CFP Meeting Notes: April 14, 2010

Redefining Television, *William Uricchio*
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Our understanding of the basic concept of TV is quickly unraveling as "televisual" services take on new and multiple forms, many of which no longer align with the original formulation of 1950s television. This talk will present a history of the conceptualization of television from its pre-industrialization roots, a time when TV had the potential to be many things, and the progression to the identity crisis TV finds itself in the midst of today, demonstrating that the medium has been unstable from the start.

Television's Complex Identity

Medium has multiple identities at the same time. The word television can mean the technology, the industry, the medium and the content. Television is a combination of platform and protocols.

Models of TV

- Telephone model: point to point information transfer.
- Radio model: broadcasting information. Cultural synchronization.
- Theatre model: shared entertainment experience.
- Network computer model: democratic access and distribution. Unlimited content.

Eras of TV

Broadcasting:

- scarce content, but simple UI is good
- programmer controlled
- entertain to keep you in your seat

Remotes and Cable:

- lots of content
- user in control
- analysis still possible

Networked

- more user control
- users able to make viewing plans
- unlimited content
- track behaviors

Ad skipping has been happen for a long time. The remote was the first device for skipping ads, and came with familiar uproar from content providers.

Online TV circumvents standard restrictions design to control content. Unlimited content requires recommendation systems to make it manageable.

TV Future

- Participatory culture: everyone is a producer AND consumer.
- Ways to engage people in a medium that is more than just consuming entertainment
- There is no "one kind" of TV. It is in a constant state of flux.
- Successful brands reach across all mediums.

Questions

Audience member: Who is in control now?

William: In the old days it was the tv programmer. When the remote was unveiled, more control came to the user. Now between me and my choices are a bunch of recommendations. so the algorithms are in control. Social recommendation systems.

Audience member: Is that even control anymore?

William: It's more about the choices you are able to make.