

M T M

EMPOWERING MEDIA THAT MATTERS

CELEBRATING
TEN YEARS

*BUILDING THE
STORY EXPERIENCE*



CMSI

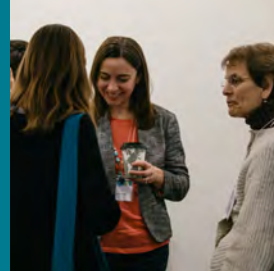
CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT



SCHOOL *of* COMMUNICATION
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC



“Film was the dominant cultural form of the 20th century, interactive media will be the dominant cultural form of the 21st century.”
-Suzanna Seggerman, Games for Change



“You have to be strategic and find ways to invade the culture that looks like what people want to watch but has a subversive message.”
-Byron Hurt, Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes

FROM THE DIRECTOR



A decade in to the Media That Matters conference, it's exciting to see how many things have changed, and how some have remained the same.

The conference began in a conversation at the Sundance Film Festival, where I was warming my feet with some of the Usual Suspects. We were all part of the slightly crunchy crowd interested in social issues, documentary, and making a difference with media. (In those days, you

didn't have to strategize to make sure you wouldn't get run over by celebrity caravans, but even then, social-issue documentaries didn't throw the top parties or give out the best swag.) I still owe Nicole Gaulmet a huge thank you for creating the first designated space for documentary at Sundance.

People were actually having this conversation or something like it all over the doc film world—at D-word, on Doculink, at private foundations, at festivals. The Center, which was then the Center for Social Media (founded long before Facebook or Twitter), was founded to help shape good conversations and generate good research prompted by them, on just these topics. So why not a conference on something that would be “beyond outreach”?

We settled on a central concept, which has been the guiding principle ever since: strategic design. People who want to make media that matters can't trust to good intentions and good stories alone. They need to know, or know people who know, how to plan strategically about story, users, and stakeholders. They need to learn from related fields where people are making a difference with media, and from business trends that generate new tools and approaches for social-issue makers. And that hasn't changed.

As many conference speakers have said over the years, the basics always apply. To do strategic design, you need to know what you want to happen, and who are the social actors. To provide impact measurements, you need to know what you want to measure. To collaborate successfully, you need to know what you want out of a partnership.

Strategic design is all about thinking about both media and social change. It's about understanding what all good storytellers understand: that people make change happen. It's about listening and learning from colleagues, whether in our back yards or from other worlds of experience. It's about paying attention to feedback, and acting on it.

Telling stories that make a difference in the world is hard. But it's also joyous and exhilarating. One of the most thrilling things about this conference for me is that every year, the day is carried forward on an amazing tide of good feeling, coming from all the people in the room.

Everyone who attends the conference has a story to tell. Everyone carries into the conference a spirit of generosity about connecting with their work, and everyone can leave with a bounty of connections that enrich their work.

What a privilege it has been to be a part of this process. Can't wait for next year!



Patricia Aufderheide
Founder & Director
The Center for Media & Social Impact

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Media & Social Impact at American University, formerly the Center for Social Media, is an innovation lab and research center that studies, designs, and showcases media for social impact. Focusing on independent, documentary and public media, the Center bridges boundaries between scholars, producers and communication practitioners across media production, media impact, public policy and audience engagement. The Center produces resources for the field and academic research; convenes conferences and events; and works collaboratively to understand and design media that matters.

The Center's Activities

- **INNOVATIVE RESEARCH** to answer key questions underlying social impact media.
- **RESOURCES** to facilitate impact through media: issue briefs, fact sheets, blog, and models for documentary and impact campaign production.
- **CONVENING** issue experts, social scientists, technology specialists and producers to discuss and track trends, lessons learned, and new models for **USER ENGAGEMENT** in media.
- **MAKING MEDIA** through infographics, videos, and other forms of strategic storytelling.



The Center was founded in 2001 by Patricia Aufderheide, University Professor in the School of Communication at American University. As part of the School, the Center offers research assistantships, screenings, master classes and volunteer opportunities to SOC students. The Center also has fellows associated with funded projects, but has no stand-alone funding for fellows.

The Center's work has been supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, MacArthur, McCormick, Surdna and Rockefeller and Wyncote Foundations, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



OVER THE YEARS

Throughout its 10 years, Media That Matters Conferences have convened nearly 40 panels and workshops, 100+ speakers and panelists, 7 keynotes, nearly 2,000 attendees, 15+ community partners and featured nearly 30 projects.

We've also seen buzzwords emerge, new technology tools released and distribution channels disrupted. But throughout it all, here are the primary changes in the field that have been both significant and valuable to media makers.

There are many more supporting organizations for a storyteller who wants to make a difference. Many businesses offer consulting services from strategic communication to distribution to educational modules to stakeholder relationships. And then there are festival additions like Britdocs' Good Pitch, funders like the Fledgling Fund and Chicken and Egg Pictures, double-bottom-line companies like Participant and Impact Partners.

Film, radio, graphic novels, and games, which used to be highly distinct media silos, are overlapping dramatically in the social-issue space. Media makers working with nonprofits may produce in all those forms, using the same basic information.

Funders and backers now expect a social-issue film project to either be embedded within a larger project or to have a strategic design evident at the fund-raising stage. And they expect to see analytics that demonstrate the kind of impact a film has had.

There are many more off-the-shelf tools in a digital environment for storytellers who want to make a difference, tools that facilitate planning, connecting, filming, editing, publicity, and distribution. Most of these tools also come with metrics and analytics, which provide feedback in near-real time and allow for on-the-fly strategic communication.



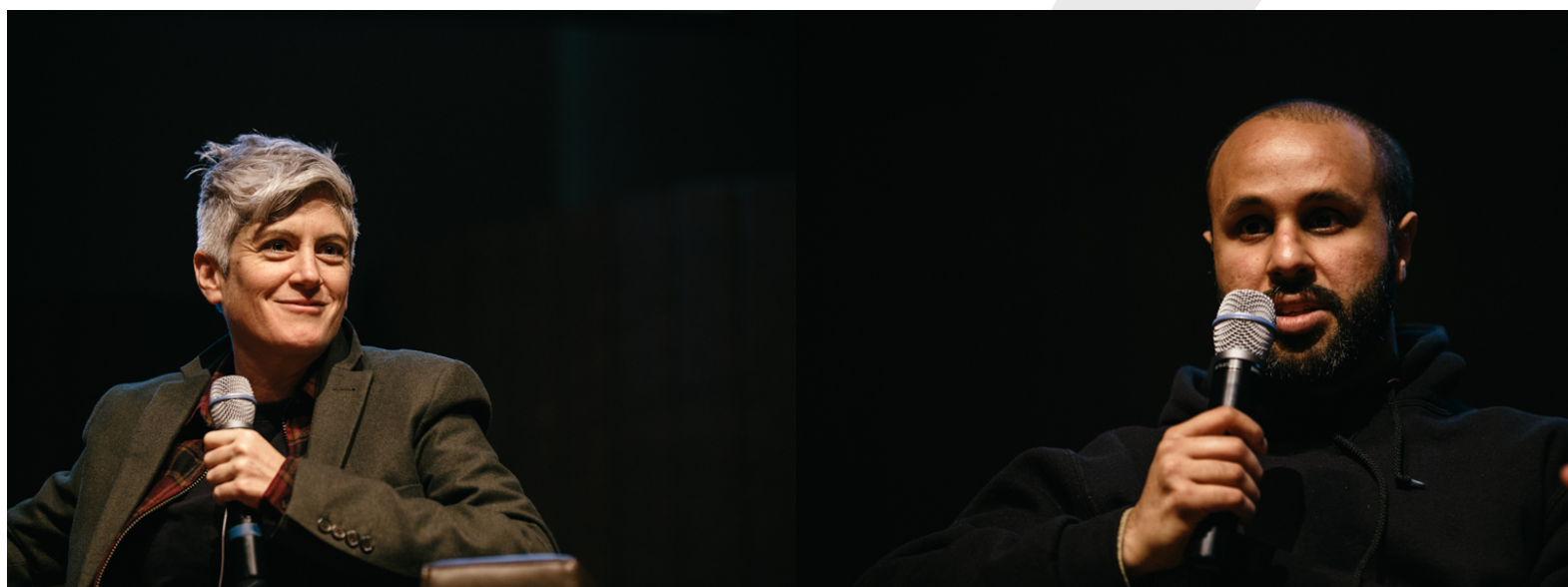
THE 2014 CONFERENCE

Building the Story Experience

February 6 - 7

Highlights

This year's conference celebrated the tenth anniversary of Media That Matters. Through robust programming that touched upon nearly every aspect of crafting the story experience, from sound to visuals to interactivity, the conference further solidified its place as providing both practical and forward-thinking insight to media makers.



Key Takeaways

- When trying to affect change on broad issues, like hunger or global warming, focus on one goal at a time. Once you've reached that goal, you can reevaluate and focus on next steps.
- Media makers should consider adopting a "360-degree campaign perspective" to engage people through a variety of channels from social media to games to interactive films.
- Good sound requires careful planning. In storytelling, it's not about the sound filling the room; it's about recreating an intimate experience.
- Silence can be a powerful sound effect that can evoke emotion and help interview subjects open up.
- Film festivals are still prime opportunities to have maker-to-maker conversations.
- While technology advances have allowed digital games to have incredible interactivity, do not forget about analog / physical games and their possible impact.
- Games teach players that systems are dynamic. Players gain problem-solving experience while learning how systems work.
- Apps can offer rich storytelling opportunities, although they come with limitations, such as the need to be downloaded.
- Use a variety of media to amplify your message; different people respond to different mediums.

PAST CONFERENCES

2005

Making Your Documentary Matter Workshop

February 7, 2005

Highlights: Attendees were encouraged to think of their documentaries not only as films, but also as projects and to understand that what used to be thought of as ‘outreach’ - an add-on to a theatrical screening or broadcast - had evolved into a dynamic field of strategic design and use. In addition to panels about funding social docs and tips for broadcast documentary outreach, the inaugural conference held a screening of Tod Lending’s film, *Omar and Pete*, a pioneer in outreach and audience engagement.

Key Takeaways:

- Always strive for a well-crafted human story with strong characters.
- Involve partners early and keep them engaged. Align project goals with those of your partners.
- Have clear message points and know the audiences you want to reach and why the film will be important to them.
- Identify community needs, build sustainable networks, work with organizations that have strong reputations and the ability to reach people in the community.
- Provide guidance to advocates on how to use media.
- Be aware of turf issues among partner organizations and don’t avoid the opposition.
- Don’t underestimate the importance and need for thoroughly researched case studies that can trace strategies that worked and didn’t work.

2006

Making Your Documentary Matter: Public Engagement Strategies That Work

January 30, 2006

Highlights: This conference featured our first keynote. It also included panels on producing with non-profits, innovative distribution partnerships, and engaging the “other.”

Key Takeaways:

- Tighten interdependence between filmmakers who can tell powerful stories and organizations with a strong idea of the stories they want to tell and how.
- The elements of successful producing partnerships include: Set out clear terms, from issues of creative control to financial relationships, ownership and rights. Written contracts are essential.
- Choose clients whose values match yours. Build long-term goals and strategies in from the start. Be willing to negotiate and listen.
- Distribution is no longer distinct from outreach; core audiences and niche audiences are new allies in long-tail distribution.
- Use a two-step approach in which the film first creates a buzz, and then becomes a tool for social change that enhances long-tail distribution and use.
- Achieve sustainability with practical, solution-based films that are part of long term campaigns.
- This work shouldn’t be just about bringing together like-minded constituents, but creating space for conversation between people on opposing sides of an issue.

2007

Making your Documentary Matter: Public Engagement Strategies that Work

January 31 - February 1

Highlights: For this conference, we expanded to a two-day format and produced a record number of four panels on mobile media, cutting-edge nonprofit media, participatory media and bridging difference through building engagement. We also began recording some of our panels and making them available as podcasts.

Key Takeaways:

- Mobile phones as the “fourth screen” have the potential as a content delivery tool and the possibility for creating a two-way conversation.
- Envision productions as multi-modal and multi-platform and create content that can be repurposed.
- Think of phones as a way to enhance broader multimedia projects.
- Organizations should be nimble with their films in order to repurpose them for diverse audiences and delivery systems to have the biggest impact.
- Make shorter versions of the film to show online and partner with others to drive distribution.
- Digital divide has prevented many community members from seeing the work, so also play films at meetings and community screenings.
- Individuals can be the best ambassadors for their own causes; putting media production in their hands offers a powerful tool.

2008

Making Your Media Matter

February 7 - 8

Highlights: We changed our name! We believed that Making Your Media Matter represented the intersection and collaboration of media makers in the digital media sphere. Gaming, new media, and documentaries no longer stood as completely separate entities. Accordingly, this year we convened panels about games for social change, plight entertainment, crossing cultural boundaries, short shorts and other innovative platforms.

Key Takeaways:

- Digital Games are a young medium that's evolving quickly and moving into the mainstream.
- Gaming is a different cognitive process than when you do something rather than hear or read something. Games allow you to explore new ideas, offer "low risk failures" and can be harnessed for social change and civic engagement.
- "Documentary gaming" presents several unique production challenges; it's the process of building an engaging game, a teaching tool, and possibly a political statement, all while being true to the story.
- Games are a tool where people could make their own story with their own assumptions "challenging their own misconceptions."
- Issues must be presented honestly without sensation; producers must maintain impartiality.
- Repurposing content for multiple platforms is increasingly important because it allows you to not only leverage existing assets, but also to reach different audiences.

2009

Ethics, Money and Mission

February 12 - 13

Highlights: Our fifth conference convened nearly 250 established and aspiring filmmakers, non-profit communications leaders, funders and students including participants from Germany, Nigeria and Kenya. Our director, Patricia Aufderheide, dedicated the conference to Woody Wickham, in loving memory of the public media advocate. The release of our white paper Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics was a topic of discussion amidst panels about funding, sustainability, and ethics.

Key Takeaways:

- Flip the traditional model; use "outreach" for production.
- You have to be creative, intrepid, and willing to stretch from the usual path in raising financing for documentaries.
- Outreach Plans should include at least a year post-completion for collaborating and possibly taking the lead on the film's distribution.
- Target funding partners who fully support your priorities – better to walk away from financing than to connect with partners who have a different agenda.
- Never underestimate the power of a short film.
- Audience can be a collaborator, help promote project, and potentially fund the next one.

2010

Making Your Media Matter: Real Stories, Real Impact

May 12

Highlights: The conference (snowed out in February, and rescheduled for May) featured panels about documentary ethics, strategic design in social issue media, and fiction for change. We also started videotaping some our panels to offer video in addition to podcasts.

Key Takeaways:

- A new distribution model for filmmakers that employs low tech, broadcast, and mobile technology.
- Make varying lengths of educational modules, micro-docs and supplemental video material all from footage you shot of the flagship film.
- The more you give away free of charge, the more people want to acquire the film.
- Build your crew to include community members who have empathy for the issue.
- Recognize filmmaking is part of the process of social change – produces webs of connection between people, organizations, and institutions in a process of coalition-building fundamental to building a movement.
- Structure narrative strategically so that it invites multiple and diverse audiences into the story to use in networks beyond what you imagined.
- Contrary to conventional belief, fiction films on social issue themes perform well at box office.

2011

Storytelling Across Platforms

February 10 - 11

Highlights: This year we added a number of new learning and sharing opportunities to the conference, including workshops, mini modules and a special honoring of Gordon Quinn, founder of Kartemquin Films, for his forty-five years of filmmaking history. Conference programming explored design thinking, transmedia, ethics in environmental filmmaking, and innovative radio storytelling.

Key Takeaways:

- Design thinking can offer a framework for media makers to think about research and evaluation.
- Revenue streams can include: sponsorship, micro-payments, convenings, advertising, and subscriptions.
- Branding, ratings, revenue and convenience can often lead to decisions that are ethically compromising for the sake of engaging, high impact, and high octane wildlife footage.
- Narrator-less stories don't mean that there isn't an editorial point of view. Editing someone else's story entails a certain responsibility but also provides a novelty.

2012

Change For Good

February 10 - 11

Highlights: This year we hosted a Designing for Impact clinic that offered individual sessions with filmmakers about strategic design for their projects. We screened the short film "It's In Your Hands" which was a Media That Matters Festival jury award winner. Panels focused on affecting significant, meaningful, and wide-scale change.

Key Takeaways:

- Regularly think of new ways to bring potential partners into the conversation; rejection is part of the process.
- Traditional quantitative metrics of success are important, but some successes, like emotional reactions after screenings, are immeasurable.
- Be aware of partners who may want to inject their message into your project and find ways to encourage wide collaboration among partners.
- Often in partnerships, the filmmaking team must do the lion's share of the work. The onus may be on the filmmaker to tell the partners how their funds will do the work and to continually communicate to partners the importance of that work.
- In addition to gaining the attention of policy shapers and intellectual leaders, consider the value of working with and engaging students around social issues.

2013

Measure for Measure

February 14 - February 15

Highlights: In addition to facilitating three workshops, including one about media entrepreneurship, we screened two films: *To Be Heard* directed by Roland Legiardi-Laura and Meridian Hill Pictures' *Green Corps*. Panels explored the latest technological impact tools, sustainability in documentary, and measuring success for multiplatform projects.

Key Takeaways:

- Tracking indicators are important, but you have to make sure you're tracking the right ones.
- Approaches to establishing an effective outreach campaign that monitor this kind of "conventional" data such as demographics may be missing the boat.
- Consider excel as a measurement tool. The human interaction required to enter the data may be capable of extracting more qualitatively incisive insights than any computer program.
- Utilizing a multiplatform approach in projects may not just help with engagement and inspiration, but also to help take projects to the next level.

THE KEYNOTES

2006

Cynthia Lopez, Executive Vice President & Co-Executive Producer, Point Of View Documentary Series

The recap: Using her years of experience working on the public TV documentary series POV, Lopez asserted that traditional terms and techniques such as marketing and publicity are all in the service of public engagement.

2007

Robert Greenwald, Founder and President, Brave New Films

The recap: Greenwald discussed the necessity of film producers to partner early on, before any footage is shot, with non-profit organizations to make a film that both matters and is seen by many people. Outreach strategies and goals should be coordinated alongside the filmmaking process, with input from nonprofits at every step of the way. Beyond organizational partnerships, involving individuals in the productions and screenings also works to build community while affecting social change.

2008

Byron Hurt, Director of *Soul Food Junkies* and *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*

The recap: Hurt's seminal documentary *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* provided him with more than a few insightful lessons in audience building and engagement, which he shared with attendees. At the core of his film's success was great storytelling, community screenings with director appearances and tireless work with partners who shared common goals.

2009

George Stoney, Documentary Filmmaker and Producer

The recap: Often considered the father of public access television, Stoney, who passed away in 2012, addressed ethics in social issue film, using his own films, some of which date back to the 50's as examples. He proposed that documentary filmmakers should take their own Hippocratic Oath that could simply be: "Do no harm."



2011

Katy Chevigny, Co-founder and Senior Director of Arts Engine

The recap: Drawing on her experience at Arts Engine, Chevigny explored “the genius of collaboration.” She emphasized that it’s the responsibility of filmmakers to remind the public that creativity is a collective project and encouraged attendees to contemplate and honor the complexities of context and collaboration, both in the process of storytelling and within the story itself.

2012

Meredith Blake, Founder and CEO, ProSocial

Both attorney and social entrepreneur, Blake rightfully declared that promoting positive social change is not only morally right, it’s also a sound investment that can earn bottom line returns and brand building impact for stakeholders - benefits that filmmakers should include in their project pitches to potential partners.

2013

Wendy Levy, Director, New Arts AXIS & Co-Founder of Sparkwise

The recap: As director of New Arts AXIS, Levy has consulted with a number of significant media projects which is why she pushed attendees to think about the impact that their work is actually having on targeted audiences and to include the use of data, alongside compelling narratives in their measurement strategies, with the understanding that none of it is easy.

2014

Alden Stoner, Vice President of Social Action Film Campaigns at Participant Media

The recap: With extensive experience designing social impact campaigns for films, Stoner shared insights about Participant’s process to develop effective, impact-driven campaigns. She underscored the importance of up front research into the issue and encouraged attendees to focus on one goal at a time, especially when tackling broad issues like hunger. She projects that we’ll see more media makers utilizing a 360-degree campaign perspective in their work.



THE PROJECTS

Over the years, we've featured some cutting edge and significant media projects by dynamic media makers. Here are just a few:



Always in Season

A transmedia project that takes a contemporary look at the lingering impact of lynching with an interactive Second Life locale and documentary film that offer hope for fighting racism and hate today.



American Experience Project

Television's most-watched history series that brings to life the characters and stories that have shaped America's past and present.



Bridge the Gulf

A community media initiative designed to help Gulf Coast communities convey their stories and their vision for a just, healthy and sustainable future.



Dear Mandela

A film about the story of Abahlali BaseMjondolo – Zulu for 'people of the shacks'. It is considered the largest movement of the poor to emerge in post-apartheid South Africa.



ICED

I Can End Deportation is a free, 3D downloadable game that teaches players about current immigration laws on detention and deportation.



Land of Opportunity

An experimental web platform about post-crisis community rebuilding that merges compelling multimedia storytelling with curated data, research, and calls to action in one collaborative interactive space.



The Line Campaign

A non-profit organization and movement inspired by the documentary *The Line*, that is committed to empowering young leaders to create a world without sexual violence.



NO! The Rape Documentary

A Black feminist educational organizing tool, which is being used in the global movement to end violence against women and children.



Out in the Silence

A film and campaign for fairness and equality in rural & small town America.



Question Bridge

A transmedia art project that seeks to represent and redefine Black male identity in America. Through video mediated question and answer exchange, diverse members of this “demographic” bridge economic, political, geographic, and generational divisions.



Snap Judgment

A themed, weekly NPR storytelling show that focuses on presenting compelling personal stories to produce cinematic, dramatic radio.



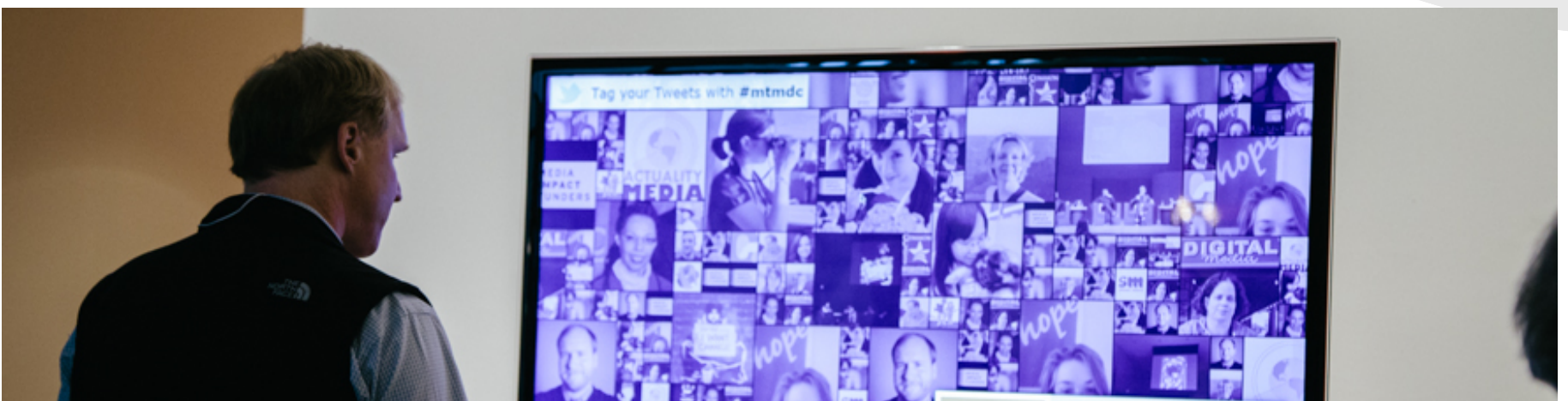
The Bully Project

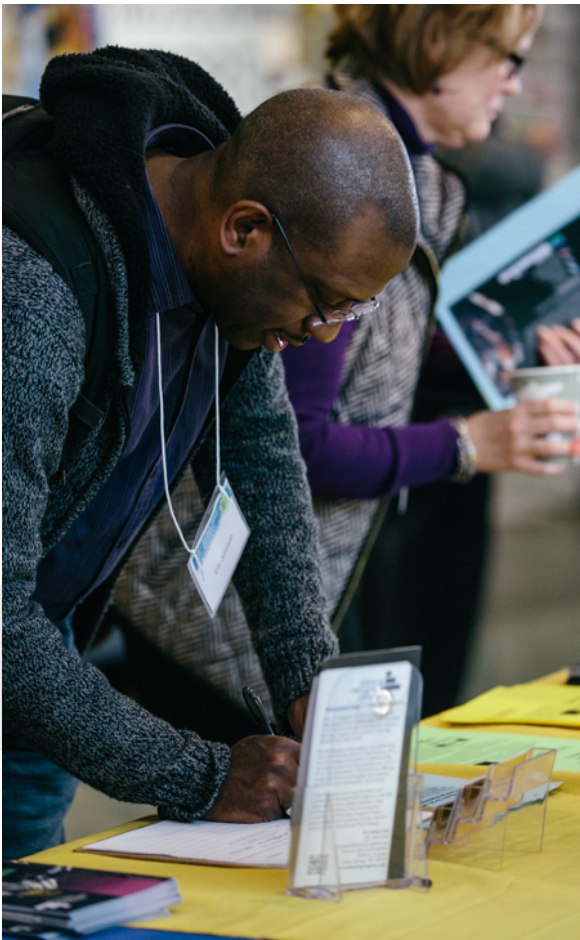
The social action campaign inspired by the award-winning film *BULLY* that sparked a national movement to stop bullying and change a culture of bullying into one of empathy and action.



To Be Heard

A verité film that tells the story of three teens from the South Bronx whose struggle to change their lives begins when they start to write poetry. The film evolved into Power Poetry, a mobile community for youth.





WHAT'S NEXT?

As we move forward into the next ten years, we're contemplating what's next for media that matters. To broaden the conversation, we asked a few influencers within the space for their thoughts. Here's what they had to say:

Nonny de la Peña, Immersive Journalism Pioneer

"Important stories can be portrayed in life-size and visceral detail using a revolutionary implementation of gaming platforms and virtual reality programming that is combined with careful reconstruction of eyewitness video, audio, and photographs. The audience wears fully-tracked, high-resolution goggles and experiences a spatial soundscape to create sensations of being on scene. By harnessing those feelings of being on scene, the audience gets unprecedented access to the sights, sounds, feelings and emotions of the story which allows media that matters to resonate."

Alyce Myatt, Consultant

"While I can't presume to know "what's next," I'd like to express what I'd like to see happen:

- Either media makers become more savvy about promoting their work or new organizations form to do the promotion for them. It's a very noisy world and in order to have an impact, media that matters must have a megaphone. Media makers who relentlessly and effectively use social media tools, who optimize their websites, who partner with organizations with a vested interest in the subject matter who will promote to their constituents, are the most successful.*
- Yes, it's an extremely tight funding environment but, for the most part, it always has been. In order to better attract funding from foundations, media makers should target funders who connect with the issues and themes presented in the media maker's work – not just media funders.*
- Advocacy/lobbying is the most underutilized tool available to media makers. Not since the days of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) has the film and video community advocated, and won, on its own behalf.**

**Come on people: there's not even a Wikipedia page for AIVF!"*



Ellen Schneider, Founder, Active Voice and Director, Active Voice Lab for Story and Strategy

Many years ago, while packing my suitcase for a trip to the Center for Media & Social Impact's (nee Center for Social Media) annual conference, my husband wandered by and asked where I was off to. "D.C.," I replied. "For 'Making Your Media Matter.'" A staunch defender of the Fifth Estate, he stopped in his tracks. "That's fantastic. Go get 'em. Media should be madder!"

Ok, so maybe I can work on my enunciation. But when thinking about what's next for "social impact" media, our little miscommunication reminds me that content can do more than make people "mad" or "sad" or even "hopeful" – although of course emotion is a key ingredient for media engagement.

How can we advance and amplify this powerful trajectory? Our strategies are already becoming as sophisticated as the content itself. Here's what I mean:

- We're going to understand more about why certain kinds of media matter to particular people – not necessarily because of where they live or how old they are or how much money they make – but because of their values. That doesn't mean that our desire for wide audiences will diminish, but we'll be smarter about getting meaningful media directly to individuals, organizations and networks that can harness content to stimulate empathy and action.*
- We'll learn about what can be measured, and how – depending on what we really want to know. The language and practice of "evaluation" will give way to more creative but still rigorous processes; less top down, and more collaborative.*
- We'll know if we're making a difference with our media because we'll have better tools for tracking change along the way, and more opportunities to make midcourse corrections and pursue promising new directions.*
- I'm looking forward to another decade of the Center for Media & Social Impact insights, trend-spotting, and moving all of us up the ladder of engagement. Or the latter!*



**Nancy Schwartzman,
Filmmaker, CEO Tech 4 Good, LLC**

"More media, by more makers creating more stories that matter to more people!"



THE ARCHIVES

Enjoy past conferences by accessing our archive of podcasts, videos, and rap reports.

2007

Podcast & Discussion Forum

Rap Report

2008

Podcast & Discussion Forum

Rap Report

2009

Rap Report

2010

Videos

Rap Report

2011

Podcast & Discussion Forum

Rap Report

2012

Podcast & Discussion Forum

Rap Report

2013

Podcast & Discussion Forum

Rap Report

2014

Rap Report



CREDITS

Director of Center for Media & Social Impact:

Patricia Aufderheide

Associate Director of Center for Media & Social Impact:

Angelica Das

Creative Director of Center for Media & Social Impact:

Caty Borum Chattoo

Written and Developed by:

Felicia Pride/Pride Collaborative

Research: Emily O'Connor

Design: Anedra Edwards

CMSI 
CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT



SCHOOL *of* COMMUNICATION
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

www.cmsimpact.org