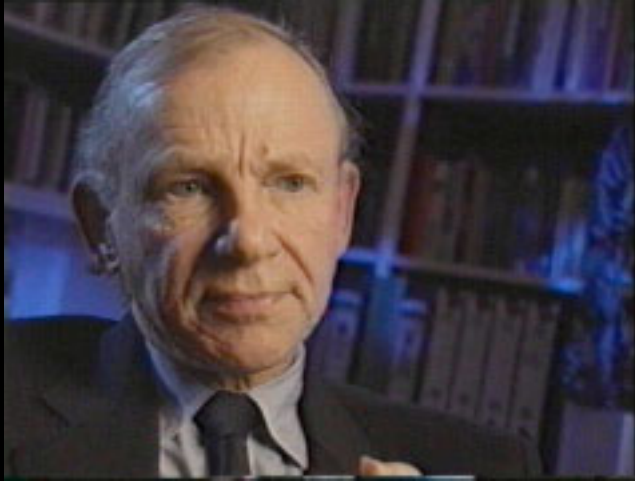


Title: SCRIPT: "NEVER MIND THE QUALITY?" PAGE ONE



ANDREW GRAHAM

We're going to move from a world in which there were three or four five channels, to a world of three or four or five hundred channels, and this is made possible by the fact that when you make things digitally you can make them very small, and you can send the signals out occupying much less space.

I expect that in the next 15 years or so, the television will become a much more diversified kind of thing. Some people will have wide screen television, some people will have multiple screens, some people will have little screens in their bedrooms, some will have little screens in their pockets on their watches, so it's going to change in that sort of way.

NARRATOR (RALPH INESON)

Broadcasting, computer technology and telecommunications are colliding, and no one knows what will emerge once the dust of impact has settled. There'll be new ways of making programmes. New ways of delivering them through an almost limitless number of channels, and new expectations from the audiences or consumers. But some people are predicting even more fundamental changes.

FUTUREWORKS FOOTAGE

NARRATOR

Satellite and cable already offer some choice, but there's about to be a revolution in mass communication.

DAVID DOCHERTY

The forward march has begun and it's gathering momentum forces of technology, and there's a creative force. And it'll speed up rather than slow down, because this is simply the beginning.

IAN WEST

Every national broadcaster is saying they're going to be braver, offering new channels, come and get it, so I think the take up of digital will be much faster than when we first launched Sky. And what we're trying to do is to provide choices, it's what digital is all about.

Basically my TV everyone wants to watch 12 or 15 channels approximately. Your 12 or 15 channels will be different from mine to somebody else's. If we can offer we're currently offer about 175 channels and services in all. We don't promote it like that because what we're trying to say is if you like documentaries we'll give you documentaries if you love movies we'll give you five movies every hour on our subscription movie channel. It's all about the choice.

DAVID CONN

The digital companies will be telling you it's all about choice. Now if it was all about choice that would be great, then you'd have the terrestrial companies serving the wider public. You could have something like Sky which could give people many different channels, and that could work okay, and then you could have the digital companies serving specialised interests, you could have them doing particular kinds of subject matter and that would generally provide a choice. But, what looks like is gonna happen is simply that they're gonna take off programming like football clubs and like football just take it of terrestrial and take it off anywhere else, so that you're forced to get cable, and that will make you buy it, and all they're doing is taking something away which you had before, and that's not choice.

NARRATOR

The digital revolution brings more channels, more choice dividing society into tribes, bringing together small groups with a passion, like Manchester United fans.

VOX-POP

I reckon that it'll be decided by one goal ... it's very close, cause Leeds are doing very well.

NARRATOR

£10 million have been invested by Sky TV, Granada TV and Manchester United in the hope that the 4 million fans will open their purses, and pay for their own channel.

GED CLARKE

MUTV is the first football channel of its type in the world the first daily channel dedicated to one football club. I'm head of programmes, so it's really my responsibility to make sure that what goes on the screen is what the fans want.

INTERVIEWER

What score do you think it'll be on Sunday afternoon.

MU FAN

Two one to Man United.

INTERVIEWER

Who's your favourite player in United's side.

MU FAN

David Beckham.



INTERVIEWER.

Why is that.

MU FAN

Because he does good goals.

GED CLARKE

It is unbelievable that you can fill half of a new show every night, with Manchester United information but there's so much happening at this club I mean 500 people work here every day. They're the biggest club in Britain by a long way, possibly in Europe possibly the world, and there's just so much going on with the players and maybe transfers, maybe behind the scenes things. Also for things that you wouldn't just know about otherwise as well which is all of interest to supporters.

MANCHESTER UNITED NEWS REPORT

PAUL RIDLEY

I think that MUTV might become you know part and parcel of that soap that is Manchester United. Manchester United is a soap. We have the club, the players, we have Megastore, we have you know the Red Café, we have a TV channel, that's the way it works, that's what football's about, you know why should football be all about you know twenty blokes flogging their arses up and down on a Saturday afternoon in the wet on a November afternoon. It doesn't work that way.

ANDREW GRAHAM

I think there is a danger in the digital world of the future with everybody watching separate channels, there's a potential to lose something else, which is the sense of sharing.

DAVID CONN

Seven million people used to sit on a Sunday afternoon and watch the football live. You could watch every club, it was a decent service, they should have kept something like that on, and if Sky wanted to come in and offer more matches, fine, I still wouldn't have bought a dish probably, but I wouldn't have been excluded from watching football.

NARRATOR

Sky claims that choice is always good, that the customer can choose to pay or not. But critics argue that in signing up sports events, Sky is forcing people to pay for what was once free, and that profit will be an increasing benchmark in the digital age.

DAVID CONN

Having seen good football on the BBC or ITV so that the whole country can watch our national game, and if Manchester United want to provide a service for its own supporters over and above that, well great. But that would mean they'd have to do it well, to attract people in over and above what's being shown on terrestrial. But all that's happening as happened with the Sky deal in 1992, they'll just take it off terrestrial completely, and force football supporters who they see as a captive market, who are tremendously loyal to their club, to buy their product to buy their television channel so it's all about making money out of the supporters, and not about serving them and giving them choice.

PAUL RIDLEY

Yes Manchester United television will make money for the club, for Sky, and for Granada. Of course. Without that, without the money factor, I'm not gonna be here, and all the people the 67 people that we've created jobs for, you know, won't be here either.

GED CLARKE

The funding is tight as it is with most cable and satellite channels anyway. I mean I've worked in the BBC and ITV and for Sky, and I've never worked with budgets this small before. But, what we do is we have a young enthusiastic team, and we've picked a lot of very good people here, who we're very very pleased with and also we've got to make programmes on a very low budget we have to run a small edit system, and we have to use lap top editors, you cut your cloth, but you know you've to fill forty two hours a week so you just spread it thin sometimes, but it's what the fans want, I don't think you can get away with some of these things on other channels but, because it's all about Manchester United the fan doesn't mind.





PAUL RIDLEY

Narrow casting is exactly what we are, very proud of it. We are trying to sell into a dedicated band of people a service that they want. If we don't get the service right they won't buy it.

NARRATOR

And whatever viewers go, advertisers quickly follow. But in the digital future, Channel 4 and ITV will come under threat, as advertisers can bypass traditional broadcasting, and target audiences more effectively, through the programme makers themselves.

PETER BAZALGETTE

I believe within 5 years we'll be delivering as many as half of our programmes free or partially free to the broadcasters, because they will be advertiser funded, and my company already has links to most of the main advertising agencies in London, and we are developing programmes and formats with advertisers, programmes that will attract viewers that they would like associated with their products. And then we'd take those programmes free to the broadcasters.

NARRATOR

There are concerns about the quality of programmes that dance to the advertisers tune. And what about the public service broadcasters who have a remit to produce quality broadcasting. Can programme quality survive in the face of all these changes.

DAVID DOCHERTY

Well the BBC's commitment to quality of course is absolutely the bedrock on which our service is built. We spend the vast bulk of the two billion pounds that we currently get in licence revenue in making programmes, that's why we're here. However, once you've made programmes these days you've got many other sources of distribution and added convenience for the consumer. And also we're learning increasingly through digital production technologies that chucking money at productions isn't necessarily the answer to the question of quality.

IAN WEST

I could never afford Sky One for example, to produce the quality dramas the BBC do. I once worked out a few years ago if we did that we'd have about four days of programming, which obviously we can't sustain, so the public service broadcasters will continue to lead the rate in watching in providing television for general entertainment channels, I don't think we see that changing for many years.

NARRATOR

Will there be enough advertising revenue to sustain all these channels. Will the BBC's licence fee continue, or will they too be begging for money from government or advertisers. Will there be hundreds of channels, and nothing to watch.

ANDREW GRAHAM

I don't think the BBC per se has the right to exist but I do think there's an enormously important case for public service broadcasting to exist. I mean the people who run the BBC have to meet these tests. What should they be doing. One, they must continue to be the source of reliable, accurate, impartial news and documentaries. They should also broadcast across the full range of programmes, programmes which are intended to encourage, get people to extend their views of the world, and not diminish them. So I think a public service broadcaster whether they're doing comedy or soaps or historical fiction has a responsibility that is not the same as a commercial broadcaster, a commercial broadcaster's goal is to sell it to you, and make money out of it. A public service broadcaster wants to attract you to it so they want an audience, so they've got to make things that are popular, but in addition to that a bit like a university, they mustn't mislead you.

NARRATOR

It's the pressure to deliver niche audiences to advertisers which also lies behind the push towards something called interactive broadcasting. This is not about making quality television broadcasts, it's about selling services. About making money.

HARRIET ROOK

Basically Videonet is a service that is provided down the telephone network, to your television at home. Originally the service started with video on demand which is as it sounds a video at your demand. You can watch a video whenever you want to, and that goes for all the other services that we provide, you have access to those 24 hours a day, and you can do it when you want to when it's convenient to you.

MR FREEMAN

We have been under a lot of pressure from the children to have satellite type things and I thought well, let's have a little look at this cos it looks better in your set and it's free for six months.

MRS FREEMAN

Well I like all the channels the films, the children's programmes are very good, but usually I use it mostly for home shopping, I find that quite a good advantage really to be able to shop from home, when I can't get out.

NARRATOR

With virtual high streets bringing video on demand into the home, the video rental outlets on Hessle High Street in Hull has to compete.

CHRIS HEATH

We are still in the high street, and we are still part of, if you like the community, not just the business community but the community where we have regular customers coming in they know the staff they, they hopefully enjoy coming in and talking to the people in the shops which I think you'll never ever get with any other demand technique that the videos down the telephone lines or whatever.



HARRIET ROOK

Home banking is planned for the future. Which I think will be very popular and people will really enjoy that, it's nice to be in control of your own banking facilities. And then really it's just constrained by your imagination. If you can think of a service that can be provided down your telephone line on to your television, we can do it.

ANDREW GRAHAM

One of the consequences of the digital future is that enormous amounts of information are being collected, stored, and processed. Every time you use one of the store cards, the big supermarkets know precisely what you bought, where you bought it and when you bought it. And on the basis of this, they will be able to make pretty good predictions about what you will buy in the future, so marketing offers will arrive when you haven't realised that every February you went and did X, a piece of paper suggesting or a message will come up on your TV before you start, saying do remember to buy some flowers for your wife because it's the 13th February, and tomorrow's St. Valentine's day. But the, now some people will like that, isn't life easy. I don't have to remember anything I just get reminded all the time. But there's a critical question about how do we decide what we want to do. Where's the 'me' in this. How do I decide, how do I just stop being trapped into the patterns of my past.

MRS FREEMAN

Well I'm a registered childminder, so I'm mostly at home with the children. Quite often if I can't get into town or there's things I need, or if I'm going shopping and I don't want to be carrying heavy things if I've got the children with me, it's easier for me just to order a case of dog food or something heavier items really.

HARRIET ROOK

The real high street. Whether we'll harm that I don't know. I think that probably the high street, the real high street, and our virtual high street can run side by side. But obviously there will be people that don't want to shop this way. For those people it's a social experience, but I think there's room for us.

CHRIS HEATH

One doesn't know what's going happen in five, ten years time, but we must concentrate as a retail outlet, in retaining that personal contact with our customers.

VOX-POP

Well we like to have a little run round the shops you know. Bit of exercise does you good. Also it may be alright for some people that can't get out, it would be handy.

VOX-POP

Basically because of the time that I spend at work I do shift work I didn't find that it was going to be useful for me, and I already get Sky television, so I've actually stuck with that system, but I do actually also think it's quite expensive once I'd looked into it properly.

NARRATOR

Videonet will be competing with other commercial home shopping channels, including the Internet. And now Sky is also providing home shopping.

IAN WEST

We've signed up a deal with, GUS the home shopping company, and we've also signed up Woolworths. So you can buy Woolworth's products through your TV. We've also signed up with Iceland as well which has the free national delivery service. We know people aren't going to stop going to the stores. I mean that's not the intention.

HARRIET ROOK

We'll compete with Sky because we're totally interactive. Sky say that they will have interactive television interactive shopping, but I don't feel, my personal view anyway, is that they will never be able to provide quite the interactivity that we can do, because behind shopping stores is a very large database of information, and whether they'll actually be able to get that down on to your television when you want it, I don't know there's a lot of technical things involved in that, but this service you can access the shop whenever you want to, get to the product that you want to, and select that product and buy it, have it delivered direct to you, very simply.

NARRATOR

Videonet is totally interactive. The viewer can respond immediately via the television to the service offered. At the moment if you shop through Sky, you still then have to make a traditional phone call to buy things, because you aren't connected to them by a two way channel.

Under possible threat of extinction, faced with the digital age, the BBC is also having to take interactivity seriously. With Microsoft as a partner, it is experimenting with the educational uses of Barney, an intelligent digital dinosaur.



DAVID DOCHERTY

The BBC has had a reputation for a long time of being cutting edge of all forms of television engineering and television technology, and we're always on the lookout for new things to help us understand. I mean we've got basically lots of playrooms around the place, the digilab for production, the R&D people who spend all they're time and hard earned money on playing with Barney the dinosaur.

It's all about looking for clues, about the future and how the future will develop, and let's face it learning from Microsoft in terms of interactivity can't be a bad thing.

If you're interacting with an object which is interacting with television, you're already setting up this very complex relationship with your TV , and Barney's beginning of many many forms of interactivity and interactive learning in particular interactive education, which is a very under explored way of exploiting digital that's why we came up with this learning channel that we're launching.

INSERT BARNEY

NARRATOR

In reality the BBC still has to compete with other television channels. And in the new digital battleground the fight will be making viewers even aware of the programmes that are on. Traditional listings guides are set to become the size of telephone directories, and impossibly cumbersome to use. The answer is an intelligent guide that lives inside the television itself, something called an electronic programme guide.

IAN WEST

If you look at the control, I mean we can't tell people what to watch, we have a on screen guide an electronic on screen guide which you operate through your remote control. And the customer has, gets easy access to whatever they want and it's very easy to use, the two hundred channels are not daunting and as one of the media correspondents wrote in the newspapers recently, a child of eight could use it.

NARRATOR

In the future the way Sky designs the electronic programme guide could be crucial. If Sky controls the guide, it becomes the arbiter of audience choice, not only for its channels, but for everyone's.

DAVID DOCHERTY

I mean one of the big issues for us is the electronic programme guides which we've branded and you know cos then someone else is controlling how you as a consumer get access to us as a programme provider.

ANDREW GRAHAM

Imagine that you turned on your new digital television. Switched on your electronic programme guide. Now I could present you two pictures. One picture, what comes up is sport, news, sex, films, shopping. And another picture would be what would come, would be BBC 1, BBC 2, ITV, C4 C5, Sky. Now, I think the second picture would be one which people knew much more instinctively what they were buying, because of the trusted brand names of the different suppliers. When they went to the other sort which said sex, films, shopping, you wouldn't quite know who was providing it to you.

FOOTAGE

ANDREW GRAHAM

Deciding your future is being conscious of your own ability to choose. You have to know that you're free, and you have to exercise your freedom. And the ability to freedom is both to carry on doing what you've done in the past if you want to, but not necessarily to carry on doing what you've done in the past if you don't want to. And television shouldn't make you.

NARRATOR

Keeping big brother off our backs, controlling and regulating the future will become even more difficult, as digital broadcasting converges with the personal computer. These aren't simply web sites providing links to broadcast programmes, these are broadcast programmes themselves, going out live over the Internet. And it's not just radio. Television is moving into the Internet as well.

MAX WHITBY

Don't be put off by the speed of today's modems cos they're gonna get faster, but more importantly compression technology is advancing at a really phenomenal pace. The TV picture you're watching with me now has a data rate of about two hundred and seventy megabits per second. The data rate on this new picture here which you're seeing compressed using a brand new technology, is two thousand times less than that.



NARRATOR

And with quality like this, Internet television becomes a serious possibility.

MAX WHITBY

The hard disk in this computer could store literally a week, a twenty four hour day broadcasting on one of the BBC channels. I think the whole thrust of this technology is to castrate the scheduler. I think the new technology is going to be about putting together sites if you like in the Internet context where viewers will go and will find interesting programmes and interesting connections but they won't be strung together in a particular order.

NARRATOR

The vast proliferation of choice across digital broadcasting and online services, makes the concept of mass media redundant. Everyone will be able to find, to say, to be, anything they want. The traditional relationship between broadcaster and viewer is breaking down.

FUTUREWORKS FOOTAGE

DAVID DOCHERTY

In a world of four channel choice, broadcasters have the power, even in the world of eighty channel choice the broadcasters have the power. In a world of two hundred and fifty channels plus the Internet, plus pay per view and on demand services, all of which will grow and grow and expand, plus interactivity, the viewer has two kinds of choices and one is I'll choose to consume whatever I want because it'll all be there you know, if I want a documentary I don't have to wait for the BBC to fetch one up there'll be one on New Key Horizons or on Discovery or on BBC Choice or on an on demand service so that's one kind of additional power you've got.

And another kind of additional power is interactivity where you can tell us much more clearly what you like what you don't like, and we'll tailor our service more directly to you.

NARRATOR

The Internet is already democratising production, allowing anyone to share their experiences and ideas with everyone else. Bringing small passions to the small screen is very real for a group of environmental protesters from Kent. They use the Internet screen to bypass the usual media, print and television, and to take control themselves, facing the multi nationals with their own technology, trying to save tradition in the digital age.

LYMINGE FOREST PROTESTER - MIKE

It's the most important thing, it's the most powerful tool we have with the media and everything, obviously with the Internet, and that side of things are a big part of you know the new spread of information, getting hands on and finding things out for themselves, being able to get pro active, it's going to be a big part of that. We're getting hits on our site from all over the world, obviously people Australia, you know there's very little to practical help they can give, but the support is always welcome.

LYMINGE FOREST PROTESTER - MERLYN

We're in Lyminge Forest and the locals here have been fighting a battle against the development corporation who have been wanting to develop this wood for many years, until we moved in about a year ago as a last resort to try and fight the development.

CYCLIST

They want to open a Center Parcs or something very similar, which I think personally is a bad thing for the area. It is woodland and what they're actually doing, I think yeah, is right what they're doing, someone is protesting. I don't think anyone in the area realises the impact of what it's gonna be like, and nor do I think that there's gonna be anywhere near the jobs for local people in the centre.

LYMINGE FOREST PROTESTER - MIKE

Today it's about being sustainable, about looking at a time factor in the environment, and the only way that we can change from fossil fuels and the consumer, throwaway society we've got at this moment is to take on the new technology, the new technology is there to help us. It can be used for many uses but it also can be used for help. And work towards the future.



PRODUCTION TEAM