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Interview with Peter Kaufman Intelligent Television

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KENNEALLY: Screen/culture, TV/books, intelligent/television. Such word pairings seem destined for a list of 21st century oxymorons, but they are in fact very serious terms, particularly serious for our guest today on *Beyond the Book*.

Welcome to the show, everyone. My name is Chris Kenneally, and joining me today is Peter Kaufman, who is President and Executive Producer of Intelligent Television. Peter, welcome to *Beyond the Book*.

KAUFMAN: Thanks. Good to be with you.

KENNEALLY: Well, it's a pleasure to have you, Peter. And you know, as I thought about these various pairings, TV/books, screen/culture, intelligent/television, I recalled that I couldn't resist, when we first met some years ago, pointing out to you that intelligent television seemed like an oxymoron, and I bet a lot of people make that same observation.

KAUFMAN: I get that. I get that sometimes, for sure.

KENNEALLY: But you definitely think that television has a very powerful opportunity, responsibility and potential for educating and socializing people.

KAUFMAN: That's absolutely right. I mean, I go back in my work to the origins of public broadcasting in this country, and some of those essential documents at the intersection of the Tigris and Euphrates, you know, in the 1960s and '70s, about the establishment of public media, really testified to our hopes nationally at the time, and among educators, among producers, among all kinds of cultural figures – Ralph Ellison was involved – in the promise of television.

KENNEALLY: Well, in fact, before there was a PBS in the '60s, of course, it was all under the umbrella of educational television, and nobody thought that was particularly amusing. In fact, they really believed that television could be educational.

KAUFMAN: That's right. And in most every other country, television began in some form or another as a state monopoly. It was subsidized massively by the



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government. And we are, I guess, a little (inaudible), as always. But we grew out of a commercial radio world.

But if you go back – I mean, the work of a number of media historians tracks this. If you go back, there was a tremendous amount of promise surrounding the establishment of this new media, a dedication to making it kind of a quality source of information.

KENNEALLY: Well, we can talk more about that promise, and more about your thoughts on where media is headed. We should tell the audience a bit about you, and we should also try to address the question that probably is occurring to people, and that is, why have a television guy on a program called *Beyond the Book*? And it's because increasingly, it seems, books and video and television are coming together. And I want to explore with you the ways that each side has something to teach and to learn from the other.

But to tell people briefly about your background, Peter – we are, as we said, speaking with Peter Kaufman. He's the President and Executive Producer of Intelligent Television, where he directs all aspects of the company's media productions and research works. He has been an expert advisor for access issues to the Library of Congress' Division of Motion Pictures, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound. Previously, he was President and Publisher of TV Books, a book publisher he founded and sold to Lorne Michaels' Television and Film Company, Broadway Video.

The list goes on. We'll post all of that on our website. You are the author as well of a book with a, again, a fascinating title, a very provocative title, *On Building a New Market for Culture – Virtue and Necessity in a Screen-Based Economy*.

And Peter, my question to you first is about this notion of screen culture. Can you give us a definition of that, and some thoughts from someone who has been a part of television and book publishing for long enough to really wonder where this is taking us?

KAUFMAN: Sure. You know, my work has involved kind of the premise that some of the finest intellectual property in the world is being created or has been created for television, and that more of that great intellectual property can be created for online video. Screen culture is a kind of an emerging term of art that signifies more and more people worldwide are getting their information off of a screen. And Copyright Clearance Center knows that, with its – your great theories on addressing some of the trends in eBooks.



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But people are reading, people are inhaling information off of all kinds of devices worldwide, but screens and speakers particularly. The statistics – I mean, some of them are amazing. There are firms like Cisco and Intel that spend time charting the future of this world of hyper-connectivity that we're entering.

And it turns out, according to some of their predictions, in three years – 1,000 days – there will be 11 billion square feet of digital screen surface area carrying moving images around the world. That's enough to cover the earth's surface almost 50 times.

There will be, by the same time in 2013, the equivalent of 10 billion DVDs worth of video – 10 billion, crossing the Internet every month. And there are network-enabled devices that are proliferating, too. There will be about 15 billion of those, also in about 1,000 days, according to some of these forecasts. All of that is at the core of screen culture.

KENNEALLY: Right, and for many years, perhaps for generations, people have imagined a global culture, and it seems to me that screen culture may be the first truly global culture, because post something online, and it becomes available anywhere.

KAUFMAN: I think that's right. I think that's right, and it's instant.

KENNEALLY: What about how the book publishing industry can learn from this emerging screen culture? And by the way, how much is this screen culture taking from book publishing?

KAUFMAN: It's a great question. I think that the – I think that there's a lot that we can learn, if we're in book publishing, as I was, or if we're in television/video production, as I am, from the other side. And I think both can learn from the origins, the early days of the media in the United States, publishing and television, film and cinema.

In particular, for example, like if you look at the early experience that we had in early cinema when nickelodeons first started, these were not silent movie theaters with people hush-hushing everyone at the – they were multi-layered experiences with music, live music, with narration. Sometimes a lecturer would stand in front of the screen. There was multitasking in the theatrical environment itself. And I think that we're heading that way again, and when it comes down to it, it may be just an aberration that we've been kind of sitting with individual screens in silence.



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KENNEALLY: Or, for that matter, we've been sitting with just a book or just a screen. Now the book and the screen may be side by side in ways that people hadn't anticipated. We're hearing about something called Vook, which is an attempt to create video online books. Jane Friedman, formerly with Harper Collins, has just launched a new company called Open Road Media, in tandem with a partner who comes from the film industry.

There's certainly a lot going on out there that suggests it all is heading in that direction. For you as a book publisher, particularly a publisher of a company called TV Books, do you think that people will be looking for video to supplement their book reading, or will it be a part of the book reading itself?

KAUFMAN: My hunch is – and I look to my three kids, for example, for direction on some of this. They're 13, 11, 9. My hunch is that when people are going to be reading material online, they're going to be at a screen, and that screen will be hospitable to all kinds of other media, including video. I don't think that text or video or music will have a rarified status to these – to the generation that's growing up now. One won't have – one won't be more kind of lofty than the other. They'll all be working in tandem on the same screen for information purposes, hopefully. But for a lot of other purposes, too.

KENNEALLY: And with regard to television production, video production, which you are, again, very familiar with as a professional, it's now gotten into the hands of – I don't want to use the term amateur, because it sounds pejorative. But to non-professionals, in a way that it wasn't possible to do before. It was easier to publish a book individually than it was to create a film individually. But now, it – that is possible too. How is that changing things?

KAUFMAN: Oh, well, it's changing things a lot. Cisco bought that company that makes Flip video cameras. Nowadays, cell phones are enabled with cameras, and moving image cameras as well.

I think, you know, the kinds of – oh, to use an old term, the means of production are falling into the hands of everybody. And I think that, for the most part, is a great thing, because it enables citizens, world citizens everywhere, to capture information that they believe is important and put it online for the rest of the world's privilege.

KENNEALLY: Well – and this leads us to another one of these interesting and emerging phrases, which is, open video. And Intelligent Television earlier – I should say, last year, we're speaking in January of 2010, but I believe last summer, was part of a



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conference in New York, an open video conference, and you are members of something called the Open Video Alliance. You've also helped produce a short video available online about open video.

Define that term for us, and what is the open video movement, if you will, seeking to accomplish?

KAUFMAN: Sure. Well, to take a step to the side for a second, imagine the day that Wikipedia becomes video-enabled. If you search on any proper name or proper place, chances are that Wikipedia will emerge as the top search result, or among the top two, three search results. There is coming a day soon when Wikipedia will host video as well as text. And when the video on Wikipedia will be as easy to edit, manipulate, correct, annotate as the text is today – Wikipedia is working hard to provide that situation.

When that environment launches, it will blow the doors off of everything. That environment can only happen according to Wikipedia and the orthodox folks that – the orthodox, kind of open source folks that run it –

KENNEALLY: There's another oxymoron – orthodox open source. (laughter) But, anyway.

KAUFMAN: When video players are not in a proprietary format – you know, that is to say, you're not dealing with a QuickTime file, or a Flash player. And so, there is a movement to render these player formats and file formats and distribution types in open source technology, and there is, likewise, a movement to kind of – I mentioned the terms intellectual property at the beginning of this interview, to remove that whole framework from the world of video, and make more material more readily available for people to manipulate and publish for free.

KENNEALLY: Well, that vision you articulated of Wikipedia with video is an intriguing one, because certainly in the newspaper world and the research world, while Wikipedia suffered in its early days from a kind of less-than-stellar reputation, the reputation has grown over time, and people really are turning to it as a reliable source. If the video becomes a part of that, then newspaper publishing, news publishing, blogging, all of that will suddenly have the power of video at its disposal.

KAUFMAN: Yeah, that's right. And I think when you mention newspaper – I know you have been in the media world for a long time. When you mention newspapers, radio, magazines – as time goes on, and it moves quickly, more and more of the



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publishing strategies of all of these media involve video. You can look – and, by the way, at cultural and educational institutions, which is what we're committed to supporting and working with. You can look at MIT's homepage right now – you can click through an almost bottomless well of extraordinary video that MIT.edu is posting up there.

KENNEALLY: Well, it is changing things. But the question does come up, Peter – and we're speaking with Peter Kaufman here, President and Executive Producer of Intelligent Television – where the money is going to come from for all of this. I mean, educational initiatives like the ones you are imagining are part of institutions that are suffering from the financial recession just as much as individuals are.

KAUFMAN: Yeah.

KENNEALLY: Where is the funding going to come from? And how are you, for example, finding funding for some of the things you're working on?

KAUFMAN: Well, aren't we putting up an 800 number at the end? (laughter)

KENNEALLY: That makes you, we would say, a TV evangelist. You're an evangelist for TV, so we do have to have people call that number on the screen. (laughter)

KAUFMAN: No, I think – and this ties into an earlier question you were asking, maybe what the video world can learn from the book world. You know, Google Book Search, which I know Copyright Clearance Center has done some great programs about – that is the result if you take this step back and look at all those millions of books going online. That's the result of a hybrid capital investment – the investment of all of these publishers, private money, the investment of all of these universities to keep these books and store them, public money, and the investment of Google, sometimes foundations that have been (inaudible).

So I think it's a future world of video, and there will be a Google Video Search at some point, too. There's no question, it's got to go that way. I think it can stand alone from what has been happening right under our noses, with the – sort of putting all of this material online. (overlapping conversations; inaudible)

KENNEALLY: Well, it is remarkable, yeah, because in past generations, such archives existed for all sorts of things, for film previous to television video, but even now for video, and – but it required a visit somewhere. And today, it's just incredible to find all of these books online anywhere you are, and when we think about the



access to educational video that you are imagining, that will be an enormous resource for students, researchers, and just individuals everywhere.

KAUFMAN: Oh, it will be huge. And that's kind of the focus of some of our productions on the history of the American South, on the history of Harlem, or the Korean War, is to tie into the digitization of all of these resources that's actually taking place or about to take place, so that kind of the television, the online video event, becomes a giant promotional event for, in fact, the oil well of extraordinary resources that lies underneath.

KENNEALLY: Well, we will look forward to the development of intelligent television. It can't come soon enough for us, Peter.

We have been chatting with Peter Kaufman, who is President and Executive Producer of a company called Intelligent Television, where he directs all aspects of the company's media productions and resource works. He's also an expert advisor on access issues to the Library of Congress' Division of Motion Pictures, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound. And he's the author of *On Building a New Market for Culture – Virtue and Necessity in a Screen-Based Economy*.

We've enjoyed the discussion, Peter, and appreciate your joining us for *Beyond the Book*.

KAUFMAN: Thank you, Chris. Good to be here.

KENNEALLY: And for everybody at Copyright Clearance Center, we thank you for joining us today, and look forward to having you back on *Beyond the Book* very soon. Take care.

ANNOUNCER: *Beyond the Book* is an educational presentation of the not-for-profit Copyright Clearance Center, with conferences and seminars featuring leading authors and editors, publishing analysts, and information technology specialists.

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