidly. We have to adjust.*"

⁴³ Press release, BCE. <http://www.bce.ca/fr/news/releases/bev/2010/11/08/76751.html>

To summarize:

- **Canal D** finances up to 50% of the digital media component
- Budgets for the digital media streams are around \$40,000 per project (total budget)
- The digital content is located exclusively at **canald.com** for a minimum of one year
- **Canal D** holds all digital rights exclusively (mobiles, on demand, etc)
- Television productions can be found on **canald.com** for 30 days following broadcast.

Radio-Canada

For George Amar, co-coordinating director, Grands reportages et Documentaires [Major news stories and documentaries]: *“The real battle is for money, for financing. More players have to be fed, so it’s obvious we have to share the pie. But we need a bigger pie. It is still too soon to point out, but there will be fewer hours of television product.”* **Radio-Canada** will adjust its strategies with the new rules of the **CMF** for 2011-2012.

To summarize:

- **RC** is funding up to 50% of the digital media stream
- The budget for the digital media content is about \$30,000 per project (total budget)
- The content for the digital component is held exclusively by **radio-canada.ca** for a minimum of one year
- **Radio-Canada** holds all the digital rights in exclusivity (mobiles, on-demand, etc.)
- Certain documentaries will be available in their entirety for screening on **tou.tv**

Artv

Jacinthe Brisebois, director of programming, expressed her concerns during the broadcasters’ round table at **Doc Circuit** in November 2010: *“It’s rather problematic for us because we don’t have very big budgets. So how are we going to develop websites on a particular subject? We are waiting to see what will happen, how things evolve. But clearly, it’s more complicated for us to develop websites for one-off documentaries, unless it’s a subject that is totally appropriate.”*

To summarize:

- **Artv** can finance up to 50% of the digital media component.
- The budget for an associated digital media stream is about \$20,000 – \$30,000 (total budget)
- **Artv** has concentrated its efforts in developing enhanced digital material for series.
- The digital content is not located on **artv.ca**
- No program will be broadcast in its entirety on **artv.ca**
- **Artv** holds some digital rights.

Télé-Québec

Micheline Pépin, director of programming, recalls that the one-off documentary demands more flexibility at the level of process. *“Our problem is that we have difficulty in paying for the multiplatform license”,* and as far as the one-off is concerned, *“The requirement of enhanced content must be accommodated as much in development as in production. All the players would win if web material were produced only when it was needed.”*⁴⁴ *Maintaining the on-demand platform, however, is an excellent means of attracting an audience to a one-off.”* Julie Duhaime, head of new media services at **Télé-Québec** continues: *“Our data over the past few years indicates that the web does not function indiscriminately for all types of programs. It’s vital to target web productions based on the type of project and the audience. In the case of the one-off documentary, the content doesn’t always lend itself to the web, far from it. Finally the creation of enhanced content for a one-off demands an investment of both money and resources that is much too substantial for an hour of television. You can’t expect durability in this case because once the broadcast is over, the site is no longer busy and the resources aren’t there to maintain and update it.”*

⁴⁴ This request, also made to the CMF by the Documentary Network, was taken into account in the 2011-2012 guidelines published on December 20th 2010

To summarize:

- **Télé-Québec** can finance up to 50% of the digital media stream. Depending on the series, on a case-by-case basis, the percentage of investment in the project can vary. When it's a question of a large project that will attract funding from the **Bell Fund** and **Quebecor**, the investment will run from 10 – 15%.
- Projects must be located on the **Télé-Québec** site; digital media projects must subscribe to the rules and policies of **TQ.tv**, and enhance **TQ.tv**.
- **TQ** holds the digital rights for a period of 5 years. Special agreements can be concluded with producers to close a site sooner, or to prolong it, as needed.
- **TQ** generally holds all the digital rights in exclusivity unless a partner's status or financial contribution justifies sharing the rights. The exclusivity applies for the duration of the rights, and varies if these are shared.
- **TQ** is evaluating the pertinence and feasibility of increasing their offerings on the mobile platforms. If that takes place, documentary will be included.

TV5

Benoît Beaudoin, head of Interactivity at **TV5**, is convinced that there are advantages to the convergent stream. *“Social networks can extend the link with an audience, and open a dialogue with communities, which is very relevant for documentaries. Furthermore, these new platforms bring a certain generation to television; while television is still the motor, the audience is clearly being directed to television by the web.”* But Pierre Gang, director of programming, is more restrained: *“the TV5 envelope has diminished in 2010-2011 and it's the one-off documentary which is losing ground.”*

To summarize:

- Websites are located at **tv5.ca** exclusively.
- Depending on the series, the percentage of investment can vary on a case-by-case basis. From 10% to 15% when it's a question of large projects that could attract funding from the **Bell Fund** and **Quebecor**. **TV5** can put in up to 30% of the financing for the digital media stream.
- **TV5** holds all digital rights exclusively.
- The productions are offered on **tv5.ca** after broadcast.

At **TFO**, the directors are now in a period of reflection on the orientation the channel will take in terms of documentaries and all web/tv programming. During the round table of broadcasters at **Doc Circuit**, Claude Sauvé, programming director for **TFO**, announced his channel's approach to the digital platforms. *“For us, it's a question of financing; the obligation to produce multiplatform material has reduced our envelope and our license fees, since there is no supplementary money. We will be able to calculate the impact at the end of the year, but clearly fewer productions will be made this year in order to pay for the web component. But we believe in it, we think it's essential. I agree with many people who say that, even for the documentary, the digital platforms are not a threat, but another opportunity, and we want to make our mark there. I can assure you that TFO will play an important role in the coming years on these digital platforms.”*

Documentary

Heather Marshall, Director, Business, Rights, and Content Management, News, Documentary Unit and Factual Entertainment, at **CBC** has remarked on the difficulty she encountered at the time of the first submissions. *“The cutoff dates for different funding organizations are not harmonized, which can harm certain projects.”* Bruce Cowley, Creative Head, digital channels at **CBC**, insists on the necessity of adapting to new consumer appetites. *“People want to understand what is happening around them and in the larger world. They have a strong need to see documentaries, which is reassuring, but they want to see them in a new way, whenever they want, in the format of their choice, etc. The documentary is still a genre for television and the big screen. A genre that connects with the public. But the audience is changing, and we must change also.”*

To summarize:

- **Documentary** holds all the digital rights except those for mobile and wireless platforms.
- Certain productions will be available for continuous screening on the site **cbc.ca** for several months.
- For the moment, the size of the channel's investment in the financial structure for digital material has not been limited, and projects are evaluated on a case-by-case scenario.

CBC

At **CBC**, Michael Claydon explains that the federal institution does not see the relevance of enhanced digital material for every one-off documentary. *"In fact, we feel the same stress, especially for the one-off. There's not much sense in spending money which would be better spent in the film production process, not only from our point of view, but also from yours. We've discussed this a lot, and, correct me if I'm wrong, it's an opinion shared by producers. They don't want to be obliged to spend money because it's expensive to do this kind of work, especially for the one-off."* But as Annette Bradford, in charge of the web strategy for the documentary film unit at **CBC** in Toronto, expresses, *"That doesn't mean doing nothing for our productions."* **CBC** has developed an internal strategy using social networks, etc.

To summarize:

- **CBC** holds all digital rights for Canada only.
- The size of their investment in digital material in a project's financial structure is not limited; projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- The documentary section of the website **cbc.ca** will be updated as of December 2010
- The site **cbc.ca** will have new capacities in terms of sharing, connecting to social networks, blogs, etc

At **Bravo**, a chain belonging to **CTV** and recently purchased by **Bell Canada**, the message is clear. Charlotte Engel, executive producer of documentaries and alternative programming, sums up the new position: *"Everything must be multiplatform, we demand all rights, VOD, mobile, whichever screen is available. We insist on all rights, exclusively, and at all levels."*

At **Vision TV**, Joan Jenkinson, independent production director, explains the preoccupations of the chain: *"We are doing everything we can for digital media. It's very expensive for us, because we don't have much financial margin in which to maneuver, but we are trying to contribute a maximum of \$15,000 to \$20,000 for the digital component. We have developed a relationship with a digital producer who has created a platform that has enhanced components that satisfy the demands of the **CMF**. In this way, producers can concentrate on creating original content for this platform and have only to post it online. We are experimenting with this system, and it's a way for us to stay in the game."* She adds, *"From our point of view as a small independent broadcaster, we definitely don't want to see the demand for digital material reach 100%, because that will be much too expensive and it's not necessary for certain projects like one-off documentaries. We are going to fight for it to be less than 50% because again, there is no economic model. We must draw money from the budgets of television programs, which normally generate revenues; during this period of transition when there is no money to be made, it's a difficult argument to insist on this type of investment."*

The impact of the Bell Fund

Since 1997, the **Bell Fund** has contributed financially to the production of new media projects associated with television programs. In 2009, the **Bell Fund** granted almost 12 million dollars to more than one hundred projects, money which helped produce 68 new media projects and associated television programs, as well as funding 16 projects in development.⁴⁴ At the end of the

⁴⁴ Annual Report extract 2009

first year of the new **CMF** rules, the **Bell Fund** began to feel the impact. The volume of demands remained about the same, but the number of documentary projects increased considerably, particularly in terms of one-offs. For Claire Dion, deputy general director at the **Bell Fund** *“It’s still too soon to really draw any conclusions.”*

Among the 28 projects funded in June 2010 by the Bell Fund:

- 2 one-off documentaries and their digital media component: Super Bodies and Storming Juno.
- 5 documentary series: Ice Pilots Season II, J’ai la memoire qui tourne, saison 2 [My memory is on a roll, season 2], Museum Secrets, Le Quebec en 12 lieux II [Quebec in 12 places II], Le Sexe autour du monde [Sex around the world].
- in development are 2 documentary projects, Alpee des etoiles [Alpee of the stars], Exil [Exile].

Among the 21 projects funded in October 2010:

- 3 one-off documentaries and their new media stream; Alpee des etoiles [Alpee of the stars], Semisweet: The Other Side of Chocolate, Yoga, the film.
- 3 documentary series: Battle Castle (6 x 60’), Young Street (3 x 60’), Voyages au bout de la nuit [Travels to the end of night] (13 x 52’)
- 7 out of 10 projects in development are documentaries.

And tomorrow?

Will we see in Canada the birth of niche online portals based on the genre and editorial approach of the broadcaster? Portals which could respond to the ongoing demand for documentary content? Will it be possible to see documentaries created and distributed solely for the websites of individual broadcasters?

At **Radio-Canada**, George Amar says: *“It’s something achievable in the near future. It’s on the table, we’re discussing it, but no concrete steps have been taken.”*

For its part, **TV5** launched in 2009 the **TV5 Fund** for digital creation. The **Fund** addresses Canadian creators who are branching out into video and new technologies. The priority projects are series in fiction and documentary, which consist of 5 episodes lasting from 1 to 5 minutes, exploring a certain theme. The **TV5 Fund** is endowed with a \$100,000 cash envelope (which can go directly into production), as well as \$100,000 for services, launching, and marketing. The winning productions for the 2010 edition join the 8 projects already produced in 2009, which already have attracted 75,000 hits on **fonds.tv5.ca**. Short works produced are delivered in HD format and a few have been broadcast on **TV5**.

For the moment, the funding opportunities for webdocumentary production are not numerous, and there is fierce competition to access them. The Experimental Fund of the **CMF** supports the creation of digital content and Canadian interactive software applications at the point of innovation. A project must demonstrate that it has innovative potential in terms of the content, the technology, and the business model in order to be admissible. The Experimental Fund distributed, in its first year, an envelope of 27 million dollars.

On the first submission date of July 5, 2010, the demands added up to well over 16.2 million dollars for the financial cycle. In fact, more than 250 applicants requested around 90 million dollars in support of 120 projects in production, 112 projects in development, and 21 projects in marketing. The winning projects in production for the first round included 12 games, 5 websites, 3 mobile applications, 3 interactive web series, and 4 software applications.

In the UK, **Channel4learning** has for several years experimented with a very original approach. Mark Greenspan, vice-president of digital media at **Achilles Media** enthuses about the excellence of the convergent programming at **Channel 4**. “*They are the only broadcasters I know who distribute licenses for the documentary game format.*”

In 2008, the chain developed a new strategy to attract a loyal audience of young people 14-19 years of age to the program **Battlefront**. The story revolves around 20 youngsters who launch a campaign to sensitize the public about a theme important to them: civic responsibility, organ donation, the minimum wage, combating knife crimes, etc. In its first phase, the project included a documentary series for television, a website, and a strong presence on social networking sites like **Bebo**, which is very popular with British youth. The project existed not only virtually, but in real life. All the young people were brought to London at the end of March 2009 to shoot the last television episode. They shared their experiences, and met for the first time the mentors, tutors, and experts who had assisted them. Young Holly Shaw was responsible for 4000 new organ donor signatures with a campaign called **The Gift of Life**. The first phase of the project ended in May 2009. The documentaries were broadcast in November 2009, and the series won an Emmy at the **Digital International Emmy Awards**.

In summer 2010, the second season of the project was launched with new young people, a television broadcast and even more opportunities to contact youth on the web and provide them with greater resources for their own campaigns. The second season will make more use of social networks like **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **YouTube**. **Channel 4** has set up an online contest which will select a finalist. With a daily webcast, interactive games, and contests, the second season promises to be as addictive as the first. It will last until March 2011, and will be the subject of a one-hour documentary. The second version of the project is once again produced by **Raw Television** and the **Airlock Agency**.

PBS, **BBC**, and **Canal Plus** are also proposing portals on the web that accompany their televised and web content.

France Televisions, via **France 5**, has opened a new portal called **Documentaries**: “*This space makes it possible to explore every form of the genre; entire films, extracts and bonus material, interactive animations, webdocumentaries, digital files, articles, and participatory sites.*” With **Portraits d’un nouveau monde** [Portraits of a new world] (February 2010), the public channel’s stated objective is to “*offer quality documentaries with a directorial point-of-view, created for the new media*”: 24 webdocumentaries, constructed around six themes, reflecting the issues of the 21st century (costing about 400,000 euros).

After two years of experimentation, the French-German cultural channel **ARTE** launched a dedicated platform for webdocumentaries (webdoc.arte.tv) in February 2010. Among other programs, the portal includes **Gaza/Sderot**, **Havana-Miami**, **Afrique: 50 ans d’indépendance**, [Africa; 50 years of independence], **Prison Valley**, **New York Minute**, etc. Joel Ronez, in charge of the portal for **ARTE** France, provides statistics that indicate the chain’s intentions: “*Realistic budgets are reserved for webdocumentaries. In 2010, the ARTE contribution to these programs will be 350,000 euros (it was only 80,000 euros in 2008); we’re investing an average of 20,000 to 80,000 euros per project. The cost of a webdocumentary generally varies from 100,000 to 250,000 euros, and up to 420,000 euros for “Havana-Miami”, which includes a 52 minute version destined for television.*”⁴⁵ In 2011, the internaut will be able to find one new production per week on this website.

⁴⁵<http://www.7sur7.be/7s7/fr/4134/Internet/article/detail/1069933/2010/02/19/Arte-se-tourne-vers-le-webdocumentaire.dhtml>

It's important to emphasize that in France, it's largely public finances and the crucial participation of the **Centre National du Cinema et de l'image animée CNC** [National Film Center] that have supported this new undertaking and provided space for the webdocumentary.

A law passed in 2007 allowed consolidation of the structure by obliging the internet service providers to contribute to the financing of the CNC reserve account, based on the following principal; half of their triple-play turnover is subject to a 4.5% tax. But the CNC would like to go even further by "directing the reserve account receipts to the digital world"⁴⁶.

Since December 2007, the fund to aid the creation of new media at the **CNC** has supported "150 cross media or purely web projects (animation, fiction, and documentary), for a total investment of about 5 million euros. The rate of selection indicates that one out of three projects is approved. The **CNC** can help finance the writing and the development of cross media projects, up to a maximum of 50,000 euros, to help one or several creators, or a production house; the writing and development of a project solely for the web and/or mobile platforms (a webdocumentary, for example), up to a maximum of 20,000 euros, to help one or several creators, or a production house; and finally the **CNC** can help finance the production of content for the web and/or mobile platforms, up to a maximum of 100,000 euros, benefiting a single production house. The latter must come with a minimum cash contribution or web/mobile services capable of webcasting the project." And Guillaume Blanchot, director of the multi-media section of the **CNC** continues: "Unlike conventional documentaries, most webdocumentaries enjoy very little pre-financing, with the notable exception of those funded by the **CNC**."⁴⁷

In fact, documentaries destined for the new platforms are totally dependent on the public financing amassed in support of broadcasters.

⁴⁶ <http://www.sacd.fr/Rencontre-avec-Veronique-Cayla-presidente-du-CNC-et-de-l-image-animee.1593.0.html>

⁴⁷ <http://petitespacej.toile-libre.org/?p=200>

II. THE NEW WORLD OF DISTRIBUTION

1. Distribution 2.0 according to Peter Broderick

[Peter Broderick](#) is president of Paradigm Consulting, which specializes in digital distribution and acts as an information hub and content aggregator. He has partnered with more than 900 independent filmmakers to design state-of-the-art distribution models that have left a lasting mark on the independent sector. His presentations at IDFA, Sundance, TIFF, Cannes and other festivals draw enthusiastic crowds.

As he himself points out, however, there is no navigation guide to this new distribution world: what's needed is the sharing of experience.

1.1 DIY AND THE END OF THE MIDDLEMAN

Peter Broderick's core argument is that the arrival of digital formats has given independent filmmakers the means to be completely independent, in distribution as well as production terms. And there is every reason to take charge of one's own distribution.

His 2008 report "Welcome to the New World of Distribution"⁴⁸ set a cat among the pigeons. The "Old World" is not dead, but in Broderick's view it is fraught with difficulties: broadcasters have less and less money (licensing fees are dropping) and some cling to old ways of doing things that no longer respond to changes in audience consumer culture.

Peter Broderick's DIY could be summarized as directors (or producers) assuming the various aspects of distribution of their films. That theory is supported by Canadian distributor Jan Rofekamp, founding president of [Films Transit](#): "Seriously, in the digital world, the middleman does what exactly? Generates what? The practice of VOD (micro-payments) via an intermediary is almost criminal. We know that operating and distribution costs and expenditures are no longer the same, so what does that intermediary do?"

But nor is Broderick an apologist for extremist positions; every film evolves its own individual distribution strategy.

Some producers will prefer to assign all rights to a single distributor whom they trust. Others will get involved in genuinely independent distribution. And some will choose [hybrid distribution](#), which "combines direct sales by filmmakers with third-party distribution (e.g. DVD distributors, TV channels, VOD companies, educational distributors)"⁴⁹

⁴⁸ <http://www.peterbroderick.com/>

⁴⁹ Peter Broderick, [Indiewire](#), 21 September 2009.

http://www.indiewire.com/article/declaration_of_independence_the_ten_principles_of_hybrid_distribution/P0/

In Canada, hybrid distribution experiments, such as those with [RIP! A Remix Manifesto](#) by Brett Gaylor, produced by EyeSteelFilm, and [Earth Keepers](#) directed by Sylvie Van Brabant at [Rapide-Blanc](#), are just two examples of the increasing interest in this new distribution world.

Hybrid distribution case studies

RIP! A Remix Manifesto

RIP! A Remix Manifesto is a special case in terms of both production and distribution. The topic of the film—the role of copyright in the digital age—lent itself well to the format.

In 2008, the film began its career at the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma in Montreal. EyeSteelFilm, the production company, had obtained distributor status with SODEC and wanted to experiment with a hybrid approach to distribution, i.e., traditional distribution (at festivals, in theatres, on television, and then to DVD) along with online distribution (using social networks, streaming, VOD, and DVD sales). Filmmaker Brett Gaylor did not think Internet users were ready to watch the entire film online. His online strategy, therefore, was to first offer audiences a chapter of the film on social networks. He offered them a novel experience: they could manipulate the content, remix certain parts of the film, share sequences, and so on. For the TV market, EyeSteelFilm's position was clear from the outset: despite a topic that might be limited to niche distribution online, they did not want to cut themselves out of the television broadcast market. "TV is still the main screen to attract a big audience. Don't make your work hard to get," Brett Gaylor explains.

For Gaylor, distribution start-up turned out to be rough. "We had to negotiate with sub-distributors, TV, the NFB... we were really involved in the distribution. And maybe I was the only one happy at the end of the day! Everybody learns in this adventure: how to find new collaborative ways of working, how to divide rights with all the sub-distributors, how to deal with so many partners, how to make a business deal work..."

The film would go on to enjoy enormous success on the festival circuit (IDFA, Hot Docs, FNC, CPH:DOX, Sheffield, SXSW, SilverDocs...) before being sold to more than twenty broadcasters. It also enjoyed excellent DVD sales (available in Canada, the U.S.A. and the U.K. on Amazon and through the NFB; and via iTunes in the U.S.A.) and performed very well in the educational market. Eventually, it was picked up by Internet distributors (Pitchfork.tv, BoingBoing.tv, Hulu.com, nfb.ca), just as a parallel economy (sharing, no-fees, collaborative) was growing up around the film, with no regard for the rights of EyeSteelFilm or the NFB. In Japan, Internet users spontaneously translated the film for community screenings, just as the film was being sold to the NHK television network.

"All of this is very good for me as a filmmaker; the film is being seen and bringing in revenues. The film had success in the marketplace, of which I am proud," says Brett Gaylor. The film is now available free of charge on the NFB website, in HD.

Earth Keepers

The most recent feature from filmmaker-producer Sylvie Van Brabant saw the light after four years in production. The NFB as coproducer holds the institutional and world television rights; Les Productions du Rapide-Blanc kept the rights to direct-to-consumer sales and distribution in theatres.

Becoming involved in distribution made a certain kind of sense to Sylvie Van Brabant and the team at Les Productions du Rapide-Blanc. "We often end up doing distribution since we have to deal with distributors. But too often we don't see much in the way of results, or cash. So why not take control of our rights to use all the way along?"

Les Productions du Rapide-Blanc obtained distributor status with the help of SODEC and Telefilm for the film's theatrical release. After its premiere at Montreal's Festival du Nouveau Cinéma in October 2009, the film went on to other festivals (Planet in Focus, IDFA...). In Denmark, it screened at the Copenhagen summit on climate change, which created a positive buzz. In early December, after the festival season, the film had its theatrical release at Montreal's Cinéma Beaubien for a two-week run. "It wasn't the best timing," says Sylvie Van Brabant. Just before Christmas, snow... but audiences liked it and we had a good theatrical run. The film got around in the regions, Quebec City, Rimouski, Sherbrooke; it was also included in the NFB's regional tour schedule and that of the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois outside Quebec."

This was a new experience for Les Productions du Rapide-Blanc, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2009. "Our first experience was with *Seule dans mon putain d'univers* (1997), but we re-learned as we went. And it's no picnic. It's a huge amount of work and one person on the team spent all their time on it. The good part was that we compiled a huge list of names and email addresses for the next films, of audiences interested in the films we make," recalls Sylvie Van Brabant.

In terms of parallel screenings, the film is very much in demand, with one or two screenings a month around Quebec. Whenever possible, the filmmaker or someone else from the team is there to introduce it. People have come together around *Earth Keepers* on the Internet and social networks. The DVD was released in September 2010, and since then, a videoclip has been posted on the film's website each week reflecting the discussion and stimulating dialogue with viewers.

1.2 THE LIMITATIONS OF *DIY*

Still, the Do It Yourself approach advocated by Peter Broderick is not to everyone's liking.

Profit margins tied to market size

Peter Broderick has been faulted for proposing a model better suited to the American than to the smaller Canadian market. Direct distribution, and the sale of DVDs from the producer's website, can bring in serious revenue on condition that they reach a significant number of consumers.

TV broadcasters hold the key

For Jan Rofekamp, it is clear that the only way to make money with distribution is still in the television market, even allowing for lower licensing fees in recent years, which he attributes to a range of causes including the financial crisis, documentary program scheduling, the explosion of new channels, and audience fragmentation. In addition, some broadcasters are proposing a hybrid distribution model. If that happens, Rofekamp recommends, "Dive in, experiment, create new models, establish a more direct relationship with viewers."

The issue of rights and the multiplication of contracts for use

Rémy Khouzam, a lawyer with Lussier & Khouzam, points out that multiple platforms bring a multitude of contracts for use. Producers should know how distributors plan to use their film on each platform so they do not miss out on opportunities. "You have to plan for the long term and split up the exploitable rights." That view is shared by Jan Rofekamp: "The area of digital rights is complicated, negotiations are tough, some definitions are vague, and too many players are taking too many rights and, unfortunately, not using them." He is clear: "I advise producers and filmmakers to undertake these steps themselves. The latter need to get their rights back. Keep your rights. Don't be too quick to give them away."

New skill sets and additional workloads for filmmakers and producers

When the documentary subject allows, direct sales can move beyond local markets into international markets. But that calls for a significant investment in promotions and an increased workload for filmmakers and producers. Many of them are interested in experimenting with new distribution models, but their operational structures are not ready; they don't have enough staff, they need to acquire new expertise, and they lack financial resources. The use of the Internet and social networks sweeps the old distribution models away without generating significant revenues. The response to the problem may lie, as Jan Rofekamp advocates, in the return to filmmaker/producer cooperatives, consolidating their strengths, creating a new work dynamic, joining with new sources of expertise (social network organizers), and positioning distribution both ahead of and at the heart of their film projects.

The primordial role of search engines: Being seen

It is no longer enough simply to be listed in an online catalogue; you still *have to be found* within the explosion of documentaries on offer. This is where filmmakers and producers have to push to make sure their documentaries are displayed by search engines, content aggregators, and social networks. Nikki Nime, who works with [Power to the Pixel](#) and who is finishing a doctorate on distribution in the Media Studies Program at Royal Holloway University, London, told Peter Wintonick in an essay to be published in [New Platforms for DocMedia] *Nouvelles plateformes pour les DocMedia*⁵⁰ that “Discovery will be the key to sustainability, so the search engine’s collaborative filtering and recommendation systems will efficiently connect users with projects that match their interests and preferences.

The long tail effect under scrutiny

The other major component considered in theories about the new distribution is the “long tail effect” as defined by theoretician Chris Anderson²⁵: the mass market, dominated by the Top 50, best sellers and blockbusters, is mutating towards a “mass of niches”.

It is an optimistic theory, but one that does not hold up in the face of reality. As Daniel Kaplan points out in his article “Webéconomie, que faire de la longue traîne?”⁵¹ (The web economy: what to do about the long tail?): “On the one hand, the diversity of product on offer does not necessarily translate into diversity of consumption. In particular, the recommendation effect that is the basis of Anderson’s analysis—that each Internet user recommends what he or she likes to other users—does not automatically result in diversification of choice. Further, the long-tail effect is of little benefit to artists or editors: the potential increase in sales generally will not cover even the costs of going digital or being displayed by online platforms. The only beneficiaries would seem to be the digital distribution platforms and the aggregators, who will offer, for example, a subscription to catalogue compilations of exclusively held hits (to create demand) and an ample selection of less well known titles (to enhance the volume effect and differentiate themselves from what competitors are offering). But these aggregators do not finance the release of new titles; they are content to reap the benefits. In which case the long tail has no reason to add value to cultural diversity or the dynamism of creative work.”

⁵⁰ Upcoming book on the new documentary to be published by the **British Film Institute**, edited by Brian Winston.

⁵¹ “The Long Tail”, *Wired*, October 2004. http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html?pg=1&topic_set

2. Marketing festivals online

Festivals are an extremely helpful jumping-off point for distribution: the films are seen and reviewed in the press and may receive awards.

Film festivals have also joined the digital age, and changes in how selection and marketing are done are just beginning. Most festivals offer high-end professional presentations as a way to bring creative people from different backgrounds together and to support the development of cross-platform approaches. Some encourage the production of web content. *The International Documentary Challenge*, part of Toronto's [Hot Docs](#) program, is a competition where entrants make a web-based documentary over a period of 5 days. The winning films are screened at Hot Docs and then sent on a Canadian tour and released in DVD format. [SnagFilms](#) has acquired several of these documentaries for its video-on-demand platform.

Webdocs have made huge strides at festivals. They are taking awards at festivals devoted to multimedia content, such as the Festival Européen des 4 écrans. But they are also making headway at more traditional festivals, such as the Festival Visa pour l'Image, and winning mainstream awards at the Prix Europa and the Emmy Awards.

2.1 DEMATERIALIZATION OF THEIR MARKET

The marketplace at the [Hot Docs](#) festival with [DocShop Online](#) gives industry professionals full access to films that the Festival considers to be “the best of documentary”. At [IDFA](#) in Amsterdam, [Docs for Sale](#) gives producers the chance to put their films online so that they can be viewed while still password protected. Buyers and sellers can then network and reach agreements. But these supplementary submissions are expensive. Given the number of festivals out there, they can add up. Jan Rofekamp of [Films Transit](#) is not at all convinced of the value of online marketplaces. “They are expensive and I’m not sure it’s worth it for now.”

2.2 A YEAR-ROUND ONLINE PRESENCE

The [Hot Docs Doc Library](#) offers hundreds of Canadian documentaries free of charge. Internet users are invited to support the filmmakers by visiting their websites and buying their DVDs. This project was made possible thanks to support from the Department of Canadian Heritage Canadian Culture Online Strategy.

[Doc Alliance](#) is a platform for the distribution of documentary and experimental films. The Doc Alliance Association came out of a partnership among five major European documentary film festivals: [CPH:DOX Copenhagen](#), [DOK Leipzig](#), [MFDF Jihlava](#), [Planete Doc Review Warsaw](#) and [Vision du Réel](#) in Nyon. Its goal is to promote auteur documentary in the institutional market and to support its distribution via festival markets and the online platform. Doc Alliance offers permanent access to 250 documentaries selected by its five partner festivals. Besides contemporary films, the portal offers archival films and major documentaries from the past. Twenty new films are added each month, which may be viewed for a modest fee (1 to 5 €) via streaming or download. Royalties are shared with 60% going to rights holders and 40% to Doc Alliance, with no distribution fees. The distribution contracts are non-exclusive, and the platform asks only for VOD rights.

[FilmFestivals.com](#) (a subsidiary of Editions M21) advertises itself as the number one portal for festivals and information on films. Its blog [fest21.com](#) houses more than 1,000 blogs (increasing by 25% per month) along with videoblogs from major festivals and filmmakers interested in the festival circuit.

3. New Tools support distribution

Whether for association screenings or direct DVD sales from a dedicated site or post-screening, this complementary distribution mode can be a not insignificant source of revenue and a way of increasing the buzz around a film. Soviet filmmakers in the early 1920s were already showing their films in villages, in the same way that the NFB's travelling projectionists did in the 1940s and 50s. The phenomenon is not new, but with the Internet it has taken on another dimension and parallel distribution has new tools available to it. Today, new platforms are being created to facilitate parallel distribution of films that are accessible anytime and anywhere.

3.1 Groupon, A GARANTEE FOR THEATRE OWNER-OPERATORS

Groupon, a contraction of Groupe and Coupon, sets the standard for promotional sale of services. It is a platform offering a local deal, every day, mainly in the United States and Canada. Groupon operates on a group-purchasing basis, i.e., the offer is good only if a sufficient number of people buy in. Using Groupon has meant that filmmakers and producers can establish a direct relationship with theatre owner-operators and guarantee them a minimum number of ticket sales.

The directors of the American documentary *Ready, Set, Bag!*, Alex D. da Silva and Justine Jacob, used social media in an innovative way to promote their film in the theatrical market using **Groupon**.

They contacted theatre owners directly to try to sell the film but with an incentive, promising that \$1 of every ticket sold would go to a local food bank. All the local theatres who accepted to show the film accepted the arrangement. To broaden the distribution network, the team also used Twitter, Facebook and a YouTube channel to find new people to take the idea to theatres outside Montreal.⁵²

3.2 INDIE SCREENINGS : SHARING THE PROFITS

The U.K. production company **SpannerFilms** developed the web platform **Indie Screenings** in May 2009 for the Frannie Armstrong documentary *Age of Stupid* to generate direct-to-viewer distribution using an innovative model. The strength of the Indie Screenings system is that it lets anyone organize screenings and enjoy the profits ("Hire a film, show it, keep the cash!"). Their catalogue lists about a dozen films. Designed as both a complement to traditional distribution and a hybrid strategy, the platform is accessible only in countries where the film rights have not been acquired by a mainstream distributor.

By August 2010, *Age of Stupid* had screened 1463 times in 63 theatres, generating more than £110,000 for its producers and several thousand pounds for screening organizers.⁵³ The platform gives them all the tools necessary to the film's promotion.

⁵² <http://mashable.com/2010/07/25/ready-set-bag-groupon/>

⁵³ <http://www.indiescreenings.net/>

4. Distribution platforms devoted to documentary

The following are profiles of some digital distribution initiatives offering mainly documentary films:

[NFB.ca](#)

For more than ten years, the National Film Board of Canada has been streaming both contemporary and classic films. [NFB.ca](#) offers nearly 1,500 films, including the latest HD and 3D films. Documentary constitutes the mainstay of its catalogue (English, 649; French, 526). Private viewing is free of charge and affordable subscriptions are made available to educators and institutions. The NFB's mission is to foster access to these films for the entire Canadian population, and content that is not geoblocked is therefore accessible to publics outside Canada.

This project has been supported in part by Canadian Culture Online, part of the Department of Canadian Heritage strategy aimed at fostering a Canadian presence on the Internet.

The NFB has also unrolled a multiple-image strategy with an NFB channel on YouTube.com, the YouTube "Screening Room", moderated by the NFB on dailymotion.com; and NFB space on VOD channels: Rogers on Demand; and Videotron's Illico. A new film is spotlighted weekly on YouTube. "Some of the films are very successful, others less so. It really varies. That said, YouTube is a very important source for the screening of NFB films," notes Stéphane Bousquet, Director of Digital Enterprises at the NFB.

The NFB is very active in social media with two social network coordinators and two bloggers hosting community discussions. Stéphane Bousquet emphasizes that these strategies have surpassed expectations and opened up an entirely new kind of dialogue with the public.

On Facebook, where some films may also be screened:

- 4,538 people joined the NFB's Francophone page; and
- 8,329, the Anglophone page (figures as of November 2010).

On Twitter, the figures are:

- 3,760 people on the French page; and
- 14,100 in English.⁵⁴

In August 2010, during the television broadcast of the film [Tulku](#) on the CBC's [The Passionate Eye](#), the audience was invited to twitter live with filmmaker Gesar Mukpo. "It was a first for us and we learned a number of things. We'll certainly do it again," remembers Stéphane Bousquet.

The NFB has also developed and launched applications for mobile platforms such as the iPhone and, in June 2010, the iPad. Applications for the Blackberry and the Android operating system will be available in 2011.

By relying on the full range of web tools, the objective of generating a new audience has been attained and the platform's success has been remarkable:

In June 2010, audience figures were:

- 5 million views on NFB.ca since January 2009;
- more than 820,000 screenings on the NFB iPhone app since October 2009.

For Stéphane Bousquet, the NFB platform is often the last link in the distribution chain. "A film has to do the usual festival circuit, theatrical releases, television, DVD, sales and yes, afterwards, it might and should end up on NFB.ca. For example, Guy Maddin's most recent film, [Night Mayor](#), has a particular format and message. With the director, we decided that the best way to realize the film's potential was to make it available on the NFB

⁵⁴ Figures provided by Stéphane Bousquet, Director of Digital Enterprises at the NFB.

website immediately following its festival tour. Every film has its own strategy. No two films will have the same history in the distribution timeline.”

Revenues?

The **National Film Board**'s general strategy is to gradually monetize services that were originally proposed free of charge. To begin with, this consists of offering a reliable, free, and indispensable service that banks on the widest possible access available to **NFB** productions in order to gain a loyal audience and create a pool of customers. Secondly while continuing to improve accessibility and increase the volume of content offered, the **NFB** will adopt a staggered approach that will permit us to offer more content and new paid services. At this stage, we will experiment with different subscription models, video on demand, downloading by purchase or rental, and links with online stores for DVD purchase. In *Emerging and Digital Media: Opportunities and Challenges*, NFB April 29, 2010. Provided to the Permanent Committee of Heritage Canada

“Most of our partnerships involve revenue sharing,” adds Stéphane Bousquet. But are those revenues enough for the NFB to continue running activities around the NFB.ca platform?

Could the NFB make the NFB.ca platform a dedicated site for films not produced, coproduced or distributed by the NFB? For the moment, the answer is no. Stéphane Bousquet points out that the NFB is pursuing acquisitions, and that films supported by the ACIC program ([Aide au cinéma indépendant – Canada](#)) might find a place on NFB.ca but for now, the NFB is not open to the idea of adding independent films.

Vithèque

Launched in May 2010, [Vithèque](#) is uniquely positioned in the distribution landscape in Quebec and Canada. Vithèque is a platform that wants to retool the distribution and broadcast of independent films. To do so, it operates as an open site, accessible to the community of filmmakers, producers and independent distributors.

Lauraine G. André, Vithèque's Director, clearly summarizes the issue: “Vithèque is not an archive; it is a centralized hub of tools and expertise. It is a platform that belongs to the independents. They have to take charge of it.”

The independent community is invited to invest in Vithèque and benefit from all the services on offer:

- a platform for all stages of distribution: festival participation, theatrical releases, sales by professional buyers, screenings, retrospectives, DVD consumer sales, and so on.
- paid services: consulting and advising on promotions and distribution, project support, list sharing, and so on.

The platform is universally accessible. In Canada, screening is free; in other countries, it is pay per view.

Vithèque is funded entirely, for the first year, by Canadian Culture Online at the Department of Canadian Heritage under its Partnerships Fund, and by the Canada Council for the Arts, Emploi-Québec, Skills Development at the Department of Canadian Heritage, and Quebec's National Library and Archives (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec). A new revenue model should be in place soon, still advertising-free. The business model at Vithèque is based mainly on paid professional services and sharing of screening revenues.

The films belong to the filmmakers or rights holders. Vidéographe holds the exclusive rights only for the distribution and/or streaming on Vithèque of films from its own catalogue. The films accessible on Vithèque that come from other catalogues and are not distributed by Vidéographe fall under an agreement between Vidéographe and Vithèque, covering their broadcast and/or distribution on the Vithèque platform. Under the agreement, Vidéographe-Vithèque is authorized to stream and/or distribute these films only on Vithèque. Filmmakers/rights holders remain the only legal representatives of these films, for all broadcast or distribution not on Vithèque.

SnagFilms

[SnagFilms](#), launched in July 2009 by the former head of National Geographic Films, Richard C. Allen, and the former executive director of AOL, Ted Leonsis, is a free VOD platform with a catalogue of close to 1000 open source documentaries, by both established and emerging directors. It says it relies on the viral nature of the Internet to give the films the visibility they deserve and which they unfortunately do not get either in theatres or on television. People can screen them, comment on them, and import the documentaries onto other sites and blogs using links to the community.

For producers and filmmakers, three revenue sources are offered:

- 50% of advertising receipts;
- DVD sales from the site;
- a share of the profits from paid downloads.

SnagFilms has found its audience but does not yet generate much revenue for producers and filmmakers. This experiment, which depends on viewing being free and the sale of advertising space on its platform, requires that the films must be screened hundreds of thousands if not millions of times before the filmmakers draw any substantial income.

Egypt: Secrets of the Pharaohs, a National Geographic documentary promoted by AOL, shows the limits of this model's profitability. The film was downloaded 60,000 times over a period of two weeks but at a CPM (cost per thousand) of \$20, that comes to only \$1200 in advertising revenue of which 50% will go towards rights holders.⁵⁵

Online Film

C. Cay Wesnigk, president and CEO of OnlineFilm, explains: "What makes our Platform different from any other platform that you will find is that : The filmmaker/rights owner can upload and delete his films at any time. The filmmaker/rights owner does not grant onlinefilm.org any exclusive rights. The contract to buy the film as download to own (in the future also as 48 hours lease as stream) does come into place between the filmmaker/rights owner and his customer. Onlinefilm AG is only acting as application service provider and custodian for the money that is paid by the user. The filmmaker/rights owner decides himself for what price he wants to offer his films. The filmmaker/rights owner gets to know who buys his films and can create his own customer database to inform customers about new films or projects"⁵⁶

The platform promises 51% for the filmmaker. The plans call for development of a crowd sourcing system which will allow the filmmakers to come into contact with their community (the people who have seen their films, in particular) and the platform community, with the aim of encouraging them to contribute to the funding of new projects.

This initiative was made possible thanks to the EU's MEDIA Plus program, the Kulturelle Filmförderung Schleswig-Holstein, the Hessischen Filmförderung and the MSH - Gesellschaft zur Förderung audiovisueller Werke in Schleswig-Holstein, and belongs to 122 shareholders who are mainly media professionals. OnlineFilm AG, the company behind OnlineFilm.com, was founded by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Dokumentarfilm (AG DOK) (Association of independent German documentary filmmakers), which has more than 800 members.

IndiePix

The American platform IndiePix claims to offer the best revenue sharing in the online distribution industry. The platform works closely with filmmakers to offer personalized marketing plans. Documentary is one of the genres it privileges.

IndiePix offers more than 900 documentary titles on DVD, some one hundred documentaries available for download, twenty-odd documentaries on-demand, and major collections such as those of Werner Herzog and Albert Maysles. Based in New York, founded in 2004.

"The focus of the project is discovery – opening up new avenues of thought and ideas for exploring independent film," says Bob Alexander, President of IndiePix. "Each film on the site will contain metadata attachments that allow IndiePix's in-house team of film experts to insert all sorts of information – who directed it, which country it was filmed in, the reviews it had at release."⁵⁷

Vodeo

From its catalogue of more than 10,000 titles, Vodeo offers 4,500 documentaries and reportages in VOD, from a dozen theme categories which change periodically. Created in 2004, Vodeo joined the Figaro group, France's leading online publisher (11 million hits per month) in 2008. Vodeo deals with nearly 300 rights holders in France and internationally.

⁵⁵ <http://www.thewrap.com/movies/article/snagfilms-finds-online-works-distributing-documentary-films-1886>

⁵⁶ Personal communication with C. Cay Wesnigk, August 2010.

⁵⁷ News Release, IndiePix, August 1, 2007.

Vodeo offers cross-platform distribution (as video on demand (VOD) on the Internet (VOD to rent per paid stream), TV ADSL, iPhone and iTunes (since March 2009) and DVD on demand (EOD) on the Internet.⁵⁸ Frédéric Sitterlé, President and CEO, explains: “This is a crucial time in the development of Internet pay-per-view. Users now understand they have to pay for high-quality content, and the emergence of paid sites such as those of *Libération* and *Figaro* prove that the funding shift is underway.” He adds that vodeo.tv has balanced its books since late 2009.

Joining the Docs

Joining The Docs is a streaming video platform claiming to offer “the very best director-led films” for the U.K. More than 1880 documentaries are available. Many films play at international festivals and some have had theatrical release. About ten films are added each month. “We are working hard to make documentary films available to as wide an audience as possible, while generating revenues for filmmakers.”

Joining the Docs is an initiative of [MercuryMedia](#) which has received funding from the EU MEDIA [Video on Demand and Digital Cinema Distribution](#) program in partnership with [The Independent](#) and [Sheffield Doc Festival](#).

Other platforms...

[MUBI](#), formerly known as *The Auteurs*, is an online international cinematheque.

[Voir un Film](#) offers 215 documentaries in VOD.

[Dissidenz](#) is both an independent web portal devoted to auteur film and visual arts and an alternative distribution platform offering 336 (as of 14/12/2010) documentaries on DVD or VOD.

[Iminéo](#) offers nearly 1,600 documentaries, mainly reportages and television formats.

[Medici.tv](#) Launched in April 2008, it hopes to become an international VOD platform for documentaries and films on music and the performing arts. Also covers documentaries on social and historical subjects.

[Bright Wide](#) The U.K.’s Brightwide (“Watch Think Link Act”) describes itself as “a new site featuring the best of social and political cinema, where you can watch films, learn more about the issues at their heart and take action, all in one place.”

[Factual.tv](#) Self-described as “the best online resource for documentary films”, Factual.tv is a vast film library and a meeting place where lovers of documentary in all its forms converge.

[ISUMA.tv](#) IsumaTV is an independent, interactive, multimedia network of Indigenous films from Inuit to Maori filmmakers.

[ViewChange](#) Financed in part by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ViewChange is a digital platform aimed at sharing positive initiatives and improving the lives of people in developing countries.

[Myscreen](#) is an online directory of VOD providers in France developed in partnership with the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA).

⁵⁸ Vodeo.tv

CONCLUSION

These experiments in documentary creation, production, and distribution show that the new platforms are in fact tools. They are simultaneously a means for documentary filmmakers to open up the creative process to interactions with the public, and a channel for distributing specifically formatted multiplatform content... In other words, every creator is free to rethink the platforms, to use them or not.

What's important is the way that filmmakers use these tools. Some directors have chosen to grab hold of them and explore their multiple possibilities. These trailblazers embrace the exchange process, they can and do pass on their knowledge. But they are few in number. We are still in the midst of a learning curve. Each experience can be seen as a case study, but the apprentices are rapidly multiplying. To effectively use the tool and obtain the desired result requires a strong collaboration between the documentary and the multimedia fields. From this perspective, there is a sea of possibilities for creators.

It's counter-productive to think of the Web only as a content-provider, but it's also incorrect to presume that all internauts want to participate in the creation of a documentary work. Internauts who get involved are for the moment marginal. But this active minority is the one that creates a buzz around works, leads innovation, is eager to experiment. It is at the heart of the creative process. The Web is seen as a space for socialization, exchange, and the free circulation of ideas, for citizen participation, as a driver of democracy; the Web is a subject for philosophical speculation on what is real, supporting a new capacity for discovery and creation... While it is within reach, this approach can perhaps seem utopian.

It will remain utopian if this form of creation is not fully recognized. To create new rules is not to support the change. It is essential that documentary filmmakers have access to the necessary means to experiment. That presupposes a strong engagement by all partners, public and private, and makes the establishment of a comprehensive documentary policy even more important: this is the project taken on by the **Documentary Network**.

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[DocSpace](#)

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[DOC AGORA](#)

[Henry Jenkins](#)

[Le blog de Michel Reilhac d'ARTE](#)

[WORKBOOK Project](#)

[Le blog de Matt Locke](#)

[Documentary Tech](#)

Professional Training

[Sunny Lab du Sunny Side of the Doc](#)

[Interactive documentary Media Lab du Canadian Film Center](#)

[TransmediaLab](#)

[CrossoverLabs](#)

[Centre de formation Espresso](#)

[Power to the Pixel](#)

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