

Community flavors: Access to media for the local population similar but ...

Bruce Merrill: a member of the original chapter of the Cable Television Pioneers established in 1966

Please be aware that there are many different kinds of community media organizations. Your community may only have what is called "governmental access television" which only provides coverage of the government itself. Some communities only have "educational access television" which only provides high school or college courses over television. (This is also called "distance learning.") Often the local cable TV company produced only its own programming -- called "local origination." So when you call your local community media organization, be sure to ask for information on "public access television.

Source: <http://www.geocities.com/iconostar/history-public-access-TV.html>

Advocates for public access TV won a victory in 1972 when the FCC issued its Third Report and Order, which required all cable systems in the top 100 U.S. television markets to provide three access channels, one each for educational, local government and public use. If there was insufficient demand for three in a particular market, the cable companies could offer fewer channels, but at least one. Any group or individual wishing to use the channels was guaranteed at least five minutes free. The cable companies were also required to provide the facilities and equipment with which people could produce shows (Gillespie, 91; Hollowell vol. 3, p.103; FCC...).

In 1976 the rule was amended to include cable systems in communities with 3500 or more subscribers with a diverse, independent and local voice.

Only 10% to 15% of the communities in the country have 'media' access, however, this small percentage includes every community in Connecticut. The ground work for media access by communities started before Cable Companies existed with the 1934 Federal Legislation, Communications Act (as amended by 1984, 1992 and 1996 Acts). Cable enterprises began forming in the mid 1960's. In 1972 the FCC established the concept of PEG with what is known as the Third Report and order required cable systems ... to provide three access channels, one each for educational, local government and public use.

It became an opportunity for every community in Connecticut when incorporated as a responsibility for the Dept. of Public Utilities (DPUC)

The DPUC awards and renews cable TV franchises and assures that the charges for installation, repair and the basic (lowest) tier of service are at or below the federally mandated requirements.

- PEG access centers exist when cable operators are required to provide channel capacity, services, facilities and equipment as partial

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compensation to communities for their use of public rights-of-way (streets, highways, parks and other government owned property). The requirements are documented in franchise agreements typically with municipalities.

- **PEG access**, a service found nowhere else **can provide**:
- vital information for the community, including emergency details and public announcements.
- a forum for all citizens; allows every person the opportunity to communicate.
- can foster community; bringing together various people and groups.

One exception: cable operator may refuse to transmit any public access program or portion of a public access program which contains obscenity, indecency, or nudity.