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Author

Laughren, Pat

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Pat Laughren

DEBATING AUSTRALIAN DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION POLICY: SOME PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

Abstract: On July 1 2008 Screen Australia commenced operation as the main Australian Government agency supporting the screen production industry. This article considers some of the policy issues and challenges identified by the 'community of practitioners' as facing Australian documentary production at the time of the formation of that 'superagency' from the merger of its three predecessor organisations - the Australian Film Commission, the Film Finance Corporation and Film Australia. The article proceeds by sketching the history of documentary production in Australia and identifying the bases of its financial and regulatory supports. It also surveys recent debate in the documentary sector and attempts to contextualise the themes of those discussions within the history of the Australian documentary.

Introduction

Screen Australia, the Commonwealth Government's new screen agency, opened for business on July 1 2008 and undertook 'to deliver the programs of its three predecessor organizations ...until a revised program structure can be introduced following industry consultation'. A draft Statement of Intent for 2008/09 noted that in

'an environment considerably changed by the introduction of the Producer Offset ... This draft SOI presents broad principles only. A second round of industry consultation will take place in October focusing on the development of detailed programs and guidelines around these principles' (Screen Australia 2008)

This was welcome news for a documentary community concerned about its exclusion from negotiations around the merging of the FFC, the AFC and Film Australia (ADG 2007) into an agency required to place 'an emphasis on documentaries... and programs with a high level of cultural or artistic merit' and 'to ensure the development of a diverse range of Australian programs that deal with matters of national interest or importance to Australians, or that illustrate or interpret aspects of Australia or the life and activities of Australian people'. (*Screen Australia Act 2008*, s. 6(3))

On its face, this remit looks like good news for Australian documentary producers. But some suggest a less straightforward future for a documentary sector negotiating new forms of digital delivery; pressures and rewards for

larger broadcast audience shares; and growing presumptions that both financing and content will be globalised (Hogarth 2006). In particular, in a networked world, many question whether the 'telling of Australian stories' can remain a rationale for either substantial government funding of Australian documentary production or media regulation privileging Australian content and redressing the failure of the market to provide it. (O'Regan and Goldsmith 2006)

Globally, factual production levels are growing. The 2008 MIPTV television trade show confirmed that 'factual shows have become the second most purchased TV genre'. (Stuart 2008) At the same time, Nomadsland — a website for 'global social issue media' — lamented that documentary filmmakers 'survive producing formulaic spectacles about ghosts, meerkats or super-weapons'. (2008) The government's clear view was that Screen Australia and the tax incentive, the Producer Offset, would enable the Australian screen production industry to move beyond 'cottage industry' status. The views of the documentary sector, in public forums, the industry press and on-line discussions, were less unanimous. This paper attempts to identify some of the trends in these discussions about the 'institutional framework' among the 'community of practitioners' (Nichols 2001) and to consider the relation of those discussions to Australia's history of documentary production and regulation.

A Brief History of Australian Documentary Production

Documentary production constitutes only a small proportion of Australian audiovisual production yet it provides the thread of continuity running through over a century of Australian filmmaking. Such productions met contemporary needs and developed a store of archival material; and some, such as John Heyer's *The Back of Beyond* (1954), were among the earliest Australian films to win international acclaim.

The first Australian documentary was an international co-production recording the 1896 Melbourne Cup. Soon, Australian governments were using motion pictures to market their resources and promote migration (Laughren 1995). The Commonwealth became directly involved in film production in 1911 when the Department of External Affairs appointed James Campbell as its inaugural Cinematographer. He held the post for just eighteen months before conflicts due to his 'tendency to strive after "artistic" effects' led to dismissal. A report on Campbell's sacking established the policy for much subsequent production:

The Department simply requires prints of useful advertising value of good technical quality, sharp and clear. To meet the demand of the High Commissioner's Office, for the present at any rate, 'artistic' quality must, to a large extent be sacrificed to quantity. (Cooper 1965: 44)

Bert Ive, his successor, died in the job in 1939. During that time the Cinema Branch moved from External Affairs to the Development and Migration Commission and finally to the Department of Markets. But the purpose of

all its production is summed up in the title of the file documenting its activities: “Advertising Australia”.

The Second World War, however, saw changes in the nature of Commonwealth Government documentary production. Increasingly, documentary was recognised as a medium to break down sectionalism, promote national viewpoints and, in Grierson’s words, ‘bring into the public imagination the problems, responsibilities and achievements of Government’ (in Moran and O’Regan 1985:72). When the Australian National Film Board — the precursor of Film Australia — was established in 1945, a member emphasised it

is not just a Government propaganda machine, In their own productions, they seek to give a true and objective picture of Australian problems, to encourage self criticism rather than complacency, to inform rather than to sell a policy. (Shirley & Adams 1983:177)

From the coming of television in the mid 1950s until the 1980s, broadcast in-house factual production made an increasingly important contribution to documenting Australian life. But since the late 1980s, in-house documentary production has largely been replaced by an independent documentary sector for whom the programming schedule used by television — still the primary commissioner and audience for documentary — has taken on an ever more decisive role. (FitzSimons 2002)

What can be drawn from this historical schema? At the least, it suggests it may be worth pondering whether the tensions between artistry and efficiency; propaganda and analysis; gate keeping and access; institution and independence; or cinema and television; retain any currency.

A Picture of Recent Documentary Production in Australia

AFC data confirms the persistence of the documentary impulse in Australia (AFC 2008). The free-to-air TV networks broadcast around 300 hours of first-release Australian documentaries in each of the three years 2003/04-05/06. Production costs for broadcast, non-broadcast and online documentaries averaged \$73 million over this period. The sector made up 3 percent of total audiovisual production in 2002/03 (TV news and current affairs 23%, sport 20%, commercials 15%, TV drama, sitcom and sketch 12%, feature films 5%), considerably lower than in Canada (12 per cent) and New Zealand (8%). Of the 300 hours in 2006, the ABC screened 127 hours and the SBS 71 hours. The three commercial free-to-air broadcasters screened a combined 102 hours, increasing their spending by 35.2% from the previous year.

Reviewing the decade of documentary production funding to 2005/06, the AFC found an average of just under 300 hours produced each year and an annual average production value of \$62 million. Of this, around two-thirds of the hours (\$50 million in production value) was made by independent producers and one third by broadcasters (\$12 million in production value),

reflecting the lower budgets of most in-house TV production. Independent production hours split evenly between singles and series; in-house production was dominated by series. More than half the independently-produced single documentaries were made for less than \$200,000 in 2006 dollars; 89 per cent had budgets below \$500,000. Single documentaries comprised two-thirds of the total hours produced by independents in 1996/97, but less than 40% in 2005/06.

Documentary funding comes mainly from government, local broadcasters and foreign sources. Over the seven years to 2005/06, 49 per cent of total budgets was provided by federal and state funding agencies, 24 per cent came from local broadcasters and 14 per cent from foreign sources. Comparisons with Canada and France show that government and foreign investors contribute a larger share of Australia's slate, but broadcasters less. Of the government sources, the biggest was the Film Finance Corporation, which supported an annual average of 36 documentaries in the 15 years to 2006/07. Film Australia produced an annual average of 18 hours in the decade to 2006/07.

The report estimated that there were some 400 producers, 330 directors and 300 writers making documentaries in Australia. But around two-thirds of them made only one documentary between 1990 and 2006. Only about one in ten in each category made five or more titles in this period. From 1996/97 to 2002/03, the number of businesses producing TV documentaries fell from 134 to 98.

On average, 251,000 people, or 1.8 per cent of the population, watched documentaries aired on Australian free-to-air television in 2004. People aged 40 years and over made up 72 per cent of the viewers. On Sydney TV between 1998 and 2003, the Australian documentary series *RPA* (Channel 9) was either the no. 1 or no. 2 documentary overall. *Border Security* (Channel 7) topped the national documentary ratings for 2005 and 2006. Other top-rating Australian documentaries in recent years included *Who Killed Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler?* and episodes of *Australian Story* and *Dynasties*. At the cinema, twice as many Australian documentaries were released in the five years to 2006 (30) as in the previous five years (15), including the highest-grossing non-IMAX Australian documentary to date, *Bra Boys*.

Overall, while this data may offer little insight into the emerging on-line delivery of documentary programming, it does confirm that public policy and government agency investment decisions and public broadcaster programming strategies play a decisive role in framing the documentary slate in Australia for “benefits, such as the enhancement of a national culture, that may be generated as a market externality” (Papandrea1997:66).

Addressing parliament, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Arts, Peter Garrett, made it clear that this policy will continue since ‘Without strong Government support, Australian voices on our screens would be considerably muted’. Commenting on a documentary on the *HMAS Sydney*, he noted it wouldn't have been made at a profit. It probably won't sell at a profit. Australian taxpayers have supported making that film. It's a

tremendous and important national benefit. (Lateline 2008)

This rhetoric of 'Australian voices', 'national benefit', and the recognition of market failure, strikes familiar notes from arguments for regulating and supporting national cultural production.

What is a Documentary and What Does It Do?

When the documentary is increasingly seen as one generic element in a mix of factual programming (Hill 2007), it is worth identifying just which of its functions might deserve retention. A recent Film Australia document conveys some of its characteristic social and public connotations as

a considered national record that extends beyond the reportage of news and current affairs. Good documentary programs interpret and contextualise, challenge and inform, inspire and entertain. They further understanding and provoke dialogue...promote democracy and leave a legacy. (Film Australia 2008)

Before television — and even now at the cinema — documentary can be understood by what it is not: a 'non-fiction', clearly differentiated from the dominant fare exhibited theatrically. After television, the fact that half of all programming might be termed 'non-fiction' demanded more stringent definition and posed a dilemma for documentary's broadcast regulation (Corner 2000).

Historically, documentary has not been a stable object but an evolving set of co-existing practices constantly re-worked in light of new production and distribution technologies (Barnouw 1993)). Nonetheless there is a consensus that documentaries strive to capture the experiences of real people and to represent them truthfully and accessibly. Renov (1993) identified 'four fundamental tendencies' underlying documentary production: to record, reveal, or preserve; to persuade or promote; to analyze or interrogate; and to express. The first is echoed in Screen Australia's mission 'to create an audio-visual record of Australian life'. This suggests an ambition shaped as much by values and ethics as methods, conventions and technologies; one where, as Cavalcanti reminds us, 'three fundamental elements exist: the social, the poetic, and the technical' (in Monegal: 1955).

Nichols argues that the documentary is defined in multiple arenas: 'an institutional framework' of funders, distributors (and regulators) — such as Screen Australia, ABCTV, SBS, ACMA, commercial broadcasters, pay TV, etc; 'a community of practitioners' such as producers, writers, directors, and editors; 'a corpus of texts' sharing conventions such as narration, talking heads, social actors, archival materials, observational filming, dramatization, provocation etc.; and 'a constituency of viewers' with common assumptions about the documentary as evidence from the world and a desire to learn something from it. But, contemplating the ubiquity of Reality TV, Corner provocatively suggested that documentary's three hitherto dominant projects — Grierson's Democratic Civics; Journalism's inquiry and exposition; and Independent Documentary's

alternative perspective — had been displaced by a fourth project: Diversion, where factual entertainment is designed not to “sweeten the pill” to convey information but solely to attract the maximum audience (2000).

Arguably, one aim of documentary policy would be to counter the unbridled dominance of this last of Corner’s categories. This has certainly been a goal of Australia’s regulatory regime since the term ‘documentary’ entered its lexicon.

Australian Content Regulations and Documentary

Since 1961, Australian content regulations have ensured commercial broadcasters screen a minimum proportion of Australian content and Australia currently retains quotas for new domestic drama, children’s programs and documentary. The ABC and the SBS are not subject to the same regulation, but each follows a Charter of Performance. (AFC 2006:11)

Until the 1990s, the documentary was subsumed by an information category. In 1996, after considerable lobbying, a quota was introduced requiring a minimum of 10 hours a year of first release Australian documentary defined as ‘a creative treatment of actuality other than a news or current affairs program or a magazine or infotainment program’. (ABA 1996:2)

By 2005 this quota had increased to 20 hours and the list of excluded genres had expanded to cover sports and light entertainment. The accompanying

guidelines also identified a range of 'converging program types' that 'may not be readily distinguishable as documentary or otherwise'; including reality programs, reconstructions and travel programs. With their faster turn-around, shorter research periods and greater broadcaster control, these factual entertainments were considered by some documentary makers to threaten to displace the social and political documentary from the television schedule and to drain the pool of funding for the genre. (Thomas 2002: 152) At stake were the qualities of complexity, depth, cultural specificity and critique often regarded as the rationale for the documentary quota. (AFC 2004: 4)

Clearly, issues of documentary definition are not just of scholarly interest. They also affect decisions with direct financial and cultural impacts. Commercial television stations unsuccessfully challenged 'the basis on which the traditional documentary category is judged as being more culturally desirable or worthy than other forms of factual programming' (in AFC 2002). ACMA's definition of the documentary was also adopted to determine a project's eligibility for government investment or access to the Producer Offset. In 2004, just such a debate was resolved in favour of the 'living history' series, *The Colony*. Seeking access to the funding pool for documentary, its producers insisted it was not 'Big Brother in historical costume'. (Dowling 2004; Kalina 2005)

The retention of Grierson's formulation — 'the creative treatment of actuality' — at the heart of ACMA's definition, has been seen as encouragement for commercial television to broadcast documentaries

demonstrating ‘original thought or expression’ (ABA 2004:4). While judgment about the efficacy of such regulation varies, there is agreement that the move to a digital world poses deeper questions about the regulatory project. Just before Screen Australia commenced work, ABC television chief Kim Dalton called on the federal Government to extend Australia's TV content standards to web-based video and noted that “we are living with a policy framework designed for the analogue world that is no longer fit for purpose”. (2008)

Debates among the Community of Practitioners

The introduction of the producer offset and the establishment of Screen Australia prompted widespread discussion in the documentary sector. On some matters, such as dissatisfaction with the 20% rebate figure for documentary and the need to lower the budget threshold for eligibility for the rebate to \$250,000, there was fundamental unity. But other topics, such as the role of television commissioning practices and genre expectations, attracted fierce debate.

On the *Australian Documentary Film Makers Policy Forum*, local producer Michael Cordell exhorted his fellow Australia documentary makers to

kill the silly “documentary” V “factual” argument. Let any idea about real people in the real world be based on its merits and relevance, not some arcane idea that one is, by definition, more ‘creative’, ‘worthy’ or ‘cultural’ than the other. There are gems and dross in all...

But documentarians are a fractious lot. Dennis O’Rourke promptly replied that

such comments

make no reference to the role of television in funding only certain styles of "documentary" or "factual" programs (take your pick). This is blatantly the case with the commercial networks and, increasingly, the public broadcasters are following suit. We all know what "factual" means: it means television: it means, almost universally, what I call "documentary-lite". If we accept that what all these television broadcasters want is going to be the determinant of what constitutes our documentary culture in the future, then we are all hypocrites in demanding government support.

To which an anonymous poster responded:

Let's not underestimate the strength of much of our TV work, or the fact that many of our best known auteur filmmakers continue to be dependent on TV presales as part of their financing mix — notwithstanding increasing editorial intervention from EP's and CE's ... what's more interesting is the fact that the foreign docs shown on SBS, and to a lesser extent the ABC, are so NON documentary-lite by way of comparison with the locally commissioned ones (Anon. 2007)

Analysing institutional commissioning practices and editorial intervention, experienced commissioning editor Brian McKenzie lamented a 'once vibrant community tamed, dominated by deal driven financing and producing banal television' and observed that 'Despite the present day pretence of commerciality, documentaries are financed primarily via public funds [with] 13 separate government organizations overseeing and financing documentary production'. Asking rhetorically 'Do 13 separate organizations provide for

diversity? ... each favouring different styles, different subjects and different scales of work?' He paused only to answer in the negative, before criticizing institutional gate keeping where

A small group of documentary executives in the 2 public broadcasters holds extraordinary power. The others cringe nervously watching for signs of a green light from them. Diversity, forget it. The job of the 11 is to follow suit.

Unsurprisingly, this jeremiad did not go unanswered. Respected producer, Sue Maslin, rejoined that

The reality is that 380 separate documentaries were made last year and we have access to the means of production and delivery like never before... this landscape threw up 25 feature documentaries alone, many of which defied the kind of thinking and constraints you say is imposed on us by broadcasters. ... Banal television? Each is quite distinct and inventive in its approach. None sit easily within television formats yet all had broadcaster involvement. Yes, broadcasters love series formats, many of which are highly formulaic but a healthy sector should have a range of styles and approaches if it is producing up to 400 hours of documentary programming a year.

How might we understand such exchanges? Part of the answer might stem from the history of the relationship between documentary and television in Australia. Another element might be grounded in differing views about television's impact on the future of the documentary.

Documentary Making and Australian Television

During the first two decades of transmission, the Commonwealth Film Unit (Film Australia) rarely screened its work on television. The national broadcaster, the ABC, concentrated on non-fictional programming marked by journalistic modes of production, and commercial television produced a corresponding range of current affairs and 'features'. However, these programs regularly contained strong documentary elements (Raymond 1999; Beilby & Lansell 1982: 70-79,146-154). McMurchy identifies a continuing trend: the influence of international developments in public broadcasting and documentary forms; exemplified by series such as *Chequerboard* with its 'verite' style addressing previously taboo subjects such as homosexuality (in Murray 1994:181).

From the early 1970s, an independent documentary sector developed in Australia, often supported by the AFC, which screened through festivals, small-scale cinema releases, filmmakers' co-operatives and educational organizations (Treole 1982). By the late seventies some independent documentary producers found themselves selling their documentaries to overseas networks such as the BBC and American PBS while unable to sell to Australian television (Beilby & Lansell 1982:148-153).

Data compiled by Murray Brown for the 1987 Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Australian Documentary Programs*, traces the rating's performance, scheduling and topics of Australian documentaries shown between 1980-1986. While the number screened annually fluctuated, over 62% were screened on weekends; and of the 522 listed, 65% concerned

nature and travel. Ratings peaked at 40 for Willesee's primetime weekend specials, which were exceptions in exploring social themes. But the networks opted to win early evening weekend slots with wildlife, travel and adventure programs. Brown reported that the commercial networks found the one-off Australian documentary difficult to place in a primetime schedule and too often directed at an "educated, ideas oriented, artistically sensitive audience' whereas the networks seek to increase their share of the mass market" (Brown 1987: 25).

In 1984 the AFC developed a Documentary Fellowship scheme with an ABC pre-sale that pointed towards television as the vehicle for independent documentaries. In 1988, the FFC was established (Maddox 1996) and a corporatised Film Australia began to emphasise pre-sales and co-productions with local broadcasters, and to develop structures to work with independent producers. FitzSimons' analysis (2002) of the integration of the independent sector with television emphasises the role of the Commissioning Editor and network (or Film Australia) Executive Producer in orchestrating multi-agency funding of broadcaster timed and shaped projects. This commissioning process was 'underpinned by increasingly intense scrutiny and analysis of audience interests and behaviour' (Hewlett 2008) or what Roscoe has called 'the tyranny of the ratings discourse'. (2004:288)

In recent years the programming problem posed by 'one-off' production has been answered by the emergence of a wide range of factual television series

such as *Crime Investigation Australia*, *Surf Patrol*, *Border Security*, *RPA*, *Bondi Rescue*, *Missing Person's Unit*, *Medical Emergency* — variously dubbed observational documentary, factual or reality series but all counting towards the documentary quota. ACMA figures note that in 2007 both Seven and Nine network stations screened twice the 20-hour documentary quota and Ten screened 29 hours.

Hewlett cautions that hard won success with 'formatted docs and reality shows' could mask a threat to the future of the documentary, flowing from 'where television is at... less concerned about creativity and public purposes and more concerned with audience metrics and commercial survival'. He warns that 'TV doesn't have the stomach for the risks involved in developing the new ideas and new talent that the future of documentary depend on'. But Hewlett points to another danger for public broadcasting and publicly funded documentary when he asks whether, in pursuit of audience share, organizations like the ABC 'aren't now putting the competitive position of their TV channels ahead of their broader public purposes?' (2008).

Does the box office resurgence of the theatrical documentary stem partly from the capacity of films such as *An Inconvenient Truth* to redress this rupture of public trust? Certainly, 'joiningthedots.tv', a broadband documentary provider, regards the state of broadcast factual programming as a market opportunity for digital distributors who promise a documentary future distinct from 'the pulpy, innocuous fare served up by traditional channels...cutting out the middlemen who think they know what people want or are willing to watch'. (2008).

Of course, the broadcasters might claim that they are already engaging with the digital future with regular post-broadcast on-line forums and the expectation that project pitches must now routinely include multi-platform outcomes.

Some Considerations for Documentary Policy Makers

In the period leading up to the establishment of Screen Australia, much of the lobbying and discussion undertaken by the 'community of practitioners' was aimed at ensuring that the industry did not 'settle for life support of the current vegetable state'. Among the concerns voiced were the need for a documentary quota for Pay TV; an Australian Content requirement for any content platforms in the Australian market; licence fees reflecting a fair terms of trade; and an increase in the Producer Offset to 40% for all documentaries (Nasht 2007).

At the same time, a consensus was emerging that any media policy framing a sustainable documentary practice must encourage a diversity of documentary genres and devise commensurate ways of supporting such a range of production. In particular the community identified the need to rise above oppositions between the 'factual' and the 'creative', or the 'local' and the 'international'. John Hughes argued that

Each of these oppositional pairs describes what is better understood as spectrums - and they intersect in various ways. Filmmakers need the agility to move across and around these spectrums from project to project.

Complementing this call for inclusivity, Sue Maslin, an advocate for the potential of the producer offset, emphasised

what we should be aiming for, as an industry, is more investment in the sector to allow for more and varied voices on a wide variety of screens. ... Rather than a jumble, it would be a rich and vibrant ecosystem that can tolerate differences in approach. This investment should increasingly come from private sources, philanthropy, tax rebates once we can adequately demonstrate the extraordinary cultural value our work contributes.

But, as former Film Australia head, Sharon Connolly, reminds us, the stakes remain high:

The sustainability of documentary is as much about democracy as it is about accounting. What's the use of having a few successful companies if the documentaries they produce lose their value - the capacity to challenge, expose and oppose? And will they continue to do so if the gateways to production finance, together with their various aims, objectives and strategies, become – like Australian media proprietors and public telephones – still fewer in number?

So what is to be done? With Screen Australia engaged in identifying its 'new priorities' this is a good time to ask whether the other legs of the regulatory and broadcasting tripod — ACMA and the networks — can be left to continue business as usual.

Arguably, there are grounds for renovating definitions and distinctions of 'factual' and 'documentary' genres; as well as the nature and transparency of processes of adjudication and penalty currently employed by ACMA. But there have also been calls for wider renewal of the regulatory project and the development of, in Dalton's terms, 'an Australian content policy framework that is fit for purpose in the digital environment'.

Tellingly, audiovisual collecting society Screenrights' response to Screen Australia's call for consultation noted that documentaries make up over 45% of the programs copied and communicated to the more than 4 million students in Australian classrooms. This reinforces the need for policies framing documentary practice to safeguard its truth-telling function and prevent the documentary's complete integration into broadcast factual entertainment and public relations. (Media Report 2008) There can be no easy reliance on those programming commercial or public broadcast television to ensure the future of the documentary. On the contrary, given the substantial underwriting of documentary production by the state, it is imperative for policy to be formulated so that no single institution, such as broadcast television, wields a *de facto* veto over the form or content of the range of documentary projects, budgets and approaches.

Unfortunately, the Draft Statement of Intention issued by Screen Australia is less than reassuring on this point. While confirming that Screen Australia will still commission documentary projects 'in the public interest' and 'remain open

to individual proposals from producers', the SOI notes, 'it may also supplement the commissioning process by introducing tendering for relevant sections of the NIP and History collections". As Stefan Moore, a former Film Australia and ABC TV EP, pointedly observes 'How this pie will be divided will be of paramount concern to the independent documentary sector'. (2008)

Screen Australia's comments at industry briefings have confirmed that the tenderers could include the ABC and SBS but have left opaque just what constitutes 'relevant sections'. (Tiley 2008) Peter Butt, whose credits include *Who Killed Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler*, asks, 'What is to be benefited by this? Will it improve content? Will it maintain the current strengths and diversity of the industry? Is Screen Australia going to do this with drama producers? The idea stinks.' (2008)

Clearly the wheel is still in spin. Issues such as the fate of, and access to, Film Australia's extraordinary archive of production rate scant mention to date in official correspondence. One thing seems clear however: it is more imperative than ever that a proportion of documentary funding be directed to non-broadcast initiatives that 'expand the scope of documentary and open up new horizons for filmmakers and audiences' (Moore 2008). For as Cavalcanti put it in his 'Advice to Young Documentary Producers':

Don't lose the opportunity to experiment; the prestige of the documentary film has been acquired solely by experimentation. Without experimentation, the documentary loses its value; without experimentation, the documentary ceases to exist.

(in Monegal 1955)

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Pat Laughren is a documentary filmmaker on the staff of the Griffith Film School.