

Information Resources, Unions, and Ratings

As a producer you need quick access to a variety of accurate information resources, an understanding of broadcast guilds and unions, and some basic knowledge of copyrights and other legal matters. Finally—like it or not—you must be conversant in the rudiments of ratings, even if you have nothing to do with sales.

► INFORMATION RESOURCES

The Internet, telephone directories, and other resources

► UNIONS AND LEGAL MATTERS

Unions, copyrights and clearances, and other legal considerations

► AUDIENCE AND RATINGS

Target audience, and ratings and share

INFORMATION RESOURCES

As a producer you must be a researcher as well as somewhat of a scrounger. On occasion you may have only a half hour to get accurate information, for example, about a former mayor who is celebrating her ninetieth birthday. Or you may have to procure a skeleton for your medical show, a model of a communications satellite for your documentary on telecommunications, or an eighteenth-century wedding dress for your history series.

The Internet Fortunately, the vast resources on the Internet put the world's information at your fingertips almost instantly. Although Google is one of the most prominent and efficient search engines, there are other resources that can lead you to more-specialized information, including Ask.com, AltaVista, Lycos, Netscape Search, Excite, Mamma Metasearch, MetaCrawler, Yahoo!, and Bing. Still others have specialized information but often rely on the

larger ones. All equipment manufacturers have extensive websites with the most up-to-date information about their products. Amazon.com is often more efficient than a library for locating a specific book.

You may find, however, that the sheer volume of online information makes it difficult to find a specific item quickly. It may sometimes be faster and more convenient to use readily available printed sources or to call the local library. For example, a call to the local hospital or high-school science department may procure the skeleton more quickly than initiating a web search. You could ask the community college science department or perhaps even the local cable company for the satellite model, and contact the historical society or the college theater arts department for the wedding dress.

Besides Internet sources, the following are some additional references and services you should have on hand.

Telephone directories There is a great deal of information in a telephone book. Get the directories of your city and the outlying areas. Also try to get the directories of the larger institutions with which you have frequent contact, such as city hall, the police and fire departments, other city and county agencies, federal offices, school district offices, newspapers and radio stations, colleges and universities, and museums. On the Internet you can often obtain in seconds the telephone number of practically any phone user in the world.

Other resources The local chamber of commerce usually maintains a list of businesses and community organizations. A list of the major foundations and their criteria for grants may also come in handy. When working in a television station, you can always call on the news department for quick access to a great variety of local, national, and international information sources.

UNIONS AND LEGAL MATTERS

Most directors, writers, and talent belong to a guild or union, as do almost all technical people. As a producer you must be alert to the union regulations in your production area. Most unions stipulate not only salaries and minimum fees but also specific working conditions, such as overtime, turnaround time (stipulated hours of rest between workdays), rest periods, who can legally run a studio camera and who cannot, and so forth. If you use nonunion personnel in a union station, or if you plan to air a show that has been

SAG-AFTRA	A combined union of the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists . It includes television and movie actors, all other television and radio talent, and even some TV directors, especially when they double as actors or TV talent. The union prescribes basic minimum fees, which differ by region.
DGA	Directors Guild of America . A union for television and motion picture directors and associate directors. Floor managers and production assistants of large stations and networks sometimes belong to "the Guild."
WGA	Writers Guild of America . A union for writers of television and film scripts.
SEG	Screen Extras Guild . A union for extras participating in major film or video productions.
AFM	American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada . Relevant only if live musical performances are scheduled in the production.

2.7 NONTECHNICAL UNIONS AND GUILDS

prepared outside the station with nonunion talent, such as a play you produced with your fellow students, check with the respective unions for proper clearance.

Unions

There are two basic types of unions: those for nontechnical production personnel and those for technical personnel. Nontechnical unions are mainly those for performers, writers, and directors. **SEE 2.7** Technical unions include all television technicians, engineers, and some production personnel such as microphone boom operators, ENG/EFP camera operators, and floor personnel. **SEE 2.8**

Be especially careful about asking studio guests to do anything other than answer questions during an interview. If they give a short demonstration of their talents, they may be classified as performers and automatically become subject to SAG-AFTRA fees (see figure 2.7). Likewise, do not request the floor crew to do anything that is outside the scope of their regular duties, or they too may collect talent fees. Camera operators usually have a contract clause that ensures them a substantial penalty sum if they are willfully shown by another camera on the television screen. Acting students who appear in television plays produced at a high school or college may become subject to SAG-AFTRA fees if the play is shown on the air by a broadcast station, unless you clear their on-the-air appearance with the station and/or the local SAG-AFTRA office.

IBEW	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers . A union for studio, master control, and maintenance engineers and technicians. May also include ENG/EFP camera operators and floor personnel.
NABET	National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians . An engineering union that may also include floor personnel and nonengineering production people, such as boom operators and dolly operators.
IATSE	International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada . A union for stagehands, grips (lighting technicians), and stage carpenters. Floor managers and even film camera and lighting personnel can also belong.

2.8 TECHNICAL UNIONS

Copyrights and Clearances

If you use copyrighted material on your show, you must procure proper clearances. Usually, the year of the copyright and the name of the copyright holder are printed right after the © symbol. Most published photographs, reproductions of famous paintings, and prints are copyrighted as are, of course, books, periodicals, short stories, plays, and music recordings. To obtain a copyright clearance, you must write to the publisher of the work. Publishers usually charge a fee for your use of copyrighted material. Shows or music that you record off the air or download from the Internet as well as many CD-ROMs and DVDs also have copyright protection.

Paradoxically, when you as an artist are trying to protect your rights, you may find that the copyrights are vague; but when you as a producer use copyrighted material, you are bound by stringent laws and regulations. When in doubt, consult an attorney about copyright clauses and public domain before using other people's published material in your production.

Other Legal Considerations

Check with legal counsel about up-to-date rulings on libel (written and broadcast defamation), slander (lesser oral defamation), plagiarism (passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another), the right to privacy (not the same in all states), obscenity, and similar matters. In the absence of legal counsel, the news departments of major broadcast stations or university broadcast departments generally have up-to-date legal information available.

AUDIENCE AND RATINGS

As a producer in a television station, you will probably hear more than you care to about television audiences and ratings. Ratings are especially important for commercial stations because the cost for commercial time sold is determined primarily by the estimated size of the target audience. Even when working in public or corporate television, you will find that audience "ratings" are used to gauge the relative success of a program and subsequently as an important item in grant proposals.

Target Audience

Broadcast audiences, like those for all mass media, are usually classified by demographic and psychographic characteristics. The standard demographic descriptors include gender, age, marital status, education, ethnicity, and income or economic status. The psychographic descriptors pertain

to lifestyle, such as consumer buying habits and even personality and persuasiveness variables. When you fill out the registration card that comes with a new electronic product, you are not validating a guarantee but rather supplying the company with highly valuable psychographic information.

Despite sophisticated techniques of classifying audience members and determining their lifestyles and potential acceptance of a specific program or series, some producers simply use a neighbor as a model and gear their communication to that particular person and his or her habits. Don't be surprised if an executive producer turns down your brilliant program proposal with a comment such as, "I don't think my neighbor Cathy would like it." For much entertainment programming, such a subjective approach to prejudging the worth of a program might be acceptable. If you are asked to do a goal-directed program such as driver education or a commercial about the importance of water conservation, however, you need to identify and analyze the target audience more specifically. The more you know about the target audience, the more precise your objective (defined process message) and, ultimately, the more effective your actual process message will be.

Ratings and Share

An audience **rating** is the percentage of television households tuned to a specific station in a given population (total number of television households). You get this percentage by dividing the projected number of households tuned to your station by the total number of television households:

$$\frac{\text{number of TV households tuned in}}{\text{total number of TV households}} = \text{rating figure}$$

For example, if 75 households of your rating sample of 500 households are tuned to your show, your show will have a rating of 15 (the decimal point is dropped when the rating figure is given):

$$\frac{75}{500} = 0.15 = 15 \text{ rating points}$$

A **share** is the percentage of television households tuned to your station in relation to all households using television (HUT). The HUT figure represents the total pie—or 100 percent. Here is how a share is figured:

$$\frac{\text{TV households tuned to your station}}{\text{all households using television (HUT)}} = \text{share}$$

For example, if only 200 of the sample households have their sets actually in use (HUT = 200 = 100 percent),

the 75 households tuned in to your program constitute a share of 38:

$$\frac{75}{200} = 0.375 = \text{share of 38}$$

Rating services such as Nielsen carefully select representative audience samples and query these samples through diaries, telephone calls, and meters attached to their television sets. Some cable companies supply viewing data directly from their tuner boxes to the rating service.

The problem with the rating figures is not so much the potential for error in projecting the sample to a larger population but rather that the figures usually do not indicate whether the household whose set is turned on has any people watching and, if so, how many. The figures also do not indicate the impact of a program on the viewers (the actual process message). Consequently, you will find that your show is often judged not by the significance of your message, the impact it has on the audience, or how close the actual effect of the process message came to the defined effect but simply by how many people are assumed to have watched your show in relation to other shows. As frustrating as the rating system in broadcast television is, you must realize that you are working with a mass medium that by definition bases its existence on large audiences.

MAIN POINTS

- ▶ A producer needs quick and ready access to a great variety of resources and information. The Internet is an almost instantaneous and total information resource. Telephone directories and local business and community resources are also helpful.
- ▶ Most nontechnical and technical production personnel belong to guilds or unions, such as the Directors Guild of America (DGA) and the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET).
- ▶ The usual copyright laws apply when copyrighted material (such as scripts, video and audio recordings, printed information, CD-ROMs, and DVDs) is used in a television production. You must obtain permission from the publisher of the copyrighted material before you can use it in your program.
- ▶ An audience rating is the percentage of television households tuned to a specific station in a given sample population owning TV sets. A share is the percentage of households tuned to a specific station in relation to all other households using television (HUT).

ZETTL'S VIDEO LAB



For your reference or to track your work, the Zettl's VideoLab program cues in this chapter are listed here with their corresponding page numbers.

- ZVL1** PROCESS→ Ideas **26**
- ZVL2** PROCESS→ Proposals→ treatment **29**
- ZVL3** PROCESS→ Methods→ location | studio | single-camera | multicamera **29**
- ZVL4** PROCESS→ Proposals→ budget | try it **29**
- ZVL5** PROCESS→ Ideas→ scripts **33**