

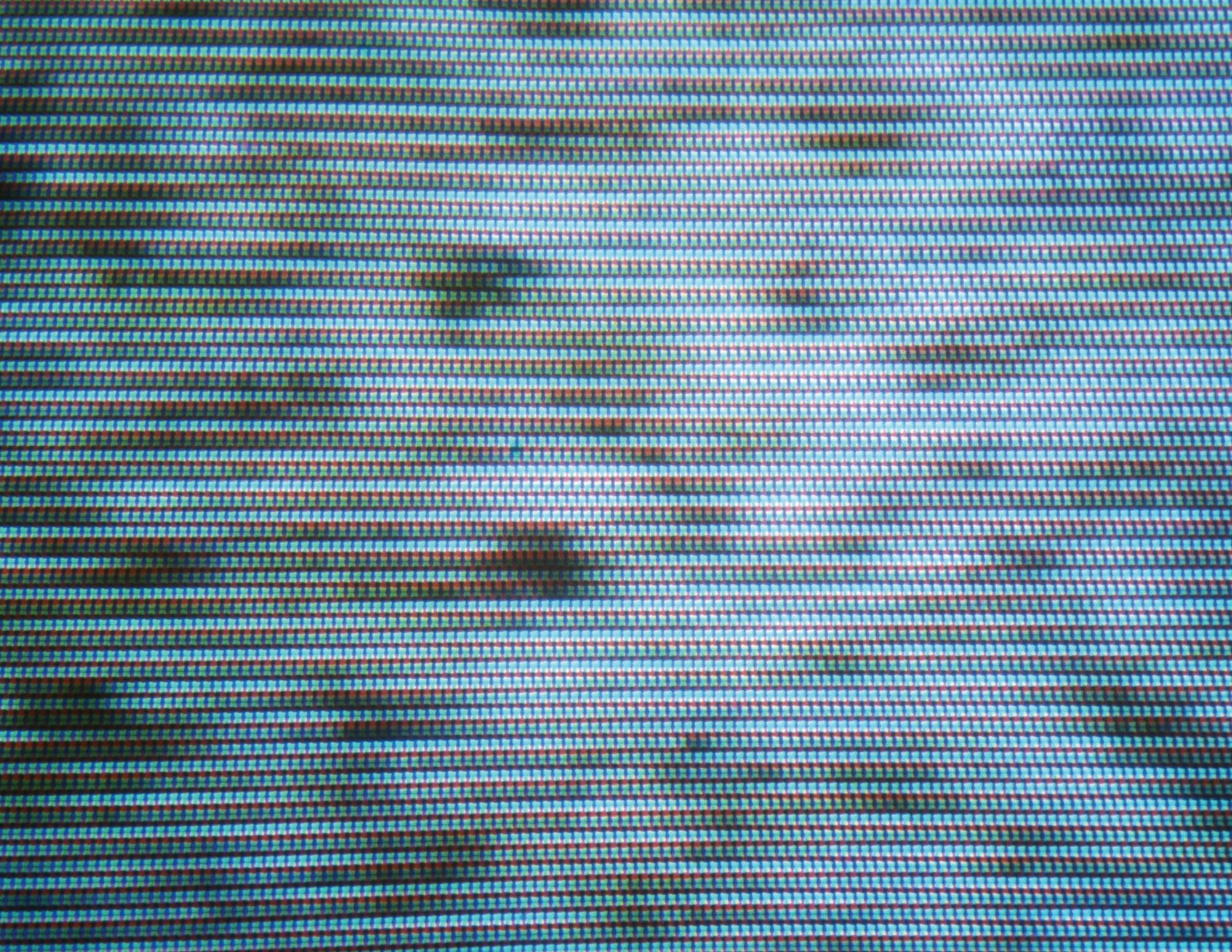


Funding Media, Strengthening Democracy: Grantmaking for the 21st Century

The GFEM Media Funding Tracker



GRANTMAKERS IN
FILM + ELECTRONIC MEDIA



Funding Media, Strengthening Democracy: Grantmaking for the 21st Century

The GFEM Media Funding Tracker

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GRANTMAKERS IN
FILM + ELECTRONIC MEDIA

INT.
INTELLIGENT TELEVISION

Dear Colleagues,

Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media is very pleased to offer *Funding Media, Strengthening Democracy: Grantmaking for the 21st Century* to the philanthropic sector.

The importance of media and the crucial role played by philanthropy is laid out within these pages. Media, in all its incarnations, influences our decision-making processes, whether personal choices or professional ones, in policy-making, and at the local, national, and international levels. Regardless of how much or how little media one may personally consume, the world is saturated with and driven by media.

Philanthropy, with its mission to improve the human condition, has yet to meet the challenge of keeping pace with the growth and influence of media. We would like to change that. *Funding Media, Strengthening Democracy* continues a critical dialogue on how philanthropy can best harness its resources—dollars and leadership—to meet the needs of a media-saturated world, in an age of increasingly rapid innovation, where media and social uses of media can have revolutionary impact on individuals and, indeed, entire nations.

This report provides a snapshot of media funding by grantmakers—the what, how much, and why. It compares the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, presents tools that some funders are using to assess the impact of their investments and, with great candor, reveals the thinking behind many of our colleagues' media grantmaking.

Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media is an association of grantmakers committed to advancing the field of media arts and public interest media funding. We serve as a resource for grantmakers and as a collaborative network for funders who wish to learn more about media.

With this commitment in mind, we believed it was consistent with our mission to ask a series of critical questions that we knew, from the outset, could not be definitively answered: Who's funding media? At what level? And what is the impact of that funding? Our aim was to determine the impediments to answering these questions. We also wanted to identify and share best practices in supporting media and, perhaps most importantly, using it to propel philanthropic goals.

GFEM would like to thank Peter B. Kaufman and Mary Albon of Intelligent Television for their extensive research and analysis. We also feel it is necessary to point out one of the most significant impediments we all face in compiling data in the field: the reluctance of foundations and government agencies to respond to questions about their grantmaking. We understand that autonomy and anonymity are valued by many in philanthropy. However, as we move forward in an interconnected environment, we hope to encourage more transparency in this area in order to strengthen our collective ability to track important trends in our field.

To help philanthropy understand its grantmaking in media, and make that grantmaking more effective, the field needs to come together to answer the key questions: Who? How much? To what effect? We hope that what we present to you here will help remove some of the challenges, open the lines of communication—literally and figuratively—and move the field of philanthropy forward. We look to you for comments and input, and invite your future participation in this growing and essential conversation.

Sincerely,
David Haas, Chairman of the Board
Alyce Myatt, Executive Director

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▶ Executive Summary

- ▶ *“Ultimately we need to understand how media can lead to real policy or social change that improves the lives of individuals, families and communities. Can it begin to lay the groundwork for increased understanding of entrenched social problems and their possible solutions? Can it move people to individual or collective action on these issues? Can it help strengthen nonprofit organizations and make the advocates’ jobs easier? Can it inspire new programs, civic engagement, and policy solutions?”* **A Survey Respondent**

M

edia permeates modern life as never before.

From moving image advertisements on city buses to messages on our mobile phones, we are constantly bombarded: video, audio, images, tweets, posts, feeds, and apps cascade across our screens and speakers. By 2013—just 1,000 days from this writing—some 15 billion networked computers, phones, and other devices will be in operation worldwide; the equivalent of 10 billion DVDs worth of media will be criss-crossing the Internet every month; and 11 billion square feet of screens will be in operation, enough to encircle the Earth’s entire surface almost 50 times over.

The centrality of media in almost every field of human endeavor, and the increasing prevalence of new technologies of communication, present new opportunities for philanthropists to promote democratic values. For centuries—in the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution—media has been intertwined with freedom and the exercise of power. Today too, technology heightens the potential for grantee civic engagement; for voice to be given to new and often marginalized sources of information and opinion; for collaboration and networking; and for individuals and groups to come closer to the formerly expensive means of media production. At the same time, the proliferation of the messages and the ideas that media—commercial and noncommercial—carry poses new challenges for philanthropists who work at the vital intersection of media, technology, and social change.

In 2009 Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media (GFEM) asked Intelligent Television (INT) to help it design a research agenda and survey instrument for capturing the types and amounts of funding that U.S.-based foundations, government agencies, and other charitable organizations put toward media—media content, infrastructure, and policy—today. GFEM asked INT to

provide an analysis of that data, along with recommendations for how GFEM and media grantmakers as a whole might best collect and sort this information on an ongoing basis, and use it to help rationalize grantmaking in the field.

The GFEM Media Funding Tracker that we developed was sent out to foundations and government agencies large and small across the country, breaking down media as follows:

- ▶ Media content refers to “information, knowledge, and artistic material conveyed through all types of media, including film and video, television, radio, print publications, and online channels.”
- ▶ Media infrastructure comprises “not only the physical bricks and mortar installations, equipment and technology that enable media outlets to operate, but also the capacity of individuals (e.g., journalists, scholars, artists), institutions (e.g., journalism schools), associations and networks to produce, distribute and communicate media content.” Projects in this area often have to do with innovation, development, training, capacity building, and support of small- or large-scale information delivery and telecommunications systems, and can include community-based media arts centers, public access television, public or community radio and television stations, mobile, satellite, or other systems.
- ▶ Media policy “broadly refers to the regulations, legislation, judicial oversight, and institutional practices that shape our information and communications systems, including control and organization of culture industries, news and journalism, advertising, Internet and telephone services.”

We conducted extensive background research on major media funders and trends; worked with GFEM to prepare a detailed survey and invited over 900 executives and program officers at foundations and funding agencies to complete it; processed initial feedback at two roundtable discussions and one two-day seminar hosted by funders; conducted telephone and in-person

interviews with program officers; and shared and compared our data with other researchers and journalists. Some foundations also supported our information gathering by coordinating and collecting, at our request, internal data dispersed among their different programs and departments. Building upon the results of this research and the information that GFEM already has collected—specifically in GFEM’s ongoing media projects database at <http://media.gfem.org/>—we present this report as the result of that initiative.

All told, to the best of our calculations, grantmakers public and private put an estimated \$3 billion toward the support of media—media content, infrastructure, and policy—in 2008. With economic stimulus funding devoted to broadband and other technologies, that amount may have risen to \$10 billion by the time tallies can be completed for 2009.

Despite the size of this figure, and the growing importance of media both to the daily life of the planet and the success of grantmaking in other fields, there has been, up to now, no clearinghouse of information about media grants; no comprehensive database of media funding opportunities; no established taxonomy for defining media grantmakers, grantees, and their grants; no broadly accepted terminology related to media; and no system of classifying how funders in the field determine their entry points and ultimate goals for social improvement.

Media grantmaking remains a long way from establishing a place where media grants can be searched for and found by grantors and grantees alike as quickly and as easily as products can be found on eBay and Amazon. The field needs to become more intelligent—more self-aware—and more knowledgeable in real time about the grants being made within it, the resources of grantors, the needs of grantees, the leverage and impact points to be affected, and the larger trends across the social, economic, and technological forces that affect all of media content, policymaking, and institutional sustainability. We believe that grantmakers will benefit from a more comprehensive

understanding of how important media is for basic values of freedom and democracy, and thus of how media grantmaking can be used as a tool to further those values.

At the same time, it is important for the grantmaking field to recognize that relative to the size of commercial media financing from banks, markets, advertising, and sales, media grantmaking is minuscule. Often the budget of a single Hollywood feature film eclipses the total annual media spending of the largest U.S. philanthropies. Global entertainment and media spending in all its forms, already over \$1 trillion annually, will reach \$1.6 trillion by 2013. The money invested in media annually through grants from the nonprofit sector amounts to about 1 percent of the money invested by commercial and noncommercial sources as a whole.

For media grantmakers whose funds constitute only a small piece of the total media ecosystem, leverage, necessarily, is key.

We recommend that the grantmaking field itself take advantage of media and technology to build a more comprehensive framework for media grantmaking and for measuring its impact. We highlight 10 recommendations from our surveys, interviews, meetings, and research:

First, acknowledge the prevalence and impact of media.

Foundations and government agencies of all sizes and in all fields will benefit from recognizing the growing importance of media, and screen-based media in particular, to the future of every field—education, health, the environment, and more.

Second, funders should identify additional common traits across philanthropy. Funding for media has many traits in common with funding in other fields, and it will behoove media funders to exchange information with funders in other sectors on a more regular basis. Best practices and tools from one grantmaking sector may have applications in another.

Third, philanthropists should create and support new and flexible funding structures. There have been calls for new structures to support media funding in this age of fast-moving change: many of these are worth listening to. As tectonic shifts take place in the media landscape, rapid-response teams of media funders will need to be assembled to provide for the nimble, strategic, possibly collective allocation of funding.

Fourth, funders should support the development of new networked media production and distribution systems. There is now greater emphasis being placed on the potential for networked collaboration among funders and grantees alike. Opportunities now exist for exploring new types of networks, studios, and laboratories—initiatives that themselves may prove to be demonstrations of cost-effective grantmaking.

Fifth, funders and grantees alike should utilize and advocate for open technology. There is the opportunity to encourage philanthropy to become more intelligent and self-aware, utilizing some of the tools that the commercial media and information sector has been deploying to good effect. This involves beginning to establish and inculcate among foundations as a whole, and media funders in particular, preferences toward open technology standards and open source solutions for data collection.

Sixth, communicate and collaborate with your colleagues within your foundation and across the philanthropic sector. Perhaps the most important survey question and answer in the GFEM Media Funding Tracker concerned whether stakeholders in the future of media grantmaking would be open to further discussion regarding the issues covered in the survey. The overwhelming majority said yes. This interest in engagement opens the door to collaboration that extends beyond the sharing of common concerns into initiatives on a broader scale.

Seventh, funders should collaborate to create a comprehensive platform for information sharing. Given the centrality of media funding for all sectors, it would seem beneficial for media funders to establish a version of, or strengthen existing versions of, a media grantmaking database in particular—a living, searchable archive, one that welcomes and processes data on a rolling, ongoing basis.

Eighth, the pervasiveness of media funding must be acknowledged. Funders and grantees should recognize that media is funded in many grants that do not explicitly highlight media—content, infrastructure, or policy—as the primary object of funding.

Ninth, the impact of media grantmaking should be measured, and the field should undertake new efforts to do so. The social impact of grantmaking can now be more specifically measured and tracked across each dimension of progress using technology and tools that the web provides. Indeed, media grantmakers may be able to develop systems—for their own grantmaking as well as grantmaking in other sectors—that track where media has been instrumental in increasing public awareness and engagement, strengthening social movements, and effecting social change.

Tenth and finally, funders should recognize that media reinforces their missions. If the public and government are going to understand and appreciate the work of philanthropy, they are going to be looking, or listening, or watching, or gaining and expressing these attitudes through media.

The GFEM Media Funding Tracker project was built to help position media philanthropy in this ecosystem. We try to show why media grantmaking matters, how it can have an impact, where its impact can be greatest, and what steps funders might take to strengthen their work. The information and conclusions presented in this report can help funders to understand how media can be used to enrich their strategies and advance their goals.

▶ Introduction

- ▶ *“The creative destruction of the media ecosystem brought about by the digital age” poses fundamentally new challenges to the core missions of media grantmakers, as well as offering new opportunities and promise.*

The GFEM Media Funding Tracker: an introduction

In January 2009 Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media (GFEM) asked Intelligent Television (INT) to help it design a research agenda and survey instrument for capturing the types and amounts of funding that U.S.-based foundations, government agencies, and other charitable organizations put toward media today. GFEM asked INT to provide it with an analysis of that data, along with recommendations for how GFEM and media grantmakers as a whole might best collect and sort this information on an ongoing basis, and use it to help rationalize grantmaking in the field. Media is an essential tool for achieving change, and GFEM believes that the information and conclusions presented in this report can help funders to understand how media can be used to enrich their strategies and advance their goals. We aim to show why media grantmaking matters, how it can have an impact, where its impact can be greatest, and what steps funders might take to strengthen their work.

For ten months Intelligent Television staff conducted background research on funders of media content, media infrastructure, and media policy; designed and circulated surveys to hundreds of philanthropies and funding agencies large and small; organized and presented initial data at roundtables of media grantmakers; and conducted personal interviews with foundation and government program officers. We also have connected with journalists, social scientists, historians, technologists, and other researchers who are or have been involved in data collection efforts in media, arts, education, and culture. This report is the result of that initiative.

A. Media: everywhere

Media—which Marshall McLuhan described almost 50 years ago as “the technological simulation of consciousness”—truly does now permeate modern life.¹ From moving image advertisements on city buses to messages on our mobile phones, we are constantly bombarded by media. Video, audio, images, tweets, posts, feeds, and apps now cascade across all of our screens and speakers. Traditional metrics used for measuring media’s growing prevalence, such as consumption of media over time—how many hours adults or children spend reading books, watching television and movies, going online, listening to radio²—are giving way to new ways of quantifying what the commercial architects of digital communication, firms such as Cisco and Intel, chart as our new “hyperconnectivity.” These units of measurement for the digital age focus on quantities of screen surfaces and speakers, networked devices, and high-speed processors:

- ▶ digital screen surface area—11 billion square feet are predicted to be showing images worldwide by 2013, enough to encircle Earth’s entire surface almost 50 times;
- ▶ the speed and power of computers;
- ▶ the proliferation of network-enabled devices—15 billion such devices will be in use by 2015; and
- ▶ broadband traffic—by 2013, the equivalent of 10 billion DVDs will be crossing the Internet every month.³

Moreover, change in media is taking place at ever faster and faster rates. “A half millennium ago, the product of a paradigm shift such as the printing press took about a century to be widely deployed,” one analyst writes. But today, “the products of major paradigm shifts, such as cell phones and the World Wide Web, are widely adopted in only a few years’ time.”⁴

This pace of change in media technologies, laws, business, even in innovation itself—“the creative destruction of the media ecosystem,” as one foundation program officer described it to us, “brought about by the digital age”—poses fundamentally new challenges to the core missions of media grantmakers, as well as offering new opportunities and promise.

For decades, even centuries, media, as channels of communication and as powerful institutions, have always been intertwined with freedom, with what one sociologist has called “the exercise of power,” especially with the larger, “unfinished...story about the origins of democracy, the struggles over its extension, and the continuing efforts to realize aspirations for a more vital democratic politics.”⁵ Indeed, many of the foundations whose work we examine here characterize the mission of their media grantmaking through the prism of promoting democratic values:

- ▶ The Benton Foundation “works to ensure that media and telecommunications serve the public interest and enhance our democracy.”
- ▶ The Ford Foundation explicitly directs media funding to “organizations working to ensure that today’s media systems contribute to a better-informed citizenry, encourage public participation in civic life and offer inclusive and accessible space for analytical and creative expression.”
- ▶ The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation supports quality journalism and freedom of expression “to ensure that each community’s citizens get the information they need to thrive in a democracy.”

But now new challenges are evident everywhere. Longstanding media institutions—commercial icons of print journalism especially—are imploding. Whole chunks of the Fourth Estate (companies that uncovered Watergate and published the Pentagon Papers) teeter into debt and even toward insolvency, their shareholder value melting like polar ice.⁶ Huge swaths

of television, radio, Internet, publishing, telephone, and other technology owners are combining and recombining so that fewer sources of capital control ever-larger amalgamations in the field.⁷ Public media finds itself in an ever-harder struggle for funding and audiences.

What challenges do these trends raise for philanthropists seeking to promote democratic values?

At the same time, opportunities for the media grantmaking field are also plentiful. Technology heightens the potential for grantee civic engagement; for voice to be given to new and often marginalized sources of information and opinion; for collaboration and networking; and for individuals and groups to come closer to the formerly expensive means of media production. Traditional audiences are now shifting from passive consumers of media into producer-participants instead. In film and electronic media in particular, as McLuhan’s contemporary Walter J. Ong predicted, film and video are losing their once-lofty status; formerly the domain of movie studios and television networks, the means to produce and distribute moving images are now in the hands of the everyman.⁸ Indeed, video will comprise over 90 percent of all consumer traffic on the Internet by 2013 (some 1,000 days from this writing)—in many ways becoming, at a blinding rate, our newest vernacular.⁹

*In such a hyperconnected world,
blanketed in screens and speakers and
paradigm-shifting a mile a minute*

(one writer describes the exponential growth that is now occurring in...exponential growth!),

*what new interventions can media funders,
taking advantage of media technology,
seek to accomplish?*¹⁰

B. Media funding 2008

Public media enterprises, philanthropies, and government agencies that fund media thus find their roles in transition as never before. While the search continues among many in the foundation sector for what one producer described to us as “the grand narrative” to explain the importance and impact of media and media change on society, media grantmaking continues. The following offers some sense of the scope and scale of media grantmaking in the United States in 2008:

- ▶ Large, iconic philanthropic foundations such as the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation provided grantees with hundreds of millions of dollars—\$30-\$60 million, \$51 million, and \$70 million, respectively, in the case of these foundations—to support media content, policy, and infrastructure work in 2008.
- ▶ Family foundations new and old supported the media sector with millions of dollars in grants ranging widely in size and type. The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, for example, provided six grants totaling \$1.5 million for media in 2008—largely to support producer Ken Burns and other long-form public broadcasting documentaries.
- ▶ Young foundations with a fresh focus on media have begun to provide filmmakers and others with millions of dollars of support. The Skoll Foundation, for example, gave \$3 million to six grantees for media projects in 2008.
- ▶ Regranting nonprofits such as ZeroDivide (\$1.9 million) and the Media Democracy Fund (\$1.1 million) provided grantees in media with some \$10 million in 2008.
- ▶ Government agencies with an explicit mandate to focus on media—the National Endowment for the Humanities

(\$55 million), the National Endowment for the Arts (\$10 million), the Institute for Museum and Library Services (\$214 million)—operated programs that provided some \$300 million in media support in 2008.

- ▶ Public media organizations such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Public Broadcasting Service, involving hundreds of television and radio stations nationwide and representing an annual economy of \$2.85 billion,¹¹ also provided tens of millions of dollars in media grants in 2008.
- ▶ Federal agencies and other federal institutions with media grantmaking more deeply embedded in their programs—the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education, for example—provided hundreds of millions of dollars in media funding.
- ▶ State, city, and local agencies and institutions provided funds in the millions.
- ▶ Corporate foundations and giving programs numbering in the thousands also provided millions of dollars in media support.
- ▶ Individuals also supported media with grants—large and small—in the millions.

Reflecting the growing importance of media in the everyday lives of Americans, new national programs established as part of the Obama administration’s nearly \$1 trillion stimulus package eclipsed all of the above—with \$7.2 billion, for example, rolled out in 2009 dedicated to broadband grant and loan programs.

All told, to the best of our calculation, grantmakers public and private put an estimated \$3 billion toward the support of media in 2008—and with economic stimulus funding in 2009, the amount will rise to over \$10 billion in 2009. Yet despite the size of this figure, and the growing importance of media both to the daily life of the planet and the success of grantmaking in other fields,

there has been, up to now, no clearinghouse of information about media grants; no comprehensive database of media funding opportunities; no established taxonomy for defining media grantmakers, grantees, and their grants; no broadly accepted terminology related to media; and no system of classifying how funders in the field determine their “entry points,” as one funder put it, and ultimate intentions for social improvement. There also has been little systematic attempt to measure, or even to build metrics to measure, the full impact of all the billions of dollars that grantmakers have invested in media over all these decades to date.

All of that should change.

C. The need for media grantmaking information

While there have been initiatives in the past to assess grantmaking in media, and similar initiatives in areas that are part of media as we define it (art, journalism),¹² information in the media grantmaking field remains disorganized if and when it is collected at all. One longstanding foundation executive we interviewed told us that no funding field—be it education, the environment, human rights—has a perfectly healthy information system at its core.¹³ But given the growing importance of media in our daily lives and for the work of people and institutions who seek to improve the world, it would seem that the media field in particular should try to assemble a more robust information system—for the benefit of grantmakers and grantseekers alike.

Media grantmaking remains a long way from the vision one foundation program officer described in our conversations: a place where media grants could be searched for and found by grantors and grantees alike as quickly and as easily as products on eBay and Amazon can be found by buyers and sellers.

More comprehensive, readily accessible grantmaking data would make such a system easier to develop.

But quantitative data is not all that is needed. In the view of many of the program officers we interviewed, the field still needs to become more intelligent—more self-aware—and more knowledgeable in real time about the grants being made within it, the resources of grantors, the needs of grantees, the leverage and impact points to be affected, and the larger trends across the social, economic, and technological forces that affect all of media content, policymaking, and institutional sustainability. Program officers told us that the field as a whole needs a more comprehensive understanding of how important media is for basic values of freedom and democracy, and thus of how media grantmaking can be used as a tool to further those values.¹⁴ Grantmakers often lag behind activists and practitioners in understanding this. Foundation staff are not (with some exceptions) media practitioners; many are older and less acquainted with new media technologies; most have not worked in the field and seen funding impact firsthand.

Additionally, we were told that foundation boards of directors and advisors are often “very traditional”; they and many of their officers remain “risk-averse”; they do not want to try the untested; they are “obsessed by credentials”; and sometimes shy by nature about media because media projects bring with them a point of view that is “rarely value-neutral.” Moreover, “the same people are talking to each other,” year after year, one foundation executive pointed out. As a result, there is a huge need to bring in new voices and new areas of focus, along with a structure for the information that is waiting to be harvested about the good works that the field has accomplished already.

All of this takes place, of course, in the context of demand for media grants far outstripping supply. One striking example of this imbalance appeared in the first round of the 2009 federal broadband stimulus package, when institutions nationwide submitted 2,200 applications totaling \$27.6 billion—seven times the amount of funding that the government, in the end, made available. The Knight Foundation recently received 170 proposals—with 21 winners—for its first News and Community Information Challenge grants, underscoring that even the most generous of the foundations active in media can find their grantmaking challenged to keep up with demand.¹⁵

Against this backdrop, it is all the more important to understand why media grantmaking matters, how it can have an impact, and where, given the size of its funding relative to commercial and noncommercial media spending in total, its impact can be greatest.

Relative to the size of commercial media financing from banks, markets, advertising, and sales, media grantmaking has always been minuscule.

Global entertainment and media spending in all its forms, already over \$1 trillion annually, will reach \$1.6 trillion by 2013. To make the point more starkly, often the budget of a single Hollywood feature film eclipses the total annual media spending of the largest philanthropy in our survey.¹⁶

If, by our calculations, 2008 media grantmaking totaled \$3 billion—or even, in 2009, \$10 to 11 billion, with stimulus funds included—the amount of money invested in media commercially, compared to the amount invested through grants from the nonprofit sector, can be calculated on a scale of anywhere from 100 to 400 to 1.

For media grantmakers, therefore, whose funds constitute no more than 1% of the total media ecosystem, leverage, necessarily, is key. Thus was the GFEM Media Funding Tracker project born—to help position media philanthropy ahead of the curve.

▶ Media Funding: Assessing the Field

- ▶ *Enhancing the searchability of grantmaking would help grantees and grantors see the commonalities of their work across sectors. It would equip funders with a tool to help them identify gaps and more effectively target their resources.*

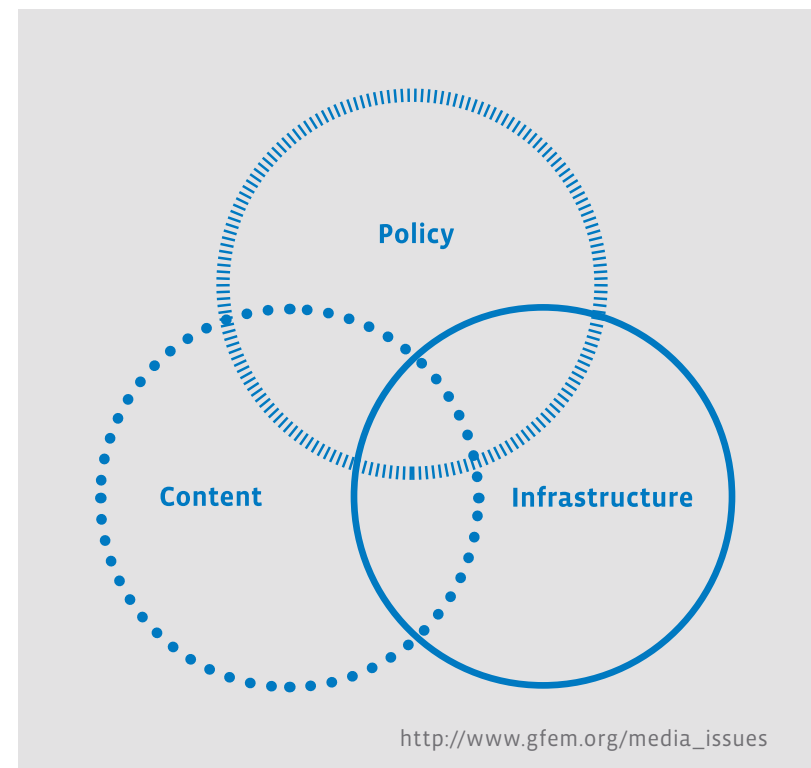
A. Earlier surveys

This investigation builds on previous work surveying the field of media grantmaking, including the Media Democracy Fund's annual non-scientific reviews of philanthropic support in media policy, a Media Democracy Fund/Hershey-Cause 2008 communications landscape analysis; an August 2006 GFEM/Blueprint Research & Design survey of funding for media policy work; and a March 2005 MediaWorks funder survey, as well as unpublished efforts that have sought to explore defining a common language for the field. Our research is also informed by innovative new work now under way, including the Knight Foundation-supported J-Lab survey and toolkit for innovators in community media and grantmaking.¹⁷

The most important challenge we recognize from these studies is the need in the field for clear, up-to-date, agreed-upon terminology to sort and describe field activities, grants, and funding priorities. There is no clear consensus yet today, for example, on what constitutes “media policy”—or even an agreed-upon definition of “media” itself. As one of our media funder roundtables highlighted, the term “media” is used sometimes as shorthand for film and video only—even among the most experienced media grantmakers. The 2005 MediaWorks study pointed out how this kind of blind spot can interfere with media funding. Noting that the bulk of media funding goes to media content for mass media outlets (e.g., television), but very little goes to older forms like print media or to media designed for emerging technologies (e.g., mobile phones), the study raises the issue “as to whether we are running the risk of forgetting the past, while, perhaps, not seeing what could be an important medium of the future.” The MediaWorks study concludes that “[t]he media field is still a mystery to many funders, so clarity of media-related issues, the funding process, and even basic terminology would be useful.” Almost five years later, we could not agree more.

B. Definitions of media & media grantmaking

Intelligent Television has worked closely with GFEM to develop working definitions of media content, media infrastructure and media policy, and terminology that, moving forward, may be able to help classify grants made and received in each of these categories. The work that gets funded in each of these categories usually is related to the work that gets supported in the two others—indeed, as GFEM has illustrated, all three are interdependent:



At the same time, grantmaking that takes place in each category eventually shall require its own thesaurus of descriptive terminology (keywords) and detailed information (metadata) so that the field can create a proper taxonomy for media grantmaking as a whole. That taxonomy will help funders make deeper sense of themselves in their annual reports and other media; it will help the field make sense of itself in collective reports such as this one and by seeing relationships between multiple grantors and grantees; and it will make information about current grants and grantees readable by machines—one of the new sources of authority, validity, and even significance in the digital age.

Media content, in our definition, refers to “information, knowledge, and artistic material conveyed through all types of media, including film and video, television, radio, print publications, and online channels.” As a GFEM and Association of Small Foundations publication for grantmakers indicates, “media content is *your message*,” and “funding content goes directly to the development of the message you want to help promote.”¹⁸

Media infrastructure comprises “not only the physical bricks and mortar installations, equipment and technology that enable media outlets to operate, but also the capacity of individuals (e.g., journalists, scholars, artists), institutions (e.g., journalism schools), associations and networks to produce, distribute and communicate media content.” As one program officer wrote in her survey response, “there is a developing understanding [at her foundation] of the connection between media infrastructure (for example, universal broadband) and the foundation’s larger social justice goals in education, community development, journalism, government, and financial transparency—even human rights.” GFEM notes that projects in this area often support innovation, development, training, capacity building and support of small- or large-scale information delivery and telecommunications systems. This can include community-based media arts centers, public access television, public and community radio and television stations, and mobile, satellite, and other systems.

Media policy “broadly refers to the regulations, legislation, judicial oversight, and institutional practices that shape our information and communications systems, including control and organization of culture industries, news and journalism, advertising, Internet and telephone services.” GFEM notes that “local, state, and national media policies enacted by governmental bodies and corporations directly influence the access that individuals and whole communities have to media. Grantmakers can impact media policy by funding advocacy and education programs to help ensure equity in media access for underserved and unserved communities and to ensure government and corporate accountability.” One Washington-based reform advocate we interviewed emphasized how media policy is often overlooked by media grantmakers. She emphasized that funders need to recognize the impact of media policy on all their work, as media policy impacts many other fields beyond media, as well as critical social issues such as access to healthcare. Another foundation executive acknowledged that media policy is a dense and overwhelming area to support, “and no one wants to fund what they don’t understand,” but she underscored that we are now at a tipping point. She has called on her colleagues to accept the need for a long-term vision for media policy reform, and urged them to make clear commitments to funding it.

While looking specifically at funding for media content, media infrastructure, and media policy, we also gathered data on media-related grantmaking that supports the goals of other program areas as diverse as information, communication, health, education, the environment, and human rights, with an eye toward helping the field classify this data in the future and identify funding gaps and opportunities for innovation. Survey responses often led us in this direction. Throughout the process we have sought to support the development of a fresh taxonomy for describing media content, media infrastructure, and media policy—a comprehensive framework for media grantmaking—in order to highlight the importance of grantmaking in these areas too as a means of achieving social change.

C. The importance of a common language in the digital age

Terminology is important not just to classify missions, mandates, and information more generally, but to establish a common language for the field's taxonomies and metadata specifically in the digital age. Taxonomies are critical for rendering bodies of content searchable by Google and the web's emergent "authority models"—Digg, Delicious, Slashdot, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Wikipedia—that are now reading this content and automatically deciding on its authority value. Metadata is data that describes other data, serving as an informative label. Metadata is used to facilitate the understanding, usage, and management of data, both by humans and computers. Indeed, facilitating the ability of foundations to render their content more fully searchable, and thus increasing their content's ability to "compete in computability" may be as valuable, or even more valuable, an investment of resources as making more foundation information available online.¹⁹

Increasingly, foundations, government agencies, and other funders—the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Open Society Institute, the Rockefeller Foundation, numerous others—are including grant search features on their individual websites. Typically these are customized search engines making it possible to search a foundation's grants by program and/or issue area, geographic location (sometimes using an interactive map), grantee, the year a grant was awarded, and/or grant amount. In some cases, as for example on the NEH's website (<https://securegrants.neh.gov/publicquery/main.aspx>), it is also possible to search by keyword. These websites remain very much works in progress.²⁰

To search more widely for grants today across a field such as media, two principal search engines exist: the *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* online Guide to Grants and the Foundation Center's Foundation Directory Online. Both are paid subscription services—and both, also, remain works in progress.²⁰

The *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* Guide to Grants database includes all foundation, corporate, and nonprofit grants that have been listed in the *Chronicle* since 1995—hundreds of thousands of grants, literally totaling billions of dollars. The Guide to Grants enables grant searches by subject keyword (there are more than 200 in the approved thesaurus), as well as by grantmaker and grant recipient. When search results are generated, each grant that appears has been tagged with at least one subject keyword.

When searching the *Chronicle's* Guide to Grants for media-related grants, there are a number of keywords to use, including "Media," "Film and television," "Internet," "Journalism," "Literature" and "Public radio and television." Somewhat less obvious keywords include: "Libraries," "Technology and education," "Advocacy" and "Public policy." Media-related grants can be found in many other subject areas—but they are not tagged as "media" or as any of the other obvious media-related categories. The *Chronicle* is explicit about the archaic nature of the searchability of its database. "Unlike some search engines," a user is advised, "this one does not accommodate Boolean terms to search for words in separate categories. For example, if you enter the search string 'California and arts' in the keyword box, the search engine will not produce a list of arts organizations in California."

Media grants in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* database are often embedded or tagged as belonging to other subject areas—and are therefore easy for media grantseekers to overlook. For example, an Omidyar Network grant to the Sunlight Foundation to support web-based efforts to publicize information about Congress's activities and the influence of money on politics, is tagged only as "Public Policy" and "Technology." A Ford Foundation grant to the Centre for Contemporary Architecture

in Moscow for its digital and video archive, an international seminar on new art spaces, and other activities to promote public interest in architecture, is tagged as “Arts and culture,” “Architecture” and “Russia and the former Soviet Union.” The *Chronicle of Philanthropy*’s taxonomy of grantmaking is “like an ancient technology”—10-plus years old, according to one of our interviewees—and while they are preparing to revamp that structure, as of today they “haven’t touched the code in...forever.”

The Foundation Center’s Foundation Directory Online also offers a search engine. It draws from a well of grant information sources larger than the *Chronicle*’s Guide to Grants, including IRS Form 990s, grantmaker websites, annual reports and published grant guidelines, the philanthropic press, and other sources. The Foundation Center’s grants classification system uses the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) for its subject/field of activity term list—a hierarchical system that the National Center for Charitable Statistics designed in the 1990s. The NTEE arranges 26 major field areas under ten basic divisions; Media/Communications organizations fall under the division of Arts, Culture, and the Humanities.

The Foundation Directory Online enables grant searches in hundreds of specific subject areas, as well as using an infinite number of keywords. Some of the Foundation Center database’s more obvious media-related subject areas include: Media, film/video; Media, journalism/publishing; Media, radio; Media, television; Media/communications; Electronic communication; Film/video; Journalism school/education; Journalism/publishing; Radio; Telecommunications; and Television. Each grant is labeled by at least one subject area, and when an individual does a search, s/he is able to save the information and label the grants with any tags s/he chooses. Even though the Foundation Center’s online search engine is enormous, it poses the same problem as the *Chronicle*’s grants database—it is extremely difficult to tease out media-related grants that are embedded in other program areas. Because of an almost infinite number of available tags, it becomes easy for a user to overlook useful search terms.

While both of these databases offer access to a vast amount of information about grantmaking, as search engines they are blunt instruments—cumbersome, unintuitive, inflexible, and unable to capture nuance. A more truly useful grants search engine would allow the user to search for and find not only very specific information (including media grants embedded in other program areas), but it would make intuitive connections that would provide the user with information that s/he might not have come upon otherwise. This would make it easier for grantmakers and grantseekers to promote and locate sources of funding and prepare proposals that reflect the current activities and interests of grantmaking organizations. Such a “grants engine” might also make its data available to the broader communities of grantees as well as to the public, in this way enabling the searchability of the data to be improved by the widest possible array of its stakeholders.²¹ The public could help sort this data effectively. Links might also be made explicit between projects that are funded or looking for funding in the nonprofit world and projects that have investment or may receive investment from commercial funding sources that are, as noted, hundreds of times larger.

*This type of information engine—
a media grantmaking application program-
ming interface, or API—would enable
grantmakers and grantees alike to take
fuller advantage of the web,*

especially as the web grows to the point that machines and people are able to connect data, ideas, and meaning.²² Enhancing the searchability of grantmaking would help grantees and grantors see the commonalities of their work across sectors. It would equip funders with a tool to help them identify gaps and more effectively target their resources.

D. Communicating across program areas

Within the funding world, various fields of giving (including media) tend to be siloed—treated as separate, distinct areas, despite the growing evidence that there is ever-greater overlap and convergence between program areas and disciplines.

As one foundation executive pointed out to us, program officers in different areas often do not communicate with one another; they sometimes even view media as someone else's competing program area rather than a complementary resource for achieving goals in their own fields. Ironically, this absence of communication also extends to media grantmakers, whose information sharing remains to be more fully developed.

Many interviewees asserted that the philanthropic sector cannot afford to continue to silo media (or any areas of giving). To some extent this process may be generational. As one media producer pointed out, the generation that grew up with the web tends to ignore silos; its members are given to collaboration and are much better at finding each other. Nevertheless, it can also be important, one foundation officer noted, to respect silos for protecting and nurturing in-depth understanding of the issues that they cover.

Affinity groups like GFEM continue to proliferate in the arts (Grantmakers in the Arts, <http://www.giarts.org/>), health (Grantmakers in Health, <http://www.gih.org/>), education (Grantmakers in Education, <http://www.edfunders.org/>), and the environment (Environmental Grantmakers Association, <http://www.ega.org/>). But as we were reminded in our 2009 funder roundtables, a common denominator for almost every one of the foundations in each of these groups is their use of media, and thus media funding, to achieve many of their program objectives.

▶ Methodology, Data, Findings

- ▶ *“The field of media is so diverse. What would be helpful is a framework or evaluation matrix which demonstrates how to measure the impact of media funding in the variety of sectors.”* **A survey respondent**

A. Methodology

There are five elements to our project methodology:

1. Extensive background research on major media funders—including a close review of their websites, grant lists, and media-related publications. Culling down our core list from a field of 75,000 foundations in the United States alone,²³ we studied foundations’ missions and guiding philosophies, and how media fits into their funding priorities—whether as its own program area, or as a subset of a larger program area (such as arts or education), or whether support for media projects is woven into other program areas like health or human rights.

2. A surveying instrument that we designed with GFEM. Together with GFEM we posted the survey online; provided it directly to funders to discuss during interviews; and customized it for subgroups of funders, including, for example, representatives of state arts and humanities organizations. We sent it to GFEM members and a broad array of media grantmakers across the country, both large and small—to over 900 executives and program officers at foundations, state and federal funding agencies, and nonprofit regrantee organizations. We followed up the initial invitation with multiple online reminders and personalized requests for information.

3. Roundtable discussions with media funders that we organized to provide us with feedback on the project, hosted by the MacArthur Foundation in Chicago and the Surdna Foundation in New York, and a two-day session that GFEM and the Media Democracy Fund organized at the Open Society Institute to review the state of media grantmaking.

4. Interviews by telephone and face-to-face with foundation program officers responsible for media grantmaking, which enabled us to delve deeply into key issues that the survey addresses.

5. Data-sharing with other researchers and journalists.

The conversations with funders have been profound. We asked program officers to think very deeply about complex issues—their responses have been thoughtful, insightful, and creative.

B. Data

The online survey that we designed and circulated together with GFEM received responses from a broadly representative group of media grantmakers, including foundations large and small, government agencies, and nonprofit regrantees. The foundations included large and long-established institutions; family foundations new and old; and young foundations that are experimenting with innovative approaches to grantmaking.

To supplement the information we collected through the online survey, we also amassed and tabulated media grantmaking data for a number of other major media-grantmaking foundations and government agencies, drawing on their online grant listings, annual reports, and/or IRS Form 990s. All told we collected material from approximately 100 grantmakers. All of the media grantmaking data we collected pertains to fiscal year 2008.

Our online survey requested both quantitative and qualitative information. For example, we asked for data on responding organizations’ areas of media funding activity; the number and total dollar amount of their media-related grants; and the proportion of their overall grantmaking that media grants represent. We inquired whether their current level of funding for media was deemed sufficient, and if it was likely to increase, decrease, or hold steady in the future. We also asked whether or not the responding organization considered itself a “media funder.” Other, qualitative, survey questions addressed issues related to evaluation, including methods and metrics, by both grantmaker and grantees. We also solicited input on how the impact of media funding on society might be better measured, evaluated,

and improved. Our automated online service, SurveyMonkey, recorded 52 responses from the field. Of these two were blank, and of the 50 remaining, some respondents elected to answer certain questions and not others. Some of our online questions received as many as 49 responses, and some as few as 35 or 24.

Below find the fifteen survey questions in full and key findings for each.

1 Media content refers to information, knowledge and artistic material conveyed through all types of media, including film and video, television, radio, print publications, and online channels.

Does your organization fund any of the following types of media content in any of its program areas?

(funding can come from outside of a media-specific fund):

1. news content for distribution on radio, TV and/or Internet
2. documentary films
3. educational and teaching resources
4. print publications (e.g., books, journals and other informational materials)
5. artistic creations
6. Web 2.0/social networking media
7. other (please specify)

Forty-nine of the 52 online survey respondents completed this question. The leading type of media content these respondents fund is documentary film (31 respondents, or 63.3%). Tied for second place (26 respondents each, or 53.1%) are print publications and news content for distribution on radio, TV and/or the Internet. Tied for third place (23 respondents each, or 46.9%) are educational and teaching resources and Web 2.0/social networking media. Artistic creations come in next, with 20 respondents, or 40.8%. Seventeen respondents (34.7%) also fund

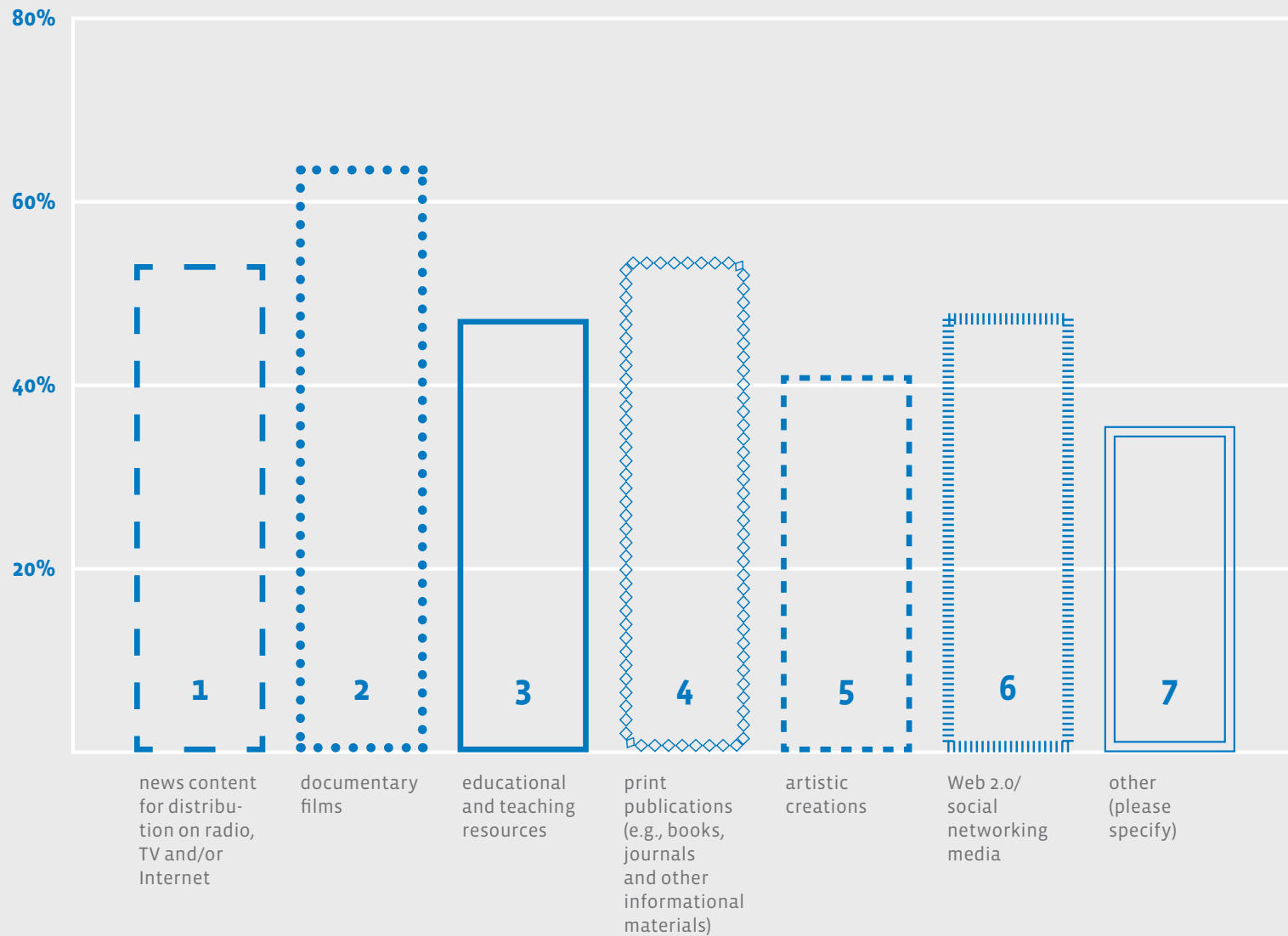
media content that does not fall into any of the above categories; indeed, one respondent noted that this survey's list of categories is "much too narrow and antiquated." Another noted: "We fund content experiments regardless of platform."

These are some of the media content funding activities respondents listed under "Other":

- ▶ advertising, branding, promotion[al] video and text on web, email and viral marketing, media watchdogs, and many other forms;
- ▶ graphic novels;
- ▶ radio and new media documentaries;
- ▶ public service announcements, outdoor media, short marketing videos for nonprofits;
- ▶ progressive radio, video, films on social change;
- ▶ photography;
- ▶ games with a strong social focus;
- ▶ combinations of all of the above to serve purposes of training youth, developing projects with a variety of goals meaningful to the project; and
- ▶ a YouTube-type survey on how the first 100 days of the Obama administration impacted children and families.

Some of the activities respondents listed under "Other" for this question, such as technical assistance, media legal advocacy and laws, regulations and technology protecting public interest in media, might be more appropriately categorized in our survey as support for Media Infrastructure or Media Policy rather than for Media Content.

Does your organization fund any of the following types of media content in any of its program areas?



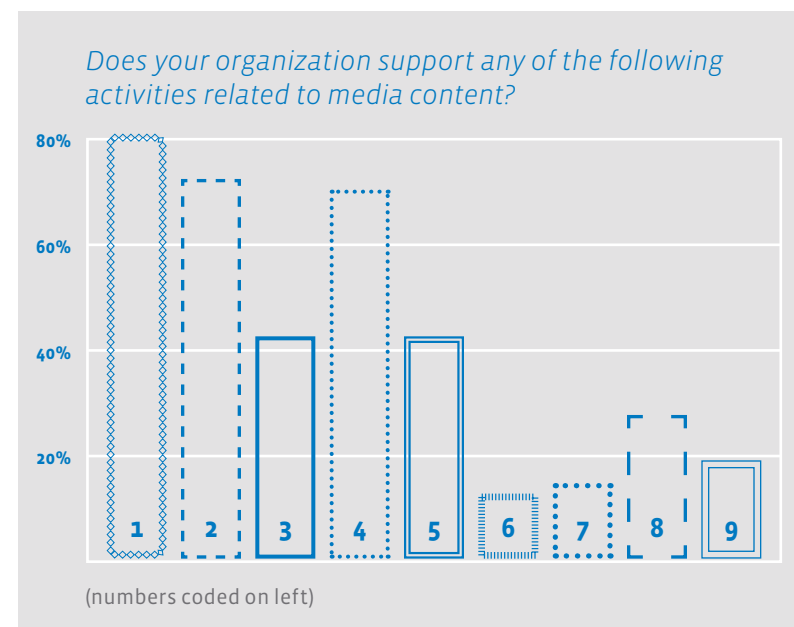
2 *Does your organization support any of the following activities related to media content?:*

1. production
2. distribution
3. exhibition
4. outreach and promotion
5. interactivity (i.e., projects that enable users to adapt, modify and transform content for their own purposes)
6. translation
7. preservation and archiving
8. tracking and analysis of media content trends
9. other (please specify)

Forty-seven out of 52 survey respondents replied to this question. The vast majority of respondents provided funding for production (38 respondents, or 80.9%), distribution (34 respondents, or 72.3%) and outreach and promotion (33 respondents, or 70.2%) of media content. (One respondent pointed out that “outreach and promotion are two different activities.”) Tied for fourth place (20 respondents each, or 42.6%) are exhibition of media content and interactivity (i.e., projects that enable users to adapt, modify and transform media content for their own purposes). Thirteen respondents (27.7%) provided funds for tracking and analysis of media content trends. The three remaining categories for activities related to media content were represented as follows: “other” (9 respondents, or 19.1%); preservation and archiving (7 respondents, 14.9%); and translation (6 respondents, or 12.8%).

Among the activities listed under “other,” all but one—audience engagement/impact on issues—could be placed elsewhere according to the survey categorization. For example:

- ▶ documentary research and development (this could be categorized under media content);
- ▶ website development and leveraging of Web 2.0 and open source software (media infrastructure);
- ▶ general operating support for media arts organizations (media infrastructure);
- ▶ technical assistance for organizational and professional development (media infrastructure);
- ▶ post-production and editing costs to complete a film (media content production); and
- ▶ development, research, capacity building/education for filmmakers (media infrastructure).



3

Media infrastructure comprises not only the physical bricks & mortar installations, equipment and technology that enable media outlets to operate, but also the capacity of individuals (e.g., journalists, scholars, artists), institutions (e.g., journalism schools), associations and networks to produce, distribute and communicate media content.

Does your organization support any projects or initiatives that support media infrastructure in any of the following ways?:

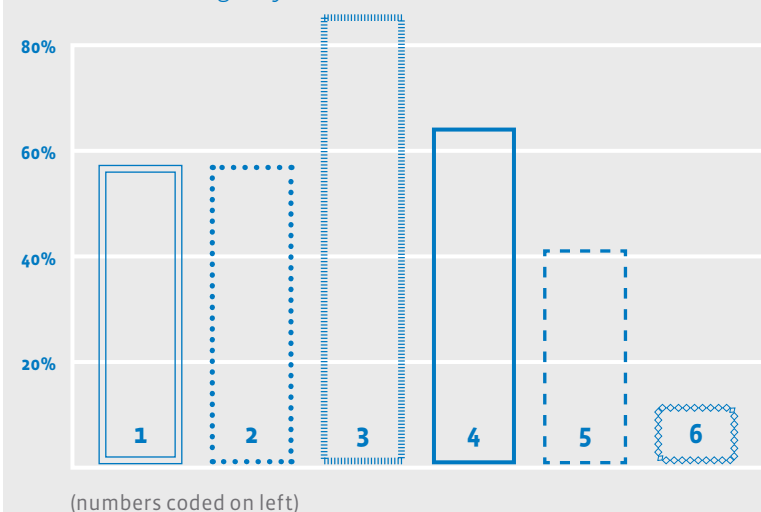
1. developing and expanding the reach of media outlets
2. developing and disseminating innovative technologies and processes for media production and distribution
3. building and strengthening the capacity of individuals, organizations and networks to produce, distribute and communicate media content through training and other forms of resource, skills and capacity development
4. building up the field by fostering and strengthening networks, associations, coalitions and partnerships
5. developing and disseminating best practices, metrics and sustainable models
6. other (please specify)

Forty-two out of 52 survey respondents completed this question. The vast majority (36, or 85.7%) provided support for media infrastructure by building and strengthening the capacity of individuals, organizations, and networks to produce, distribute and communicate media content through training and other forms of resource, skills, and capacity development. In second place was building up the field by fostering and strengthening networks, associations, coalitions, and partnerships (27 respondents, or 64.3%). Tied for third place with 24 respondents each (57.1%) were developing and expanding the reach of media outlets, and developing and disseminating innovative technologies and processes for media production and distribution. Seventeen

respondents (40.5%) provided support for developing and disseminating best practices, metrics and sustainable models. Five respondents (11.9%) checked the “other” box, though several used it for comments on their support for media infrastructure, such as “we fund all these issues, but through the lens of a specific geographic community”; “some of the above occurs indirectly or informally through our media grantmaking, however we do not offer grants specifically for these activities.” Other forms of support for media infrastructure include:

- ▶ funding media service organizations;
- ▶ funding replicable pilot projects for community news; and
- ▶ funding service organizations that assist other media arts groups and organizations.

Does your organization support any projects or initiatives that support media infrastructure in any of the following ways?



4

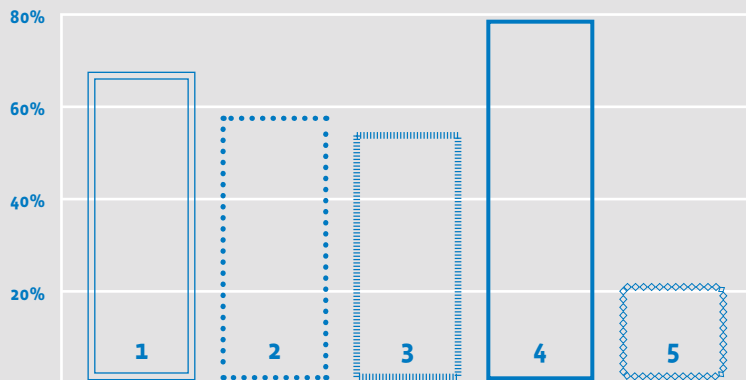
Media policy broadly refers to the regulations, legislation, judicial oversight and institutional practices that shape our information and communications systems, including control and organization of culture industries, news and journalism, advertising, Internet and telephone services.

Does your organization fund any projects or initiatives related to media policy?

For example, do you support any of the following activities:

1. monitoring media policy and tracking media policy legislation
2. studying and analyzing public policy issues related to media policy
3. proposing and recommending media policy
4. building public constituencies and partnerships to promote media policy (e.g., through knowledge building, public education on, for example, media justice issues, grassroots organizing and media association building)
5. other (please specify)

Does your organization fund any projects or initiatives related to media policy?



(numbers coded above)

Only 24 out of 52 respondents answered this question, which may indicate (as more than one of our interviewees noted) that funding for media policy may lag behind funding for media content and media infrastructure. Nineteen of these respondents (79.2%) supported media policy by providing funding for building public constituencies and partnerships to promote media policy (e.g., through knowledge building, public education on, for example, media justice issues, grassroots organizing, and media association building). In second place, monitoring media policy and tracking media policy legislation received financial support from 16 respondents (66.7%). Fourteen respondents (58.3%) funded study and analysis of public policy issues related to media policy. In fourth place, thirteen respondents (54.2%) provided funding for proposing and recommending media policy. Five respondents (20.8%) checked “other,” but again, several used this as an opportunity to comment on their overall response to the question. Others noted that they supported media policy through regranting and by providing support for understanding technology’s role in the changing media environment.

5

How does your organization’s media-related grantmaking (as defined above) relate to your organization’s overall mission?

Forty-four out of 52 respondents answered this question. GFEM survey respondents and other funders we interviewed did not share a uniform view of how media grantmaking relates to achieving their organization’s mission and goals. Some respondents represented grantmaking organizations where media funding is the exclusive purpose (“crucial to our mission”; “the primary initiative”), while others considered media funding tangential to their organization’s priorities. Many more fell in the middle; for their organizations, media serves as a tool to achieve core funding objectives, or as one program officer at a long-established foundation put it, media is “both a substantive

program and an essential tool used in other program areas.” Funders who recognized media as instrumental described it as “the common thread throughout our program area of arts, environment and social and economic justice”; “tied directly to our mission of helping to reduce poverty”; “an outgrowth or interpretation of our mission to support science and technology in colleges and universities”; and as “tools to support our core issue areas, which include education, environment, global economic opportunity, combating the digital divide.”

Overall, we detected a growing appreciation of the centrality of media for achieving program objectives in all areas. Several respondents answered much as this one:

Thus far, our media grantmaking has been in support of our other policy goals (public education reform, planning and zoning reform, etc.), however, it is beginning to look like [we] are heading towards developing more media-centric strategy.

One respondent underscored the centrality of media as a tool for change quite succinctly:

[Our] mission is to develop, promote and implement progressive ideas and values. Can't do this without media.

6 *Does your organization fund media projects because they explicitly support your media-related goals and values, or does your organization fund media projects because they support objectives in your other program areas? Or do you do both?*

Forty-four of 52 respondents answered this question. Respondents offered a full palette of rationales for their funding of media projects—as supporting media-related goals and values, supporting objectives in other program areas, or as three foundation officers wrote:

Both. We fund media projects to help the goals of the lines of work (for example a documentary or a journalistic exposé on a social justice issue that is central to one of our lines of work) but we also fund excellence in journalism and work to protect the media structures that would disseminate that journalism or documentary. We fund the media and media ecosystem simultaneously.

We do both. Through our environment program we will only fund media-related projects if they are specific to our objectives in biodiversity conservation and sustainable consumption and production. Typically they are smaller grants. In the Human Rights Program we fund more directly into media reform efforts, ethnic media, and alternative media.

Both. Increasingly moving toward the latter...

In certain cases funders ruled out either option:

We do neither. Our program supports individuals whose works reflect great storytelling and artistic skill.

Neither: We fund media projects as experiments in the new media ecosystem to build capacity and models for what works.

Some might interpret these answers as demonstrating support for media for its own sake, but clearly the respondents do not see it that way. Their answers highlight the challenges that those who collect polling responses like this can face when terminology has been left unkempt and overgrown, over time, in the field—a semantic Grey Gardens.

In general, we noted that as funders increasingly seek to support ambitious goals—to “ignite social change,” as one foundation officer put it—media funding becomes a critical tool for their work.

7 *How many media-related grants (as defined above) did your organization make in 2008?*

Forty-four of 52 respondents answered this question. Here, we supplemented the survey results with research and interviews to provide a more comprehensive portrait, including some of the largest federal agencies and foundations that had not participated in the project online.

1-10	▶ 22
11-50	▶ 24
51-100	▶ 6
101-250	▶ 2
over 250	▶ 3

The number of media-related grants awarded in 2008 by the 57 organizations we surveyed and studied ranged from one to more than 600. The majority of funders who responded to the survey awarded 50 or fewer media-related grants in 2008. Those that awarded more than 50 grants included large, established foundations (e.g., the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, with 109 grants), and on the high end, federal agencies like the Institute of Museum and Library Services (410 grants) and one state arts agency, the New York State Council on the Arts (625 to 675 grants). Most state arts and humanities agencies and regranting nonprofit organizations we surveyed awarded fewer than 50 grants. Many foundations, both small and large, awarded fewer than 50 (and in many cases fewer than ten) media-related grants.

8 *What is the total dollar amount your organization devoted to media-related grantmaking (as defined above) in 2008?*

Forty-five of 52 respondents completed this question. Here too we supplemented the survey results with research and interviews to provide a more comprehensive portrait, including some of the largest federal agencies and foundations that had not participated in the project online.

up to \$10,000	▶ 2
\$10,001-\$50,000	▶ 7
\$50,001-\$100,000	▶ 3
\$100,001-\$500,000	▶ 14
\$500,001-\$1,000,000	▶ 5
\$1,000,001-\$10,000,000	▶ 17
\$10,000,001-\$50,000,000	▶ 2
\$50,000,001-\$100,000,000	▶ 3
over \$100,000,000	▶ 2

The total dollar amount devoted to media grants in 2008 by the 55 organizations we surveyed and studied varied widely, from \$10,000 on the low end to over \$200 million. The largest totals—themselves representing a broad dollar range—belonged to federal agencies and some of the large, established foundations. The smallest totals in our survey belonged to small foundations, most state arts and humanities agencies, and some regranting organizations.

9 *What proportion of your organization's overall grantmaking was devoted to your media-related grants?*

Forty-five of 52 respondents answered this question. Here too we supplemented the survey results with research and interviews to provide a more comprehensive portrait, including some of the largest federal agencies and foundations that had not participated in the project online.

>1 percent	▶ 5
1-10 percent	▶ 16
11-25 percent	▶ 10
26-50 percent	▶ 8
51-75 percent	▶ 5
76-99 percent	▶ 3
100 percent	▶ 10

Of the 57 funders we surveyed and studied, the largest concentration (31) devoted up to 25 percent of their grantmaking dollars to media-related grants in 2008. Within this subgroup, five organizations devoted less than 1 percent to media grants—but this bears closer examination because it does not necessarily mean that the amount of funds they devoted to media grants was minuscule. For example, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation awarded two media-related grants in 2008, accounting for less than 1% of total grantmaking—yet the total dollar amount of these two grants was \$1,679,879. Meanwhile, by contrast, the Humanities Council of South Carolina made 11 media grants in 2008, accounting for 43% of all the Council's grantmaking that year—totaling only \$61,725. At the high end of the spectrum, ten organizations we surveyed awarded 100% of their funds to media-related grants in 2008; however, most of these organizations are

regranting nonprofits whose mission is media-focused, or foundations such as the Instructional Telecommunications Foundation and the Benton Foundation whose mission is media-focused.

10 *Do you consider the amount/ proportion of resources your organization devotes to media to be sufficient? Please explain.*

Forty-five funders responded to this question. Grantee and prospective grantee demand for foundation and government agency media funding has long outpaced the availability of funds. But as media capabilities become more vital to all grantmaking sectors in the digital age, funders are being further pressed to support more and more endeavors they see as worthwhile.

Certain funders responding to the survey indicated that their proportion of funds being allocated toward media is sufficient because, as one wrote,

the media initiatives are a strategy to build awareness and impact for social change—social change that comes from the work of grantees working to reduce poverty and build sustainable prosperity.

Overall, respondents indicated that new resources and new partnerships for resources would help their work move forward.

One longstanding media funder emphasized not the absolute amount of funding dollars but strategies for making each of those dollars have more impact:

I think it is getting there. We need to do more internal measures and build more support to help program officers to have the communications literacy and communications strategy that will make their work most impactful. What we need more than increased \$\$ in this foundation is increased large partners outside the foundation.

A family fund program officer wrote:

Because of the nature of communication today, we see continued opportunities to help our nonprofit partners to become more savvy in using new media as well as implement traditional marketing and outreach efforts.

A new foundation echoed the need to strengthen the partnership nature of its grantmaking—and the field of philanthropy’s ability to quantify and account for the same:

Media investments are high leverage for the foundation and core to our mission so it is difficult to define what ‘sufficient’ would be. Since these investments are typically in partnerships where we work collaboratively with the organization receiving the grant, we do not have the internal bandwidth to manage an infinite number of such relationships and realistically are at the boundary of what we can do given current staff capacity. If we were to add capacity proportionately to incremental grants, we could certainly have significantly more impact. As a side note, your analysis does not take into account the collaborative nature of our work so you are missing operating expenses associated with those partnerships.

But by and large answers to this question were negative. “No,” wrote a program officer of a family foundation:

[s]uccessful promotion, mainstreaming, popularization of progressive ideas and values requires better content and wider/deeper distribution.”

“No,” answered a state agency funder:

Traditional funding practices through discipline based support to non-profit organizations is failing to recognize the ubiquitous environment of digital technology, i.e. all arts disciplines now employ at some level (basic to sophisticated) a variety of technology for a variety of purposes from art making to web sites, to social networking to IT functions, for communications, preservation, production, dissemination, distribution, etc. There needs to be across disciplines either a distinct allocation within discipline-based budgets for technology-based funding, or a separate Technology Fund allocation for cross-discipline technology support, hybrid technology-based work and preservation.”

“No,” a regrantee nonprofit indicated; “there’s still a lack of awareness about the importance of media.” “We see more opportunities to nurture more experimentation,” wrote the head of a new foundation media initiative, “so we could expand our activities in media grantmaking.” “We think we need a lot more resources to produce the kind of impact we’d like to see,” the head of a funding group answered, “i.e. a critical mass of media makers of color who have the space to innovate.”

Others wrote appreciating the new gaps that media funding must address. One of the most generous funders in the media funding field wrote:

Not really. I know [our media funding total] seems like a substantial sum. But the magnitude of the challenge—the ‘creative destruction’ of the media ecosystem brought about by the digital age—is much greater than anything one foundation can cope with.

The 10,000 traditional newspaper reporters recently unemployed, for example, represents something along the order of magnitude of between \$300 million and \$400 million worth of lost journalism each year—in the US alone.

A state agency representative noted that “for a non-media organization the proportion devoted to media support is substantial,” but placed its support level again in the context of rising demand:

However, as we received well over \$4.5 million in requests in the last round of the documentary grant, there is certainly demand for an increased level of funding.

Regrantors, large foundations, and smaller family foundations alike reminded us here that across content, infrastructure, and policy there are in absolute dollars insufficient funds available. “Since virtually all of our funding is media related,” wrote one, “we believe that of the funds we have we are devoting sufficient amounts to media funding. However, the amount of funds we have are not sufficient to support the number of media projects we would like to fund.” “In the media policy field,” wrote another, “there will always be greater need than we have financial capacity to support.”

“No,” wrote a program officer from another foundation:

We feel we’re engaged in a war of ideas in which you can be right and still be wrong unless you can popularize and mainstream those ideas so they get adopted.

11 *Do you anticipate that the proportion of your organization’s overall funding devoted to media will increase, decrease or remain the same in the future?*

Forty-five funders responded to this question. The majority of survey respondents expected the proportion of media funding to increase or remain the same; in a few cases, it was noted that while the proportion was likely to remain the same, the absolute dollar amount would increase.

Several respondents anticipated a decrease in funding because of the current recession, but several of these said that over the longer term, the proportion of media funding was likely to hold steady. A few respondents were unsure what would happen to their organization’s media funding, usually citing the economy, but in more than one instance because the organization was reconsidering its funding priorities.

One state funding agency head wrote:

Outside the current climate, hopefully an increase – and hopefully to address the issues in [question] no. 10 above. The use of media technology is increasing, across all disciplines, and so the current [...] budgets are already over burdened and ever more so.

Another funder from a large foundation answered:

Increase. It's becoming more and more apparent that excellent work that goes unpromoted is less successful work.

Also there is a developing understanding of the connection between media infrastructure (for example universal broadband) and the foundation's larger social justice goals in education, community development, journalism, government and financial transparency and even human rights.

Others indicated that assessments about the role of media in their grantmaking would be under way. As a program officer from a regional foundation wrote:

This is a large question. Over the next year, we intend to evaluate the impact of our various media efforts on behavioral change—decisions and actions by targeted publics to reduce poverty and build prosperity for the long term.

12 *Does your organization require grantees to evaluate the impact of the media work you fund?*

If so, what evaluation methods and criteria do they typically use?

Evaluation measures that funders require of their grantees to assess the impact of their work with media vary considerably, as is true of grantee evaluation in all philanthropic sectors. Of the forty-five funders who responded to this question, one indicated that his foundation does not require grantees to self-evaluate; his institution has identified this as a “primary shortcoming.”

He was not alone. Many others indicated openly in their survey responses to this question and Question 13 that the absence of such a requirement is often a function of the difficulty in establishing adequate tools for measuring and naming the kinds of change that media grants can produce.

The metrics for those who do measure change are customized—also a result of too little common nomenclature—and involve benchmarks that are both hard and soft. One grantmaker indicated that he asks media grantees to quantify impact based on financial, business, and social metrics:

Financial Metrics: Progress toward increasing an earned income stream or diversifying funding for the whole program.

Business Metrics: Progress toward proving business model or achieve program goals. For example: – Number of new customers for a community media production program – Number of new users to a social networking site (designed to build civic engagement) – Number of new stories produced from local community.

Social Metrics: Progress toward achieving social goal of program (this differs depending upon intended outcomes of each grant). For example: – Number of youth trained in technology skills – Viral impact of news stories created by community – Number of at-risk youth who get tested for HIV/AIDS (this is an example of an outreach program using social media).

Another funder has prepared a framework that assesses a grant’s “social impact” by characterizing “quality of media, public awareness, public engagement, strengthened social movement, and social/policy change”:

We suggest a variety of metrics that can be used to track and assess impact along these dimensions including survey data, audience data, press coverage, Google analytics and other web-based tracking.

“The key challenge,” wrote another, “is finding the appropriate methodology for a particular project. The starting point is determining a very specific concrete measurable objective.” “This is a difficult field to measure,” another foundation program officer indicated. “Most of our evaluation methods are anecdotal,” another told us.

One longstanding media funder at a major foundation answered:

Not systematically as a foundation... but that is a great idea and if you have any suggestions of evaluation tools I would love to see them.

Another told us that her foundation does not require grantees to fulfill such requirements because its organizational eye is on change over the long term—which presumably is impossible for grantees themselves to measure.

Our organization is focused on impacting the media landscape at large – we are less concerned with linking our grantees’ work to direct and immediate social change and more interested in long term cultural shifts.

All of these responses indicate the challenges that evaluation poses, and not only to media grantmaking, but all grantmaking. Development of standardized terminology related to media is a critical initial step that can be taken toward improving efforts to assess the impact of media grantmaking.

13 *Does your organization evaluate the impact of your media-related grants?*

If so, what methods and criteria do you use for evaluation?

Forty-four funders responded to this question. Whether and how—through what methods and using which criteria—media grantmakers evaluate their media grants are questions that truly open doors into the ever-faster interactions now under way between money, work, technology, and societal change.

Many grantmakers answering the survey—including new and old, well-known and less famous foundations—indicated that they do not evaluate their media grants. Others wrote that:

Our evaluation regarding impact of media-related grants is minimal.

We have not done so yet, but will in the future.

[L]ack funds for formal evaluation but do informal evals.

[O]ur internal metrics are underdeveloped and we are looking for direction in that area.

We could be doing much more in this area.

We are interested in learning more about ways to do this.

Still others describe their work with evaluations as based more on informal “observation,” “intuition,” and “anecdotal information” “from time to time,” rather than on any standardized metrics. One response, not atypical, indicated that the funder looks to the grantee for appropriate tools:

We evaluate based on the goals the grantee set out to do. These goals are usually not quantitative and therefore based on reflection and feeling vs. hard metrics. The media projects we support are usually projects that are not linked to a specific cause or issue, therefore direct impact is very hard to measure. We just hope the projects will have an impact on decisions people make in the long-term.

A number of funders conduct “surveys,” “interviews,” “reports,” “field scanning,” “monitoring,” and “external evaluations” of their own—and in some cases the deployment of other simple but unidentified “methods” and “criteria.”

A number of other funders have been engaged in the development of metrics—some based on sophisticated models of social change and some reflecting the film and electronic media backgrounds (e.g., an interest in Nielsen ratings) of our respondents. Yet almost every respondent indicated that, much like these grantmakers below, its measurement criteria are undergoing serious revision:

Up until now, most of our measures have been on output. We’ve collected anecdotal information on outcomes (behavior change). We are designing specific outcome goals and evaluations into our 2009/2010 public relations efforts of all types: web, web 2.0, meetings, etc. These would include: who was reached, what did they do with the information/material/ideas/contacts.

Yes, we are currently revising our framework to evaluate the impact of our media-related grants. We are looking at the following metrics for each of our program areas: Youth and Technology: Number of youth trained on technology skills.

Number of youth that gain jobs in this area we are also developing a methodology to calculate the Social Return on Investment and the Net Present Social Value of youth media training and production enterprises that is based up the increase in lifetime earnings of youth in these programs and also looks at the Social...Community Media: Sustainable community media outlets (companies) established in underserved communities. Civic Engagement: Organizing and Advocacy organizations in underserved communities build capacity to utilize technology Increase number of persons in an underserved community utilizing technology (media).

Generally, we measure the effectiveness of media grants based on our ability to increase audience share (reach beyond the choir), change audience attitudes and values or generate unearned media.

We use polling, focus groups; we monitor audience actions and responses. But this list is not exclusive; we use different metrics in different settings and with different projects. Each is relatively unique and tailored specifically to outcome sought.

Yes we look at the same dimensions that we ask our grantees to report on. We use surveys and interviews with grantees and others to assess the impact. Was a compelling, timely social issues story produced? Can we assess its level of quality via reviews, festival experience, broadcast theatrical success, web-based following? Was it able to raise public awareness about the key social issues profiled in the media? Did the media and its associated community engagement campaign engage people in action? What kind? Was it sustained? Was it useful to nonprofit and advocacy organizations working on these issues on a day-to-day basis? Did it help them grow their membership? Spur collaboration among organizations? Did the film or media help to spur policy or other social change?

One state-agency funder wrote:

Currently we primarily focus our evaluations on the experiences of people directly involved with the media production (producers, subjects, scholars, etc.). We evaluate the results of our media grants through final reports, participant and follow-up surveys, and at present a major evaluation of scholar involvement with media projects is underway. Until recently the organization has been more focused on the development and production stages than the outreach and engagement stages. This is in the process of being revised and we plan to have more direct involvement in supporting and evaluating public engagement in the near future.

Many funders critiqued their own approaches as “no longer meaningful” and “inconsistent.” Others indicated that they are developing with some excitement new methods of measurement. “Could spend a whole paper on presentation,” wrote one:

We look at ultimate change and the concrete causal connection between that change and a particular media project. There are always two vectors for the media used: educating policymakers and electeds and building public awareness and support. In reality, we try to build specific campaigns, like moveon [MoveOn.org].

Others listed their own:

External Evaluator Participatory evaluation, Theory of Change process. How has the funder grantmaking changed the ability of grassroots/local organizing groups to contribute to social/political change in the media/communications sector?

Other program officers deployed terms shaded with commercial-media and venture-investment terminology:

We look for robust and frequent content creation, the ability of the grantee to leverage our grant to bring in additional sources of revenue, and sustainability beyond our grant cycle.

Absolutely. The metrics depend on the objectives of the grant.

Overall, we look at story quality and alignment with [our] definition of social entrepreneurship, number of viewers/listeners reached (gross impressions), cost per impression, changes in audience awareness and perception over time and impact on work of social entrepreneurs on the ground.

One longstanding media funder wrote:

[N]o. Not that I know about. I suspect that some program officers go into a communications strategy with clear objectives and deliverables, I certainly do. And I think most program officers assess the effectiveness of each grant based on those objectives. I'm not sure if they take a broader view of how communications is impacting their larger line of work goals. It would be good if there was a way to do that systematically.

How might the impact of media funding on society be better measured and evaluated?

What metrics and criteria would you suggest might be helpful?

Thirty-five funders responded to this question. Methods of measuring the impact upon society of media funding—of media funding as a whole, rather than just of individual grants, however significant each one may be—constitute a topic for intense discussion among grantmakers.

“I believe we need to begin by setting and articulating clear and measurable outcomes,” writes one funder:

by having as clear an understanding and articulation as possible of the social change desired by the target public we care about. We then need to work backwards from there to determine what media strategies and influencers would best help achieve the outcomes. A very large challenge is to settle upon the two or three indicators of success that will be measured at various points along any campaign. I strive for simplicity and practicality, but this is only possible when the social change and the target public is well defined.

Opportunities are multiplying, wrote another.

There are numerous ways in which to measure – statistics, voting & election outcomes, legislation, Federal and State budget allocations for public media ...improvements in public education through enlightened curriculum; national cultural policies need to be put in place...this may sound random but ‘media funding’ is a broad area of public support to me.

“Measure dialogue,” wrote another.

For example, if a group funds a film focused on conflict resolution, you can measure the film’s ability to bring opposing groups to screenings and panel discussions more easily than you can measure shifts in attitudes.

Another funder told us:

Ultimately we need to understand how media can lead to real policy or social change that improves the lives of individuals, families and communities. Can it begin to lay the groundwork for increased understanding [of] entrenched social problems and their possible solutions? Can it move people to individual or collective action on these issues? Can it help strengthen non-profit organizations and make the advocates’ jobs easier? Can it inspire new programs, civic engagement and policy solutions?

“I think media’s impact needs to be measured over decades,” wrote a program officer from a family foundation.

Others indicated that the subject of this question deserves its own report. “This requires a conversation,” wrote one state agency funder. An independent family foundation program officer echoed the thought: “This is an extremely complex subject and requires extended dialogue.” “This cannot be answered in a survey,” wrote a third. “I think this is a complex question that individual organizations need to ask of themselves, based on their goals,” wrote another. “Much depends on the individual organization and the reasons why this funding fits their mission,” wrote the program officer for a new foundation active in media support.

There is some interest in centralizing criteria—a theme of this report, to be sure—and applying technology to the gathering, sorting, and distribution of data to answer the question.

The field of media is so diverse,

wrote one regrantor program officer...

What would be helpful is a framework or evaluation matrix which demonstrates how to measure the impact of media funding in the variety of sectors.

A representative from a family foundation provided a similar suggestion:

[W]e need to develop nonprofit methodologies and infrastructure for creating, monitoring, disseminating and using population and market-based data and trends.

Another family foundation representative indicated that his foundation:

would like to move beyond direct measurements (e.g., page views) and understand how Foundation-funded coverage increases the transparency of public decision making and raises general awareness and understanding of key issues facing our city and region.

A longstanding funder of media, and public media in particular, advocated for an evaluation of the evaluations that have been completed and are now underway:

It would be good to conduct a meta-analysis of evaluative work by GFEM, J-LAB, Media Democracy Fund, the Cultural Data Project, academic institutions, think tanks and others to examine media funding and its relation to content, infrastructure and policy across a broad spectrum. It is also important to look at specific media outlets to determine best practices in measuring impact and then work to take these evaluative strategies to scale.

This is where technology can play an even more significant role.

We need smarter computer metrics and more of them, to enlist media scholars in this, to enlist government. We have a long way to go.

Another foundation program officer advocated:

Developing short-term and long-term measures, through surveys, focus groups, policy development, legislature, and building of grassroots campaigns. Using digital media to do this would be important.

As in other survey areas, the promise of partnerships made sense to many of those whom we interviewed. Reflecting GFEM's original focus, one funder wrote:

Filmmakers need to be freed from foundations requiring them to comply with their strict evaluation standards to allow the filmmakers to do what they best do: make films. Instead, foundations should form partnerships with other foundations, increase their advisory boards and grant committees, and include as many different constituencies as possible when considering a grant to feel comfortable with a grant and its purpose from the get-go.

15 *Does your organization consider itself a “media funder”?*

Forty-six out of 52 respondents to the online survey answered this question. The overwhelming majority of them—30 respondents, or 65.2%—indicated that they do consider themselves media funders. Nine respondents (19.6%) do not consider themselves media funders. Five respondents (10.9%) provided mixed answers such as “yes and no”; “historically no, increasingly yes”; and “moving in that direction.”

C. Four challenges

We encountered four key challenges with the collection and tabulation of survey data. Each in its own way reflects the difficulty—and subjectivity—still inherent in any attempt to quantify fluid data in a field that includes a variety of types of grantmakers, regrants, and grantees but which as yet has few agreed-upon definitions under which grants are to be classified.

The first challenge is determining what constitutes a media grant. Our definitions of media content, media infrastructure, and media policy are expansive in scope. We have attempted to be as comprehensive as possible in capturing media-related grants. Yet because the common characteristics and language for defining such grants have not yet been agreed upon by grantmakers and grantees, the determination about including or excluding a given grant remains a subjective—in this case our subjective—decision.

When a grant results in a grantee producing or advancing a media product, strengthens a grantee's capacity to produce media, or affects the political economy around current and future media producers and distributors, we have called it a media grant. Yet in some cases these coding decisions may not seem obvious. For example, we counted as media grants the awards of foundations such as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as well as federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts to support the writing work of scholars and professional authors.

Grants and fellowships awarded to filmmakers to conduct pre-production research, or to support them and their work in other ways, are obviously media grants and will result in the production of media content (films, television, videos); so, by the same logic, grants to writers and scholars (and here we included university faculty, graduate and postgraduate students, but not undergraduates) for research or writing time also will result in

the production of media content (as text published in print and/or online). Over time, almost all of these grants will be directed at producing content for a screen of one kind or another, and the expansive or inclusive approach that we have adopted will seem even more sensible.

The second challenge is determining the tipping point at which a grant should be considered a media grant when media is only one component of the program or project that it supports.

How big should that media component be for a grant as a whole to qualify as a media grant? Should only part of that grant be counted—and how can that proportion be determined (especially without access to the budget in the grant proposal)? To cite just two examples of this dilemma, should a grant awarded to a research institution to support an annual conference, an online journal, and print publications count as a media grant? What about a grant to a museum to mount a special exhibition that also covers a printed catalog and website about the exhibition?

The third challenge stems from the difficulty in identifying and qualifying embedded media grants. While it is obvious that grants to support publication of a book or film (media content), a journalism school (media infrastructure), and an advocacy campaign promoting net neutrality (media policy) are media grants, many media grants are embedded in other program areas. For example, a grantmaker that funded the creation of a website on community healthcare resources would probably categorize it as a health grant rather than a media grant—even if that website features new video production, a deliverable close to the work of many of the grantmakers involved in GFEM. Grantmaking as a whole—beyond grantmaking to obvious media projects and programs—will benefit from distinguishing media from other aspects of these given grants; and grantmaking in media will benefit from the field of philanthropy as a whole recognizing how much money is in fact devoted to media even as it is classified under other names.

Finally, the language of our survey questions and our own tabulation policies notwithstanding, not all of the program officers and grants administrators who completed our survey of media grantmaking took such an expansive approach to categorizing grants. Indeed, some did not consider funding for print publications as media grants, but counted only grants for audiovisual media (film, television, etc.) in their survey totals. Many did not count embedded media grants that support another program area, or grants in which media was only one component. When, in surveys and interviews, program officers were explicit about their own forms of categorization, even if they were restrictive, we allowed the foundation's or agency's own tallies to trump our own in the survey. Sometimes these categorization efforts reflected serious scrutiny and self-awareness—the sight of which, in this collection process, was reward enough. One respondent from a state humanities agency, for example, wrote to us as follows:

Our definition of media is not as broad as yours, so [our survey response] does not include grant projects that involve print publications, or that use media in outreach and promotion. All grant projects are required to have a publicity plan, so virtually all use some sort of print, broadcast, or electronic media for this purpose. Grant funds sometimes cover these costs and sometimes not. We fund print publications only if they result from a public program that the grant also funds, such as a catalogue for an exhibition or an anthology resulting from a writing workshop project. The print publication is rarely the emphasis of the grant, so these grants are not included in the list.

Beyond these challenges of subjectivity, we faced an additional challenge from the simple fact that the survey focused on grantmaking in 2008. The economic crisis has had a dramatic negative impact on the endowments of countless foundations and the budgets of all government funding agencies, and it is too soon to tell what the “new normal” will be. This uncertainty is evident in many survey responses to Question 11: “Do you anticipate that the proportion of your organization’s overall funding devoted to media will increase, decrease, or remain the same in the future?” In addition to all else it has wrought, the uncertain economic environment has made it all the more difficult to identify trends in media grantmaking based on 2008 data.

▶ New Strategies for Engagement

- ▶ *We would suggest that our emergent hyperconnectedness across media delivered via billions of screens and speakers, on machines large and small, fixed and portable, will render all of us who support social change interested in accessing the great new network.*

A. A new understanding of stakeholders and participants in the changing media landscape

As time goes on, almost all grantmaking will involve support—direct and indirect—for media policy, content, and infrastructure. Likewise, most improvements in people’s capacity for and access to the means of media production and distribution are likely to have a beneficial impact on social reform in almost every field, from health to education to the environment. Ironically, the second point, a positivist view of media progress, perhaps is more deeply and broadly appreciated, but it is the first point that we seek to drive home. We would suggest that our emergent hyper-connectedness across media delivered via billions of screens and speakers, on machines large and small, fixed and portable, will render all of us who support social change interested in accessing the great new network. Indeed, this focus on control of the media—printing presses in Paris in the late 1700s, telegraph offices in St. Petersburg in the early 1900s—has been a fixture of change agents of all kinds for centuries. What marks our current moment is that we find ourselves working with commonly denominated technologies where almost all messaging is moving, or can move, toward the screen.

B. The potential for new forms of stakeholder collaboration

Opportunities thus exist for increased collaboration among all types of grantmakers that support media as a tool for change—including foundations, government agencies, and other stakeholders who invest in the future of media, as well as media grantees.

Sharing information, approaches, and techniques could contribute to more effective media grantmaking

—which in turn could help encourage increased funding for media-related projects.

Internal collaboration

While fostering collaboration among media grantmakers is certainly important, perhaps the first place to encourage cooperation around media funding is within foundations themselves.

“It’s becoming more and more apparent,” one program officer noted for us, “that excellent work that goes unpromoted is less successful work.”

Media are key to promotion, yet within many foundations, internal support for media grantmaking can still be weak. This is in part a result of the silo effect described earlier. But it is also due to a lack of understanding among foundation staff that media can be a useful and sophisticated tool for achieving program goals. Several grantmakers noted that even today, they still struggle to persuade their colleagues of the value of supporting media.

One critical way to build internal collaboration and support for media grantmaking is to prove that media grants work.

To do so, of course, requires the development of clear metrics for measuring and evaluating the impact of media grants that will demonstrate their success. Several foundation officers told us that they strive to be good educators internally, and described methods they used to help their colleagues understand that media is not a competitor for grantmaking funds, but a complementary strategy for achieving program goals—in every area. One program officer told us that she regularly brings in guest speakers from media organizations such as Wikipedia and Facebook to talk to her colleagues about the social impact of their work, and several others organize board education days around specific media issues to build board members' support for media grantmaking. Another foundation executive makes a habit of showing documentary films to colleagues to introduce them to issues and get them thinking about how they could use media to strengthen the impact of their grants.

Collaboration among grantmakers

Numerous opportunities exist for collaboration among media funders. Several foundations can award complementary grants to the same grantee to help ensure a project's success. Or, as an executive from a small media funding organization suggested, some funders, such as his organization, can shoulder the initial

risk in a project by awarding a small grant, or seed funding, to demonstrate confidence in that project and help it achieve some initial success. He told us that his organization often is willing to help such grantees apply for larger grants from other sources. Grantmakers can also collaborate by sharing information about projects and grant requests, and by connecting grantmaking colleagues to high-quality grantseekers. For example, one foundation executive noted that when she is unable to fund a good project because it does not fall within her foundation's grantmaking priorities, she contacts other funders on the applicant's behalf and makes introductions.

Several foundation executives pointed out that there are ways to collaboratively leverage foundation assets beyond pooling money. For example, foundations that share basic values can work together to rally around issues and advance advocacy.

As one foundation executive told us, “We have way more influence than we have money.”

With regard to media, another grantmaker noted, “the rules of the digital environment are being shaped now, and will have an impact for years to come,” so it behooves foundations to play a role in shaping the ecology of media by supporting freedom of the press, broadband access, net neutrality, and other critical media policy issues. This will require, another program officer stated, rethinking critical ideas about learning and teaching, as well as the basic foundations and architecture that support them. He cited increasing broadband access as an extremely important tool in this regard because it helps make learning more equitable, and not only in the classroom. Indeed, collaboration among funders around support for broadband access is all the more urgent since its impact cuts across so many important sectors—not only education and communication, but also civic and political engagement and access to healthcare and environmental protection, among many others.

A foundation executive who specializes in media policy noted that she would be willing to help other foundations assess their grants portfolios to see where media policy could come into play, and suggested that establishing a way to institutionalize this process would be beneficial to the grantmaking field.

Collaboration—and openness—among media grantmakers is something that can usefully extend throughout the grantmaking process. Media commentator Jeff Jarvis says this can lead to “beta philanthropy”:

*Openness and collaboration at the start of the process—seeking and giving funds—can also extend to the end: sharing lessons learned, good and bad, from giving. About a year ago, one foundation I know sent out a report detailing its mistakes. I thought that was gutsy (though potentially embarrassing for the grantees—that’s the risk). But that kind of openness about lessons learned can be valuable to others. So why wait until the end? What about being transparent during the process of a project, so adjustments can be made? That becomes beta philanthropy.*²⁴

There are now issue-based funder collaboratives such as the Media Democracy Fund (<http://www.proteusfund.org/programs/media-democracy-fund/about>), the Threshold Foundation (<http://www.thresholdfoundation.org/>), the Full Circle Fund (<http://www.fullcirclefund.org/>), the Democracy Alliance (<http://www.democracyalliance.org/>)—that play key roles among philanthropists.

Grantmakers as platforms

In his discussion of philanthropy, Jeff Jarvis has also suggested that “a foundation, charity, or philanthropy should act like a platform. They do now in the sense that they make good work possible with funding. But how else can they enable others to do the same good work and how can they thus extend their resources with knowledge, networking (from introductions to more formal structures), vetting, teaching, management, and more?”²⁵

Several media grantmakers spoke to these points, calling for funders to take a more holistic approach to maximize the impact of media projects, and suggesting that

foundations should consider the support systems that need to be in place to enhance outreach and enable media products to be in use for the longest periods of time.

This is especially important now, when rapidly changing technologies call for new sources of skills. “Sometimes we expect grantees to do more than they should have to do, or may be skilled to do,” one program officer noted, suggesting that “funders need to be responsible for creating another group of people with the specialized expertise to strategize how to reach different parts of society—and maybe even others to put this into action.” This would remove some of the burden from media producers, increase access to resources among a larger number of media makers and media organizations, and enhance the impact of the field of philanthropy overall.

One program officer wrote in her survey response that:

It would be great if program officers within the foundation had to explain the media quotient and the technology quotient in each grant. This could be done simply by checking a box on a form 'rate from 1 to 5 the role that media and communications play in this grant.... 1) not at all, 2) for promoting the work, 3) there is a dedicated program line for communications or promotion, 4) this grant is a communications grant, 5) this grant protects the communications infrastructure....' I think if program officers had to rate their grants even once in relation to how they were factoring in media and technology we'd have a lot more smart grantmaking and we would have a database that we could use foundation-wide to understand how to better resource [program officers] to make smarter, healthier grants.

One media producer urged grantmakers not only to develop their grantees' media production capacities but also to identify potential partners for them. Media producers would welcome introductions to potential partners outside their own networks. Foundations, one producer said, are well positioned to identify who does what well, and then fund the structures and organizations that could serve some of their media grantees' needs, such as promotion and distribution. One NGO leader suggested that there is a business opportunity here, and urged funders to think about using program-related investments to create support organizations that would benefit media creators and media organizations.

Public-private partnerships

There is also room for media grantmakers to collaborate with other media stakeholders, including those active in the commercial media industry. If industry support increased broadband access, one funder suggested, such support would actually help technology companies build and market new relationships with customers. Media grantmakers and media producers need to help the industry recognize the potential value of such support. As these public-private partnerships may become a cornerstone of funding digital media moving forward,²⁶ it may be useful for media grantmakers to begin building public-private working groups, including groups that can focus on database and technology challenges such as those outlined at the start of this report.²⁷

► Recommendations

- *Now might be the time to establish a kind of semantic philanthropy, using tools that the web provides to make grantmaking more transparent, accountable, and sustainable.*

Toward a comprehensive framework for media grantmaking & measuring its impact

We recommend that the grantmaking field itself take advantage of media and technology to build a more comprehensive framework for media grantmaking and for measuring its impact. For funders of media—whether they are funders in a primary sense or indirectly—we highlight 10 recommendations from our surveys, interviews, meetings, and research:

First, acknowledge the prevalence and impact of media.

Foundations and government agencies of all sizes and in all fields will benefit from recognizing the growing importance of media, and screen-based media in particular, to the future of every field—education, health, the environment, and more.

Second, funders should identify additional common traits across philanthropy. Funding for media has many traits in common with funding in other fields, and it will behoove media funders to exchange information with funders in other sectors on a more regular basis. This information might feature details about which aspects of grantmaking work best in those fields—for as one longstanding (now retired) media funder told us at one of our sessions, there is much philanthropy experience to go around. Best practices and tools—toolkits developed to assist field evaluations—from one grantmaking sector may have applications in another.

Third, philanthropists should create and support new and flexible funding structures. There have been calls for new structures to support media funding in this age of fast-moving change: many of these are worth listening to. Some have suggested that new forms of nimble think tanks be assembled for media funders, where research and policy fellows, for example, can study and survey the field much as we have done, but perhaps for longer patches of time or focused on more specific questions, such as measuring the impact of grants and other interventions. Others made the point in our roundtables that as tectonic shifts take place in the American media landscape, great institutions will collapse into the fault lines and sinkholes, and therefore rapid-response teams of media funders will need to be assembled to replace news-gathering bodies—again requiring the nimble, strategic, possibly collective allocation of funding. Many grantmakers discussed with us the need to move forward on a number of new initiatives now—especially if speed can be achieved responsibly, with appropriate milestones.

Fourth, funders should support the development of new networked media production and distribution systems. There is greater emphasis now being placed on the potential for networked collaboration—among funders and grantees alike. Can new forms of media production and distribution help to replace the content and societal roles that public broadcasting has represented, for example? Opportunities now exist for exploring new types of networks, studios, and laboratories²⁸—initiatives that themselves may prove to be demonstrations of cost-effective grantmaking outside of behemoth institutions like universities and public television stations long notorious for carrying heavy overhead.

Fifth, funders and grantees alike should utilize and advocate for open technology.

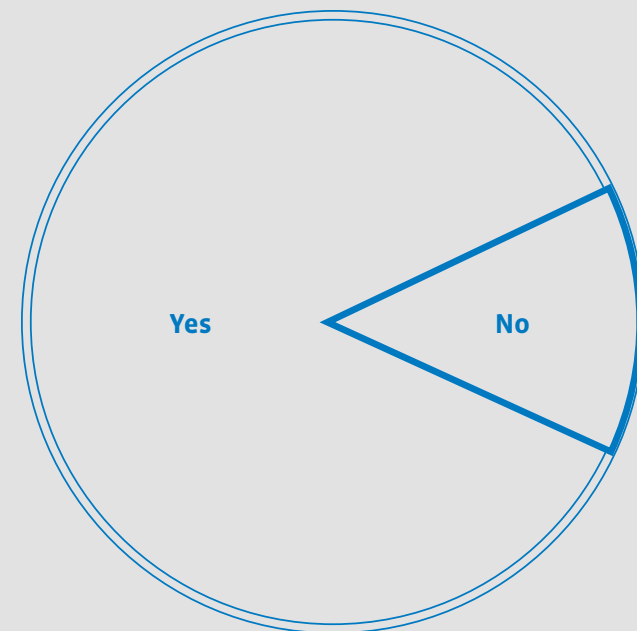
There is the opportunity to encourage philanthropy to become more intelligent and self-aware, utilizing some of the tools that the commercial media and information sector has been deploying to good effect. This involves beginning to establish and inculcate among foundations as a whole, and media funders in particular, preferences toward open technology standards and open-source solutions for data collection. The Information and Communications Technology Task Force of the Council on Foundations has called for the field of philanthropy as a whole to “champion comprehensive and scalable data standards for the sector,” including the creation of “a dictionary of data standards that facilitates sharing and aggregating information about grants, grantees, and grant outcomes.” Indeed, this Task Force, writing in November 2009, “believes the most important challenge related to the use of and benefit from technology within philanthropy is the design and use of common data standards.”²⁹ Nonproprietary, open-source solutions are best at the core of any such solution, for as has been noted elsewhere, “When non-profits invest in magic bullet technologies that fall by the wayside or don’t meet all the hype, they often don’t have the financial resources to write them off and reinvest again.”³⁰

Sixth, communicate and collaborate with your colleagues within your foundation and across the philanthropic sector.

Perhaps the most important survey question and answer in the GFEM Media Funding Tracker concerned whether stakeholders in the future of media grantmaking would be open to further discussion regarding the issues covered in the survey. Forty-four of our 52 respondents completed this question, and of the 44, the overwhelming majority—38—said yes.

This interest in engagement opens the door to collaboration that extends beyond the sharing of common concerns into initiatives on a broader scale.

Would you be willing to have a further discussion regarding your media grantmaking?



Seventh, funders should collaborate to create a comprehensive platform for information sharing.

Given the centrality of media funding for all sectors, it would seem beneficial for media funders to establish a version of, or strengthen existing versions of, a media grantmaking database in particular—a living, searchable archive, one that welcomes and processes data on a rolling, ongoing basis. Other grantmaking sectors related to this one—the arts, journalism—have begun to build databases of information in the field. Examples for media grantmakers include:

- ▶ the New Media Makers searchable database, based at American University and supported by the Knight Foundation (<http://www.kcnn.org/toolkit/> and http://www.kcnn.org/toolkit/funding_database/);
- ▶ the Cultural Policy and the Arts National Data Archive, based at Princeton University and underwritten originally by the Pew Charitable Trusts (<http://www.cpanda.org/>);
- ▶ the National Cultural Data Project, underwritten in part also by Pew (<http://www.culturaldata.org/>); and
- ▶ the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, based at Indiana University and underwritten in part by the Surdna Foundation (<http://snaap.indiana.edu/>).

Establishing such an effective database might involve five steps:

- ▶ partnering with a team of information scientists, developers, coders, and students on a project to develop keywords from information the field has gathered on earlier grants—perhaps by data-mining lists of legacy (pre-2008) grants collected by the Foundation Center and Chronicle of Philanthropy;
- ▶ reviewing these lists of keywords with a select group of program officers to study their fit and applicability for current (2008 and 2009) grants;

- ▶ designing a system of incentives and templates for program officers but especially for grant recipients and grantseekers to tag the grants they make and receive;

- ▶ establishing a public-private working group—foundation executives, developers, staff from Amazon and Netflix—to build a vibrant, intuitive recommendation engine based on this information for grantseekers that would produce more nuanced results than existing grant search engines do; and

- ▶ creating a standards body for the field of philanthropy based on standards bodies in other fields.

The staffs of many media institutions—commercial as well as noncommercial, from National Public Radio, to The New York Times and NBC—are now incentivized to tag the media and information they create. It might be interesting to invite media producers and others involved in the infrastructure and policy sides of media to consider how best to promote such a tagging system for grantmakers to all its potential stakeholders.

This type of collaborative activity, taking advantage of the web to network stakeholders and organize knowledge, will itself result in a world where politics and economics and other forms of societal activities become more and more transparent.

As time goes on and the betting die of technology and hyperconnectedness doubles by the day, it becomes increasingly likely that like-minded individuals and groups that share similar motivations will be able to mobilize to solve problems the roots of which are informational in nature.

Money—the use of which is, indeed, the subject of this report—may no longer be shrouded in fog, notwithstanding how fast it can travel. Calls are already being issued for using the power of tagging and the web generally to establish a new kind of “semantic banking,” where banking customers and stakeholders will be able to see how banks use money according to social-impact and other generally progressive goals. Ashoka Fellow Bruce Cahan notes in a study for the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco:

Banks access a vast array of data defining us as people, neighborhoods and groups. Through credit reporting agencies and partnerships with government and retail organizations, they build data models predicting the lifestyle patterns of customers. These models let banks tailor everything from access to credit, to the interest rate each customer pays. Banks compete by aiming their data models at customers, targeting their zip codes and affinity groups, to handcraft weekly sales pitches for credit card, mortgage refinance, car loans and other services.

Yet, for all their spending about us, the transparency is one-way. Banks provide meager tools to let customers see the environment or social impacts of using bank-provided credit or bank-entrusted deposits...The banking system generates its own trusted forms of ‘negotiable currency,’ nearly all in forms that hide community, environmental and social impact...The information imbalance keeps customers in the dark so as to grow credit use by disconnecting meaning and money.

Cahan describes banking as “impacts-opaque financial alchemy”—the consequences of which involve bankruptcy, recession, and worse—and recommends that the power of the web be deployed to help banks and other institutions to measure the impact of their financial activities.³¹

To adapt Cahan’s term, now might be the time to establish a kind of semantic philanthropy, using tools that the web provides to make grantmaking more transparent, accountable, and sustainable. Foundations too—more than banks—can “develop and make publicly available...open technology standards needed to underwrite, incentivize, and exchange transactions that produce positive environmental and social impacts.” And what better foundations to push for this change than those involved with media and technology?

To some degree this movement is underway. GFEM, through its own Media Database (online at: <http://media.gfem.org/>), is connecting media projects to the funding community, and provides a sorting structure for grants and activities in media content, infrastructure, and policy. The philanthropy field, broadly defined, can help to populate and advise on the design of the initiative moving forward. The private sector, too, has much to offer. Beyond the expertise in automating recommendation engines that exists at Amazon and Netflix, noted earlier, venture capitalists also have begun to build databases, as they too seek to streamline the process of matching money to projects. TheFunded.com (online at: <http://www.thefunded.com/>) is one such project—with 12,000 members and reviews of 5,000 venture funds. In entertainment and film finance in particular, new initiatives also are taking root. GMX, for example, is building an online marketplace for media (http://www.gmxmarket.com/gmx/content/promo_home/home.jsf) that also takes advantage of semantic technology. To build on the information-technology recommendations advanced in late 2009 to the Council on Foundations through their Information and Communications Technology Task Force: what if designers and technologists in public and private media enterprises could convene in a weekend summit of some kind designed to share data and technology, and thereby strengthen the effect of the one percent of media money that goes into nonprofit media?

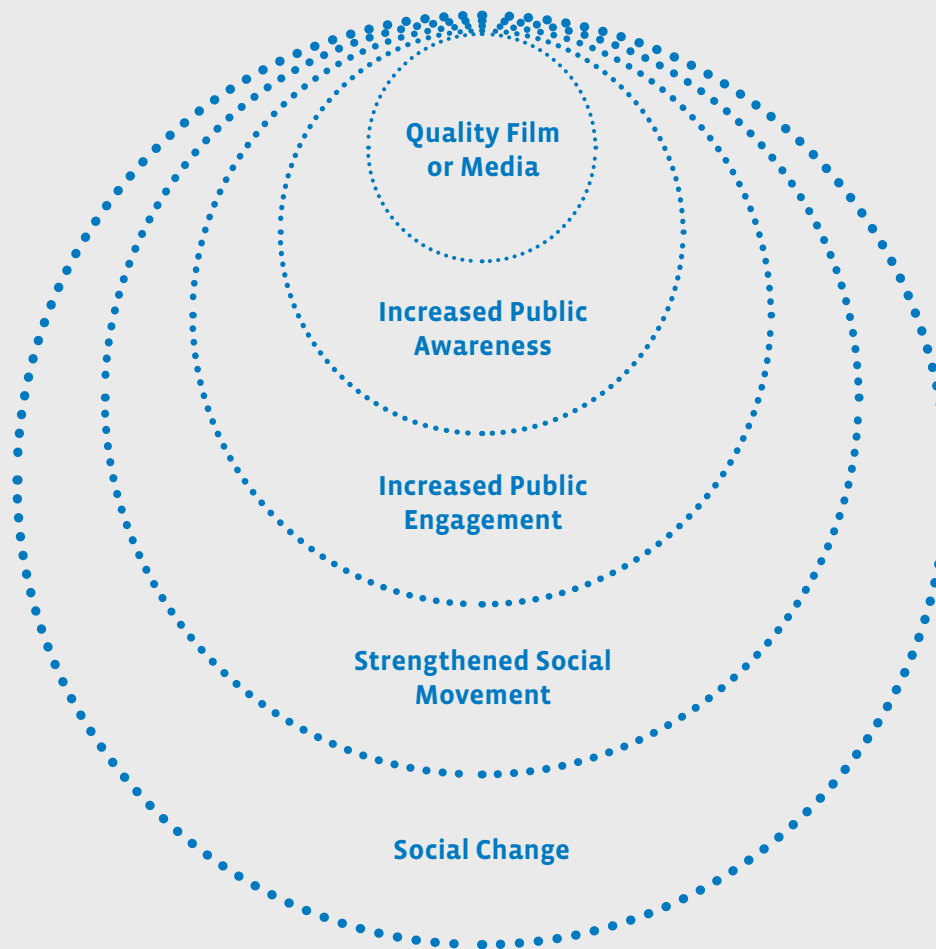
Eighth, the pervasiveness of media funding must be acknowledged. Funders and grantees should recognize that media is funded in many grants that do not explicitly highlight media—content, infrastructure, or policy—as the primary object of funding. Parsing the role that media is intended to play in all grants will make the entire field of philanthropy more self-aware in our new media-saturated century.

Ninth, the impact of media grantmaking should be measured, and the field should undertake new efforts to do so. The social impact of grantmaking—described by the Fledgling Fund and others as a social continuum—can now be more specifically measured and tracked across each dimension of progress using technology and tools that the web provides.³² Indeed, media grantmakers may be able to develop systems—for their own grantmaking as well as grantmaking in other sectors—that track where media has been instrumental in increasing public awareness and engagement, strengthening social movements,

and effecting social change. Building upon the Fledgling Fund’s continuum, one can also consider phylogenetics to describe a foundation’s activities in any sector—health care reform, say—and chart out at what points of getting to that goal media has been or is likely to be critical. One could pinpoint areas of support where media funding, whether in content, policy, or infrastructure, is most likely to be leveraged for change. Technologies are already being used to measure the environmental impact of a given product—milk, say, through the energy needed to grow fertilizer, fuel trucks, and power refrigerators.³³ What is the value equivalent of change produced by a grantee leaving a “media footprint” in society?

Tenth and finally, funders should recognize that media reinforces their missions. If the public and government are to understand and appreciate the work of philanthropy, they are going to be looking, or listening, or watching, or gaining and expressing these attitudes through media.

The Fledgling Fund Creative Media Social Impact Continuum



Quality Film or Media is the foundation for distribution, outreach, and community engagement strategies. We look at festival acceptances, level, and depth of distribution, awards, and reviews.

Increased Public Awareness is a critical building block for individual and social change. We track this by audience size as well as the frequency and quality of press coverage of the social issue featured.

Increased Public Engagement indicates a change in attitude, beliefs, and behavior and a shift from awareness to individual action. We look at the involvement in online discussions and debates, writing letters to the press and elected officials, increased attendance at related events, etc.

Strengthened Social Movement shows shift to collective action and strengthened advocacy organizations. We look at how non-profit partners use the media to fuel their work, engage people in the movement, and collaborate with other organizations.

Social Change is the ultimate goal. While it is often a long-term proposition, there are concrete and incremental indicators of change. We can look at changes in local, state, federal, and international laws and policy and their results. We also can look at shifts in public dialogue and community and organizational changes.

► Conclusion

- *Through collective action grantmakers can recognize the full role that media can play in improving the human condition.*

In conclusion, we return to the core mandates of the foundations and government agencies who support media content, policy, and infrastructure—and especially those whose program officers generously gave of their time to answer our survey questions and participate in this project through interviews, roundtables, and helpful advice.

The great work of media grantmakers, taken as a whole, is designed to better the human condition. Without the grants these grantmakers have made, in 2008 and every year for the decades in which they have been providing media assistance, one can only imagine the dark, cold, almost lunar landscape that would exist today. Public television and radio would be still; millions of books, newspapers, serials, journals, would never have come to be; theaters, concert halls, and libraries would be dark and silent; the work of thousands of thinkers and artists and producers would never have entered the life of the mind and the public debate. What laws would never have been passed? What institutions would never have been established? One shudders at the world that would exist today without the billions of dollars of their support. Picture Jimmy Stewart's George Bailey, of *It's a Wonderful Life*, staggering through the set of Francois Truffaut's and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, looking for all the institutions, content, and safeguards we know today, but that never would have been.

Media funding is critical for the success of democracy.

Through collective action, especially in the 10 recommendations we present above, grantmakers can recognize the full role that media can play in improving the human condition; identify their common interests; help support common structures in a time of rapid change; build open technology solutions to common problems; engage in a more systematic dialogue; build a common platform for their grants and for grantseekers; measure the impact of their work more effectively; and promote their work to all their stakeholders and constituents. The complexity of media saturation today and the growing understanding of media's centrality in freedom, self-government, and all fields of endeavor, all make it necessary to take advantage of technology to organize information to help society as a whole to make good choices. McLuhan sensed in 1964, decades before the arrival of the web, the coming "electric implosion" that would "compel...commitment and participation."³⁴ GFEM's own slogan—"utilizing media to move your mission"—embraces this potential.

We would encourage all grantmakers to collaborate over recommendations that can move media and missions forward together.

▶ Acknowledgments

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About Intelligent Television

Intelligent Television produces films, television programs, and video projects in close association with educational and cultural institutions, and its research and consulting projects explore how to make educational and cultural material more widely accessible worldwide.

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About GFEM

Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media

(GFEM) is an association of grantmakers committed to advancing the field of media arts and public interest media funding. GFEM serves as a resource for grantmakers who fund media content, infrastructure, and policy, those who employ media to further their program goals as well as a collaborative network for funders who wish to learn more about media.

Visit us at **www.gfem.org**.

► Footnotes

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