

12 Dec 69

Andrew Page

Arts Council of Great Britain

105 Piccadilly W 1.

Dear Andrew,

MEMORANDUM RE: VISUAL RECORD OF EVENTS

I should be grateful if you bring this memorandum, and my letter to you of yesterday, to the attention of the New Activities Committee.

Activity up to 12 December 69

Thanks to Mr John Lennon, who has made his portable video equipment available to us for the duration, we have been making a visual record of events in various towns and regions throughout the country. We now have a growing library of this type of material, which we make available in answer to numerous requests.

Finance

These activities have been financed largely by ourselves, but occasionally with money from regional bodies, colleges and groups. On the basis of our last month of concentrated activity we have made a costing of various types of operation, from single monitor playback of prerecorded tapes/thru closed circuit live TV relay/to audio visual documentation of events including the maximum interaction of artists with us and our equipment.

As you will see from the estimate for this weekend's two day job for the Midland Region in Birmingham, the cost is very roughly £50 per day, but this can be costed much more exactly for each particular job. At present, at least half of this comes from our own pockets, which are threadbare.

Recording of Regional Festivals up to March 31st 1970

We have already been invited to make a visual record of the main festivals to be held in the Midland, East Anglia and Yorkshire regions, starting this coming weekend with Birmingham Gathering No 1. Informal contacts with other regions suggest that there will be more requests, of this nature. We feel it would be possible, with some support from you, to present a more or less complete record of these events and activities. I do not wish to compare videotape with film because it is a different medium; but you should be aware that there are no processing costs and that stock once used can be reused if the events recorded are deemed not worth keeping a record of (or any other ~~reason~~ reason).

Suggested method of financing

Following the lead of Al Beach, Yorkshire region coordinator, the

most realistic way to fund us would be for us to keep an amount on hand for contingencies--which should be about £100--and for this fund to be replenished on the submission of castings and, if required, material shot. I should point out that, with the present lack of floating money at IRAT, it would be almost impossible to fund some of the forthcoming jobs in advance ourselves.

Summary of Viewing Requests up to the present

Requests to view material shot on the Arts Day and New Activities circuits have been not only from these and similar bodies, but from Universities, Art Colleges, Technical Colleges, Youth Clubs, Film etc amateur groups. Of these, the Technical Colleges and Youth Clubs appear to be the most neglected sectors of young society in cultural terms, and we are pleased to be able to respond to their interest in what, in fact, is the activities of people similar to themselves but in a different part of society.

Use of video as a communications medium

Considering the attention given to video by all groups who have asked us to visit them, we feel that this constitutes a very good communications channel to and from these groups. The Arts Council and the New Activities Committee may think that they could avail themselves of this medium, perhaps by making the occasional programme themselves. As we are all aware, there does seem to be a considerable lack of communication between artists and administrators. We are also aware that few people, if any, are asking where and how this lack of communication occurs. The attribution of dissatisfaction resulting from this communication breakdown to "political activists" is an insult to the majority of young creative people, and what is more does nothing to try and understand how it happens.

In short, we feel we can help in bridging this gap: a gap of generations, of language, of concepts, and of activity; and that television is one of the ways to do it.

Research

Part of our activity at IRAT consists in research, and as ex scientists and ex journalists we are well qualified. Last summer we published a report on Local Television privately circulated to various bodies and interested parties. The Minister of Technology, and the Home Office, in particular, are showing a strong interest in our work at this level.

Recently we have been looking at society in terms of the disaffiliated and other groups within it, and have developed the concept of a Social Matrix in which to describe our findings. The Social Matrix is a map of society seen from the individual's point of view, and we feel that it will be of tremendous use to any group or government wanting to communicate with the disparate and decentralised activity that is now so much a part of young society.

What to do with research

Subject of research  
Following the lead of IRAT