



**Ventura, CA** -- At the Oct 27 keynote luncheon of the ACM West Regional Conference, keynote speaker Andrew Fitzgerald of Current-TV "CJ Journalism", smiled and explained to the 120 attendees his enthusiasm for the "best web site few have ever seen". As a member of the target demographic himself, 26 years old, he spoke glowingly about the efforts to "give a voice" to the many young people who have grown up with camcorders and editing software but lacked a national platform to be seen and heard. Current-TV recently won an Emmy Award and was created by Al Gore and Joel Hyatt.

Funded by commercial revenue from major advertisers on the successful Current cable TV network, Fitzgerald reported that an experiment to add commercial content to video downloads from their web site had been abandoned for the time being. "Given a choice whether to watch commercials or not, we discovered folks, not surprisingly, choose to pass and prefer to just watch the "pod" (short, viewer created content video).

In a follow-up workshop on the social interaction aspects of "Web 2.0", Fitzgerald was joined by Tony Shawcross of Denver Open Media (DOM) and Martin Anaya of Pacifica Community Television. Each demonstrated the features of their respective web sites. The technology for uploading and viewing videos and movies from their web sites has made each site rich in content. However, even though viewer comments were eagerly invited on all sites, the numbers of successful results have been less than desired. Current TV recently abandoned its founding web site and has moved operations to Current.com. The new site still invites video submissions but also highlights more varied viewer interaction, comments, and social networking.

Both Current and DOM also report lower than expected participation in viewer evaluation of videos on their respective web sites. Current has elected to not continue its "Greenlight" method of voting for favorite "pods" as the determining factor for cable casting on their cable channels. One of DOM's three cable channels serving Denver is dedicated to only showing "favorite videos" as selected by viewer votes from their web site. "Some videos are seen hour after hour based upon viewer votes" said DOM's Shawcross. However, viewer feedback is not as popular as originally anticipated and each organization is trying to determine whether their site's viewer's choice options remain as designed into the future.

The ACM West conference was hosted by Community Access Partnership of San Buenaventura (CAPS) and the Santa Barbara Channels. Twenty workshops included community media management issues, digital media workflow from production to distribution, and internet streaming of PEG access channels. Sixty Western Access Video Excellence Awards (WAVE) were presented at a festive celebration in the historic Ventura City Hall. Todd Thayer, CAPS Executive Director and Ron Cooper, E.D. for Access Sacramento were each granted Brian Wilson Mentorship Awards for their work locally and throughout the region.

Friday's keynote speaker, Anthony Riddle, Executive Director of the ACM national office, updated attendees on challenges facing ACM members including the active lawsuit in opposition to the FCC efforts to nationalize the cable television franchise process. He encouraged ACM members to continue their local activism particularly in States grappling with the implementation of new state-wide cable franchising efforts of Verizon and AT&T.

Verizon and AT&T spokespersons participated in a thorough examination of the California law known as DIVCA (Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act). Joined by attendees from the States of

California and Nevada, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (SCAN-NATO) the conference devoted a full day and several workshops to discussing how PEG channels would be facilitated on these two new state franchised "cable TV" systems. Sue Buske, President of the Buske Group, coordinated many of the DIVCA speakers including representatives from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the California Utility Ratepayers Association plus engineering expertise.

George Hall, CEO of Video Streaming Services Company (VideoSSC.com) challenged the use of AT&T's Windows Media codec for the carriage of PEG channels on a pull-down "channel 99" placement arrangement. "This does not meet the specifications of the DIVCA law requiring State cable franchise holders to provide PEG channels in a way similar to their commercial channel offerings. AT&T should reengineer their architecture and make PEG channels compliant with the channel placement and ADA standards required in DIVCA" Hall commented.

J Robertson, ACM West Chair, called the conference successful and looked forward to new participation from neighboring states and regions of the ACM. "We are investigating future conferences in Nevada, Hawaii, and Arizona and hosting a national conference in 2009 somewhere in the West." Watch for Ventura content on the ACM Web site [www.acmwest.org](http://www.acmwest.org) invited Robertson.

Submitted by Ron Cooper, ACM West Treasurer 10/29/07

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