

- 2. Describe your full programme for the current year and your general intentions to effect your basic policy in the year to which your application refers. Note any major developments or changes proposed.

To understand our work as a whole in relation to this application, we feel it would be useful to outline the history of Albany Video.

1973 - 1976

In this period the project was mainly involved in using video as a ^{tool} role for community development and organising. There was long term "animation" work with the Community Association from Pepys Estate, together with a number of campaign tapes made with and by local tenants groups on issues such as repairs and maintenance, demands for rehousing, on nuisance from traffic noise. These tapes were shown on the estates where they originated, and to Lewisham Council to press for change.

Another major involvement was in work with young people, mainly on Deptford adventure playgrounds, which at that time were strong and numerous. The work ranged from random recording and playback, to one-off dramas, to, in one case, a documentary history of a playground threatened with closure. In all cases the aim was to stimulate the young people's creativity through their using the equipment for themselves.

We were also involved with the Telegraph Hill Neighbourhood Festivals, recording them each year, and making a compilation tape.

1977 - 1979

This period of our work reflected a number of larger political shifts, in particular, an increasing disillusionment with purely local community action as an agent of change, and the growing urgency around combatting racism and sexism.

Our campaign work tended to centre on issues of concern to the whole of Lewisham and beyond, for instance, cuts in London Transport, or repairs and maintenance on all of the Borough's estates. We were already working on anti-racist material when the National Front were allowed to march from New Cross on August 13th, 1977. We produced a tape that described the day's events and the background to them, and distributed it locally and further afield. Later we recorded (and distributed) a tape of a commemorative evening for Blair Peach. We produced a tape with Lewisham Women's Aid Refuge which they have used in their work to explain the causes and effects of male violence; and worked with two elderly Deptford women on an 'Oral History' tape on sex and marriage in the 1920's. We began work on "US GIRLS" taken from an Albany Youth Theatre play about five young women confronting sexism in their daily lives.

Throughout this period there was a growing awareness of the power of video as a source of alternative information and a stimulant to group discussion, partly attributable to the emergence of anti-racist and women's organisations and to the growth of the domestic video market at the end of the seventies. This had two implications for us; a wider, though still specific, audience.

for material we were involved in producing (which had, and still has, an effect on the sort of tapes we made), and a growing demand for access to playback equipment. This demand led to our developing the access/resource side of our work: hiring out playback machinery and building up a tape library. (We have never been an access centre for production machinery. If a group want to produce something, they work with us, or with our training and support over the production period.)

1980 - 1982

This was a period of change and readjustment brought about by external factors: two moves (to a temporary building at the end of 1980, and to the New Albany at the end of 1981) and the obsolescence of ½" black and white equipment, our production standard since 1974. So we were involved in a lot of administration, building and decorating, and capital fundraising.

Two major areas of video work have been on the cuts in public expenditure, and on youth unemployment. We made a tape with the Lewisham Campaign against the Health Cuts which has been used extensively by political and community groups in the Borough, and have prepared training material for N.U.P.E. shop stewards on the implications of cuts in the public sector. With the Lewisham Young People's Rights group we made a short instructional tape on signing on for school leavers, and started work on a documentary drama on what it feels like to be young and unemployed.

During this time we also expanded the resource area of our work both locally and London wide. This fell into two areas: equipment (editing and playback facilities) and tape hire/distribution.

1983 - 1984

Our experience over the last year or so has convinced us of the necessity of thinking through a working policy for the couple of years ahead, for a number of reasons:

- Re-expansion in our tape distribution has enabled us to see more clearly what gaps there are in our existing services.
- Our increased equipment stock has led to us being used as a resource by a large number of diverse groups, so we now have to make clearer priorities in that area of our work.
- Three of us have worked at Albany Video for the past 18 months; two white men (Geoff Stowe and Tony Downmunt) and a black woman (Karen Alexander). Since the period of the New Cross fire and the Black People's Day of Action, Geoff and Tony have become increasingly involved in work that has confronted their own and more generally, white racism. Karen has had more demands from groups on her time, both as a woman and a black person, than we have had the resources to handle.

We have consequently decided to prioritise the issues of racism and sexism in our work over the next two years, and in the light of this are applying to the GLC for a year's salary money for another woman worker. She would work in the following areas:

- Training course for women's groups VHS and U-Matic.

We want to shift the direction of Albany Video from resource to project and production work, for the following reasons: -

1. We have never resolved the tension - a problem since John and Mary's days - between Albany Video worker's need to do projects and productions in a concentrated way, and the distracting pull of resource work.
2. Since then the resource has grown enormously, so it's now too much for one full time worker to manage, and makes our rooms feel like an amusement arcade on a summer Sunday afternoon.
3. All three of us have consequently been increasingly cast in 'servicing' roles, which has meant that we ~~back into time~~ *lack the time* to develop our own creative skills by working on projects / productions or by doing "in service training".
4. "How is it possible for anyone to convincingly encourage others to develop a creative potential when they themselves have so evidently abandoned its pursuit ? " J. Phillips, 1983.
5. So most of the really innovative / exciting projects we have been involved with since " US GIRLS " have been ones that we have "Serviced" rather than initiated.
6. Physical access to video machinery is not so much of a problem / issue now as in the earlier days of Albany Video, because of the *burgeoning domestic industry*.
7. Anyway, it has never been enough in the struggle for alternative representation in the media, to deal with only issues of physical control/access to machinery; we also need control over form and language, particularly now with the rapid development of video technology - an oppositional aesthetics, personal and political frame grabbing..
8. The clients we are currently servicing (with VHS) are mostly youth/social/community workers, - statutory ~~or~~ voluntary, i.e. employed directly or indirectly by the ILEA or local government, and getting equipment off us at a fraction of the commercial price they should really be paying. Why should GLAA subsidise this?
9. There is a contradiction between open resource work and our recent policy decision to prioritise anti-racist and anti-sexist work.
10. Our neutral servicing role is increasing the quantity of video use in the community, without affecting its quality.
11. There are a number of organisations crucial to our development that we need to have more time to involve ourselves with (ACTT, BFI, GLC, GLAA, VET).

Sept 9 Nic Gibson's party.

THE CHANGES

The main change is that we will work with many less groups in a more concentrated and long term way that allows us as workers and the work we do to grow and develop. Some of the ways we've thought about achieving this are:

- A) Doing a publicity campaign announcing that we are no longer a service/resource. Groups are welcome to discuss projects with us, but we are no longer interested in one off hirings - apart from groups with whom we already have a strong relationship, or purely commercial U-matic production and editing hires.
- B) Liaising with the Youth Office and the Borough to ensure that they either have the resources to take on the access work we are abandoning, or pay us a resource workers salary to do it.
- C) Holding meetings with our constituencies, where appropriate, to inform and consult with them about these changes.
- D) Keeping written records of projects and discussing them regularly at Staff/Management Meetings.
- E) Setting up training courses for ourselves and other video workers, and regular seminars and screenings.
- F) Maintaining a 3 month on, 6 months off rota system for the reduced resource side of our work.
- G) Getting rid of equipment and responsibilities we won't need (e.g: the bulk of the tape-slide stuff, 1 VHS playback rig, 1 VHS portable and camera (?) the darkroom?).
- H) Looking for long term ways out of the resource work we can't ditch in the short term - e.g.: tape distribution.

Jemy's no.

ALBANY VIDEO SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

AGENDA:

- 1) CHANGES AT ALBANY VIDEO
- 2) THE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE
- 3) G.L.C. APPLICATION FOR WOMAN VIDEO WORKER

A.O.B

- 1) Discussion about which have come about in the project, what implications that has had for our work and the course of action for the future. The major points are outlined one paper entitled Changes at Albany Video.

TIME LIMIT 2 HOURS

- 2) Discussion about strategy and practicalities of going independent and how the project should be constituted.
Look at copy of Barefoot Video constitution.
Discussion about new members for support group.

TIME LIMIT 1 HOUR

Recap on previous items to clarify points and decisions.

- 3) A brief talk about the situation so far.
Discussion about how and who should be involved in drawing up job brief and job description.
Payment.
Where to advertise the post.
Makeup of the interview panel.

TIME LIMIT 1½ HOURS

If there is enough time - Viewing of new tapes.

11TH OCTOBER 1983

Outline for Article on Albany Video Project

The Albany Video Group has been working in the community in Deptford since John White started working there in 1973 with a borrowed BFI Sony Rover. In Feb. 82 Albany video will open in the New Albany premises. This is an appropriate time to evaluate the work of Albany Community Video and to see how its methods of work and objectives have changed during this period, through developments in technology, the advent of TV 4 and the maturing of grass roots community action which community video parallels.

When portable video first became available in the early 70's there were high hopes for its potential, with video workers and media theorists anticipating an instant democratisation of mass media through the accessibility of video as a production tool. Subsequently disillusion set in when it was discovered that video's have a tendency to break down and that it wasn't sufficient just to record tape and for people to see themselves on a monitor for the medium to be used effectively. Caroline Heller attacked access video as a "mildly lunatic but harmless fringe activity". Meanwhile community video groups like the Albany have continued to work on a shoe-string budgets, committed to access video for community action.

The article will examine the evolution of the Albany video group from the "process" approach to video use where tapes were recorded in shopping centres or on adventure playgrounds and played back unedited to the use of video to focus and generate support for local campaigns. The point will be made that community video aims to radicalise the entire communications process from recording to editing to distribution. ~~The that the workers~~ spend much time to interaction with the audience and to playback to small groups as they do to production. The radicalisation of form which tends to be the major focus of independent film makers and of the major funding bodies is secondary to this process. Community video's products therefore are designed for particular audiences, at a particular time, in a particular context. However as community work has evolved from working on particular estates to the organisation of national campaigns on issues like racism and sexism, so too the Albany is producing tapes which are distributed nationally and internationally.

The changes in community video are also the result of technological developments in equipment which mean that colour equipment now used for broadcast in countries like Australia and America is now available at the same price in real terms as black and white equipment was in the early 70's. This means that more sophisticated productions are now possible using Umatic while the access work and "process" tapes will still be made using VHS gear.

Distribution is now easier due to the availability of video equipment generally.

Community Video is now established with a string of campaigning tapes to it's credit and having trained numerous youth and community workers and members of the community in rudimentary video production. The Albany is at present negotiating with TV4 who may be prepared to fund equipment for the Albany to use for training and production purposes.