A GUIDE FOR NOVICE DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS WHO AIM TO MOTIVATE VIEWERS TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION RELEVANT TO ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION, ANIMAL PROTECTION, AND/OR HUMAN RIGHTS

An Independent Learning Project

Presented By

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To

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ABSTRACT

Documentary films, particularly those relevant to humane education, have reached millions with thoughtful and compassionate perspectives on challenges affecting animals, people, and the environment. This Independent Learning Project (ILP) examines documentary film as a powerful educational tool, with an emphasis on guiding educators, activists, novice filmmakers, and others with humane education-relevant convictions to produce effective documentary films—and to learn how to screen and distribute them.

This project investigates approaches and strategies in documentary filmmaking to motivate adults (18+ years of age) to make behavioral and lifestyle changes. Although this ILP is not intended as a technical manual to walk novice filmmakers through every step of the process, it does cover key aspects of documentary filmmaking that make a film more enjoyable, engaging, and persuasive. Drawing from research and interviews with established documentary filmmakers, this ILP concludes that there needs to be an interesting, powerful story to hold viewers’ attention. It is usually the stories of people coming to new perspectives through trials and loss, or their experiencing a change of heart, that often move viewers’ hearts. A documentary film alone can be instrumental in affecting change in individuals, but it is often a coordinated, multifaceted communication effort—in which a film is a key component—that is most effective in persuading individual viewers and policymakers to take action. The manifestations of such changes in documentary film audiences may include giving their time, their resources, their purchases and, in the case of choosing candidates and ballot measures, their votes.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Rationale

The origins of documentary film date to the late 19th century. Early film (pre-1900) was dominated by the novelty of showing an event: a train entering a station, a boat docking, or factory workers leaving work. Very little storytelling took place before 1900. Many of the first films were no more than a minute, due to technological limitations (Barnouw, 1993, p. 7). John Grierson in 1926 coined the term “documentary;” nonfiction films had previously been called “educational,” “actualities,” “interest films,” or “travel films” (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 3). Grierson hailed explorer and film pioneer Robert Flaherty as the father of documentary film (Barnouw, 1993, p. 85). Flaherty in 1922 released Nanook of the North after almost a decade of film activity. Flaherty’s 79-minute Nanook chronicled the daily life of Inuit tribe member Nanook and his family in the Canadian arctic (Barnouw, 1993, pp. 41-42).

The range of documentary film topics today is vast. A number of books have focused on the history of documentary film, as well as the production of such films. The focus of this Independent Learning Project (ILP), however, is to inform and empower individuals and groups to pursue documentary filmmaking, particularly related to issues relevant to humane education. A key element of humane education includes the offering of “positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the animals, and the Earth, and tools for problem solving so that people are empowered to create a more humane world” (Institute for Humane Education, n.d. A).

When citing examples of documentary films for this project, both those directly and indirectly relevant to humane education will be referenced, with an emphasis on the former. Historically, documentaries that have dealt with politics and nature have attracted the most interest; the seven
highest grossing documentary films are: (1) *Fahrenheit 9/11*, (2) *March of the Penguins*, (3) *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never*, (4) *Earth*, (5) *Sicko*, (6) *An Inconvenient Truth*, and (7) *Bowling for Columbine* (Box Office Mojo, 2011a). In the socio-political realm, Michael Moore’s films on this list (*Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Sicko*, *Bowling for Columbine*) stand out—all have human rights implications, considering that large numbers of people are at risk because of circumstances regarding the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, health care, and gun control, respectively. Three of the other films in the top seven showcase the natural environment, alluding to existing pressures and threats that jeopardize aspects of the planet’s well-being. With the exception of the Justin Bieber documentary, these seven films pertain to humane education; any one of them can spark concern and further inquiry regarding environmental sustainability, and what can be done to make a positive difference in the area of focus.

Myriad documentary films have addressed specific issues relevant to humane education. A categorized list of approximately 50 is posted on the Web site of the Institute for Humane Education, with links to the films’ Web sites. Many of these films are required viewing for students enrolled in the courses offered by the Institute. Examples include *The Story of Stuff, Sharkwater, Meet Your Meat, The Corporation, Stolen Childhoods*, and *Wal-mart: The High Price of Low Cost* (Institute for Humane Education, n.d. B).

Documentary films can be an excellent medium to provide a focused message about one issue or interrelated issues. Such films have made inroads into mainstream theaters, although their box office performance has been miniscule compared with big-budget dramatic movies. For example, the three highest grossing documentary films (*Fahrenheit 9/11*, *March of the Penguins*, and *Earth*) have earned approximately $230 million combined, while the top three dramatic feature films (*Avatar, Titanic, The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*) have grossed more than
$5.7 billion. The 100th top-grossing documentary film, *More Than a Game*, has earned just under $951,000, while the 100th top-grossing dramatic film, *X-Men: The Last Stand*, has earned nearly $460 million (Box Office Mojo, 2011a; Box Office Mojo, 2011b).

My experience attending movies in theaters has been that documentary films draw smaller crowds and stay in theaters shorter than dramatic films. I have organized free community screenings of films related to animal protection, and the audiences typically numbered 20 or fewer; regardless of the turnout, it was always a satisfying experience to introduce audiences to the issues presented in the film, including a discussion among those who stayed after the films ended. Despite the modest mass appeal of documentary films, I see them as having a vital role in society, often complementing the impact of a book or other written materials to examine an issue. I believe that, compared to mainstream dramatic films, documentary films have influenced a far greater number of people to make positive lifestyle and behavioral changes to reduce their impact on the environment and/or increase their compassion toward animals and people who are exploited, abused, enslaved, or marginalized in other ways. When I ask friends to think of documentary films that have motivated them to make some kind of change, they easily think of one or two. For example, one friend enrolled in a recycling training program after seeing *An Inconvenient Truth* and started to offer talks in the community on green cleaning products and worm bin composting. Another friend stopped going to McDonald’s after watching *Super Size Me*. One friend, a vegetarian for more than 20 years, decided to cut out dairy and eggs after viewing *Peaceable Kingdom* (2004), a documentary that explores animal agriculture and compassionate approaches to farmed animals through the transformed lives of several farmers.

Indeed, LaMarre and Landreville, in examining the impact of documentary film, focused their research on how the emotions of guilt and disgust influence interest, learning, and engage-
ment. They observed that a documentary is “capable of eliciting strong, gut-wrenching emotions in the audience, thereby increasing interest and knowledge about important issues”—and that documentaries have the potential to strongly influence public opinion (LaMarre & Landreville, 2009, p. 550).

Projecting indefinitely into the future, well-intended novice documentary filmmakers will be creating films in hopes of inspiring and motivating others, and they would benefit by knowing what works and what doesn’t in making an effective documentary film (A “novice” is a person who is new to the circumstances, work, etc., in which she or he is placed; beginner [Dictionary.com, 2009]; this term will be used throughout the ILP in reference to the guide’s targeted audience.). Documentary films of all lengths will continue to be an important resource on the Internet, where they can be easily delivered to large numbers of people. Approximately 2 billion videos are viewed daily on YouTube, the second most visited Internet site (after Facebook). Every minute, more than 24 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube (YouTube, n.d.; Google, 2011).

This ILP will explore the history of documentary film; approaches to produce, finance, promote, and screen documentary films; studied methods to influence behavioral change; how to achieve truly influential films; and examples of films that have effectively sparked changes in perception and behavior that align with the filmmakers’ intentions. I also see a secondary, personal benefit of becoming attuned to the research process as a means of discovering and organizing multiple perspectives on particular issues.

Goal

The goal of this project is to inspire educators and activists in areas relevant to humane education to pursue documentary filmmaking and accomplish their goals (educational pursuits ad-
dressing environmental sustainability, animal protection, and human rights, and other issues couched in compassionate perspectives on cultural issues).

To facilitate the goal, this project will culminate in a guide for novice documentary filmmakers to help them optimize the transformational potential of their films, rather than creating films that only inform or entertain without mobilizing audiences. The guide will emphasize filmmaking strategies to motivate people to want to make a difference and engage in certain environmental preservation, animal protection, and/or human rights issues—and also will include general information to help readers finance, produce, promote and screen independent films (i.e., low-cost community media resources; potential funding sources; equipment accessibility; digital video editing options; copyright concerns regarding the incorporation of existing film footage/video, still photos and music; public screenings and film festivals; collaborations with like-minded individuals and groups). However, this project is not intended as a technical manual to walk novice filmmakers through every step of the process—the emphasis will be on strategies and elements that are key to inspiring viewers to act out of concern and compassion for the environmental, animal, and/or human issue addressed. The guide will include a list of relevant resources to foster further reading and viewing.

Additionally, the guide will provide examples of other films’ strategies and successes. For example, *An Inconvenient Truth* motivated many viewers to make changes to reduce their impact on climate change, which in some cases included their becoming trained through Al Gore’s nonprofit, The Climate Project, to become trainers on the topics put forth in the film. The Climate Project supports more than 3,600 diverse and dedicated volunteers worldwide. Presenters have “delivered 70,000 presentations and have reached a combined audience of 7.3 million people” (The Climate Project, n.d., ¶ 3). A lesser known documentary film, *Oil on Ice* (2004), examined the battle over
oil development within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and its impact on the environment and indigenous communities—at a time when the U.S. Congress was considering whether or not to open up the refuge for oil drilling. Organizers, including the Sierra Club, credited *Oil on Ice* with mobilizing nationwide awareness and resistance, which ultimately contributed to the defeat of legislation to initiate oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 90).

Video, regardless of its length and whether it is a few minutes long or a feature-length documentary film, can be powerful and influential, especially when widely distributed. In 2008, the Humane Society of the United States released a video showing workers at a slaughterhouse in Chino, California, kicking, electrocuting, and dragging with chains cows that were no longer able to walk. Public health officials warned that these nonambulatory cows were more likely to be diseased than other cows. The U.S. Department of Agriculture responded by ordering the recall of 143 million pounds of frozen beef from the slaughterhouse at fault. Further, the state legislature amended the California penal code to prohibit slaughterhouses from processing, butchering, or selling meat or products of nonambulatory animals for human consumption (Persky, 2010).

The title of this professional ILP is **A guide for novice documentary filmmakers who aim to motivate viewers to take positive action relevant to environmental preservation, animal protection, and/or human rights.**

*Problem Statement*

The problem addressed in this project is an information gap. Educators, activists and others with humane education-relevant convictions can stand to be motivated and guided to produce effective documentary films—and to learn how to screen and distribute them. This project’s research will investigate what works to motivate adults (18+ years of age) to make behavioral and lifestyle
changes based on studies that have demonstrated effectiveness of particular influences on people (i.e., images, stories and other communication methods used to elicit desired emotional responses). The manifestations of such changes in film viewers may include giving their time, their resources, their purchases and, in the case of choosing candidates and ballot measures, their votes.

Effective group facilitation to inspire behavioral change in the participating individuals is an additional area that will be examined. This piece supplements the impact of the documentary film itself; a post-screening discussion of the film may heighten viewers’ concerns about the issue and increase the likelihood of their taking action in line with the filmmaker’s objectives—such as becoming an advocate or contributing resources.

Population

The focus of this project is a research-based guide for novice documentary filmmakers to help them produce films that are effective in affecting behavioral change in adult audiences. The target audience for the guide is aspiring novice documentary filmmakers whose aim is to enhance their viewers’ perceptions of environmental preservation, animal protection, human rights, and cultural issues so viewers will take action (i.e., consuming different kinds of products, volunteering for and donating money to new causes, pursuing further education on the relevant issue, voting differently), as opposed to responding passively after a cognitive viewing experience.

Video is a viable option for creative expression that has become more accessible to more people in the 21st century. For one thing, the cost to get started can be quite low; for a few hundred dollars one can buy a camera worthy of shooting basic digital video. Editing software also are not out of reach for many people, at least basic software programs like iMovie, which is packaged with new Apple computers. Adobe Premier Elements, another popular video editing software, costs $100 or less. Distributing the video is as easy as uploading it to YouTube and
then promoting the link. While a basic documentary film can be produced inexpensively, there is no end to the number of enhancements that can bolster a film’s production, and the budget can climb into the thousands, tens of thousands, or millions of dollars. For example, filmmaker Ken Burns’ latest baseball documentary, *The Tenth Inning*, cost $5 million (Bertoni, 2010). The guide will pertain both to individuals on a shoestring budget and to others with deeper resources and/or inclined to pursue financial supporters.

People who are passionate about an issue will benefit from a guide to help them pursue filmmaking to tell their story. A film is in some cases the best vehicle to convey the importance, perhaps the urgency of an issue. Addressing choice of topic, Rosenthal (2007) stated:

> Often the answer is you have no choice. The subject obsesses you. It has been haunting you for years. It appeals to you, to your imagination, to your emotions, to your political views. Your topic covers a range of human experience you feel you have to talk about, an experience you feel you can best deal with on film. (p. 10)

In addition to those working on films, others will benefit indirectly: the inspired viewers of the films made by filmmakers who used the guide. Sometimes seeing one film (or reading one book, for that matter) can motivate an individual to make immediate behavioral changes, volunteer, pursue further inquiry into an issue, and/or strengthen one’s connection to her/his community. The efforts of inspired viewers will ultimately reach animals, people, and environments in need of greater advocacy and protection.

**Methodology**

This ILP will primarily address documentary film impact, techniques of persuasion, and effective small group facilitation. These elements combine to inform the process of impactful documentary film production, screening, and distribution. The process of information gathering
will include the accessing of journal articles through the Cambridge College on-line library (EBSCO), my local library system (Multnomah County Library, Oregon), books, and the Internet. More specifically, the categories for my scholarly research will be organized by the following research questions.

1. What works in documentary filmmaking to effectively influence people to act according to the filmmaker’s objectives, not merely to provide information about an issue, person, or organization? EBSCO database searches for scholarly articles will include key words “documentary film” coupled with “effect,” “affect,” “captivate,” “intrigue,” “motivate,” “persuade,” “influence,” “convince,” “inspire,” and “impact.”

2. What works to motivate adults (18+) to make behavioral and lifestyle changes—based on psychological studies that have demonstrated effectiveness of particular influences on people (i.e., images, stories and other communication methods used to elicit desired emotional responses)? EBSCO database searches for scholarly articles will include words such as “motivate,” “persuade,” “influence,” and “behavioral change.”

3. What works in facilitating group discussions to effectively inspire behavioral change in individuals participating in the discussions? This piece augments the impact of the documentary film itself; when there is an opportunity to screen the film for friends or a public audience, a post-screening discussion may be conducted in such a way to heighten viewers’ concerns about the issue and their likelihood of modifying their behavior in line with the filmmaker’s objectives—and possibly becoming involved in the cause presented in the film. EBSCO database searches for scholarly articles will include key words “small group” or “group” coupled with “facilitate,” “persuade,” “influence,” “mobilize,” and “motivate.”
In addition to pursuing research in scholarly journals, I will consider relevant information from Web sites, newspapers, magazines, and books. Books will provide information about the history of the film genre, as well as the process involved in producing and distributing films. Websites, newspapers, and magazines will likely contain viewpoints and data in discussing recent documentaries that have proved to be influential.

It will also be of interest to contact established documentary filmmakers about what they feel are key components in making persuasive documentary films, how to motivate viewers to respond to the message in their films, and to ask whether they have tips on how to facilitate discussions after screenings of their films. The filmmakers may include Ian McCluskey, who was my instructor for a class in documentary filmmaking a few years ago and serves as executive director of the nonprofit NW Documentary; Chris Tufty, a professional cinematographer and filmmaker; and Judith Helfand, co-director of the documentary films *The Uprising of ’34* and *Blue Vinyl*. 
Chapter 2

Scholarly Literature Review

*The Need for Guidance in Producing Documentary Films Relevant to Humane Education*

The goal of this Independent Learning Project (ILP) is to inspire educators, activists, and aspiring filmmakers in areas relevant to humane education to pursue documentary filmmaking and accomplish their goals (educational pursuits addressing environmental sustainability, animal protection, human rights, and other issues couched in compassionate perspectives on cultural issues). This project will culminate in a guide for novice documentary filmmakers to help them optimize the transformational potential of their films, rather than creating films that only inform and/or entertain without mobilizing viewers to take action such as volunteering for the cause, donating money, pursuing further education on the topic, changing certain behavior(s), voting in line with the film’s message, and/or promoting the film.

This review of literature examines scholarly publications pertinent to documentary films, particularly in terms of how these films impact viewers. In addition, strategies of persuasion are investigated to document insights that may be helpful in producing films. Finally, the matter of motivating a group is included in this literature review to gain perspectives on optimizing the impact of a documentary film when it is possible to interact with viewers after a film is screened. For example, filmmakers may speak after screenings of their films, or films relevant to a nonprofit organization may be screened for members of the group or visitors to events in which the group is participating.

*The Rise and Refinement of Documentary Films*

Documentary films have historically been obscure and marginal compared to feature films, but recently this genre of film has become more popular (Arthur, 2007). “Regardless, however,
of the fleeting national leverage wielded by earlier documentaries, the eruption in the last fifteen years of a popular nonfiction cinema is simply without precedent” (Arthur, 2007, p. 865).

Not only are documentary films widely viewed in theaters and on the Internet, they also are being used extensively as a resource in high school classrooms across the United States. One study found that just over 82 percent of secondary history teachers reported using some portion of documentary film on average at least once a week. Less than 9 percent reported using a documentary film once a month or less, and zero teachers reported using no documentary film (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009).

Hankin (2007) noted that several women in Sisters in Cinema, Yvonne Welbon’s 2004 documentary on African American filmmakers, revealed that digital video had allowed them to create feature-length movies at a fraction of the cost it would have taken them to produce the work using film. Also included in Hankin’s research, filmmaker Coquie Hughes recalled the ease with which she made three feature-length films on digital video, though she lamented the challenge of distributing her video work (Hankin, 2007).

Although documentary films vary in length and format, short, digital films involve less work and money to produce than longer ones—and are more easily disseminated via electronic devices and the Internet (Heuston, 2005). Conway (2008), comparing macrocinema with microcinema, noted that the history of microcinema has yet to be written: “No one has examined the forces shaping the emergence of microcinemas as organizations that facilitate the production, distribution, and exhibition of films made by nonprofessional filmmakers” (Conway, 2008, p. 61). Various factors made the microcinema movement possible, most notably advances in digital video technology. These advances inspired optimism about expanding emerging filmmakers’ options regarding the production, distribution, and exhibition of their films (Conway, 2008).
Showcasing a model of successful microcinema, Conway (2008) examined the Montreal-based group Kino, which was founded in 1999 in response to frustrations its founders experienced as recent film school graduates trying to break into Quebec’s filmmaking industry. From its beginnings, Kino has emphasized filmmaker access to the means of production and projection. To this end, the filmmakers adopted the motto “Faites bien avec rien, faites mieux avec peu, et faites-le maintenant!” (Do well with nothing, do better with a little, and do it right now!). This organization’s approach spawned the creation of Kino “cells” (cellules in French) worldwide, which totaled more than 50 by 2005 (Conway, 2008, p. 63).

The Impact of Documentary Films

Since their emergence early in the 20th century, governments and private organizations have used documentary film to convey their agendas, though not always adhering to truth. Simpson (2008) defined propaganda as “a means by which a communicator can move audiences toward political and social action” (Simpson, 2008, p. 103). Simpson’s research focused on two films from different eras: Triumph of the Will (1935) and Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004). Although there was debate as to whether Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 was propaganda, the instructional value of using Fahrenheit 9/11 and Triumph of the Will lay in the fact that they “deliberately aim to change the perceptions, beliefs, and behavior of their viewers in ways that furthered the objectives of both filmmakers” (Simpson, 2008, p. 104). In a message-saturated culture, media that attempt to persuade must stand out or become lost in the marketplace of ideas (Simpson, 2008).

When one documentary film is viewed as wielding influence, those opposed to its point of view may counteract. In May 2004, a public relations firm connected to the Republican Party formed a group called “Move America Forward” to pressure theater owners across the country not to show Fahrenheit 9/11 (Dahlgren, 2009). When the DVD was released in October 2004
and shown in some high school and college classrooms, a hurriedly released documentary exposé called *FahrenHYPE 9/11* was released as a conservative counterweight to Moore’s accusations about the Bush administration (Dahlgren, 2009).

Koopman et al. (2006) conducted research from July to October 2004 to gauge pre- and post-viewing perceptions regarding the subject matter addressed in *Fahrenheit 9/11* to assess the film’s impact on viewers. Post-film participants were more likely to see oil and global domination as reasons for the initiation of the Iraq war and less likely to endorse the Bush administration’s rationales. Post-film participants also viewed President Bush more negatively, reported less chance of voting for him in the upcoming election, and they felt angrier, more fearful, and sadder. Koopman et al. stated that the results of their research indicated that a documentary film can have “significant immediate effects in the direction intended by the film’s creators on political beliefs about war, voting intentions, and mood” (Koopman et al., 2006, pp. 139-140).

Koopman et al. (2006) noted that *Fahrenheit 9/11* might provide a model of effective emotion-arousing strategies for filmmakers seeking to influence citizens’ views. Although filmmakers such as Michael Moore have been chastised for using emotion-arousing tactics, peace activists have endorsed the use of such tactics to try to counter the “much larger and socially sanctioned program of pro-war propaganda” such as found in the Pentagon’s publication *Joint Vision 2020* (Koopman et al., 2006, p. 153). This document directs the U.S. military to pursue “information dominance” (as cited in Koopman et al., 2006, p. 153) that prevents parties with opposing viewpoints from influencing policy. Based on the box office success of Moore’s films, his directorial style to stir emotions is appealing to moviegoers, whose views on the issues addressed may or may not be changed.
Heuston (2005) argued that propaganda in documentary films was “more alive than ever” following the release of the Abu Ghraib prison abuse videos and the emergence of online terrorist video clips (Heuston, 2005, p. 60). Documentary films once were shown only in theaters but now are shown in numerous venues, reaching greater numbers of viewers and thereby increasing their impact. Video footage that portrays violent or degrading actions can be used as propaganda to turn public opinion against individuals or organizations perpetrating those actions or to erode the morale of viewers allied with the victims of the violence (Heuston, 2005). For example, the murders of journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 and American contractor Nick Berg in 2004 were filmed with “the intent to produce terrorist propaganda, and indeed with the intent to deliver terrorism to worldwide potential audiences in a new way” (Heuston, 2005, p. 63).

Regardless of individual filmmakers’ beliefs and motives, those who seek to change minds and spark action in line with their message may be considered activists. Harding in The Video Activist Handbook (as cited in Hankin, 2007, p. 62) defined a video activist as “a person who uses video as a tactical tool to bring about social justice and environmental protection.”

Hankin (2007) noted that The Video Activist Handbook’s examples of such activism include a “local resident who occasionally uses her cousin’s camcorder to record community meetings,” a “full-time campaigner who tries to sell footage of every protest to local television,” an “overseas aid worker who includes footage of a refugee camp with his monthly report,” and a “lawyer who uses video evidence to help her clients get off false charges” (as cited in Hankin, 2007, p. 62). Hankin described the commonality of these examples as the “notion that video activism is a heroic measure implemented on the political frontlines” (Hankin, 2007, p. 62).

they are at a disadvantage in the economically driven film world, they are able to thrive and do important work in the realm of video” (Hankin, 2007, p. 81). Hankin also discussed the challenges of filmmaking, referring to directors’ financial struggles. Citing examples of hardships, Hankin alluded to Rose Troche, who, during the filming of Go Fish (1994), reached a point where she could not pay her phone and electric bills. Kimberly Pierce, director of Boys Don’t Cry (1999), was so far in debt upon finishing her film that getting it out of the laboratory was questionable at one point (Hankin, 2007).

A discussion of film and activism is not complete without mentioning undercover video surveillance, an assertive form of Do It Yourself (DIY) activism that is typically enacted by one or two committed individuals, noted Munro (2005). The most famous case of undercover surveillance in the animal rights movement’s history was the 1981 exposé of animal experimenter Edward Taub by Alex Pacheco in Silver Spring, Maryland. Release of the incriminating film, which revealed experiments on surgically crippled monkeys, led to a police raid on the Institute of Behavioral Research. The raid was televised, giving maximum publicity to the movement (Munro, 2005).

Munro (2005) recalled another example of an effective release of undercover surveillance video that occurred in 1990 in England, when activists Mike Huskisson and Melody McDonald gained access to the laboratories of Professor Wilhelm Feldberg, and for 5 months they videotaped the 89-year-old researcher at work. The tapes revealed breaches of the 1986 Act concerning animal experimentation. A subsequent governmental inquiry confirmed Feldberg had broken the law by continuing with experiments he had been told to terminate. In Munro’s research paper, Huskisson recounted the impact of the video’s release (as cited in Munro, 2005):
We secured the film and within a day of showing it to the Home Office that experiment was ended. The man’s licence to experiment was taken away; the Medical Research Council had an investigation and if he’d been a younger man he’d have been prosecuted. That ended that experiment dead. (p. 89)

A generation ago, observed Arthur (2007), it was rare to see a film in which the director engaged in subjective voiceover commentary—and very unusual to see the director in the film as a key character. Due in part to the success of Michael Moore (director of Bowling for Columbine, 2002, and Fahrenheit 9/11, 2004) and Ross McElwee (director of Sherman’s March, 1986, and Time Indefinite, 1993), the filmmaker-as-protagonist approach is increasingly common (Arthur, 2007). For example, the documentary Super Size Me (2004) followed filmmaker Morgan Spurlock’s month-long experiment in fast food consumption, charting the rapid deterioration of his physical health. Made for $60,000, the film brought in $11 million at the domestic box office, making it one of the highest grossing documentaries in U.S. history (Bailey, 2010).

In a scene from Super Size Me, in which Spurlock consumes his first “supersized” meal, Bailey (2010) recalled that the filmmaker’s technique of periodically blacking out the screen and reporting how much time has elapsed heightened the nauseating effect:

After twenty-two minutes of this increasingly tortuous meal, Spurlock’s body finally rebels, causing him to vomit out the car’s window. The camera peers out the window to show us the regurgitated remains of the food, a shot which elicited loud groans from my fellow audience members … our fascination turns into revulsion. (p. 445)

Throughout the course of the film, Spurlock willingly subjects his body to a number of mental, emotional, and physical changes. Rather than showing the transformation from fat to fit, as many makeover shows do, he allows his body to go from fit to fat. Perhaps intended to temper
potential ridicule and censure toward Spurlock for what could be construed as egotistical self-abuse, viewers ultimately were informed that he returned to his original weight and health after a considerable amount of rehabilitative effort (Bailey, 2010).

LaMarre and Landreville (2009) focused their research on how the emotions of guilt and disgust influence interest, learning, and engagement. They observed that documentary films are “capable of eliciting strong, gut-wrenching emotions in the audience, thereby increasing interest and knowledge about important issues” (LaMarre & La ndreville, 2009, p. 550)—and that documentaries have the potential to strongly influence public opinion.

Whiteman (2009) wrote that the production and distribution of social-issue documentaries may have a wide range of significant impact on community organizations, educational institutions, citizens, and policy makers. As spotlighted in Whiteman’s research, Craig Gilmore, an activist with the California Prison Moratorium Project, used the documentary film Yes In My Backyard (1999) to train activists. This film explored the multi-layered dependence of one farming town on the prison industry. Gilmore observed that this documentary came out just before the state went into a severe budget crisis, so “suddenly state legislators listened very seriously” (as cited in Whiteman, 2009, p. 473) to arguments couched in a new framework about what the real costs of prisons were, and who was bearing those costs (Whiteman, 2009).

According to Whiteman (2009), the development and use of an issue-centered model to assess political impact is even more important now that “‘outreach’ has become the new essential element of social-issue documentary, in large part because of the interest of funders in “increasing the likelihood that their investments in documentary production will have some effect on the world” (Whiteman, 2009, p. 459).
To assess impact of documentary film on policy outcomes, Protess and colleagues identified three types of impact: deliberative (‘‘when policy makers hold formal discussions of policy problems and their solutions, such as legislative hearings or executive commissions’’), individualistic (‘‘when policy makers apply sanctions against particular persons or entities, including prosecutions, firings, and demotions’’), and substantive (‘‘regulatory, legislative, and/or administrative changes’’) (as cited in Whiteman, 2009, p. 460).

From policy makers to theater audiences to students, documentary films represent potent catalysts of influence. Hess (2007) noted that documentary films are used in high school social studies classes more frequently than newspapers, magazines, or computers—and they can have a powerful impact on what students learn. Documentaries can be credited with “developing students’ empathy; enhancing their awareness of issues, events, and people that typically are not given much attention in textbooks; and influencing students’ views on controversial historic and contemporary issues” (Hess, 2007, p. 194).

According to research by Hess (2007), students do not approach documentary films as empty vessels—their prior knowledge, social positions, political ideologies, and a host of other factors influence the meanings they create. For example, one study found that high school history students do not recognize a film’s perspective unless they disagree with its message. That is, when the filmmaker’s point of view aligns with their own, they see no perspective—just truth. Many students and their teachers trust documentary films as valid sources of information and as authentic historical representations (Hess, 2007).

Marcus and Stoddard (2009) observed that high school students reported that documentary film was more accurate and trustworthy than the Internet, feature films, the government, and fel-
Students viewed documentaries as trustworthy sources of information as compared to their textbooks and other classroom readings.

*Strategies of Persuasion*

Miceli, de Rosis, and Poggi (2006) recalled Aristotle’s argument that persuasion relies on the interplay of three basic ingredients: the speaker’s credibility and trustworthiness—especially the speaker’s moral character (ethos), a logical and well-reasoned argument (logos), and the feelings of the audience (pathos). “Aristotle’s framework supports what most people suspect intuitively—that effective persuasion often appeals to both the informational and the emotional sides” (Miceli et al., 2006, p. 855).

Miceli et al. (2006) noted that emotional persuasion is often considered as synonymous of irrational persuasion, but the authors opposed such a view, dissecting the concept of emotional persuasion in the process. They identified two general modes of emotional persuasion: persuasion through actual arousal of emotions and persuasion through appeal to expected emotions. Miceli et al. (2006) explained their view as follows:

The appeal to expected emotions can be perfectly rational, as long as rational implies the correct processing of the information available, the derivability of conclusions from premises, and the production of plausible means-ends relationships. An appeal to expected emotions is structurally indistinguishable from any other argument from consequences or, in our terms, intention generation by acting on pre-existing goals. In the appeal to expected emotions, this content is precisely that of feeling a certain emotion rather than having a certain state of the world true. (p. 875)

Research by Peake, Innes, and Dyer (2009), on the role of tour guides in affecting change in ecotourists, observed the ecotourist as “having potential to develop, and as incumbent of, a
shared responsibility for the conservation of our natural fauna and flora, resources in which we all have a stake in sustaining” (Peake et al., 2009, p. 123).

In their study examining attitudes toward tourism and climate change, McKercher, Prideaux, Cheung, and Law (2010) suggested that changing consumer behavior may represent the greatest challenge in reducing tourism’s carbon footprint in the short-to-medium term, compared to legislation that forces industry to comply. Participation in carbon-offset programs, for example, may represent a start, but “low awareness, low take-up rates and real concerns about the efficacy of such programs may render such programs of little more value than assuaging guilt feelings” (McKercher et al., 2010, p. 313). The authors argued that most recycling, cited as another example of consumer behavior, is commendable but involves little real behavior modification—and it fails to address the more profound issue of over-consumption.

According to McKercher et al. (2010), resistance to change in tourist behavior must be placed within a larger context of an “overall thicket of unsustainability that most of the developed world finds itself in and overall resistance to making needed changes” (McKercher et al., 2010, p. 313). The authors noted that invoking change will require a range of actions to educate consumers, to increase awareness, and to convince people that their own actions are meaningful. In their conclusions, the authors noted that some tourists realize they are part of the problem, but very few engage in actions that make them part of the solution (McKercher et al., 2010).

According to research by Whitmarsh (2008), direct experience (i.e., “interaction with attitude object,” such as an industrial dairy’s impact on the quality of life and property values of nearby residents) is more likely than indirect experience to result in “stronger, more confident, clearly focused and persistent attitudes, and in attitude-behavior consistency. Experience may also motivate people to seek further information to improve their understanding and inform their future
responses” (Whitmarsh, 2008, p. 354). Further, the author observed that air pollution victims have higher pro-environmental values, and research respondents with these values were significantly more likely to consider climate change a salient risk issue and to take action in response to it (Whitmarsh, 2008).

When asked about their actions out of concern for climate change, those affected by air pollution were significantly more likely to believe the issue can be tackled by action on an individual and societal level. When asked how it could be tackled, this group was more likely to cite international action. A higher proportion of those affected by air pollution stressed a need for more action by government, industry and wider society, but also accepted personal responsibility for climate change (Whitmarsh, 2008). These findings may extrapolate to documentary films: the more closely viewers identify with the issues presented, the more likely they are to respond to the filmmaker’s message with vigor.

Research by Maiteny (2002) noted that when people encounter information that challenges their role in unsustainable environmental practices, thereby producing anxiety, they respond in three main ways. They may experience an unconscious denial in which case individuals stave off the anxiety by seeking gratification through continued, and perhaps increased, material acquisition and consumption. Another, more conscientious consumer response is to “do your bit” by shopping in what is perceived to be a more selective, ethical way—changing the form of consumption rather than reducing the amount that is consumed. A third group experiences a heightened conscience and often a feeling of “connectedness” within the wider context of ecological and social processes. They are convinced that the “snowball effects” of unsustainable behavior can only be stemmed if each person takes responsibility for changing themselves and their lifestyles. This group is most likely to not only modify their own behavior, but also to take on the
task of “stimulating awareness and change in others” (Maiteny, 2002, p. 300). A documentary filmmaker seeking to influence viewers may benefit from this perspective presented by Maiteny.

Research by Reinhard, Messner, and Ludwig Sporer (2006) coupled persuasive intent in messages with the attractiveness of the spokespersons. They observed that in most persuasive messages, speakers did not explicitly convey their intention to persuade. However, their results suggested that when the spokespersons used in an advertising campaign were physically attractive or otherwise likeable, the campaign might be made more effective if the spokespersons express their intentions to persuade. Celebrities are selected for advertising campaigns not only to create attention based on their popularity, but also because of their attractive and likeable qualities (Reinhard et al., 2006).

Experiments by Reinhard et al. (2006) strongly supported the assumption that making explicit the interest in persuading consumers can sometimes increase the effectiveness of advertising efforts rather than decreasing it. “For unattractive or dislikeable persons, making explicit their desire to persuade seems to be a liability. Attractive or likeable sources, however, can profit from making explicit their persuasive intent” (Reinhard et al., 2006, p. 257).

In a scenario examined by Reinhard et al. (2006), a likeable salesperson elicited a more positive attitude when she disclosed her desire to influence than when she did not, whereas the dislikeable salesperson elicited a less positive attitude in the former condition than in the latter.

_The Screening and Discussion of Documentary Films_

Whiteman (2009) alluded to commentary by Craig Gilmore (as cited in Whiteman, 2009) regarding the importance of a facilitated discussion to the success of a public screening:
A lot of what happens happens in the discussion of the movie. It requires that people engage in a certain way. . . It allows people to engage passionately, but not narrowly. It precludes overly simplistic notions of what it’s going to take to do this work. (p. 463)

Research by Kolbe and Boos (2009) noted best practices of decision-making groups that appear in a broad range of industrial, organizational, and medical areas. In the context of a discussion related to a documentary film, group decisions may be relevant when a cohesive group has viewed the film, rather than a collection of previously unconnected individuals (i.e., the general public). Kolbe and Boos alluded to the theory that during the decision process, the group should fulfill the following critical functions to ensure feasible decision quality:

- The group should develop a thorough and correct understanding of the problem; the group must recognize the requirements that the decision must satisfy in order to be judged acceptable; the group should develop realistic and eligible decision alternatives and evaluate their possible positive and negative consequences; and lastly, the group should choose the alternative with the best trade-off of advantages and disadvantages. (p. 3)

One result relating to group facilitation implied that planning and communicating contribute positively to the quality of the outcome, observed Kolbe and Boos (2009). Functional theory can serve as a tool for group decision-making process facilitation, to be taken into account particularly by leaders and facilitators. “What makes this theory so poignant is that it emphasizes the complexity of group decision processes: each team member’s opinion and knowledge should be integrated into the group’s final decision” (Kobe & Boos, 2009, p. 3). Thus, coordinating and integrating individual contributions is a crucial piece of effective group decision-making.

According to Simpson (2008), persuasive film calls attention to certain facts, not through education, but instead by more frequently provoking emotion over reason. In the context of his
teaching related to the documentary films *Triumph of the Will* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Simpson stated that he intentionally left the delineation between persuasion and propaganda ambiguous “so that students would have to wrestle with unclear distinctions evident in the films used” (Simpson, 2008, p. 104). Simpson sought to clarify the ambiguity in post-screening discussions. The documentary filmmaker may benefit from a similar approach in framing discussions.

Clips from documentary films may be shown when screening the entire film is not possible or preferred. However, in the context of research pertaining to screening historical documentary films for students, Simpson (2008) noted that students viewing only clips might lose sight of the larger story and the supporting cultural climate in which these films were once advanced, and there may be the perception among students that these types of films are droll, uninteresting, and overly “educational” compared to popular movies. Suggestions for improving the methods include varying in-class examples of propaganda (e.g., audio clips taken from World War II radio broadcasts, contemporary methods such as wartime techniques used by opposing forces and “safe-sex” and antidrug campaigns) and having students create their own versions of persuasive messaging for current societal challenges such as domestic violence, altruistic community involvement, and antipoverty campaigns, among others (Simpson, 2008). These suggestions may be applicable to educational situations within community events or workshops.

In a study examining the role of tour guides in conveying conservation messages to ecotourists, Peake et al. (2009) pointed out that “the strategic role of tour guides should not be underestimated by tour operators or relevant government agencies” (Peake et al., 2009, p. 123). The guides’ role in an ecotourism context is in “driving the kind of transformative processes in visitors crucial for the sustainability of our natural resources and its associated industries” (Peake et al., 2009, p. 122).
Tracy Huling, director of *Yes, In My Backyard*, as discussed by Whiteman (2009) said she did not want her work to lead to a predetermined conclusion but rather to start a discussion. Huling was confident that “opening up community discussions would be likely to lead at least some citizens to question the rationale for prison development” (Whiteman, 2009, p. 462).

When the *Fahrenheit 9/11* DVD was released in October 2004 and shown in some high school and college classrooms, director Michael Moore posted a 54-page “Teacher’s Guide” for using the film in high school and college classrooms on his Web site (Dahlgren, 2009). Documentary filmmakers may wish to consider creating supplementary materials to help shape and enhance discussions of their films.

Maiteny (2002) stressed that pro-environmental behavior change initiatives must work with experience and not simply assume that information alone stimulates such change. However, “it is also important to recognise the relationship between experience and the framing of experience. Interpretative frameworks for making sense of experience in pro-environmental ways are essential” (Maiteny, 2002, p. 305). Maiteny observed that concern for the environment *per se* is not the exclusive factor in one’s behavioral change. Rather, pro-environmental action enhances “the personal meaning of these individuals’ lives and, consequently, contribute to their sense of well-being” (Maiteny, 2002, p. 305). Based on Maiteny’s research, filmmakers discussing their films with viewers may wish to acknowledge emotional reactions respectfully and carefully and, when relevant, relate the film’s issues and potential solutions to the disclosing viewers’ personal enrichment—increasing the chance of viewers becoming proactively involved in the issue.

**Conclusion**

This review of scholarly literature demonstrates that documentary films are a significant educational force, reaching an increasing number of viewers due in large part to the advent of
digital video and the Internet. There are examples of the impact of certain films on public policy
and viewers’ perceptions of particular issues, but it is less clear how films influence behavior
over time. Research supports both informational and emotional filmmaking strategies to impact
viewers, but it is the emotional experience that is more likely to result in significant change.
When there is an opportunity to discuss documentary films, the role of the filmmaker (or other
discussion leader) is crucial in providing relevant and constructive feedback. This may be espe-
cially true in framing emotional reactions, when it is productive to direct the reactions sensitively
toward the objectives of the filmmaker.
A GUIDE FOR NOVICE DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS WHO AIM TO MOTIVATE VIEWERS TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION RELEVANT TO ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION, ANIMAL PROTECTION, AND/OR HUMAN RIGHTS

Charley Korns
May 2011
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I. INTRODUCTION

Since photography emerged in the 19th century, images have intrigued, inspired, and captivated billions across the planet. What began as photographs in publications evolved into motion pictures, brought to the masses in theaters, television, and eventually the Internet. Movies combine images, dialogue, and (usually) music to create mesmerizing entertainment. Audiences in the millions flock to films like Avatar, Titanic, and Lord of the Rings; viewers are transported, immersed in adventure, romance, and suspense. One important genre of film that has carved out its essential niche is the documentary. This Individual Learning Project (ILP), structured as a guide for novice documentary filmmakers, examines filmmaking as a catalyst for change—personal and societal.

Documentary films are a fantastic way to share information and express your unique perspective. Granted, the process is more involved than writing about the same issue, but if filmmaking excites you more than writing, you shouldn’t delay in hopes that some day you will feel more inspired about writing a book, articles, or a blog. Like anything else, you will need to learn about the process, especially if you have no experience. Whether you aspire to make a short documentary film to raise awareness about an issue affecting your community, or you dream of making films that you can submit to film festivals internationally, now is the time to start.

Movies of all kinds grew in popularity from 1980, when they earned less than $3 billion at the U.S. box office, to 2010, when they earned more than $10 billion (Box Office Mojo, 2011a). It is the dramatic movies that comprise most of the movie revenues. Audiences mainly are drawn to films based on their interest in particular actors, directors, and one or more of these genres: action, suspense, romance, comedy, adventure, horror, science fiction, or Western. But documentaries will always have their place and are well worth pursuing, albeit without car chases, exploding helicopters, or the latest special effects.

I was inspired by a 2001 documentary about a Scottish artist whose specialty is perishable environmental sculpture: Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working With Time, directed by Thomas Riedelsheimer. And I loved 49 Up, the 2005 film composed of interviews with 12 English women and men who had been part of Michael Apted’s film documentation since the age of 7; Apted made a movie about their life progression every 7 years, starting at age 7. Filmmaker Gillian Armstrong, in a similar approach, has followed three women since they were 14, in the first and longest documentary longitudinal study of young Australians, which began in 1976; the latest incarnation is Love, Lust & Lies (2010). Although I’m not a Metallica fan, I was fascinated by the 2004 documentary Some Kind of Monster. Filmmakers Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky revealed the complex relationships of the band members during a tumultuous time for the rock stars, when their lead singer sought therapy for alcoholism—and the band nearly broke up.

While the three films mentioned above are but a few of the thousands of superb documentaries on art, personalities, history, and other general topics, this ILP examines documentary films’ persuasive power to affect change, with an emphasis on films relevant to humane education. This subset of documentary films cuts a broad swath, for humane education includes compassionate approaches to environmental preservation, animal protection, human rights, social justice, and other issues involving exploitation and prejudice. (See Chapter III to learn more about humane education.)
Throughout this ILP, the terms *film* and *video* are used, the latter when it is clear that the reference is to a work recorded electronically on tape or disc. Some discussions, including quotations, mention *video* or *digital video* and could not truthfully be replaced with *film*. In other contexts, the term *film* is used more generally, when the distinction between film and video is not crucial in the respective context. While film is still used by many established filmmakers, video has become virtually the sole medium for novice, independent filmmakers because of the significant advantages in cost, convenience, and Internet accessibility.
II. The Purpose of This Guide

Individuals who are passionate about protecting environments, animals, and/or humans may view documentary filmmaking as technically inaccessible and prohibitively expensive—a perspective that could block or derail a project, and thus result in a missed opportunity.

The goal of this project is to inspire educators, activists, and filmmakers in areas relevant to humane education to pursue (or continue) documentary filmmaking and accomplish their goals. These pursuits would especially pertain to environmental preservation, animal protection, human rights, social justice, and other issues couched in compassionate perspectives.

This guide will help novice documentary filmmakers to optimize the transformational potential of their films, rather than creating films that only inform or entertain without mobilizing audiences. The guide will emphasize filmmaking approaches that motivate audience members to want to make a difference and engage in certain environmental preservation, animal protection, and/or human rights issues—and also will include general information to help readers finance, produce, promote and screen independent films. However, this project is not intended as a technical manual detailing every step of the process—the emphasis will be on strategies and elements that are key to inspiring viewers to act out of concern and compassion for the environmental, animal, and/or human issue addressed. A list of relevant Web sites, books, and magazines to foster further reading and viewing is included in the appendices of this paper.

Additionally, the guide will provide examples of other films’ strategies and successes. For example, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) motivated many viewers to make changes to reduce their impact on climate change, which in some cases included their becoming trained through Al Gore’s nonprofit, The Climate Project, to become trainers on the topics put forth in the film. The Climate Project supports more than 3,600 diverse and dedicated volunteers worldwide. Presenters have “delivered 70,000 presentations and have reached a combined audience of 7.3 million people” (The Climate Project, n.d., ¶ 3). Another documentary, *Oil on Ice* (2004), examined the battle over oil development within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and its impact on the environment and indigenous communities—at a time when the U.S. Congress was considering whether to open up the refuge for oil drilling. Organizers, including the Sierra Club, credited the film with mobilizing nationwide awareness and resistance, which ultimately contributed to the defeat of legislation to initiate oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 90).

Film and video, whether the work is a few minutes long or feature length, can be powerful and influential, especially when widely distributed. (Feature length films, per the rules of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, have a running time of more than 40 minutes.¹) For example, in 2008, the Humane Society of the United States released a video showing workers at a slaughterhouse in Chino, California, kicking, electrocuting, and dragging (with chains) cows no longer able to walk. Public health officials warned that these non-ambulatory cows were more likely to be diseased than other cows. The U.S. Department of Agriculture responded by ordering the recall of 143 million pounds of frozen beef from the slaughterhouse at fault. Further, the state legislature amended the California penal code to prohibit slaughterhouses from

¹ http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/rules/rule12.html
processing, butchering, or selling meat or products of non-ambulatory animals for human consumption (Persky, 2010).

A. Circuitous Paths to Filmmaking

Documentary filmmakers arrive at their projects from varied launching points. Some may take classes in their community, starting with films of a few minutes in length, and they may never pursue feature-length films, while others go straight for longer films. Some may delve into filmmaking after many years in a career that ultimately informs their work. Charles Ferguson earned a Ph.D. in political science, taught at MIT and UC Berkeley, served at the Brookings Institution, and spent years as a consultant to technology companies before starting his first film. *No End In Sight* (2007) examined and critiqued the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. His second film, *Inside Job* (2010), probed the causes and consequences of the global economic crisis. Both films were nominated for an Academy Award in the feature documentary film category (*Inside Job* won the Oscar on February 28, 2011). Ferguson credits his success to his own learning abilities and the skilled and talented production personnel who worked with him.

“If you surround yourself with really fantastic people, they will teach you your job,” said Ferguson. “For this film (*Inside Job*) I tried to get the very best people I could, and I think we got amazing people” (Crowdus, 2010, p. 43).

It was through being rejected that Rebecca Cammisa embarked on the documentary film path. In the midst of a career as a documentary photographer, Cammisa spent years documenting Sister Helen Travis, a Benedictine nun, who ran a halfway house in the Bronx. After Cammisa finished shooting the story, she made the rounds to various magazines, but none accepted her photographs, including *LIFE* (indieWIRE, 2009).

“That rejection forced me to visualize the story in a completely different way,” said Cammisa. “I realized then that Sister Helen’s life would make an extremely compelling film. Fortunately, the digital video market emerged at the same time, so I could now work with a less expensive technology. I immediately put all my creative efforts into learning and creating documentary films, and never stopped” (indieWIRE, 2009, response to question #1).

Frederick Wiseman is another documentary filmmaker with a first career that helped inform his projects. He worked for years as a lawyer before making his first film, *The Cool World* (1964), about a youth gang in Harlem. His body of work consists of at least 30 feature-length films devoted primarily to exploring American institutions.
III. HUMANE EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

Humane education may conjure up images of humane societies that help companion animals find good homes and teach the public about how to care for these animals. Indeed, humane education is often taught at these organizations, including components about kindness to animals, the problems with pet stores, and the importance of spaying and neutering.

In 1933, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Congress issued the following statement in support of humane education:

Children trained to extend justice, kindness and mercy to animals become more just, kind and considerate in their relations with each other. Character training along these lines will result in men and women of broader sympathies, more humane, more law-abiding—in every respect more valuable citizens. Humane education is the teaching in schools and colleges of the nations the principles of justice, goodwill, and humanity toward all life. The cultivation of the spirit of kindness to animals is but the starting point toward the larger humanity that includes one’s fellow of every race and clime. A generation of people trained in these principles will solve their international difficulties as neighbors and not as enemies. (Humane Education Teacher, n.d.)

This ILP embraces a broader view of humane education applicable to environmental preservation, human rights, social justice, and cultural issues linked to problems stemming from power, privilege, and prejudice. Further, the humane concern for animals extends to the protection of all animals, particularly those who are exploited by humans for their meat, milk, eggs, fur, fins, horns, hooves, hides, organs ... whatever the case may be.

According to the Institute for Humane Education, humane education “not only instills the desire and capacity to live with compassion, integrity, and wisdom, but also provides the knowledge and tools to put our values into action in meaningful, far-reaching ways” (Institute for Humane Education, n.d., ¶ 6). Humane education includes four elements (Institute for Humane Education, n.d., ¶ 9-12):

1. information about the issues of our time so that people have the information they need to understand the consequences of their decisions as citizens
2. fostering curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, so that people can evaluate information and solve problems
3. instilling reverence, respect, and responsibility, so that people have the motivation to face challenges and to act with integrity
4. offering positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the animals, and the Earth, and tools for problem solving so that people are empowered to create a more humane world

Learn more about humane education and the Institute for Humane Education, including its workshops, courses, and degree programs, at [http://humaneeducation.org](http://humaneeducation.org).
IV. HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF DOCUMENTARY FILM

A. Origins and Evolution of Documentary Film—in Brief

The origins of documentary film date to the late 19th century. Early film (pre-1900) was dominated by the novelty of showing an event: a train entering a station, a boat docking, or factory workers leaving work. Many of the first films were no more than a minute, due to technological limitations (Barnouw, 1993, p. 7). John Grierson in 1926 coined the term “documentary;” nonfiction films had previously been called “educational,” “actualities,” “interest films,” or “travel films” (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 3). Grierson hailed explorer and film pioneer Robert Flaherty as the father of documentary film (Barnouw, 1993, p. 85). Flaherty in 1922 released Nanook of the North after almost a decade of filming. Flaherty’s 79-minute Nanook chronicled the daily life of Inuit tribe member Nanook and his family in the Canadian arctic (Barnouw, 1993, pp. 41-42). Beginning in 1942, documentary films were eligible for an Academy Award.

In 2008 the International Documentary Association announced its list of the best 25 documentary films ever made, including the following top 10 (White, n.d.), with brief descriptions included from the Internet Movie Data Base.²

1. *Hoop Dreams* (1994), by Steve James, Peter Gilbert, and Frederick Marx. Followed two African American boys as they struggled to become college basketball players on the road to going pro.
2. *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), by Errol Morris. Successfully argued that a man was wrongly convicted of murder by a corrupt justice system in a Texas county.

² [http://www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)
Betsy McLane, a documentary film historian, in 2010 selected her “Top 11 Docs That Shook the World,” a reference to Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein’s classic drama, *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, about the 1917 Russian Revolution (Puente, 2010b, p. 6D). The 11 films on her list, in chronological order, followed by the directors’ names and brief descriptions, were:

2. *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), by Esfir Shub. Combined “home movie” footage of the last Russian czar’s family with images of starving peasants to glorify the cause of the Soviets.
4. *Why We Fight* (1942), by Frank Capra. A series of films that made the case for the United States entering World War II—originally intended for the troops, it ultimately became civilian propaganda shown in theaters. One of the films in the series, *Prelude to War*, won the Oscar for best documentary in 1943.
5. *Night and Fog* (1955), by Alain Resnais. The world’s first look inside the Nazi death camps, this 32-minute film is credited as a catalyst for helping to start conversations about the Holocaust, after a decade of repression.
6. *Harvest of Shame* (1960), by Edward R. Murrow. The veteran newsman’s last documentary for CBS, shown just after Thanksgiving, shocked viewers with its unveiling of the lives of America’s migrant farmworkers, whose plight had not improved much in recent decades.
9. *If You Love This Planet* (1982), by Terre Nash. Spotlighted Australian pediatrician Helen Caldicott addressing the dangers of nuclear weapons and war.
10. *Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt* (1989), by Robert Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. Traced the AIDS epidemic from the first TV news reports on the disease and included the first unfolding of the AIDS Quilt on the National Mall.
11. *An Inconvenient Truth* (2008), by Davis Guggenheim. Examined Al Gore's campaign to make the issue of climate change a recognized problem worldwide, concluding with ideas about how people could take steps to make a difference.

**B. Documentary Film Today**

Documentaries are no longer seen as a passive experience solely for learning or entertainment. “Instead, with ever-increasing frequency, these films are considered part of a larger effort to spark debate, mold public opinion, shape policy, and build activist networks,” stated Nisbet and Auferheide (Nisbet & Auferheide, 2009, p. 450).
“In addition to these new forms and uses, more traditional public media such as *Frontline*, Bill Moyers, and *POV* (*Point of View*) continue to be influential outlets for public affairs journalism and commentary. Documentaries are also becoming an ever-more-valued commercial enterprise at for-profit cable television networks and a popular amateur genre on YouTube” (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009, p. 450).

In 2007, roughly 100 documentary films—or more than 17 percent of all releases—had theatrical openings, a new benchmark for the genre. Technological advancement is credited for the surge, including high-definition cameras, editing software, low-cost DVD reproduction, and the Internet as a distribution channel. Today’s novice filmmakers can produce films faster and more cheaply than ever before (Arthur, 2008).

Hankin (2007) noted that several women in *Sisters in Cinema*, Yvonne Welbon’s 2004 documentary on African American filmmakers, revealed that digital video had allowed them to create feature-length movies at a fraction of the cost it would have taken them to produce the work using film. Also included in Hankin’s research, filmmaker Coquie Hughes recalled the ease with which she made three feature-length films on digital video, though she lamented the challenge of distributing her video work (Hankin, 2007).

Although documentary films vary in length and format, short, digital videos involve less work and money to produce than longer ones—and are more easily disseminated via electronic devices and the Internet (Heuston, 2005). Conway (2008), comparing *macrocinema* with *microcinema*, noted that the history of microcinema has yet to be written: “No one has examined the forces shaping the emergence of microcinemas as organizations that facilitate the production, distribution, and exhibition of films made by nonprofessional filmmakers” (Conway, 2008, p. 61). Various factors made the microcinema movement possible, most notably advances in digital video technology. These advances inspired optimism about expanding emerging filmmakers’ options regarding the production, distribution, and exhibition of their films (Conway, 2008).

Showcasing a model of successful microcinema, Conway (2008) examined the Montreal-based group Kino, which was founded in 1999 in response to frustrations its founders experienced as recent film school graduates trying to break into Quebec’s filmmaking industry. From its beginnings, Kino has emphasized filmmaker access to the means of production and projection. To this end, the filmmakers adopted the motto “*Faites bien avec rien, faites mieux avec peu, et faites-le maintenant!*” (Do well with nothing, do better with a little, and do it right now!). This organization’s approach spawned the creation of Kino “cells” (*cellules* in French) worldwide, which totaled more than 50 by 2005 (Conway, 2008, p. 63).

“We are in a golden age of documentary filmmaking,” said filmmaker Lucy Walker. “There’s been an amazing outburst of talent and action. Audiences are experiencing a new era of world-class filmmaking (that) can have the same impact as a fiction film” (Puente, 2010a, p. 1d). Walker’s excitement is understandable. In 2010 two of the films she directed were released. *Waste Land*, nominated for an Academy Award in the feature documentary category, is an uplifting examination of how art came to impact the lives of scavengers at the world’s largest landfill in Rio de Janeiro. *Countdown to Zero* exposes the dangers of rogue nuclear weapons (Turan, 2010).

Not only are documentary films widely viewed in theaters and on the Internet, they also are being used extensively as a resource in high school classrooms across the United States. One
study found that just over 82 percent of secondary history teachers reported using some portion of documentary film on average at least once a week. Fewer than 9 percent reported using a documentary film once a month or less, and zero teachers reported using no documentary film (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009).

Since 2000, the following feature-length documentary films (with their directors noted) won the Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary (the year indicated is the year the film was released). For a complete list of winners and the other nominated documentary films, visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Award_for_Best_Documentary_Feature.

- 2000: *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*, by Mark Jonathan Harris
- 2001: *Murder on a Sunday Morning (Un coupable idéal)*, by Jean-Xavier de Lestrade
- 2002: *Bowling for Columbine*, by Michael Moore
- 2003: *The Fog of War*, by Errol Morris
- 2004: *Born into Brothels*, by Ross Kauffman
- 2005: *March of the Penguins* (La marche de l'empereur), by Luc Jacquet
- 2006: *An Inconvenient Truth*, by Davis Guggenheim
- 2007: *Taxi to the Dark Side*, by Alex Gibney
- 2008: *Man on Wire*, by Simon Chinn
- 2009: *The Cove*, by Louie Psihoyos
- 2010: *Inside Job*, by Charles Ferguson

A few years ago the Academy of Motion Pictures began requiring all documentary filmmakers whose works are submitted for Oscar consideration to identify, in writing, all parts of their films that are staged re-enactments. That requirement has made it easier for committee members to decide whether a given movie can rightly be considered a documentary, said Arnold Schwartzman, whose film *Genocide* about the Holocaust won the Oscar for feature-length documentary in 1982 (Johnson, 2011).

Schwartzman believes that “we really do have to distinguish” between fictional and documentary films. “They’re two different animals,” he said, “and if we’re going to have a category about nonfiction films, then we shouldn’t allow it to slip into the other area, and that’s why that wall was made” (Johnson, 2011, p. 3).

C. Documentary Films Relevant to Humane Education

One needn’t journey far into the documentary film galaxy to find ones that are relevant to humane education. Such films include those that address animal protection, environmental preservation, human rights (including civil rights), gender bias, social justice, and/or media literacy. A categorized list of approximately 50 videos/films relevant to humane education is posted on the Web site of the Institute for Humane Education, with the films’ lengths and Web site links.³ Many of these films are required viewing for students enrolled in the courses offered by the Institute. Examples include *The Story of Stuff* (2007), *King Corn* (2007), *The Corporation* (2003), *Born Into Brothels* (2003), and *Wal-mart: The High Price of Low Cost* (2005).

³ [http://humaneeducation.org/sections/view/videos](http://humaneeducation.org/sections/view/videos)
One of the earliest documentary filmmakers who focused on environmental issues was Pare Lorentz, who worked for Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program, producing films describing environmental and social problems in the 1930s and 1940s. Lorentz acquired $6,000 in government funding for his first project, *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), which examined the consequences of dust storms from Montana to Texas. *The Plow* paved the way for *The River* (1937), which was funded at a much higher level by the Roosevelt administration: $50,000. *The River* focused on the Mississippi River, lauding government projects such as flood control, hydroelectric power, soil conservation, and rural electrification (Barnouw, 1993, pp. 114-118).

*The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The River* exemplified U.S. propaganda films of that era. “There are moments in *The Plow*, especially involving tractors, when you are certain that this film could have been produced in one of the political film mills of the totalitarian states of Europe,” said culture critic Philip Kennicott (Kennicott, 2007, ¶ 3). “Both films build from a loving description of the landscape and then introduce the depredations of man into this state of innocence. The land is overtaxed, man has squandered his inheritance, nature takes its revenge. But through the benign grace of your government, help is on the way” (Kennicott, 2007, ¶ 7).

An important example of a documentary with human rights implications was Frederick Wiseman’s *Titicut Follies* (1967), about an asylum for the criminally insane. The movie, which exposed prisoner abuse and humiliation at the hands of guards, made the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Bridgewater one of the most infamous institutions of its kind. Despite the initial support and acceptance of the film by the asylum staff, audiences outside the institution reacted in horror to the treatment of the patients; the asylum authorities turned against the film, arguing that it violated the privacy of the prisoners and moving to have it legally suppressed. On January 4, 1968, a judge denounced *Titicut Follies* as “80 minutes of brutal sordidness and human degradation” (Walker, 2007, p. 50). It is the only movie in U.S. history to be banned for reasons other than obscenity or national security, a ban not lifted until 1991 (Walker, 2007).

A film that addressed a human rights issue relevant to Native Americans was the Oscar-winning *Broken Rainbow* (1984), directed by Maria Florio and Victoria Mudd. The film examined the history leading to the passage of P.L. (Public Law) 93-531, in 1974, to force the relocation of 10,000 Diné (Navajo) from Hopi land. The film argued that the impetus that drove the relocation pertained directly to mining rights, demonstrating that Peabody Coal used the Hopi tribal council to evict Diné families who had lived in peace with Hopi people for centuries.

*Blue Vinyl* (2002) exposed the dangers of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which has been used in building materials, car interiors, and children’s toys, among other products. Directed by Judith Helfand and Dan Gold, the documentary was structured as a personal journey, with Helfand investigating the implications of her family’s choice to put vinyl siding on their suburban home. Helfand presented herself as the average consumer, demonstrating the obstacles to discovering the consequences of certain consumer choices. The film encourages viewers to become active in the issue (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009).

*The Cove*, a 2009 documentary film that won an Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary, saddened and angered audiences. Viewers unfamiliar with the annual slaughter of dolphins at a particular cove in Taiji, Japan, were shocked to see the event unfold as filmmakers used clandestine tactics to gain access to the guarded cove. Scenes filmed under the
green lens of night-vision goggles, and racing, handheld camera work made *The Cove* feel more like a spy thriller than a documentary. Not only are thousands of dolphins slaughtered for their meat, but viewers also learn that a small number of female dolphins are selected for purchase by aquariums from across the globe before the killing begins, with aquarium buyers paying up to $150,000 for a single dolphin destined for a park where patrons pay to watch dolphins perform tricks and/or to swim with them (Mark, 2009).

Audiences at the Sundance Film Festival gave the film a standing ovation. Ric O’Barry, director of the Save Japan Dolphins Coalition, who was featured in *The Cove*, recalled, “People cried; they laughed; and at the end of the movie, they asked what they could do” (Mark, 2009, p. 22).

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has produced hundreds of short videos that focus on myriad animal protection issues. In 2000, the organization produced the first edition of *Meet Your Meat*, a 12-minute video revealing cruel treatment of animals in factory farms, using primarily undercover footage. A couple of years later PETA updated it and added narration by actor Alec Baldwin. The video, which PETA continues to update, was getting an average of 100,000 hits per month in 2005 (Phelps, 2007, p. 299).

Compassion Over Killing (COK), an animal advocacy organization, has worked to end animal abuse since 1995. One of the ways COK conveys messages is through video. “Even the most effective piece of literature on factory farming and its abuses can’t quite compare to seeing those cruelties with our own eyes. When we witness—as best we can—the suffering farmed animals endure for us to have meat, milk, and eggs, we’re much more inspired to help them with every bite we take by choosing animal-friendly foods” (Compassion Over Killing, n.d., ¶ 1). Because COK believes that “letting the victims of the animal agriculture speak for themselves is among the most powerful tools for encouraging people to become vegetarian, its investigators document factory farm conditions, and the films take individuals behind the closed doors of farms, slaughter plants, and livestock auctions” (Compassion Over Killing, n.d., ¶ 2).

COK has produced four documentaries: *45 Days: The Life and Death of a Broiler Chicken; Inside the Egg Industry; The Auction Block: An Inside Look at Farmed Animal Sales; and Hope for the Hopeless: An Investigation and Open Rescue at a Battery Egg Facility*. Additionally, COK offers shorter public service announcements (PSAs) (Compassion Over Killing, n.d.).
A. Filmmaking Basics

Every documentary film starts with a story that needs to be told. Once an idea is born, the passion of the filmmaker(s) for the subject of the film is paramount to seeing it through to completion. The following points are key (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 13):

1. You need passion to make (and finish) your own movie.
2. When you choose a subject with life for you, you tap into a wellspring of energy.
3. Filmmaking requires that you trust your intuition.
4. Films that emerge from your own knowledge, experiences, hopes, and concerns will be of interest to others.
5. The strength of the core idea, and your commitment to it, will carry you through the challenges it takes to make a film.
6. As you go forward your energy may diminish. This dip in interest is natural and happens to everyone.
7. Learn to differentiate between input that makes a contribution, and input that becomes a distraction.
8. The core idea, and the elements related to it, are continually changing and evolving.

Various filmmakers were asked why they make films, considering that documentary films are rarely profitable and a great many obstacles are likely to cross the filmmaker’s path. A 1998 book called *Imagining Reality*, contained perspectives on this matter (Rosenthal, 2007):

Most admitted to curiosity and a need to communicate. Ricky Leacock talked about a passion for experiences, both good and bad. Albert Maysles spoke about recording events so that they could be shared. Mike Grigsby talked about giving a voice to the voiceless. Others talked about providing a space where people could be themselves and express their deepest emotions. Most defined a concern for the world around them, though the expression was very gently put. All talked of vision, passion, commitment. (p. 13)

“I’m not in documentaries for the money,” said Davis Guggenheim, director of *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and *Waiting for Superman* (2010). “The work is intensive, and they don’t pay well. I’m in it because I think these stories have the capacity to do good in the world, and I’ve seen it” (Puente, 2010a).

Learning the craft of filmmaking can take a variety of educational paths. If you are highly motivated and technically savvy, you may be able to teach yourself with the help of books, Internet tutorials, and perhaps the guidance of a filmmaker friend. Most novice filmmakers, however, will want to pursue some form of instruction, ideally through hands-on classes in their area.

For example, in Portland, Oregon, Portland Community Media provides “equipment and training courses for individuals and organizations to utilize cablecast and other forms of media distribution as a means of communication, civic involvement, artistic and cultural expression and community development.” (Portland Community Media, n.d., ¶ 3) Alternatively, community colleges often have continuing education classes in video production in which equipment is provided for students.
Another Portland option for training is NW Documentary, which offers many relevant classes and workshops throughout the year, in addition to renting equipment. Student work is screened periodically at public events. “We believe real stories matter. They not only entertain, but they can enlighten. They can move us deeply, and change the world as we see it forever” (NW Documentary, n.d., ¶ 3). Yet another possibility in Portland is the Northwest Film Center’s School of Film, which has “helped thousands of individuals to find and cultivate their personal voices as storytellers and to help create community around cinema’s potential to advance cultural understanding, reflect the human experience, and fuel social change” (Northwest Film Center, n.d., ¶ 1).

Film school is certainly something to consider if you are in a position to take the time and invest in a formal education, although it’s not the most common launch point for documentary filmmakers. One approach is to investigate what is offered in your community or nearby, while another is to look at schools nationally that offer programs in documentary filmmaking. The Independent—a source of information for independent, grassroots, and activist media-makers—picked the following three schools among its top 10: Duke Center for Documentary Studies, the Documentary Center at George Washington University, and The Documentary Institute at the University of Florida (see the complete list, with program details, at http://www.independent-magazine.org/08/09/10-best-academic-programs-documentary-filmmakers).

Filmmaking is rarely a solo endeavor. You may very well start out by yourself, perhaps making a 5-minute film and uploading it to YouTube—which is a tremendous start. But as you pursue larger projects, you will want to find others who share your filmmaking interests. You may end up leading a team or partnering with someone and ultimately guide the film together as codirectors. Having a team will energize your production and bring together disparate resources. Even having a crew of two can cover a lot more ground than one person. For instance, as the director you can direct and conduct the interviews, and a cameraperson can shoot and handle the sound. Later, in postproduction, an editor with more experience can work with you to refine the footage and master transitions. Adding a third team member can help even more, and ... well, you have seen the closing credits after a feature-length film—the list of contributors can be astonishingly long, especially if the movie involved special effects and animation.

B. Cameras, Sound, and Lighting

Cameras

A video camera, naturally, is a filmmaker’s most basic, essential piece of equipment. Before purchasing any equipment, it is possible that cameras, microphones, lights, and other items can be borrowed through community media programs, which exist in many cities. These are spectacular resources—ideal outlets for someone who is getting started.

If using equipment from community resources is not possible, or if you are ready to acquire your own, there are numerous options. Like anything else, investing in higher quality equipment is wise—in terms of longevity and the quality of your video. Because camera technology is constantly evolving, it’s important to research what’s on the market, based on your budget and your filmmaking goals. The Internet is ideal, compared to books, since the information on sites is typically current and user reviews are common.
Handycamreview.Com is an online auction Web site featuring deals on various Handycams and Camcorders: [http://www.handycamreview.com](http://www.handycamreview.com). In association with Amazon, HandycamReview.Com offers customers reviews and product details on camcorders. The site includes links to “best of” lists on other sites such as PC World, Bestcovery, and Consumer Reports (a $26 annual membership, or $5.95 monthly is required to access Consumer Report’s on-line data). Other sites with reviews of video cameras are [http://www.camcorderinfo.com](http://www.camcorderinfo.com) and [http://www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com).

One page on CNET, a news and media Web site, ([http://reviews.cnet.com/camcorder-buying-guide](http://reviews.cnet.com/camcorder-buying-guide)) has a helpful breakdown of camcorder specifications based on the buyer’s needs in seven categories, including “Independent Filmmaker.” The suggested cost of a camera in this category is $1,500 and up. It’s best to start with a camera that won’t impinge upon your finances, trusting that, with more experience and funding, you will be able to upgrade later.

Whether or not you consult the Internet to research equipment before buying, your actual purchase may best be done at a local retailer, if there is one in your area. This will allow you to ask the staff questions and, if necessary and possible, return or exchange the equipment. Further, some stores offer classes with the purchase of cameras. Buying used equipment saves money but is always a gamble, especially when buying from anyone other than a local retail store, which may include a limited warranty with the purchase. If you have friends, or friends of friends, who have been using video cameras for a while, ask them about equipment.

**Sound**

One advantage of documentary films over fictional movies is that you don’t need to create the illusion of no camera being present, which typically involves suspending microphones above the action to ensure they are out of view. However, recording clear sound is crucial in any kind of filmmaking, and at least one external microphone is well worth the cost—rather than relying on the camera’s built-in microphone. The most common need for documentary filmmakers is to record interviews. Dorothy Fadiman, director of *Stealing America: Vote by Vote* (2008), recommends a lavalier microphone placed between 6 and 9 inches from the person’s mouth as the “safest way to get good sound” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 127). These microphones, smaller than a thumb, are typically clipped to collars, ties, or other clothing. The cost ranges from around $25 to $150, depending on the quality and whether it is wired or wireless.

**Lighting**

While natural light can be ideal in some situations, most filmmakers will want to have equipment to ensure adequate, portable lighting, and/or to create particular lighting effects to complement the scene they are shooting. Shop lights on stands, sold at many hardware stores, are the least expensive, but the light they emit usually needs to be bounced off walls and ceilings because they are not diffused. A brief tutorial video and other tips on lighting can be accessed at [http://videoproductiontips.com/video-production-tips/lighting-for-video-lesson-one](http://videoproductiontips.com/video-production-tips/lighting-for-video-lesson-one).

When buying electronics it’s important to consider the environmental impact of the item, and the practices of the manufacturer. Chances are you won’t find this information easily at your local retailer or on the Web site of a video equipment seller. A helpful guide produced by Greenpeace, the Guide to Greener Electronics, aims to get companies to (1) clean up their products by eliminating hazardous substances; (2) take back and recycle their products responsibly once they become obsolete; and (3) reduce the climate impacts of their operations and products. Access
If you are shopping for a video camera and you have clear aspirations to make a documentary that will involve interviews with people in positions of power, you may want to spend more for a higher end camera, not only for its video and audio quality but also for the impression it will make on your interview subjects. The larger and more sophisticated the camera, the more seriously you will be taken, in some cases.

Although high-definition (HD) digital video cameras lend themselves to higher quality, there may be situations where HD is not the best choice—in low light, for example.

Recalling the making of *Which Way Home* (2009), filmmaker Rebecca Cammisa said, “We shot in PAL,⁴ using lightweight Sony PD 170 video cameras, because PAL provided a superior quality image and was less obtrusive when following child migrants in the field. Using HD cameras was not an option because HD cameras were not sensitive enough in low-light conditions” (indieWIRE, 2009). *Which Way Home* follows several unaccompanied child migrants as they journey through Mexico en route to the United States on a freight train.

One camera to consider for a novel approach is the one built into iPhones. This camera was used to make a 30-minute fantasy-horror movie, released in 2011, called *Paranmanjang* (*Night Fishing*), by South Korean filmmaker Park Chan-wook, director of *Old Boy* (2003), a drama about a man bent on revenge after his release from prison. Made on a budget of $133,000, the movie was shot using the iPhone 4. Park said that a wide variety of angles and edits were possible because numerous cameras could be used. He said lenses were attached to the phones and nothing was particularly different from shooting a movie with conventional video cameras (Associated Press, 2011). The iPhone is purchased as part of a AT&T or Verizon phone and data plan; prices range from $199 to $299, but refurbished phones may be available for less—activating any iPhone will require a service contract, usually 2 years. If purchased without a service contract strictly for its video functionality, a new iPhone costs $599 for the 16 gigabyte model and $699 for the 32 gigabyte model (as of March 2011). The higher capacity model is preferable to optimize the video storage capabilities.

C. Editing

It’s not uncommon, since digital video entered the consumer video market in the late 1990s,⁵ to have at least a little experience shooting video, even if it’s of your family, friends, or companion animals. Editing is another matter since the average video camera user is content to shoot and be done with it, sharing with family/friends and/or uploading clips to Web sites such as YouTube. But editing (also known as postproduction) is the essential process of converting all your raw footage into a coherent film that will inform and inspire viewers. As a novice filmmaker, you have several choices:

1. Take a class in your community to learn a video editing software program.
2. Take an on-line tutorial, or one that is provided with your video editing software. Several tutorials and relevant links can be accessed at [http://videoeditingtutorial.org](http://videoeditingtutorial.org).

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⁴ PAL (Phase Alternating Line) is the TV standard introduced in the early 1960s in Europe.
3. Teach yourself, perhaps enlisting the help of a competent friend.
4. Hire a video editor.

Your decision about how to learn editing software may drive your decision to buy a particular brand and version, or you may already have basic software that came with your computer. For example, Macintosh computers come loaded with iMovie. Users of Microsoft operating systems can use Movie Maker, which is bundled with many PCs.

Popular video editing programs with a price tag include Apple’s Final Cut and Adobe Premiere. Final Cut Express costs approximately $199, while the more robust version, Final Cut Studio, sells for $999. Adobe Premiere Elements sells for approximately $99, and the advanced Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 costs around $799. Students are typically eligible for lower prices.

Although editing comes after most or all of the shooting, the process relies in large part on the techniques that were used in filming. The following tip pertains to this shooting-to-editing relationship: Follow the 15-second rule; “always film a stable shot for 10-15 seconds before you start any motion with your camera. Even if you are just shooting a stationary subject, you should always let 10-15 seconds roll. This gives the editor enough material to choose and insert a shot into a sequence” (Gregory, Caldwell, Avni, & Harding, 2005, p. 151).

Editing is a meticulous process that demands many hours of focused attention in order to make progress. While the footage you shoot is composed of a finite number of hours, the possibilities for editing your documentary film are endless. No matter what approach you take, whether you learn new software or bring in an experienced editor, it’s important to remain very involved in the process because it is your project; you are the filmmaker. According to filmmaker Dorothy Fadiman (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008):

> There is only one brass ring to catch on the merry-go-round of filmmaking—the one with your name on it. Your style will reflect what you want to say and how you say it. Even if you have an editor, the vision rendered should be yours. Two different people will make two completely different films from identical material. (p. 185)

### D. Music

Whether or not to add music to a documentary film is your choice. Adding it deftly can enhance the impact of particular messages or scenes. “The relationship between music and audience is one of the unsung keys to great moviemaking,” said Mark Sells, film critic and screenwriter. “A strong soundtrack can supplement emotion, create energy and impact, evoke a certain time period or era and truly bring a film to life” (Sells, 2011, p. 40).

For instance, in the documentary film *The Witness* (2000), there’s a scene in which a Sarah McLachlan song, *Angel*, plays while passersby on a New York City street watch video played via FaunaVision⁶—images of animals being killed and skinned for their fur. The camera focuses on distraught faces, some in apparent disbelief at what they are seeing. The evocative images, combined with the evocative lyrics of *Angel*, amplify the reaction of sadness and disgust. (View a clip from this scene: http://www.witnessfilm.org/wt_music1_english.htm.)

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⁶ FaunaVision refers to a large screen mounted in a high-tech multi-media van; designed for animal protection activism, the effort typically involves advocates distributing relevant literature near the van and starting conversations with people who stop to watch the videos.
McLachlan donated the use of her song in *The Witness* after seeing an early draft of the film. Novice filmmakers can certainly attempt to seek permission from established, even famous musicians to use their music, contacting them through their Web sites or other connections. It may feel like a long shot, but actually obtaining permission to use a suitable song could make it well worth the effort.

In Charles Ferguson’s documentary *Inside Job* (2010), music is playing during almost every moment of the film, which attempts to piece together the causes and effects of the recent global recession. Complementing the dire subject matter, the music is unfamiliar (at least to this ILP author) with an ominous tone, not unlike what would accompany scenes in an action film like *The Bourne Identity*, in which *Inside Job*’s narrator Matt Damon starred. Parts of two popular songs—Peter Gabriel’s *Big Time* and Bachman-Turner Overdrive’s *Taking Care of Business*—are played at a higher volume to accentuate particular transitions.

A filmmaker’s efforts to secure music may include:

1. creating original music, if you are a musician
2. asking friends and family members who play original music and are willing for it to be used in the film, with or without compensation
3. asking musicians, music publishers and copyright holders—politely and passionately
4. obtaining music that is royalty-free for a nominal fee; sites like [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com), [www.royalty-free.tv](http://www.royalty-free.tv), [www.proudmusiclibrary.com](http://www.proudmusiclibrary.com), and [www.allmusiclibrary.com](http://www.allmusiclibrary.com) offer entire libraries of music, licensed for a single fee without subsequent royalties
5. obtaining music that is royalty-free and free of cost—sites like [www.mobygratis.com](http://www.mobygratis.com) and [www.sonnyboo.com](http://www.sonnyboo.com). A list of links to similar resources is posted at [http://www.stonewashed.net/free-music.html](http://www.stonewashed.net/free-music.html)

“I wrote a lot of personal letters to musicians and explained why I wanted to use their songs,” said Greg Mottola, recalling the music in his 1980s-themed *Adventureland* (2009). “The great thing is that if you reach out to them and communicate sincerely, they’ll listen.” For example, Mottola succeeded in obtaining permission from Paul Westerberg of The Replacements to use *Unsatisfied* after Westerberg initially resisted. “He needed to be reassured that my heart was in the right place; that I loved it dearly and I wasn’t just slapping it in there for a little wallpaper,” recalled Mottola” (Sells, 2011, p. 41).

While it may be tempting to use music throughout a film, it is usually more effective when used sparingly. “If you limit the amount of music in a movie by choosing the cues for really key moments, they can have an even greater impact,” said Zach Braff, director of *Garden State* (2004), a drama about a man returning home for his mother’s funeral after being estranged from his family for a decade (Sells, 2011, p. 42).

**E. Funding**

The cost to make a documentary film, once equipment and an editing solution are secured, can range from thousands to millions of dollars. However, if you are highly resourceful and have access to a community media program—and no one is hired to join your crew—the cost could be very low. But costs can start adding up when you consider all the potential materials, fees, and services you may decide to factor into your budget. Once you are clear on your subject and
have a plan to produce the film, including a budget, you will be in a position to seek funding. You will need to take time to consider potential supporters, which may include foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and/or other groups and individuals.

Fadiman and Levelle (2008) emphasized that *people fund people*, not projects. “When you make a commitment to raise money, you take on a mission, which is to communicate your vision wherever you go. You need to bring your enthusiasm for the project into conversations with potential funders, and potential funders are everywhere. It is your vision which will attract donors” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 68).

The authors said there’s no need to be apologetic when seeking funding because you, as the filmmaker, are giving people a voice for their concerns by addressing their issues. “They will invest in you because they believe that through your film you can bring their voices to the world. Bottom line is they will be funding you to do that for them” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 69).

Fadiman and Levelle’s advice implies that you are not the only person who cares about the issue you are documenting. If you are the only one, however, you may need to tap into your personal resources and/or approach friends and family with your vision, asking for contributions—good luck! If you are just starting out and feel shy about approaching potential funders, you can dream up creative ways to raise money. For example, to earn the money for the budget of his first film *Roger & Me* (1989), Michael Moore ran neighborhood bingo games (The Internet Movie Data Base, n.d.). Just for fun, you may want to watch *American Movie* (1999), directed by Chris Smith, a documentary about a filmmaker’s comical attempts to fund the completion of his low-budget horror film.

Robert Bahar, producer and co-writer of *Made in L.A.* (2007), detailed the intricacies of a documentary film budget. This film chronicled three Latina immigrants working in sweatshops in L.A. who become part of a 3-year campaign to win basic labor protections from a major clothing retailer. Bahar explored the conundrum of making a budget without any idea of how much money can be raised (Bahar, 2006):

> While some filmmakers are lucky and persistent enough to raise the necessary funds before they begin, a vast number begin shooting and even editing while still fundraising. In these cases, you’ll probably need two budgets. The first budget should include ‘professional’ rates and will be the budget that you’ll submit to potential funders. The second should be the ‘bare bones’ budget that you’ll keep hidden in your desk drawer. This will be the absolute minimum amount of money needed to complete the project in a way that is acceptable to you. (p. 1)

Rebecca Cammisa, director of *Which Way Home* (2010), stressed the importance of creating a trailer (a film of a few minutes in length that conveys the gist of your project and makes viewers want to see the entire film) as soon as possible, or unedited footage, to show potential funders. “They need to see you have access to your subject and that you are capable of getting good footage,” she said (personal communication, March 3, 2011).

Hankin (2007) observed that in the documentary films *Sisters in Cinema* (2003) and *Women of Vision* (1998), women of varying filmmaking backgrounds addressed the fact that, “Although they are at a disadvantage in the economically driven film world, they are able to thrive and do important work in the realm of video” (Hankin, 2007, p. 81). Hankin also discussed the chal-
lenges of filmmaking, referring to directors’ financial struggles. Citing examples of hardships, Hankin alluded to Rose Troche, who, during the filming of *Go Fish* (1994), reached a point where she could not pay her phone and electric bills. *Go Fish* is a drama about a young lesbian’s quest for a significant relationship.

An activist film can be fodder for cynics who may ask how the film was funded. For example, copyright for *The Corporation* (2003) rested with “The Big Picture Media Corporation,” an irony not lost on the filmmakers. *The Corporation*’s co-director Jennifer Abbott said, “We’re not trying to say ‘we’re above it all,’ we’re all implicated. It’s very difficult not to be implicated in corporate culture in this world we live in” (O’Connor, 2004, p. 3). The film was funded through various public funding initiatives in Canada, meaning that 70-80 percent of the funding came from taxpayers (O’Connor, 2004).

When you are ready to pursue funding for your film beyond your community, you may want to start by visiting this resource site for tips and links: [http://docsinprogress.blogspot.com/2007/01/how-to-find-funding-for-your.html](http://docsinprogress.blogspot.com/2007/01/how-to-find-funding-for-your.html).

The following two examples provide a sense of the grants available once you have made some progress in your documentary filmmaking—definitely something to shoot for!

The Sundance Documentary Fund offers a continuum of support through the life of a project, from research to production and post-production, through to distribution and audience engagement. Twice a year, the Documentary Fund makes up to $1.5 million in grants to support U.S. and international documentary films focused on contemporary issues. Learn more at [http://webapp.sundance.org/docsource/about](http://webapp.sundance.org/docsource/about).

The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. The foundation’s Media, Culture, and Special Initiatives support public interest media, including public radio, documentary programming, and work to explore the use of digital technologies to reach and engage the public. Learn more at [http://www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org).
VI. MAKING PERSUASIVE DOCUMENTARY FILMS

A. Overview

Since their emergence early in the 20th century, governments and private organizations have used documentary film to convey their agendas, though not always adhering to truth or omitting crucial contexts. Simpson (2008) defined propaganda as “a means by which a communicator can move audiences toward political and social action” (Simpson, 2008, p. 103). Simpson’s research focused on two films from different eras: Triumph of the Will (1935) and Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004). Although there was debate as to whether Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 was propaganda, the instructional value of using Fahrenheit 9/11 and Triumph of the Will lay in the fact that they “deliberately aim to change the perceptions, beliefs, and behavior of their viewers in ways that furthered the objectives of both filmmakers” (Simpson, 2008, p. 104). However, in a message-saturated culture, media that attempt to persuade must stand out or become lost in the marketplace of ideas (Simpson, 2008).

When one documentary film is viewed as wielding influence, those opposed to its point of view may counteract. In May 2004, a public relations firm connected to the Republican Party formed a group called “Move America Forward” to pressure theater owners across the country not to show Fahrenheit 9/11 (Dahlgren, 2009). When the DVD was released in October 2004 and shown in some high school and college classrooms, a hurriedly released documentary exposé called FahrenHYPE 9/11 was released as a conservative counterweight to Moore’s accusations about the Bush administration (Dahlgren, 2009).

Koopman et al. (2006) conducted research from July to October 2004 to gauge pre- and post-viewing perceptions regarding the subject matter addressed in Fahrenheit 9/11 to assess the film’s impact on viewers. Post-film participants were more likely to see oil and global domination as reasons for the initiation of the Iraq war and less likely to endorse the Bush administration’s rationales. Post-film participants also viewed President Bush more negatively, reported less chance of voting for him in the upcoming election, and they felt angrier, more fearful, and sadder. Koopman et al. stated that the results of their research indicated that a documentary film can have “significant immediate effects in the direction intended by the film’s creators on political beliefs about war, voting intentions, and mood” (Koopman et al., 2006, pp. 139-140).

Koopman et al. (2006) noted that Fahrenheit 9/11 might provide a model of effective emotion-arousing strategies for filmmakers seeking to influence citizens’ views. Although filmmakers such as Michael Moore have been chastised for using emotion-arousing tactics, peace activists have endorsed the use of such tactics to try to counter the “much larger and socially sanctioned program of pro-war propaganda” such as found in the Pentagons’s publication Joint Vision 2020 (Koopman et al., 2006, p. 153). This document directs the U.S. military to pursue “information dominance” (as cited in Koopman et al., 2006, p. 153) that prevents parties with opposing viewpoints from influencing policy. Based on the box office success of Moore’s films, his directorial style to stir emotions is appealing to moviegoers, whose views on the issues addressed may or may not be changed.

Heuston (2005) argued that propaganda in documentary films was “more alive than ever” following the release of the Abu Ghraib prison abuse videos and the emergence of online terrorist video clips (Heuston, 2005, p. 60). Documentary films once were shown only in theaters but
now are shown in numerous venues including private homes via DVDs and downloads, reaching
greater numbers of viewers and thereby increasing their impact. Video footage that portrays
violent or degrading actions can be used as propaganda to turn public opinion against individu-
als or organizations perpetrating those actions or to erode the morale of viewers allied with the
victims of the violence (Heuston, 2005). For example, the murders of journalist Daniel Pearl in
2002 and contractor Nick Berg in 2004 were filmed with “the intent to produce terrorist propa-
ganda, and indeed with the intent to deliver terrorism to worldwide potential audiences in a
new way” (Heuston, 2005, p. 63).

Considering its associations with the Nazi party and other totalitarian regimes, it’s no surprise
that the term propaganda causes unease in most people. For the sake of background, as refe-
enced by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), Webster’s Dictionary defines propaganda as
(Public Broadcasting Service, 2003):

1. the systematic propagation of a doctrine or cause or of information reflecting the views
   and interests of those advocating such a doctrine or cause
2. material disseminated by the advocates or opponents of a doctrine or cause: wartime
   propaganda
3. propaganda — Roman Catholic Church. A division of the Roman Curia that has authority
   in the matter of preaching the gospel, of establishing the Church in non-Christian coun-
tries, and of administering Church missions in territories where there is no properly or-
organized hierarchy

The origin of the word comes from the third definition—specifically from the New Latin Sacra
Congregti d Prpagand Fid, or Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith which was estab-
lished 1622 to convert, or propagate, the faith. The Oxford Companion to American History’s
definition is “the deliberate attempt by the few to influence the beliefs and actions of the many
through the manipulation of ideas, facts, and lies” (Public Broadcasting Service, 2003).

This ILP author distinguishes propaganda as persuasive media driven solely by the objectives of
the political body or institution that produced or funded the work. Still, the negative connota-
tion of propaganda makes it a knee-jerk allegation against any persuasive work that is per-
ceived as one sided. Filmmakers who advocate for social change, animal protection, human
rights and other noble objectives may encounter criticism by viewers who are reacting out of
resistance or opposition—criticism that may include the defamatory propaganda slur.

Regardless of individual filmmakers’ beliefs and motives, those who seek to change minds and
spark action in line with their message may be considered activists. Harding, in The Video Activ-
ist Handbook, defined a video activist as “a person who uses video as a tactical tool to bring
about social justice and environmental protection” (as cited in Hankin, 2007, p. 62).

Hankin (2007) noted that The Video Activist Handbook’s examples of such activism include a
“local resident who occasionally uses her cousin’s camcorder to record community meetings,” a
“full-time campaigner who tries to sell footage of every protest to local television,” an “over-
seas aid worker who includes footage of a refugee camp with his monthly report,” and a “law-
yer who uses video evidence to help her clients get off false charges” (as cited in Hankin, 2007,
p. 62). Hankin described the commonality of these examples as the “notion that video activism
is a heroic measure implemented on the political frontlines” (Hankin, 2007, p. 62).
A discussion of film and activism is not complete without mentioning undercover video surveillance, an assertive form of Do It Yourself (DIY) activism that is typically enacted by one or two committed individuals, noted Munro (2005). According to Munro, the most famous case of undercover surveillance in the animal rights movement’s history was the 1981 exposé of animal experimenter Edward Taub by Alex Pacheco in Silver Spring, Maryland. Release of the incriminating film, which revealed experiments on surgically crippled monkeys, led to a police raid on the Institute of Behavioral Research. The raid was televised, giving maximum publicity to the animal rights movement (Munro, 2005).

Munro (2005) recalled another example of an effective release of undercover surveillance video that occurred in 1990 in England, when activists Mike Huskisson and Melody McDonald gained access to the laboratories of Professor Wilhelm Feldberg, and for 5 months they videotaped the 89-year-old researcher at work. The tapes revealed breaches of the 1986 Act concerning animal experimentation. A subsequent governmental inquiry confirmed Feldberg had broken the law by continuing with experiments he had been told to terminate. In Munro’s research paper, Huskisson recounted the impact of the video’s release (as cited in Munro, 2005):

We secured the film and within a day of showing it to the Home Office that experiment was ended. The man’s licence to experiment was taken away; the Medical Research Council had an investigation and if he’d been a younger man he’d have been prosecuted. That ended that experiment dead. (p. 89)

A generation ago, observed Arthur (2007), it was rare to see a film in which the director engaged in subjective voiceover commentary—and very unusual to see the director in the film as a key character. Due in part to the success of Michael Moore (director of Bowling for Columbine, 2002, and Fahrenheit 9/11, 2004) and Ross McElwee (director of Sherman’s March, 1986, and Time Indefinite, 1993), the filmmaker-as-protagonist approach is increasingly common (Arthur, 2007). For example, the documentary Super Size Me (2004) followed filmmaker Morgan Spurlock’s month-long experiment in fast food consumption, charting the rapid deterioration of his physical health. Made for $60,000, the film brought in $11 million at the domestic box office (Bailey, 2010).

In a scene from Super Size Me, in which Spurlock consumes his first “supersized” meal, Bailey (2010) recalled that the filmmaker’s technique of periodically blacking out the screen and reporting how much time has elapsed heightened the nauseating effect:

After twenty-two minutes of this increasingly torturous meal, Spurlock’s body finally rebels, causing him to vomit out the car’s window. The camera peers out the window to show us the regurgitated remains of the food, a shot which elicited loud groans from my fellow audience members ... our fascination turns into revulsion. (p. 445)

Throughout the course of the film, Spurlock willingly subjects his body to a number of mental, emotional, and physical changes. Rather than showing the transformation from fat to fit, as many makeover shows do, he allows his body to go from fit to fat. Perhaps intended to temper potential ridicule and censure toward Spurlock for what could be construed as egotistical self-abuse, viewers ultimately were informed that he returned to his original weight and health after a considerable amount of rehabilitative effort (Bailey, 2010).
Produced to counteract the successful *Super Size Me, Fat Head* (2009) featured comedian Tom Naughton’s dietary regimen that led to losing weight on a fat-laden fast-food diet “while demonstrating that nearly everything we’ve been told about obesity and healthy eating is wrong” (Fat Head, n.d., ¶ 2).

LaMarre and Landreville (2009) focused their research on how the emotions of guilt and disgust influence interest, learning, and engagement. They observed that documentary films are “capable of eliciting strong, gut-wrenching emotions in the audience, thereby increasing interest and knowledge about important issues” (LaMarre & Landreville, 2009, p. 550)—and that documentaries have the potential to strongly influence public opinion.

Whiteman (2009) wrote that the production and distribution of social-issue documentaries may have a wide range of significant impact on community organizations, educational institutions, citizens, and policymakers. As spotlighted in Whiteman’s research, Craig Gilmore, an activist with the California Prison Moratorium Project, used the documentary film *Yes In My Backyard* (1999) to train activists. This film explored the multi-layered dependence of one farming town on the prison industry. Gilmore observed that this documentary came out just before the state went into a severe budget crisis, so “suddenly state legislators listened very seriously” (as cited in Whiteman, 2009, p. 473) to arguments couched in a new framework about what the real costs of prisons were, and who was bearing those costs (Whiteman, 2009).

According to Whiteman (2009), the development and use of an issue-centered model to assess political impact is even more important now that “‘outreach’ has become the new essential element of social-issue documentary, in large part because of the interest of funders in increasing the likelihood that their investments in documentary production will have some effect on the world” (Whiteman, 2009, p. 459).

To assess impact of documentary film on policy outcomes, Protess and colleagues identified three types of impact: deliberative (“when policymakers hold formal discussions of policy problems and their solutions, such as legislative hearings or executive commissions”), individualistic (“when policymakers apply sanctions against particular persons or entities, including prosecutions, firings, and demotions”), and substantive (“regulatory, legislative, and/or administrative changes”) (as cited in Whiteman, 2009, p. 460).

From policymakers to theater audiences to students, documentary films represent potent catalysts of influence. Hess (2007) noted that documentary films are used in high school social studies classes more frequently than newspapers, magazines, or computers—and they can have a powerful impact on what students learn. Documentaries can be credited with “developing students’ empathy; enhancing their awareness of issues, events, and people that typically are not given much attention in textbooks; and influencing students’ views on controversial historic and contemporary issues” (Hess, 2007, p. 194).

According to research by Hess (2007), students do not approach documentary films as empty vessels—their prior knowledge, social positions, political ideologies, and a host of other factors influence the meanings they create. For example, one study found that high school history students do not recognize a film’s perspective unless they disagree with its message. That is, when the filmmaker’s point of view aligns with their own, they see no perspective—just truth. Many students and their teachers trust documentary films as valid sources of information and as authentic historical representations (Hess, 2007).
Marcus and Stoddard (2009) observed that high school students reported that documentary film was more accurate and trustworthy than the Internet, feature films, the government, and fellow students. Students viewed documentaries as trustworthy sources of information as compared to their textbooks and other classroom readings.

**B. Examples of Successful Films**

Historically, documentaries that have dealt with politics and nature have attracted the most interest—and box office ticket sales; the 10 highest grossing documentary films (as of April 9, 2011) are displayed in the table below (Box Office Mojo, 2011b).

**Top 10 Highest Grossing Documentary Films**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Director(s)</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Worldwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. March of the Penguins</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Luc Jacquet</td>
<td>$77,437,223</td>
<td>$127,392,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sicko</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Michael Moore</td>
<td>$24,540,079</td>
<td>$36,088,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. An Inconvenient Truth</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Davis Guggenheim</td>
<td>$24,146,161</td>
<td>$49,756,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Oceans</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Jacques Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud</td>
<td>$19,422,319</td>
<td>$82,548,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Madonna: Truth or Dare</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Alek Keshishian, Mark Aldo Miceli</td>
<td>$15,012,935</td>
<td>$29,012,935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Never Say Never was still in theaters in April 2011.

These films can loosely be grouped into three categories: socio-political, environmental, and celebrity personalities. In the socio-political realm, Michael Moore’s four films on this list (Fahrenheit 9/11, Sicko, Bowling for Columbine, Capitalism: A Love Story) stand out—all have human rights implications, considering that large numbers of people were at risk because of circumstances regarding the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, health care, gun control, and corporate greed, respectively. March of the Penguins, Earth, An Inconvenient Truth, and Oceans showcase the natural environment, alluding to existing pressures and threats that jeopardize aspects of the planet’s well-being; any one of them can spark concern and further inquiry regarding environmental sustainability, and what can be done to make a positive difference in the area of focus. The films about Justin Bieber and Madonna have drawn crowds based on the popularity of the celebrities’ music.

While the box office is one criterion for success, another is DVD sales and rentals. For instance, Netflix posts a list of its most popular documentaries. The following 6 of the Internet movie company’s all-time top 10 rentals are not among the top box office films: (#3) Super Size Me,
Beyond financial success, it is important to acknowledge documentary films for their effective societal impact—a definite measure of success; although these films may not appear on any top ten list, their impact is still significant. Among other examples highlighted in this ILP, one that is particularly relevant to humane education is the story of a 22-minute video that helped put a stop to an effort to build the biggest per capita juvenile detention facility in the United States. *Books Not Bars* documented the youth-led movement against the growth of the U.S. prison industry, with an emphasis on California. The video was geared toward youth of color, who are disproportionately victims of the human rights abuses shown in the video. As a result of two years of grassroot efforts by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, WITNESS, and other groups, the campaign successfully derailed the “Super Jail for Kids” proposal by Alameda County, California (Gregory et al., 2005, pp. 10-11). Further, the *Books Not Bars* video and companion lesson plans are being distributed to 300 libraries as part of National Video Resources and American Library Association’s Human Rights Video Project (WITNESS, n.d.).

The Oscar-winning *The Cove* (2009) exposed the annual dolphin captures and killings in Taiji, Japan. When asked what emotional effect the film had on viewers, director Louie Psihoyos said people stopped going to dolphin shows as a result of seeing it. He noted that the mayor of Taiji said the movie shut down the demand for dolphin meat by $6 or $7 million a year. “I think it’s going to be extremely hard for them to make a business of killing dolphins after this movie gets seen widely in Japan,” said Psihoyos, noting that so far only “a few tens of thousands” have seen it in Japan (Lange, 2011, pp. 35-36). He suggested that once the film goes to DVD it could reach millions of Japanese, which could lead to the end of dolphin slaughter there.

Success can also occur on a local level after a film is shown. Dorothy Fadiman’s documentary *Fix-it Shops: An Endangered Species* (1999) offered a behind-the-scenes look at small appliances being repaired at a shop in Menlo Park, California, instead of being thrown into landfills. After the film was shown, Fadiman heard that a fix-it shop nearby experienced a sudden increase in business. “Seeing small appliances, like their own, being fixed woke people up,” said Fadiman. “This is how it works when it works. Ideas that may have seemed abstract and somewhat removed become immediate and accessible” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, pp. 219-220).

**C. Establishing the Film’s Subject and Goals**

Deciding on the subject and goals of your film may be the most important point in the filmmaking process. This is when you establish the entire reason for your project. It must be something that is very close to your heart; you will need to stay motivated for months or years to keep your dream alive and see it through completion.

“Although a topic may obsess you for years, that obsession is not enough,” said filmmaker Alan Rosenthal. “You also have to ask yourself the question, ‘Is there a good story there?’ I really consider this to be vital. If you merely have material for a discussion, then you should be making current affairs talk shows” (Rosenthal, 2007, pp. 10-11).

Fadiman and Levelle advised aspiring filmmakers to not get caught up looking only for big ideas. “Intimate ideas are often the most universal. Some of the most engaging films are simply an up-close look at a single subject” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 7).
If you are having a hard time clarifying the subject for a documentary film, you might ask yourself the following questions that filmmaker Dorothy Fadiman offers when she gives workshops (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 6):

- What are some of the most dramatic moments you have lived through?
- Who are some of the most memorable people you have known?
- Where do you find the greatest beauty?
- What subjects fascinate you?
- What frightens you?
- What angers you?
- What worries you?
- What do you love to do?

In terms of your goals in making a film, these too are crucial to identify early on. Clarifying your goals will be essential in your efforts to seek funding and explain the film to your friends, family members, and collaborators. Your goals may include showing your film to particular audiences, sparking a debate about one or more issues covered in the film, inspiring viewers to take action. The goal of a film about animal protection, for example, may be to reduce the consumption of animal products—or to improve the conditions for animals by abolishing cruel practices such as veal crates, gestation crates, and battery cages. A human rights film might aim to improve prisoners’ conditions, or to abolish certain institutional punishments, such as the death penalty.

D. Research

Once your documentary film topic is established, you will want to dedicate some time to researching it thoroughly. Use the Internet, the library, the bookstore, the video store and/or a service like Netflix, and friends (and friends of friends) to gather information about what is already known about the issue(s) you have chosen to address. If there are books about your subject, be sure to buy or borrow several to gain varied perspectives. Determine whether one or more films have already been made on the same, or a similar topic—and watch them more diligently than you would normally watch a documentary film, including any extra features that may be included on the DVD. Your Internet searches may dig up articles that critique the existing films on the topic, which may call into question the veracity of certain points in the films. Keep in mind that your future audiences may have seen these precursory films and will be looking for new content and perspective, not only a fresh treatment of the issue(s).

Depending on your subject, your research may pertain to gaining access to individuals, organizations, and areas that would be helpful, if not essential, to your project. For example, when Dorothy Fadiman was researching for her film series Seeds of Hope, she wanted to find commercial sex workers in Ethiopia. The only way she could reach them and get interviews was through social workers in NGOs who had spent time building trust with them. After extensive, patient communication, Fadiman obtained interviews with sex workers, women who wanted to do whatever they could to prevent the spread of AIDS (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, pp. 32-33).

Fadiman and Levelle (2008, pp. 33-35) noted other strategies that filmmakers may want to consider in their research:
1. Collectors, fans, and hobbyists—in addition to experts—may provide valuable information and visuals that you might not have otherwise discovered.

2. Gatekeepers are individuals who may be necessary to go through to reach someone who is famous or protected; winning them over with your enthusiasm and project summary may be vital to reach your goal.

3. Build a contact database to manage the dozens, perhaps hundreds of contacts you will establish once you start your research. This database can be set up and maintained in a program like Excel or Word, unless you prefer index cards.

“Once you ‘pay the entry fee’ by doing your homework, reaching out to various communities, and organizing what you discover, you enhance the possibilities for connections between events and people. While some of these convergences may seem coincidental, others appear to be beyond chance. Many filmmakers feel they’ve entered a world of synchronicity. A string of uncanny coincidences may unfold as you shoot and edit your film. I experience this on every project” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 36).

E. Optimizing the Film’s Persuasive Potential

Starting out on your first documentary film is exciting but can be daunting. Making any kind of movie involves a learning curve, and making one that is persuasive adds another layer of challenges—but knowing that your film could make a difference in the lives of others is reason to proceed! Keep in mind that no matter how disturbing your film’s subject may be, making a film that engages, entertains, and informs your viewers is something to keep in mind, rather than solely portraying the enormity or tragedy of an issue that you are eager to document.

The Corporation (2003) is a good example of a film that is both highly informative and entertaining. Co-director Jennifer Abbott noted that this was one of the challenges from the outset: “Today when there’s more of an understanding that documentaries can be just as entertaining and engaging as narrative film, there’s more pressure to be that way” (O’Connor, 2004, p. 1).

Miceli, de Rosis, and Poggi (2006) recalled Aristotle’s argument that persuasion relies on the interplay of three basic ingredients: the speaker’s credibility and trustworthiness—especially the speaker’s moral character (ethos), a logical and well-reasoned argument (logos), and the feelings of the audience (pathos). “Aristotle’s framework supports what most people suspect intuitively—that effective persuasion often appeals to both the informational and the emotional sides” (Miceli et al., 2006, p. 855).

Miceli et al. (2006) noted that emotional persuasion is often considered as synonymous of irrational persuasion, but the authors opposed such a view, dissecting the concept of emotional persuasion in the process. They identified two general modes of emotional persuasion: persuasion through actual arousal of emotions and persuasion through appeal to expected emotions. Miceli et al. (2006) explained their view as follows:

The appeal to expected emotions can be perfectly rational, as long as rational implies the correct processing of the information available, the derivability of conclusions from premises, and the production of plausible means-ends relationships. An appeal to expected emotions is structurally indistinguishable from any other argument from consequences or, in our terms, intention generation by acting on pre-existing goals. In the appeal to ex-
In their study examining attitudes toward tourism and climate change, McKercher, Prideaux, Cheung, and Law (2010) suggested that changing consumer behavior may represent the greatest challenge in reducing tourism’s carbon footprint in the short-to-medium term, compared to legislation that forces industry to comply. Participation in carbon-offset programs, for example, may represent a start, but “low awareness, low take-up rates and real concerns about the efficacy of such programs may render such programs of little more value than assuaging guilt feelings” (McKercher et al., 2010, p. 313). The authors argued that most recycling, cited as another example of consumer behavior, is commendable but involves little real behavior modification—and it fails to address the more profound issue of over-consumption.

According to McKercher et al. (2010), resistance to change in tourist behavior must be placed within a larger context of an “overall thicket of unsustainability that most of the developed world finds itself in and overall resistance to making needed changes” (McKercher et al., 2010, p. 313). The authors noted that invoking change would require a range of actions to educate consumers, to increase awareness, and to convince people that their own actions are meaningful. In their conclusions, the authors noted that some tourists realize they are part of the problem, but very few engage in actions that make them part of the solution (McKercher et al., 2010).

According to research by Whitmarsh (2008), direct experience (i.e., “interaction with attitude object,” such as an industrial dairy’s impact on the quality of life and property values of nearby residents) is more likely than indirect experience to result in “stronger, more confident, clearly focused and persistent attitudes, and in attitude-behavior consistency. Experience may also motivate people to seek further information to improve their understanding and inform their future responses” (Whitmarsh, 2008, p. 354). Further, the author observed that air pollution victims have higher pro-environmental values, and research respondents with these values were significantly more likely to consider climate change a salient risk issue and to take action in response to it (Whitmarsh, 2008).

When asked about their actions out of concern for climate change, those affected by air pollution were significantly more likely to believe the issue can be tackled by action on an individual and societal level. When asked how it could be tackled, this group was more likely to cite international action. A higher proportion of those affected by air pollution stressed a need for more action by government, industry and wider society, but also accepted personal responsibility for climate change (Whitmarsh, 2008). These findings may extrapolate to documentary films: the more closely viewers identify with the issues addressed, the more likely they are to respond with vigor to the filmmaker’s message.

Research by Maiteny (2002) noted that when people encounter information that challenges their role in unsustainable environmental practices, thereby producing anxiety, they respond in three main ways. They may experience an unconscious denial in which case individuals stave off the anxiety by seeking gratification through continued, and perhaps increased, material acquisition and consumption. Another, more conscientious consumer response is to “do your bit” by shopping in what is perceived to be a more selective, ethical way—changing the form of consumption rather than reducing the amount that is consumed.

A third group experiences a heightened conscience and often a feeling of “connectedness”
within the wider context of ecological and social processes. They are convinced that the “snowball effects” of unsustainable behavior can only be stemmed if each person takes responsibility for changing themselves and their lifestyles. This group is most likely to not only modify their own behavior, but also to take on the task of “stimulating awareness and change in others” (Maiteny, 2002, p. 300). A documentary filmmaker seeking to influence viewers may benefit from this perspective.

Research by Reinhard, Messner, and Ludwig Sporer (2006) coupled persuasive intent in messages with the attractiveness of the spokespersons. They observed that in most persuasive messages, speakers did not explicitly convey their intention to persuade. However, their results suggested that when the spokespersons used in an advertising campaign were physically attractive or otherwise likeable, the campaign might be made more effective if the spokespersons express their intentions to persuade. Celebrities are selected for advertising campaigns not only to create attention based on their popularity, but also because of their attractive and likeable qualities (Reinhard et al., 2006).

Experiments by Reinhard et al. (2006) strongly supported the assumption that making explicit the interest in persuading consumers can sometimes increase the effectiveness of advertising efforts rather than decreasing it. “For unattractive or dislikeable persons, making explicit their desire to persuade seems to be a liability. Attractive or likeable sources, however, can profit from making explicit their persuasive intent” (Reinhard et al., 2006, p. 257).

In a scenario examined by Reinhard et al. (2006), a likeable salesperson elicited a more positive attitude when she disclosed her desire to influence than when she did not, whereas the dislikeable salesperson elicited a less positive attitude in the former condition than in the latter.

The research by Reinhard et al. may inform a filmmaker’s decisions in the scope of selecting individuals in a production when a choice is possible. Audiences may be more responsive to a message conveyed overtly by someone they deem to be attractive/likable, more so than someone of opposite characteristics. But often there is no choice—documentaries tend to include interviews with and filming of key individuals who are integral to the story being told, regardless of their looks or demeanor.

One kind of persuasive documentary film is an advocacy film, which is typically made to agitate and mobilize like-minded audiences to take a specific set of actions. In contrast, films designed to inform and provoke alert a broader audience to a problematic issue; the filmmaker may choose to reframe a problem so that it connects to a wider set of values (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009).

“These films are often deliberately designed to speak across existing lines of political difference and to go ‘beyond the choir,’” wrote Nisbet and Aufderheide. “They are open-ended in their expectations while still vested in shaping public conversation and action. They provide tools that make it easier for people to become active citizens, to engage with people who may not already agree with them, and to define with others what collective actions they want to take” (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009, p. 454).

Whether or not a documentary film affects change is not easy to measure. A feature-length documentary may be profitable at the box office, but that doesn’t necessarily correlate to viewers changing their behavior and/or supporting the film’s cause with their money or time. Thousands may view a documentary on the Internet, but its societal impact remains challenging to quantify,
although there are cases that illustrate the impact of certain documentary films. Documentary film, despite its growing influence and many impacts, has mostly been overlooked by social scientists studying the media and communication (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009).

Davis Guggenheim recalled his Oscar-winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), in terms of its impact. “There is this immeasurable thing, which is that people’s behavior changed,” he said. “Movies do not write policy, but they have a very potent ability to inspire and inform, and I know *Inconvenient Truth* inspired and informed millions” (Puente, 2010a, p. 1d).

Patricia Aufderheide, a documentary film historian, said it is possible to name documentary films that “have had a real-life, real-time effect in the world” (Puente, 2010a, p. 1d). Errol Morris’ *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), for example, helped overturn the conviction and death sentence of a man wrongfully convicted in the 1970s of killing a police officer. *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007), a documentary about U.S. use of torture in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay, made less than $275,000, but the film is being used as a teaching tool at the Army Judge Advocate General (JAG) school, according to its director Alex Gibney. *Lioness* (2008), about the first American female soldiers to be sent into combat, sparked legislation to help them gain access to veterans’ health benefits (Puente, 2010a).

The animal protection-focused *Earthlings* (2005), directed by Shaun Monson, has been viewed more than 526,000 times on YouTube, as of April 10, 2011. Although that represents approximately 1 percent of the views of the site’s all-time most popular video (a Justin Bieber music video of his song called *Baby*), it is a significant number considering *Earthlings*’ 95-minute length and disturbing content (MacManus, 2011). The film chronicles the practices of the some of the largest industries in the world in terms of their complicity in the exploitation, abuse, and killing of animals. *Earthlings* has likely influenced many viewers to take action (e.g., adopt a vegan diet, volunteer for causes that protect animals, and/or donate to relevant causes), but this ILP author is not aware of any scientific studies tracking the film’s impacts.

Initially bolstered largely by the fame of its narrator, actor Joaquin Phoenix, the film later received high-profile endorsements from Ellen DeGeneres, host of the TV show *Ellen*, and Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation*.

“I have to tell you, *Earthlings* is hard to watch,” said DeGeneres. “It took me a while, but I finally forced myself to watch it because I wanted to educate myself instead of being ignorant to the reality of it. What I learned is ignorance is not bliss. Ignorance is ignorance” (Ellen.warnerbros.com, 2010).

“If I could make everyone in the world see one film, I’d make them see *Earthlings*,” said Singer. Phoenix remarked, “Of all the films I have ever made, this is the one that gets people talking the most. For every one person who sees *Earthlings*, they will tell three” (Earthlings.com, n.d.).

Frederick Wiseman, director of *Domestic Violence* (2001), has consistently focused his works on topics pertaining to power, coercion, dehumanization, and the ways people help and victimize each other and themselves. *Domestic Violence* explores the inner workings of The Spring, a battered-spouse shelter in Tampa, Florida. Wiseman is often described as a social critic, though his films are rarely heavy-handed or one-sided, preferring to delve into the ambiguous, the inexplicable, and the absurd—which without forcing a point of view, leaving the subject matter open to multiple interpretations (Walker, 2007).
Wiseman’s trademark approach is to film scenes—and the entire film—without narration or subtitles. “When the technique works, it works because the viewer is brought into the situation, feels in some way present, and has to make up his own mind about the significance of what he’s seeing,” said Wiseman (Walker, 2007, p. 52).

While there are numerous examples of food-focused documentaries with generous narration, one made in the Wiseman style was Our Daily Bread (2005), directed by Nikolaus Geyrhalter. This “fly on the factory wall” documentary observes the industrial food system to the rhythm of conveyor belts and immense machines, without one line of narration. Machines shake fruits from their branches and eviscerate animals—with minimal, disinterested worker intervention.

A recent example of a film in which narration may have been excessive, at least in the view of one critic, is Sharkwater (2006), in which filmmaker Rob Stewart debunks stereotypes and demonic depictions of sharks as human-eating monsters and conversely portrays sharks as pillars in the evolution of the seas. Teaming with activist Paul Watson, Stewart takes on shark poachers in Central America, leading to open-sea chases and judicial contests to expose and challenge the big money in shark fins—a delicacy in China popular for its perceived medicinal powers.

“There’s no questioning wildlife photographer and biologist Rob Stewart’s passionate commitment, but he’s also the principal problem,” said film critic David Rooney. “His droning monotone, his often prosaic observations and tendency toward self-aggrandizement (every second sentence of the narration starts with ‘I’), he’s an irritating distraction from the main attraction. Stewart just needs to reorganize his information and to step back and shift the focus from himself to his fascinating subject” (Rooney, 2006, p. 65).

A New York Times writer also critiqued Sharkwater for focusing too much on Rob Stewart’s personal journey, but noted that “the issues here are so dire that you can hardly fault Mr. Stewart for trying to sell his clarion call by any means necessary” (Zoller Seitz, 2007, ¶ 10). Conversely, one reader’s comment below this on-line review of Sharkwater said, “The handsome filmmaker keeps things positive and action-oriented so that you end up feeling energized despite the depressing subject matter” (Zoller Seitz, 2007, readers’ reviews #1). Another commenting reader said he had been completely unaware that sharks were being wiped out and at risk of extinction, and that the film inspired him to join the Ocean Conservancy.

The Corporation was meant to be motivational from the start. “Our promotional material for the film, for example, the first line of it is ‘a call to action,’” said co-director Jennifer Abbott. “If you want to inspire film to create change then obviously you can’t just heap despair on their shoulders and expect them to walk out of the theatres and do anything” (O’Connor, 2004, p. 2).

Filmmakers James LaVeck and Jennie Stein founded the nonprofit Tribe of Heart in 1997 with the intention of producing compassion-based documentaries. In one of their films, The Witness, a contractor named Eddie Lama transforms from being a meat eater to becoming a vegetarian and an activist in opposition of the fur industry. Viewers learn of his journey from a macho tough guy to real “manhood” after an unexpected bonding with a kitten opens his heart to feel compassion for all animals, especially furbearing ones. In addition to telling Lama’s story, the film includes graphic footage of animals’ suffering, including anal electrocution, which is one method used to kill the animal without marring the fur.
“We all know how difficult it is to change anything about ourselves, and many of us feel that it’s impossible to deeply change,” said LaVeck. “But when we look at somebody like Eddie and realize the almost incomprehensible changes he went through to become the person he is today, it becomes easier to imagine ourselves taking a step or two toward a more compassionate way of life” (Fisher, L., n.d., response to question #3, ¶ 3).

“I think that when people see something that appeals to their aesthetic sensibility they relax,” said Stein, reflecting on how influential the film Schindler’s List was on her and LaVeck. “They trust the person who is taking them on this journey because they feel that there is a greater whole that will be revealed to them in the process” (Fisher, L., n.d., response to question #5, ¶ 1).

It is common for documentary filmmakers to bolster the impact of their films with supplemental elements that appear on the film’s Web site and/or as special features on the DVD. This illustrates how a film often represents one of several pieces of a campaign to raise awareness and spark action.

When the Fahrenheit 9/11 DVD was released in October 2004 and shown in some high school and college classrooms, director Michael Moore posted a 54-page “Teacher’s Guide” for using the film in high school and college classrooms on his Web site (Dahlgren, 2009).

The documentary Sharkwater (2006) includes a “Shark Education” section on its Web site, and links to a companion blog, a Facebook page, and a MySpace page. There are also buttons on the home page to allow visitors to make a pledge to protect sharks, donate money, and volunteer for the cause. See http://www.sharkwater.com.

Visitors to the site for the documentary Gasland (2010) connect with different ways to get involved, including holding a screening in their community and contacting their representatives in Congress. The film, directed by Josh Fox, exposes how the Halliburton-developed drilling technology of “fracking” or hydraulic fracturing has unlocked a “Saudi Arabia of natural gas” just beneath us. See http://www.gaslandthemovie.com.

Burma VJ (2008), directed by Anders Østergaard, offers a unique insight into high-risk journalism and dissidence in a police state, while documenting the dramatic days of September 2007, when Buddhist monks started marching to protest the dictatorship’s suppression of human rights. Visitors to the film’s Web site have access to ways to get involved in the cause, including signing a petition to free prisoners, give money, and spread the message. See http://burmavjmovie.com.

Bruni Burres, former director of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, was asked what ingredients make for an effective human rights film. “The necessary ingredients are the same as they are for any great film—great story, enthralling character, cinematically riveting,” said Burres. “It has to be engaging and take the viewer to a new place. It has to be visually precise—that’s the joint responsibility of the cinematographer, the director and the editor ... In a good film, every element is working together—dramatically, aesthetically, morally” (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2008, Burres’s response to question #3, ¶ 2).

F. Storytelling

Regardless of the genre of film, there’s nothing like a good story to capture viewers’ interest. People tend to be affected emotionally by the stories of individuals, more so than information or visuals that may be shocking, disturbing, or in some other way notable. When this ILP author
asked several documentary directors if they had tips for beginning filmmakers, they emphasized 
good storytelling more than any particular technical strategy. (See section J in this chapter.)

*Waiting for Superman* (2010) directed by Davis Guggenheim, was one of several recent films 
released with the aim of spurring viewers to action in hopes of improving the U.S. educational 
system. *Superman* followed five families’ efforts to place their children in better schools, which 
was ultimately decided by lotteries or financial means. Lesley Chilcott, one of the film’s produc-
ers, described the film as “heartbreaking entertainment” (Puente, 2010a).

“A documentary, no matter how comprehensive, is not a dissertation on the screen,” said Chil-
cott. “It has to be an entertaining story. The backbone (of *Superman*) is the animation, charts 
and graphs, but the heart is these five families trying to get into the one good school available 
to them” (Puente, 2010a).

As stressed earlier, the story in your film must be lodged in your passion for it—otherwise you 
may not have the necessary motivation to continue and finish the film. Once you have a story 
and have started filming, identify what aspects of the story you find the most powerful and 
convincing, regardless of where they fall in the chronological order.

“If you can’t stop thinking about a particular scene, then even if it’s going to come in the middle 
of your movie, start with it anyway,” said Jilann Spitzmiller, co-director of *Homeland* (2000), 
which examines four Native American tribes and their hardships in trying to protect their land 
and culture. “Since it has a certain resonance for you, it may be a key scene in the film that 
helps set a tone, or gives crucial character information, or gives you certain insights into the in-
herent rhythm of the film” (Spitzmiller, n.d., ¶ 5).

Spitzmiller pointed out that, when filmmakers are stuck in their storytelling, they might benefit 
by referring back to the basic tenets of dramatic storytelling. The diversion may include pulling 
out the Dramatic Curve\(^7\) diagram or picking up a good book on basic screenwriting. “Even when 
telling a true story, you can still use the basic three-act structure rules to help you shape the 
most compelling film possible” (Spitzmiller, n.d., ¶ 7).

“If there is one thing that all great presenters share, it is the ability to tell authentic stories,” 
said Jean Hamilton, CEO of Speaking Results and a coach and trainer on presentation skills.
“When you share a story with an audience, you open up their minds, their imaginations and 
their hearts—and as a result, the audience becomes more receptive to your message” (Hamil-
ton, 2011, p. M5). Although her observations pertained to presentations at meetings, the same 
premise applies to documentary films, which are presentations of a sort.

“By becoming emotionally invested in the story, we become actively engaged,” said Hamilton.
“If you want your audience to remember your speech and take action, tell stories. Perhaps this 
is because our brains are hardwired to remember stories better than we retain facts” (Hamil-

\(^7\) Plotting a novel should follow a *dramatic curve* with ascending levels of minor climaxes before the final story cli-
max. (Retrieved March 6, 2011, from [http://ticket2write.tripod.com/id27.html](http://ticket2write.tripod.com/id27.html))
Hamilton’s tips on effective storytelling include (Hamilton, pp. M7-M8):

1. Telling specific personal experiences has far more impact than generalities (for example, rather than alluding to health problems of anonymous individuals related to a chemical in household products, showcase one individual’s encounter with the chemical).

2. To find your own compelling stories (which could be highlighted in a film) think about key events in your life that involved some degree of conflict and learning. Such events may not be big, dramatic stories—even small moments may serve as powerful illumination points in telling a story.

3. Say less and show more (for example, during an on-camera interview with someone who is suddenly saddened, causing a pause before continuing to speak, retain the pause rather than cut it in the editing, thereby enhancing the emotional impact).

4. Tell the story based on its most powerful elements. Many people make the mistake of thinking they need to tell everything that happened, and in the exact order. But not all life details are interesting, so just stick to the highlights.

After you have established your story and feel you have some good footage, invite your friends for a showing of your cuts. This is the time to seek their honest feedback, which can be very helpful to gauge the strength of the story, whether to modify your approach, and possibly fill in some gaps that had so far eluded you.

“This will show you very quickly where the holes are in your story, where things are too repetitive, and will help you identify what is working well,” said Spitzmiller. “But remember, viewing stories on film is a highly individual experience, and each person will have opinions that you can incorporate or discard. In the end, it’s important to rely on your own gut feelings and tell the story that is truest for you” (Spitzmiller, n.d., ¶ 8).

G. Interviewing

Interviewing will most likely be part of your filmmaking process, although there are many documentary films that include no interviews. For instance, cinéma vérité, also known as Direct Cinema, typically incorporates handheld cameras to record events in as uncensored a way as possible, revealing little or no evidence of the filmmaker’s presence. But the more common approach is to include interviews.

If at all possible, depending on the willingness of your subject and your budget (if travel is involved), you will want to interview people in person, on camera. However, if meeting with your subject in person is not possible, you may want to consider a Skype video call, if that is acceptable to your subject. Skype is free to use (once you have downloaded it on your computer), but you will need additional software to record your video calls. Two options to consider are http://www.vodburner.com and http://www.imcapture.com.

In the case of in-person interviews, contact your subject and attempt to schedule an interview, explaining your project and noting that a release will need to be signed. Samples of several types of releases can be accessed here and then modified for your purposes: http://www.videouniversity.com/articles/releases-for-use-in-film-and-video. Research your subject as much as possible so you’ll be more likely to ask about things that are not already in print or other media—unless your point is to simply document for yourself the person speaking
about certain matters as she or he has done in other interviews. Prepare a list of questions, even though you may not use them all, and the interview itself may spark questions you’d not considered. In the spirit of establishing trust, you may choose to start with a more general question that is relevant to your film, following with your prepared questions if an extemporaneous conversation does not feel as if it’s proceeding adequately.

Protocol is like any other important meeting in your life. Be certain about the time and place for the interview and allow extra time to make sure you are prompt. You will need up to an hour to determine the interview spot and set up your equipment once you arrive. If you have a choice of location, you may want to suggest a place that reflects the individual’s environment or experience relevant to your film. On the other hand, your subject’s home or workplace is often the best location. There she or he is already comfortable, and you may notice things that trigger questions and responses you had not imagined. It’s possible that the interview will reveal interesting references to nearby locations. You will want to be tuned in to whether it might be worthwhile to suggest going to a second and even a third location if more filming and interviewing could strengthen your film. Unless the immediate environment of the subject is integral to her or his role in the context of your film, a simpler background will make your subject stand out more than anything else in view. Some filmmakers make a point of filming all their interviews for a film with the same background. In *The Corporation* (2003), for example, subjects are filmed consistently against a solid black backdrop.

Agree on the approximate length of the interview in advance, and unless your subject initiates and offer to spend more time with you, bring the interview to a close within the allotted time period. Thank your subject profusely; if your subject has a very positive experience with you, she or he may contact you later to disclose additional information that will enhance your film. You may wish to send “thank you” notes as well.

Check your equipment carefully before going to interview anyone. Make sure your camera is working, with fully charged batteries, and your lights are functioning in case you find your subject in a dim room without a brighter alternative nearby. Another critical item is the microphone—whatever kind you are using, check to ensure it’s operational. Bring digital recording tapes, more than you think you will need, or the appropriate memory card. If possible, bring an assistant (or several) to help with camera work, lighting, sound, and troubleshooting.

In making *Inside Job* (2010), Charles Ferguson filmed the individuals while he asked questions off camera. Because of his extensive research and years of political experience, he was able to challenge his subjects if he felt their response false or inadequate. However, he strived to remain “unemotional, cool, and logical because I wanted to get at the facts,” he said. “I didn’t want the interviews to devolve into screaming matches. I wanted to make sure that I actually got answers from these people, or, if they weren’t going to answer, that I pressed them to the point where they had to refuse to answer” (Crowdus, 2010, p. 43).

“Filmmaking is and should be a negotiation between the filmmaker and his/her subject,” said Shohini Ghosh, director of *Tales of the Nightfairies*, a 2002 documentary. “The relationship between the filmmaker (the one who represents) and the subjects (those represented) is so inherently unequal that one must endlessly struggle to acknowledge and address this issue as there is no way to resolve it. Most importantly, this struggle should bear its imprint on the film” (Ghosh, 2006, p. 342). *Tales of the Night Fairies* examines the struggles of several women be-
longing to a collective of about 60,000 sex workers in West Bengal, India, who united to fight for their legal and social rights.

“I usually enter people’s lives at a time of crisis. If the tables were turned, God forbid,” said Joe Berlinger, director of *Crude* (2009), which documents a lawsuit by tens of thousands of Ecuadorans against Chevron over contamination of the Ecuadorean Amazon. “I would never allow them to make a film about my tragedy. I am keenly aware of the hypocrisy of asking someone for access that I myself would probably not grant” (Aufderheide, Jaszi, & Chandra, 2009, p. 7).

“They let you be there as their life unfolds, and that carries with it a responsibility to try to anticipate how the audience will see them, and at times to protect them when necessary,” said Steven Ascher, director of *So Much So Fast* (2006), a documentary about the events that unfold after a man discovers he has Lou Gehrig’s disease and his brother becomes obsessed with finding a cure (Aufderheide et al., 2009).

How to approach your interviewing and your overall story sometimes may raise ethical decisions. Aufderheide et al. (2009) conducted research probing the ethical challenges that documentary filmmakers identify in the practice of their craft. Their report, *Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work*, summarizes the results of 45 interviews in which filmmakers were asked simply to describe recent ethical challenges that surfaced in their work. The full report can be accessed at [http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/making-your-media-matter/documents/best-practices/honest-truths-documentary-filmmakers-ethical-chall](http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/making-your-media-matter/documents/best-practices/honest-truths-documentary-filmmakers-ethical-chall).

H. Legal Matters

In late 2010 a Los Angeles judge awarded $200,000 in attorneys fees and costs as punishment for filing a defamation lawsuit against the filmmakers behind *Bananas!* a 2009 documentary that claimed the food giant Dole exposed workers in Nicaragua to harmful pesticides. *Bananas!* investigates a 2008 lawsuit against Dole by Nicaraguan workers who claimed that exposure to DBCP pesticides made them sterile. After the film was completed, it was revealed that the lawsuit was based in part on fraudulent information. But the filmmakers proceeded to screen the film. Dole sued, claiming defamation, but dropped the case in October 2009 amid public backlash. The judge granted the filmmakers’ motion under California’s anti-SLAPP law, which “protects against lawsuits intended to stifle debate on topics of public importance” (Belloni, 2010).

The above legal case ended happily for the filmmakers, but sometimes the filmmakers are the ones who must contend with threats or costly legal judgments. A scientist interviewed in *The Cove* (2009) is suing the film’s Japanese distributor, demanding the footage be deleted and 11 million yen ($131,000) in damages be paid to him for tarnishing his reputation. He claimed he didn’t know the film was about dolphin hunting and that his comments were taken out of context. The director, Louie Psihoyos, said he believes the suit is a result of the pressure of the Japanese government on the scientist, who is famous for his findings of dolphin toxicity. “But we released the full transcript,” said Psihoyos. “He said what he said when he said it. In fact, the original transcripts are a lot more damning than were actually used in the movie” (Lange, 2011, p. 36). The lawsuit was still pending in March 2011.
Legal entanglements pertaining to films can extend beyond their initial screenings and the filmmakers themselves. For example, when the South Austin, Texas, store Ten Thousand Villages advertised that *The Price of Sugar* (2007) would be shown at Austin’s first Fair Trade Film Festival, the store received a letter from a law firm representing a family criticized in the documentary. It threatened to sue for defamation if they showed the film. A board member for the nonprofit store, part of a national chain, quickly learned that similar letters had been sent out for the past 3 years to anyone who advertised an upcoming screening of the documentary. *The Price of Sugar*, directed by Bill Haney, examines the brutal conditions of dispossessed Haitian laborers in the Dominican Republic, and raises questions about where consumer items like sugar originate—and at what human cost they are produced (Johnston, 2010). Ten Thousand Villages dropped the film from its festival rather than risk a costly legal battle.

Once you commit to making a documentary film, you will want to take precautions to ensure that your film does not violate any copyrights or other legal restrictions. Chances are that most of your film will consist of original material, but you may choose to include music, photographs, or archival footage that you do not own. It’s important to obtain these enhancements legally, or you may pay dearly later in the form of a lawsuit. Conversely, you will want to copyright your completed film so that no one can use any portion of it without your permission.

You will need to prepare releases to be signed by the people in your film. Different types of releases include general (non-actors, typically interview subjects), talent (professional actors), minor (to be signed by a parent or legal guardian of a minor—typically under 18, but check your state’s law), materials (protected photographs, video, film or other media), and location (when shooting on private property other than your own). Samples of these releases can be accessed here and then modified for your purposes: [http://www.videouniversity.com/articles/releases-for-use-in-film-and-video](http://www.videouniversity.com/articles/releases-for-use-in-film-and-video).

Like most legal matters, the issues are complex and explanations lengthy. For starters, the concept of *Fair Use* is important to understand, as described on the Web site of the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford Law School (The Center for Internet and Society, 2007):

Fair Use is critical to documentary film because that medium explores and discusses important social, cultural and historical issues. It is often impossible to discuss these issues effectively without reference to the historical material that illustrates, depicts and documents them. A tremendous amount of that material is under copyright. Accordingly, copyright can present a very significant barrier to the creation of many documentary films.

While documentary filmmakers may be able to solve this problem by obtaining permission to use copyrighted material from the copyright owner, this solution is imperfect and often ineffective. First, copyright owners often demand licensing fees that are prohibitively expensive relative to the documentary film budget. Second, the problem is exacerbated where the subject of the film requires extensive use of copyrighted clips due not only to total cost, but the time, effort and expense of tracking down owners and asking for permission in the first place. Finally, copyright owners may refuse permission altogether. (response to question #1, ¶¶ 1-2)

The Documentary Film Program at Stanford University provides filmmakers with information about fair use, access to insurance for liability arising out of copyright litigation, and access to lawyers who will defend copyright claims pro bono or at reduced rates. The program’s Web
site, which features descriptions and trailers of selected documentary films, is http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/projects/documentary-film-program.

Additional legal concerns include libel and slander. Both pertain to an individual’s reputation in the eyes of the common person; libel refers to what is written or filmed, while slander connotes a spoken defamation. The applicable laws vary from state to state, but the penalties for defaming a person or an organization can be severe. “This means that you must take care, particularly if you do investigatory documentaries,” said Rosenthal (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 391).

Ken Basin, an entertainment attorney, posted descriptions of key legal issues relevant to documentary filmmakers (Basin, 2010). The issues, with Basin’s added quips, include:

1. Fair Use: Your Two Favorite Words in the English Language.
2. Copyright Clearance: Yes, You Have to Pay for That. And That. And That.
3. Defamation and Trade Libel: Just Because You’re Right Doesn’t Mean You Can Afford to Prove It.
5. Contracts and Accounting: Because In Hollywood, 2 + 2 = -5.

Read the descriptions of these issues at http://www.lawlawlandblog.com/2010/08/five_legal_issues_every_docume.html.

Regarding the legal implications of video downloads, should you post your documentary to the Internet, please see chapter VII, section D.

I. Safety Concerns

Documentary films that advocate for solutions to problems can be more challenging to make than film treatments of innocuous topics. For instance, imagine making a movie about an eccentric street performer, versus making one about underage prostitution fueled by human trafficking—both in your community. Clearly, the latter will involve more risk, effort, and possible resistance than the former. The street artist film could be fascinating and well received, yet the prostitution film could reveal an underreported problem and inspire citizen involvement, even solutions. Changing the world, or at least a piece of it, is always a worthwhile reason to get started on a documentary film ... just be careful.

Caring for the safety of yourself and others on your crew is critical. You will want to consider the situation and take any necessary precautions before you embark on a shoot. In pursuing stories and locations involving violations against animals, humans, and the environment, the degree to which you access the scene of the abuse and exploitation may directly transfer to the power of your documentary. Deciding how far to push to gain extraordinary access is a matter of your judgment, but if you are making decisions affecting others, you will want to be sure to explain any possible risks to them—it’s possible that others will not share your threshold of risk and will opt out of some outings.

Most documentary filmmakers experience few safety issues and come away unscathed from their location shoots. However, there have been tragic endings. In 2009 French documentary filmmaker Christian Poveda was murdered while working on a film in El Salvador. Poveda’s final project took an intimate look at the violent lives of gang members deported back to the Central American country after serving time in U.S. prisons (Aleman, 2009).
James Miller, a British filmmaker, was shot and killed by Israel soldiers in 2003 while working on a documentary in the Gaza Strip. Miller had gone to the troubled region to film children on both sides of the conflict (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2006).

Filmmaker Erica Soehngen, who has worked in war-torn countries on numerous occasions, was asked if she ever gets scared when she’s in the field. “Wading through six inches of human waste in the sewers, or being shot at on a rooftop in Mogadishu, I can’t afford to worry right then about what might happen to me,” said Soehngen. “I have to be in the moment to do my job. But, yes, I do sometimes feel fear. And I think that’s a good thing—it keeps me aware in situations where I may not fully understand the cultural language. I don’t want fear to hold me back, but at the same time I have to feel comfortable with what I’m doing. It’s a balance” (Bond & Frank, 2005, response to question #3).

Soehngen filmed *Dangerous Journey* (2005) in Afghanistan. The film examines the problem of rampant high-risk pregnancies largely through the eyes of an Afghan woman (Sedika Mojadidi) as she travels back to Afghanistan to follow the work of her father, a Nobel-nominated OB/GYN. Regarding her security, Soehngen had this to say (Bond & Frank, 2005):

> It comes down to trusting the people you’re working with. Sedika and her father speak the language and know the country. I trust them to make reasoned, informed decisions, and know they both have good instincts about what’s okay and what’s not okay. A camera can gain you entry into an amazing variety of new worlds, but often you don’t understand the parameters of the culture or place, so it’s important to find people who do. (response to question #10)

The human rights group WITNESS devoted more than 50 pages to safety and security in its book *Video for Change*, a “step-by-step guide to the handicam revolution,” geared mainly for fieldwork in challenging locations. A few of the myriad tips in this chapter include giving copies of the most important materials you have shot to friends in a safe house; being sure key allies know where you are, when, so they can follow up if you don’t return when expected; developing a happy disposition—this helps take out the fear in you and makes you easily accepted by others; and being culturally sensitive, especially in indigenous peoples’ communities (Gregory et al., 2005, pp. 68-72). *Video for Change* is a fascinating resource regardless of your aspirations as a documentary filmmaker (see Appendix B).

Insurance is another matter independent filmmakers need to take seriously once they start to build a crew. Be sure you’re covered in the event of personal injury or equipment damage or loss. Nearly every state requires production companies/filmmakers to carry some form of insurance. For example, you’ll want to look into workers’ compensation, a no-fault system that provides replacement income and covers the medical expenses of cast and crew who are injured on the job. For more information on insurance, see [http://www.independent-magazine.org/magazine/07/2009/filmmakerinsurance](http://www.independent-magazine.org/magazine/07/2009/filmmakerinsurance).
J. Tips and Insights from Established Documentary Filmmakers

The following interview with Rebecca Cammisa was conducted by the author of this ILP, Charley Korns, by phone on March 2, 2011. The interviews with Judith Helfand, Ian McCluskey, and Chris Tufty were conducted by the author in January and February 2011, via email.

Rebecca Cammisa is the director of several documentary films, including *Sister Helen* (2002) and *Which Way Home* (2009); the latter was nominated in 2010 for an Academy Award in the Feature Documentary category. A former photographer, Cammisa has also worked on various films and television series for IFC, A&E Films, and the History Channel. The Web site for her latest film is [http://www.whichwayhome.net](http://www.whichwayhome.net).

Korns: Can you think of a documentary film that was influential in your life, or one that inspired you to take some kind of action?

Cammisa: There are so many but perhaps the most memorable were *Hospital* (1970), *Hearts and Minds* (1974), and *Eyes on the Prize* (1987). Another one that was truly remarkable was *Jung in the Land of the Mujaheddin* (2001). They were powerful and I suppose the action I ultimately took, though not related specifically to the issues addressed in those films, was to become a documentary filmmaker myself.

Korns: What is an effective strategy (or two) in documentary filmmaking, in terms of motivating audiences to take action in line with the film’s objectives?

Cammisa: More important than any particular strategy is to make a really, really good film and tell a good story. If a film becomes truly dramatic, it will have power to inform and inspire.

Korns: Do you have any tips for beginning documentary filmmakers whose goals pertain more to behavioral change and activism than to education and/or entertainment?

Cammisa: Of course, there are many aspects of filmmaking that need to be learned, but I think the most important point is to be so passionate about the film to not take ‘no’ for an answer when pursuing funding, partners and other support. It can be very challenging to keep going, so the filmmaker’s motivation is critical. It took me seven years to make *Which Way Home*, but in the end it was totally worthwhile. In addition to its nominations for an Oscar and an Independent Spirit Award, the film is being shown to law enforcement on the border with Mexico, and I heard the First Lady of Mexico gave a copy of the DVD to Michelle Obama. Also, a *New York Times* article (*A Risky Trip Leads to Stardom and Sanctuary*) last month reported that the Honduran teenager featured in *Which Way Home* has been granted asylum in the United States.
Judith Helfand is best known for her ability to take the dark, cynical and all too often accepted worlds of chemical exposure, reckless corporate behavior and environmental injustice and make them personal, resonant, highly charged, entertaining and, when necessary, funny. Her films include *The Uprising of ’34* (co-directed and co-produced with George Stoney), and the Sundance Film Festival award-winning "toxic comedy" *Blue Vinyl* (co-directed and co-produced with Daniel B. Gold), which was nationally broadcast on HBO in 2002, and its Peabody Award-winning prequel *A Healthy Baby Girl*, which was broadcast on POV (Point of View, a PBS program) in 1997. Her Web site is http://www.judithhelfand.com.

Korns: Can you think of a documentary film that was influential in your life, or one that inspired you to take some kind of action? Why?

Helfand: The film that first inspired me was *The Weavers: Wasn’t That a Time* (1982, Jim Brown & George Stoney). I was fifteen years old and Pete Seeger reached out of the TV set and grabbed me by the heart and I looked at my mom and said: ‘That’s what I want to do when I grow up!’ ‘What? Play the banjo?’ she exclaimed. (I didn’t play the banjo!) ‘No, I want to make that kind of film…’ ‘Oh honey, that’s a documentary,’ she said, relieved.

What I wanted was to be on the other side of the TV set ... to be talking to the people who were making the history, who were singing “the dangerous songs” that linked art to activism—I wanted to talk to them before the audience got to see them. And ... I wanted to get out of Merrick, Long Island. So that is what I pursued and started to do. And then when I was twenty-five I was diagnosed with DES-related cervical cancer, and my social-change filmmaking took a radical shift—it got personal (i.e., *A Healthy Baby Girl*).

Korns: What is an effective strategy (or two) in documentary filmmaking, in terms of motivating audiences to take action in line with the film’s objectives?

Helfand: A guiding tenet that I’ve held fast to for the past 20 years of my filmmaking, which I share with those I teach and mentor is that every film’s core must contain palpable stakes—an authentic relationship worth fighting for and a heart at risk of being broken. That relationship changes with every film I make, as do the stakes, but it is always there: Whether it’s between me and my mother in *A Healthy Baby Girl*, between retired mill workers and their company town in *Uprising of ’34*, between my middle-class family and the individuals impacted by the toxic lifecycle of our home’s vinyl siding (*Blue Vinyl*), or between a weary group of self-appointed global warming messengers, a disaster-fatigued public and a recalcitrant U.S. government (*Everything’s Cool*).

I think the drawback is when the issue leads instead of the story. When it’s character driven, when there’s a heartbeat, when there are stakes that are palpable, when there’s a relationship at the center, then it’s something that people want to follow, and something that you as a filmmaker want to follow. Then there’s an opportunity for human nature to take over and lead you to places you could never expect. That is what making a documentary film is all about. I think the drawback comes in when you lose your independence as an artist. Just because you are working on mission-based art, which inevitably will link you to work in close collaboration with an NGO or mission-based organization, doesn’t mean you can afford to lose what you uni-
quely bring to the table—your craft and independence. Juxtaposing tone, humor and metaphor are the tools of an activist filmmaker.

Korns: Do you have any tips for beginning documentary filmmakers whose goals pertain more to behavioral change and activism than to education and/or entertainment?

Helfand: You have to learn how to balance the needs of the issue with the needs of your narrative … when you lose that balance, that’s when you run the risk of making something that’s neither useful for a movement/activists/organizers or to an audience. That is when you run the risk of ‘yelling.’


Korns: Can you think of a documentary film that was influential in your life, or one that inspired you to take some kind of action? Why?

McCluskey: King Corn. I now avoid high-fructose corn syrup, or at least cut down when I can. At some point I saw a documentary where they cut open a farm-raised salmon and showed that the meat was grey and not pink and that the pink was died between catch and store. That certainly made an impression and I don’t eat farmed salmon.

Overall, though, I don’t know if specific films cause specific action per se, as much as they are chapters in a larger, more social dialog. I can think of Who Killed the Electric Car, but I didn’t go buy an electric car. Or Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room, or Harlan County, USA. But I could do nothing to unrede the damage of Enron or fight a long-ago union fight for coal miners. There are so many great issue-based films that expose corruption, injustice, or advocate for environmental sustainability. However, I don’t know if films work as much in ‘action’ as they do in consciousness. It’s, of course, ideal to show a film and have a viewer then do a direct action. But I often find the effect more of a delay. A great documentary is like planting a seed of consciousness. The cause and effect between watching and action may not be immediate or obvious, but overall gains a cumulative effect at changing a wider social sense of values.

Korns: What is an effective strategy (or two) in documentary filmmaking, in terms of motivating audiences to take action in line with the film’s objectives?

McCluskey: First, be a storyteller. Use the lessons of fiction and literary nonfiction to tell a powerful, compelling story. Second, partner with mission-related organizations, and integrate films into panels, conferences, Web sites, and campaigns. A film alone is only the starting point of a conversation.

I take a collaborative, DIY (do it yourself) approach to making films. I see documentary films and folk music similarly. Everyone has a story, and the new digital tools are powerful. They are affordable and accessible and audiences flock to film more than any other time in history, but with this explosion of media, people are more informed and sharper critics than ever. Being a
storyteller is paramount, and I strive to be one in my work and help, as much as I am able, to be a mentor, so other’s can find their own voices and express the issues that matter most to them.

Korns: Do you have any tips for beginning documentary filmmakers whose goals pertain more to behavioral change and activism than to education and/or entertainment?

McCluskey: Film is a combination of different layers of media, and when combined, creates an ephemeral experience. When done well, the experience is visceral, felt deeply. Other media, like web, are better for current and constantly updated info, or books for deeper contexts and longer developments. But film’s strength is in its ability to create a temporal moment and an emotional connection. The films that seem to be most effective are the ones that tell compelling stories of compelling people, using the strengths of the medium to evoke empathy.

Chris Tufty is an award-winning filmmaker and director of photography living in Los Angeles. His documentary film credits include Not in God’s Name: In Search of Tolerance with the Dalai Lama (2008), Song of the Dunes (2008), Spirit of Yosemite (2001), and River in Disguise (1986). His cinematography in the Yosemite film can be seen at the park’s visitor center.

“’I’ve been in love with the film camera since graduating film school in Ithaca, NY. I enjoy telling a story with every shot I take, whether it’s a pan from some ducks swimming to reveal a giant megalopolis or a helicopter streaking over the Arctic ice to reveal 12 walruses surviving in the cold. I love working on dramatic shows as well, with written dialogue and professional actors creating imaginary worlds on a sound stage! It's all great!” Chris Tufty’s Web site is http://christufty.com.

Korns: Can you think of a documentary film that was influential in your life, or one that inspired you to take some kind of action? Why?

Tufty: I’ve always been inspired by Pare Lorentz’s The River. It’s about the power of Mother Nature and how one tiny drop of water can join with others and wipe out farms and land and trees. Since seeing it, I’ve made many ‘river’ films. One was River in Disguise, a film about the L.A. River, won me a best cinematography award, and another was Canyon Consort, about Paul Winter’s jazz quartet floating down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. I’ve always felt that nature needs to be protected and respected.

Korns: What is an effective strategy (or two) in documentary filmmaking, in terms of motivating audiences to take action in line with the film’s objectives?

Tufty: I find it best not to be too preachy, to just let the audience figure it out themselves. You just have to present the dilemma and both sides equally, if you can, and let the film do the motivating.

Korns: Do you have any tips for beginning documentary filmmakers whose goals pertain more to behavioral change and activism than to education and/or entertainment?

Tufty: Discover the change through people who have already been through it! Show the past and the present, and let your audience explore the possibilities of the future.
VII. PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION

A. Public Screenings

When you are clear about when your film will be completed, you can start to plan screenings in your community. If your film is relevant to certain nonprofit groups, try to join forces to plan a premier screening—far enough in advance to allow time for extensive publicity. Check with independent theaters that have large auditoriums. Other possibilities include places of worship, colleges, high schools, and community centers. Depending on the size of your community, you may plan several screenings either at the same or different venues. If you have financial support to cover your initial screenings, you may decide to make them free, but charging an admission is more common, considering that you will need to rent a theater or other facility. Consult with your team and any partner organizations to determine what to charge. A sliding scale option is not unusual, asking attendees to pay $5 to $15, for example.

Publicize your film’s screenings through your own network, including word of mouth, email, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn—all are free. Include links to the film’s Web site (consider creating one through WordPress if you are not experienced in Web site design). Ask friends and community allies to promote your screenings. Excellent, free publicity outlets are community calendars on Web sites and in print, TV, and radio media. If you have a publicity budget, you may consider printing postcards (to place in small stacks in coffee shops and other busy locations throughout the community), posters, and ads on Web sites and in publications. If you are a good designer, you can create these ads; if not, find a friend or hire someone.

Promote your screenings with information about the film, praise from viewers who have seen preliminary screenings (the more prominent the names, the better), and a note that you (and possibly others who helped make the film) will speak and take questions after the screenings. The post-screening time is a great opportunity for viewers to meet the filmmakers, ask questions, and learn how they can promote the film and/or take action in line with the film’s message. In addition to the discussion, prepare handouts with information about the film, dates and locations of upcoming screenings, and the contact information for you, as well as links to relevant resources and campaigns. Ask a couple of friends to offer the handouts to people leaving the theater. Print the handouts double sided on recycled paper and only as large as they need to be (i.e., quarter sheets or half sheets).

Pray the Devil Back to Hell (2008), a documentary by Gini Reticker, told the story of how women in Liberia demanded—and ultimately achieved—peace in their troubled nation. When hundreds of women from across Sudan came to the capital, Khartoum, for producer Abigail E. Disney’s screening of Pray the Devil Back to Hell, they stayed afterward for discussion. Hours later, the women had drafted a petition calling for peace in Darfur. “That’s the kind of thing a film can really unlock in people,” said Disney. “I believe very much in the power of film and stories, and how they can change people” (Moring, 2009, p. 40).

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8 WordPress is the world’s largest self-hosted blogging tool: [http://wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org)
“Movies like *Pray the Devil* don’t often get much attention at the Oscars—or at the box office,” observed film critic Mark Moring. “But one could argue that such documentaries are the most important films ... because of their ability to stimulate viewers to act” (Moring, 2009, p. 40).

Whiteman (2009) alluded to commentary by Craig Gilmore (as cited in Whiteman, 2009) regarding the importance of a facilitated discussion to the success of a public screening:

> A lot of what happens, happens in the discussion of the movie. It requires that people engage in a certain way ... it allows people to engage passionately, but not narrowly. It precludes overly simplistic notions of what it’s going to take to do this work. (p. 463)

Research by Kolbe and Boos (2009) noted best practices of decision-making groups that appear in a broad range of industrial, organizational, and medical areas. In the context of a discussion related to a documentary film, group decisions may be relevant when a cohesive group has viewed the film, rather than a collection of previously unconnected individuals (i.e., the general public). Kolbe and Boos (2009) alluded to the theory that during the decision process, the group should fulfill the following critical functions to ensure feasible decision quality:

> The group should develop a thorough and correct understanding of the problem; the group must recognize the requirements that the decision must satisfy in order to be judged acceptable; the group should develop realistic and eligible decision alternatives and evaluate their possible positive and negative consequences; and lastly, the group should choose the alternative with the best trade-off of advantages and disadvantages. (p. 3)

“One team member’s opinion and knowledge should be integrated into the group’s final decision” (Kolbe & Boos, 2009, p. 3). Thus, coordinating and integrating individual contributions is a crucial piece of effective group decision-making (Kolbe & Boos, 2009). The authors observed that successful groups used “more explicit coordination mechanisms such as instructing (e.g., suggesting a procedure), structuring (e.g., repeating information), and questioning (e.g., solution and clarification questions) than unsuccessful groups” (Kolbe & Boos, 2009, p. 23).

According to Simpson (2008), persuasive film calls attention to certain facts, not through education, but instead by more frequently provoking emotion over reason. In the context of his teaching related to the documentary films *Triumph of the Will* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Simpson stated that he intentionally left the delineation between persuasion and propaganda ambiguous “so that students would have to wrestle with unclear distinctions evident in the films used” (Simpson, 2008, p. 104). Simpson sought to clarify the ambiguity in post-screening discussions. You may benefit from a similar approach in framing discussions.

Clips from documentary films may be shown when screening the entire film is not possible or preferred. However, in the context of research pertaining to screening historical documentary films for students, Simpson (2008) noted that students viewing only clips might lose sight of the larger story and the supporting cultural climate in which these films were once advanced, and there may be the perception among students that these types of films are uninteresting, and overly “educational” compared to popular movies.

In a study examining the role of tour guides in conveying conservation messages to ecotourists, Peake, Innes, and Dyer (2009) pointed out that “the strategic role of tour guides should not be underestimated by tour operators or relevant government agencies” (Peake et al., 2009, p.
123). The guides’ role in an ecotourism context is in “driving the kind of transformative processes in visitors crucial for the sustainability of our natural resources and its associated industries” (Peake et al., 2009, p. 122).

Tracy Huling, director of Yes, In My Backyard (1999), said she did not want her work to lead to a predetermined conclusion but rather to start a discussion. Huling was confident that “opening up community discussions would be likely to lead at least some citizens to question the rationale for prison development” (as cited in Whiteman, 2009, p. 462). Yes, In My Backyard explores the impact of a prison on one rural community.

Bruni Burres, the former director of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, was asked how she would advise people who are moved by a human rights documentary and want to get involved or make change (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2008).

Start learning more. Find out what’s happening in Chile, or what’s happening in Latin America over all. What about Nepal? What is that country’s government doing to address human rights issues? Considering Nepal—find out what exile groups are doing to help women in Nepal. Look into school and education programs for women. Also, see what’s happening in your own backyard. Do you have people from Chile or Nepal living in your neighborhood? Maybe refugees? Or people in exile? They don’t have to be Chilean or Nepalese. What about Chinese, or Sudanese? Find out what their lives are like and make sure that they feel comfortable and engaged in your community. (Burres’s response to question #9)

B. Film Festivals

Once your documentary film is finished, regardless of its length, you may choose to submit it to be considered for a film festival. If a film wins an award, even at a small festival, that notoriety can immediately impact the film’s potential to go further. Festivals also present an opportunity to network with other filmmakers, as well as venture to places of interest in the United States and abroad. Your own community, or a nearby city, may have its own festival(s) that you will want to investigate and consider as a venue for your film to screen in the future. When you attend a festival that has accepted your film, go to as many other screenings as possible and carry promotional cards with your contact information—and a description of your film, including when it will screen at the festival.

A “one-stop shopping” Internet portal to help filmmakers get their films out to the world is Withoutabox (operated through the Internet Movie Data Base, or IMDb), which allows you to create a profile for your film and then submit it to film festivals digitally, paying the festival fees at the time of submission, if applicable. This is an effective approach to help you gain access to major channels for promoting and distributing your work, including screening at international film festivals, streaming on the Internet via IMDb theaters, and selling DVDs and Video On Demand downloads on Amazon.com and other channels. Once you apply to a significant film festival you will get a profile on IMDb, which is one of the best ways that you can promote your film. The site is http://withoutabox.com (Burley, 2011).

In the highly competitive film industry, even getting your foot in the door of some festivals can seem impossible, although it is something to pursue after you have a documentary or two under your belt. Take, for instance, the Sundance Film Festival, the Robert Redford-founded an-
nual gathering for independent filmmakers in Park City, Utah. More than 800 documentaries were submitted for screenings at the 2009 festival. Sundance organizers chose just 16 to screen (Mark, 2009). Festivals, many of which are far smaller and more accessible than Sundance, are an extremely valuable way for filmmakers to share their work.

In addition to Sundance, other prominent film festivals include the Toronto International Film Festival, the Amsterdam Film Festival, the Berlin International Film Festival, Sheffield Doc/Fest, the Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, the Margaret Mead Film & Video Festival, and the New York Film Festival. Visit the following links to learn more about festivals:

- The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) maintains a guide to international film and video festivals: [www.aivf.org](http://www.aivf.org)
- While many festivals charge a fee for submissions, others do not, and a list of more than 40 of these latter festivals can be found on the AIVF site: [http://www.aivf.org/magazine/08/2009/nofeefestivals](http://www.aivf.org/magazine/08/2009/nofeefestivals)
- Links to additional festivals are listed here: [http://www.documentaryfilms.net/festivals.htm](http://www.documentaryfilms.net/festivals.htm)
- Not ready for Sundance? The Bare Bones International Film and Music Festival in Muskogee, Oklahoma, could be your steppingstone! This site lists the Top 10 Small Film Festivals: [http://livability.com/top-10/top-10-small-film-festivals](http://livability.com/top-10/top-10-small-film-festivals)
- *Film Festival Secrets: A Handbook For Independent Filmmakers* (Stomp Tokyo, 2008) will help you select the right festivals for your film, prepare your festival screener, save money on festival fees, create marketing collateral, and craft a screening sell-out plan. The site is [http://www.filmfestivalsecrets.com](http://www.filmfestivalsecrets.com)

Launched in 2009, the American Documentary Showcase takes American documentary films to U.S. embassies in more than 20 countries, where embassy staff offers them for screenings at festivals, schools, and various other local venues. The diverse subjects range from an intimate journey with rocker John Mellencamp on a 2009 concert tour to the story of the Freedom Riders movement from the Civil Rights era. There are no entry fees; you only need to submit four DVDs of the film and fill out a form (Fisher, B., n.d.). The program is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to the University Film and Video Association. The site is [http://www.ufva.org/showcase](http://www.ufva.org/showcase).

### C. Community Networking

Well before you finish your film, consider a film’s relevance in the community where you live. After you have established the film’s story, budget, and production timeline, contact local nonprofits and other groups that you feel may be interested in the film—and share your passion for the project. These groups potentially could become sources for germane interviews, funding, volun-
teer assistance, access to equipment and locations, promotion, and audiences to preview the film before or after its completion.

In Portland, Oregon, an array of community groups recently came together to promote a screening of *The Economics of Happiness* (2011), a 1-hour documentary that shows how globalization has damaged cultures through corporations’ efforts to shape and control consumer choices. The word went out through many channels ranging from nonprofits to media to meetups (on-line social groups tailored to niche interests). The publicity noted that one of the film’s co-directors, Helena Norberg-Hope, would talk after the film (the other co-directors are Steven Gorelick and John Page). *The Oregonian* reported nearly 1,000 people showed up to see it (Sturrock, 2011). In addition to ideas presented in the film, a visit to the film’s Web site provides a bevy of ideas for getting involved in the issues.

Another recent example of networking to promote a documentary film in Portland was the flurry of grassroots publicity about *Forks Over Knives* (2010), which examines the claim that most, if not all, of the degenerative diseases that afflict us can be controlled, or even reversed, by rejecting animal-based and processed foods in favor of a healthy plant-based diet. Originally scheduled to premier with a 1-week run at the Regal Fox Tower in early January 2011, the film sold out 10 screenings in its first week and compelled the theater to extend the run for 4 more weeks. Northwest VEG, which had distributed information at some of the screenings, had a spike of attendance at its January vegan potluck, a direct result of the film’s impact. The nonprofit’s mission is to educate and empower people to make vegetarian choices for a healthy, sustainable, and compassionate world. Because of its success in Portland, three major U.S. theater chains picked it up. *Forks Over Knives* will open in 19 markets on May 6, 2011.

D. Internet Broadcast Options

Some filmmakers and producers may choose to bypass traditional routes of dissemination and journalistic publicity, relying instead on the viral grapevine and word of mouth. “Target audiences consist of ready-made interest groups for whom unorthodox access carries its own whiff of enhanced authenticity, if not outright defiance,” said Arthur (Arthur, 2008, p. 15). For example, when Robert Greenwald released *Wal-mart, the High Cost of Low Price* (2005), he partnered with Move On, the nationwide activist group, to promote screenings and discussions in homes of Move On members. According to the film’s Web site families, churches, schools, and small business owners have shown the film more than 10,000 times.

YouTube is one site to consider for uploads of your trailer. You can easily set up an account. Vimeo acts in a similar way to YouTube, except it allows for high-quality video upload and playback. This is a good place to upload not only your trailer, but also interviews with cast and crew and strong, brief footage. You can use these in conjunction with your social networking tools to get the word out about your film. The site is [http://vimeo.com](http://vimeo.com) (Burley, 2011).

YouTube is only one of many Internet options. A comparison chart on Wikipedia shows dozens of video hosts with relevant criteria: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_video_services](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_video_services). If you post your movie on any

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9 [http://www.walmartmovie.com](http://www.walmartmovie.com)
site, be careful that you aren’t giving away any rights to the site or their parent company (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 229).

Sooner or later, in this age of Internet access to videos, you will need to decide how you feel about illegal downloads. Filmmaker Jennifer Abbott (The Corporation, 2003) shared her perspective on the matter (O’Connor, 2004).

I believe in sliding scales [laughs]. If that’s the only way that someone is going to get to see our film, I personally don’t have a big issue with it. At the same time, the film did cost a lot of money to make, and those that made the film sacrificed a great deal personally and even while the film has grossed over $3 million worldwide, the filmmakers haven’t seen that money and it would be nice to be properly rewarded for our efforts. If someone can afford the film or to go and see it in a theatre, that’s obviously preferable, but the more people that see it the better. (p. 3)

According to MediaCollege.com, it is impossible to completely prevent online video from being stolen. However, you can create limited protection from downloads by using a true streaming server. The file is not actually downloaded to the user’s computer—it is seen only as a real-time stream, and there is no file left on the user’s hard drive. But it is still far from secure; Internet thieves may employ a video stream capture tool or simply use a video camera to record a streaming video (Media College.com, n.d.).

E. Television Broadcast Options

One important, low-cost avenue for documentary filmmakers to pursue to air their films is public access television. Global Village CAT has links to approximately 700 public or community access television sites: http://www.communitymedia.se/cat/linksus.htm. After you identify the closest public access station, introduce yourself, describe your film, and ask if the station will broadcast it. Approach additional stations farther from your community, although keep in mind that most stations require that someone from within the community submit the film. You can also approach your local PBS station, which is easier to do at the local level versus the national level. A Producing for PBS Web site describes the organization’s requirements in detail: http://www.pbs.org/producers (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, pp. 231, 233).

Compassion Over Killing (COK), the nonprofit animal advocacy organization, noted that nonprofits and individual filmmakers don’t have the advertising budget of the meat, egg, and dairy industries, and animal advocates must turn to more creative and cost-effective ways to get the animals’ message into homes across the country. Airing documentaries about animal agriculture on local public access television stations is an easy and effective way to do just that. Many communities with cable television providers also have their own public access television stations. It’s possible that the cable provider is even required to pay fees to support the public access service (Compassion Over Killing, 2011).

Typically, a community resident can become a member of the local public access television station by attending an orientation session, filling out a membership form, providing proof of identity and proof of residency, agreeing to the station’s rules of operation, and paying a small annual membership fee, often ranging between $20 and $60 per year. There is no requirement that you be a cable subscriber; local residency alone should be sufficient. Public access televi-
sion stations usually offer courses on how to produce programs. Once you become a member of your area’s public access television station, you should be able to air programming that was not produced in the public access television station’s own studios. You will likely be required to provide information about the program you would like to air, such as: the program title, the total running time (to the second), the date the program was recorded or filmed, the production facility where the program was produced, and the producer’s name and contact information. Most public access stations require members to submit an airtime request form according to their deadline schedules (Compassion Over Killing, 2011).

F. Marketing DVDs

One you have finished your documentary film, there are numerous avenues to consider for selling your film. If you have DVDs ready when you screen the film in your community, sell them there. If your film is accepted in a festival, ask if you can sell your DVD there.

Ideally, you will have set up a Web site for your film, complete with a trailer to watch; information about the film, you and other contributors; reviews; a way to contact you; perhaps a companion study guide; links to relevant sites; tips on ways to get involved in the issue; and a way to buy the film. A purchasing portal can be created using PayPal, which explains on its Web site how to set it up: https://www.paypal.com. A small fee is charged for every transaction. You may also include information on the site about how to order a DVD by mail.

Other possible sales outlets for your DVD are groups in your community that support the messages conveyed in your documentary. Allied nonprofit groups may sell a variety of books, DVDs, and apparel in their office and at special events—your DVD may fit into the mix, especially if you established a relationship with the group while you were making your film. You can arrange with the group what percentage of the sales they will retain for their efforts.

“Every film needs a customized distribution strategy,” said Peter Broderick, producer of numerous documentary films. “This strategy should be designed as early as possible, which will increase funding options. To create this strategy, you must understand your goals & priorities, identify your core audience, identify / plan different versions of your film (theatrical, TV, DVD, foreign, educational), determine your distribution avenues and release sequence, identify potential partners, and determine on- and off-line positioning” (as cited in Short, n.d., strategy #1). See Broderick’s 10 additional distribution strategies for your film: http://www.documentaryhowto.com/documentary-tips/138-documentary-tip-7-distribution-strategies-for-a-changing-world.

Amazon can be a good place to sell your DVD, although you won’t make nearly as much profit as you can through direct sales. But with Amazon, with more than 600 million annual visitors, the potential makes it hard to ignore. These programs serve the needs of independent filmmakers: Amazon Marketplace, Amazon Advantage, and Fulfillment by Amazon. Two other programs can be used in conjunction with any of the other three: Amazon Affiliates and Createspace (Spark, 2011).

According to Spark, Createspace is a good choice. It’s free to set up your account by providing information about your film, pricing it, and mailing a master disc. Using templates offered by Createspace, you create artwork for your DVD packaging and disc, and your DVD is assigned a
UPC code. Once everything is approved and you’ve tested a sample disc, your DVD goes live. A disc sold for $25 on Amazon, for example, will yield you $9. The advantage of this approach is that you will never have to deal with shipping or maintain inventory, while the drawbacks are you are dealing with DVD-Rs (recordable digital video discs), which sometimes have compatibility issues, and you don’t get information about who is ordering your DVD, only a statement at the end of each month. Be sure to read the fine print when you are selling your DVD through any retailer, particularly in reference to the essential UPC code. Some services, such as CreateSpace, provide the code as part of its package, while other Amazon services may charge an initial and then an annual fee. As a workaround, you may be able to search the Internet for vendors that are selling barcodes for less than $100, but be sure to test it by enrolling your DVD on Amazon’s system before you print a thousand DVDs with the barcode (Spark, 2011). Explore Amazon’s services at http://www.amazonservices.com/content/sell-on-amazon.htm?ld=AZFSSOA.

Lulu is a user-friendly site through which you can upload your DVD and cover art, approve the result, and receive a web address for your movie. Then anyone can buy your DVD on line. Lulu handles printing, mailing, and financial transactions including paying you any royalties. Each disc is created only when ordered so there’s no inventory (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, p. 230). The site is http://www.lulu.com.

A Million Movies a Minute (AMMAM) is an independent DVD distributor that creates “bold and intelligent documentary compilations to connect film-makers with a larger audience. We believe that art should not be considered charity and strive to make film-making a sustainable and accessible form of expression” (A Million Movies a Minute, n.d., ¶ 1). Film submissions to AMMAM must include a director’s bio (200 words), a synopsis of content (200 words), runtime, the year it was completed, a list of any festivals where the film has screened, and contact information (A Million Movies a Minute, n.d.).
VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Documentary films remain a powerful force in the world, and my hope is that this paper inspires novice filmmakers to pursue documentary filmmaking with confidence and excitement. In the Internet age, the possibilities for sharing films conveniently and inexpensively are greater than ever. Documentary films, particularly the films relevant to humane education, have reached millions with thoughtful and compassionate perspectives on challenges affecting animals, people, and the environment. They will continue to do so.

I have asked friends how documentary films have touched them, and most of the time people name a few films that motivated them to take action to make a positive difference. However, with the exception of a few scientific studies that examined viewers’ perspectives on issues based on their viewing of a documentary film, it is largely anecdotal experiences that point to the power of films to persuade—to influence behavior and affect change. However, as noted throughout this ILP, a number of documentaries have indeed contributed to societal change.

It is possible to identify aspects of documentary filmmaking that make a film more enjoyable and engaging. There needs to be an interesting, powerful story to hold viewers’ attention. Effective films often focus on individuals in the context of a problem, and follow those individuals through a transitional, perhaps transformational, time. It is usually the stories of people coming to new perspectives through trials and loss, or their experiencing a change of heart … those stories presented in film often move viewers’ hearts. Films that elicit feelings of guilt and disgust may grab viewers and shake them up; they may leave the film and respond by taking some kind of positive action for themselves and/or others.

Responding to a powerful documentary film, viewers may choose not to buy certain items or patronize particular businesses. They may change their diet, volunteer for a cause, contribute money to a charity, take a class, write about the issue, tell friends to see the film, read a book, or watch more relevant documentaries.

I believe that seeing even one documentary film can influence some viewers to take action that they otherwise would not have taken—action that may help save the lives of animals, protect a piece of the planet, or respond to the suffering of children, women, and men. When a film is part of a larger communication effort toward the same goal, the impact is multiplied.

As Whiteman noted: “With the increasing popularity of documentary film, and the wide audience for films like An Inconvenient Truth and Super Size Me, the temptation might be to return to the notion that documentary films achieve their influence through mass education and perhaps even mass mobilization of the general public. However, for the vast majority of activist documentary films, much more of their impact can be revealed by attention to recruitment, education, mobilization, and framing within the relevant activist organizations and within the issue network of which they are a part” (Whiteman, 2009, pp. 475-476).

Whether you want to team with other advocacy groups to examine an issue, or focus solely on your own documentary project, the most important thing is to get started. Take a class, read a book, find others who share your passion, start shooting—by this time next year you will be much further on this path, and you may even have a film to share with the world.
IX. REFERENCES


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X. Acknowledgments

The paper would not have been possible without the scores of documentary filmmakers who have intrigued and amazed me for decades with their craft. They are not driven by high salaries and profits, but rather by passion for their projects—to inform, entertain, and inspire. Sometimes they struggle financially and put themselves in harm’s way to bring us scenes and stories that otherwise would be unseen, untold. The world is more aware and compassionate because of them. I especially want to thank the documentary filmmakers who took the time to be interviewed for this paper: Rebecca Cammisa, Judith Helfand, Ian McCluskey, and Chris Tufty.

I would like to thank Melissa Feldman, my faculty adviser at the Institute for Humane Education. Her encouragement and insight helped me to pull together the many pieces that shaped this work into a coherent assemblage. Early in the process of topic selection, she guided me toward an area that truly stirs my passion, an interest that will continue to inform my future as an educator and film aficionado. Although not directly involved in this paper, I would like to acknowledge Zoe Weil for her role in co-founding the Institute for Humane Education. She has spent much of her life sowing countless seeds of compassion as a prolific educator. Anyone who is curious about Zoe and humane education can learn more at http://zoeweil.com.

Finally, this would be a less tidy and succinct paper had it not been for my editor and girlfriend, Serena Ross. She helped review and refine my writing and research as the paper developed.
am an avid viewer of films, and I feel fortunate to live in Portland, Oregon, where independent cinemas and film festivals are plentiful. Long after completing a bachelor’s degree in journalism at the University of Oregon (1988), and years after starting extensive volunteering with a Portland-based vegetarian education group (1999), I started a master’s in education (M.Ed.) program with an emphasis on humane education, which I feel represents an integration of studies in animal protection, environmental preservation, and human rights—issues I have supported most of my adult life. Humane education also addresses the matter of one or more humans exploiting, violating, or destroying other beings and aspects of nature based on physical, mental, technological, or financial advantages. This has been the way of the world, but I think these acts of dominance often can be addressed and sometimes prevented and resolved. It is always inspiring to read, watch, or witness stories of how one person or a small group made a big difference in helping animals, people, or the planet.

My studies in humane education have moved me to care more about these issues, agitating my emotions at times. For example, in reading Gail Eisnitz’s *Slaughterhouse*, I was struck at how farm animal exploitation and abuse are widespread and often unchecked, and there is a human cost to the system—workers in slaughterhouses suffer emotionally from the life-taking, dangerous nature of their tasks. I observed that slaughterhouses, and factory farms for that matter, are encapsulations of animal and human misery—systems whose abolition would behove the enrichment of both the two-legged and four-legged. I felt deep anger and sadness while absorbing some of the assigned books and films, recognizing this energy and desiring to work with it to nourish and refine the educator in me, the activist. One thing that motivates me is knowing that one book, one film, or one presentation may inspire someone to make changes that will help relieve animals and humans of suffering.

I have pursued video production training through Portland Community Media, NW Documentary, and the Northwest Film and Video Center. I co-produced a short documentary on African American Newscasters, which featured interviews with several TV news anchors. I studied photography at the University of Oregon and Portland Community College. My professional photography experience includes assignments for Associated Builders and Contractors, U.S. Bank, and NW Natural, in addition to several nonprofits and individuals in Portland.

I am anticipating the completion of my M.Ed., in 2011, to be awarded by Cambridge College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in partnership with the Institute for Humane Education, based in Surry, Maine.

*Note about the photograph: I made this self-portrait at the south rim of the Grand Canyon in 2008.*
APPENDIX A. INTERNET SITES RELEVANT TO DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

WEB SITES FOR NETWORKING AND SUPPORT

http://www.aivf.org
The Independent has been the leading source of information for independent, grassroots, and activist media-makers, providing inspiration and information for their films and video projects, as well as creating connections to the larger independent media community. Founded as a nonprofit organization in 2007, Independent Media Publications inherited the rights to the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers’ (AIVF) publications, including the 30-year archives of The Independent Film & Video Monthly and several books.

http://www.doculink.org
DOCULINK is an on-line community for documentary filmmakers who share information, leads, ideas, and a commitment to support each other’s growth as nonfiction filmmakers. An active email listserv provides a forum for more than 2,600 subscribers to quickly share information and engage in discussions about documentary filmmaking.

http://www.documentary.org
Founded in 1982, the International Documentary Association (IDA) is a nonprofit that promotes nonfiction filmmakers and is dedicated to increasing public awareness for the documentary genre. IDA states that the power and artistry of the documentary art form are vital to cultures and societies globally, and it exists to serve the needs of those who create this art form. IDA’s major program areas are advocacy, filmmaker services, education, and public programs and events.

http://www.documentarychannel.com
Documentary Channel is a 24/7 TV network dedicated to airing the works of independent documentary filmmakers. The Web site includes links and information about documentaries, as well as information about how to submit a film to be considered for airing. Selected documentaries are available for purchase, but not to watch on the site.

http://www.documentaryfilms.net
Documentary Films.Net is a response to a lack of information dealing with documentary films in any comprehensive manner, in any one place. The site provides links to all the official, individual documentary film sites that have been or are currently in release. In addition, links are provided to studios and television networks that have a history of releasing documentary films, general film information sites that have a significant focus of documentary films, film festivals, production companies, film schools, funding sources, and many other resources that relate to filmmakers.

http://www.documentaryhowto.com
DocuMentors provides tools, instruction and mentoring for documentary filmmakers. “We know that making a documentary film is one of the most important contributions that you can make to society, and we also know how challenging it can be. We want to support you in the process of creating your film, so we’ve been pulling together all of the resources that we think are necessary to have on the journey.”

http://www.workingfilms.org
Working Films leverages the power of storytelling through documentary film to advance struggles for social, economic, and environmental justice, human and civil rights. With offices in the U.S. and London, Working Films offers consultation, strategic planning for alternative distribu-
tion, Web site and social media development, and complete campaign management services to
filmmakers to ensure the content of nonfiction media truly meets the intention for change.

**WEBSITES TO VIEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS**

In addition to *buying* documentaries from the films’ Web sites or other sources, *renting* from
your local video store or through Netflix, or *borrowing* from your library, many films can be
viewed free with a high-speed Internet connection. Here are a few good sites.

http://www.archive.org
The Internet Archive is a nonprofit that was founded in 1996 to build an Internet library. Its
purposes include offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with
disabilities, and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital format. In addi-
tion to its more than 450,000 movies, the site houses recordings of approximately 90,000 conc-
certs, 800,000 audio recordings, and 2.7 million texts.

http://www.cultureunplugged.com
Culture Unplugged Films includes scores of films from independent filmmakers on a variety of
social issues, from poverty and politics to education, the environment, and enlightenment.

http://www.filmsforaction.org
Films for Action is a resource for watching social issues-related documentary films and videos
free online, including recent Oscar-nominated films.

http://www.freedocumentaries.org
From documentaries by Michael Moore to smaller indie films, you can view documentaries on a
variety of topics at Free Documentaries.org.

http://www.petatv.com
Find “channels” that include videos, clips and PSAs on a variety of animal protection issues ex-
aimed by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on its PETA TV site.

http://www.snagfilms.com
SnagFilms is committed to finding the world’s most compelling documentaries, whether from
established heavyweights or first-time filmmakers, and making them available to a wide au-
dience. You can watch full-length documentary films on the site, and you can also “snag” a film
and put it anywhere on the web.

http://topdocumentaryfilms.com
Top Documentary Films offers more than 1,500 documentary films in 24 categories available
for free on-line viewing, and site visitors may register to post comments about the films. Two
documentaries are emailed to subscribers every few days, for no cost. It is an abundant re-
source, but the viewing quality is inconsistent, and little information about the films is provided,
such as the name of the producers, directors, and dates of release, for example.

http://video.pbs.org
Watch previously aired Public Broadcasting Service documentaries. Click on programs and view
full episodes of FRONTLINE, POV (Point of View), and Independent Lens, among other pro-
grams. PBS is dedicated to keeping the arts alive for generations to come by ensuring the
worlds of music, theater, dance, and art remain available to all Americans, many of whom
might never have had the opportunity to experience them otherwise.
APPENDIX B. BOOKS ON DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING


“The end goal of this book is to cut through the clutter to save you hours of heartache and countless dollars, and to enable you to successfully overcome the obstacles of filmmaking whether you are an aspiring film student looking to shoot your first project or a veteran filmmaker looking for a quick reference guide to some of the areas with which you’re not as familiar. In short, this is an illustrated jump start for filmmakers who are ready to execute their vision now and don’t have a lot of time to read in between the lines.” (Artis, 2007, p. xii)


“This classic work on documentary films and filmmaking surveys the history of the genre from 1895 to the present day. With myriad social upheavals over the past decade, documentaries have enjoyed an international renaissance; here Barnouw considers the medium in light of an entirely new political and social climate.” (Barnouw, 1993, from the back cover)


“Filled with advice and insight from filmmakers, archivists, film researchers, music supervisors, intellectual property experts, insurance executives and others, *Archival Storytelling* defines key terms—copyright, fair use, public domain, orphan works and more—and challenges filmmakers to become not only archival users but also archival and copyright activists, ensuring their ongoing ability as creators to draw on the cultural materials that surround them.” (from the book’s Web site 10)


“The first few chapters will help you get clear about your overall vision, and give you tips about pulling together your resources. There are many books on filmmaking which focus

on shooting and editing. This book does not. The first half of the book is about charting your course, and preparing to succeed in making it all the way to the summit and back. We propose encouragement and propose guidelines for maintaining your vision as you shoot, edit, and produce the movie. The final chapters put together useful suggestions for launching your project into the world.” (Fadiman & Levelle, 2008, pp. xvii-xviii)


“This book is an invitation—an invitation to discover the potential of a simple video camera and the power it holds to spark social change. We will draw on the inspiring real-life experiences of social justice video advocates worldwide—groups that have worked with the human rights organization WITNESS and a range of other well-known and lesser known figures in the activist universe.” (Gregory, Caldwell, Avni, & Harding, T., 2005, pp. xii-xiii)


“This book is about the daily problems that the filmmaker faces: from concept to finished film, from financing to distribution, from censorship and political problems to breaking into the networks, from the complexities of location shooting to problems of ethics and morality, from difficulties with the crew to the problems of dealing with real people and the complexity of their lives. Finally, the book deals with research, problems of style, varieties of approach, and the challenge of new technologies.” (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 1)


“This classic best-selling book has been updated to include new budgets for digital video feature films, ‘no budget’ features, and the all-important digital video transfer to 35mm film for theatrical release. The book and its powerful downloadable Excel budgets provide a great one-two punch for filmmakers who want to increase production value and deliver projects on budget.” (Wiese & Simon, 2001, from the back cover)
APPENDIX C. MAGAZINES ON FILMMAKING

Magazines are an excellent resource to keep up with the latest developments in filmmaking. Short of obtaining the latest issue of the magazine or subscribing, the following publications have Web sites where selected articles and other information can be accessed free of cost.

**Cineaste**
This quarterly offers a social, political and esthetic perspective on the cinema. The content spans Hollywood films, American independents, European films, and the cinema of the Third World. Contact: [http://www.cineaste.com](http://www.cineaste.com)

**Documentary Magazine**
This quarterly is mailed to members of the International Documentary Association, a nonprofit that promotes nonfiction film and video and supports the efforts of documentary makers worldwide. Individual issues can be ordered by calling 626.398.2090. Subscriptions are included in the annual membership fee of $85 ($45 for students). Contact: [http://www.documentary.org/membership](http://www.documentary.org/membership)

**Filmmaker Magazine**
This quarterly covers independent feature films that will be released in theaters over the subsequent three months. Contact: [http://filmmakermagazine.net](http://filmmakermagazine.net)

**Film Comment**
Published through The Film Society of Lincoln Center, this bimonthly (six issues a year) features articles on films old and new, foreign and domestic, narrative and documentary. Contact: [http://www.filmilnc.com/film-comment](http://www.filmilnc.com/film-comment)

**MovieMaker**
This bimonthly (six issues a year) covers the art and business of making movies and claims to be the world’s most widely read independent movie magazine. Contact: [http://www.moviemaker.com](http://www.moviemaker.com)

**Point of View**
This quarterly, published through the Documentary Organization of Canada, covers independent films made in Canada and abroad. Contact: [https://docorg.ca/en/point-view-magazine](https://docorg.ca/en/point-view-magazine)
APPENDIX D. DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING STUDY PROGRAMS

Research your community to determine whether there are any filmmaking programs, classes, or workshops. Without enrolling in a degree program, you may be able to take classes through colleges, film schools, art schools, community media centers, and other organizations. Not only will these be the most economical options, you will network with other novice filmmakers with whom you may collaborate on film projects. If you are unable to find adequate training locally, there are a number of documentary film programs, including the following examples.

The Documentary Center at George Washington University (Washington, D.C.) offers a 6-month course in documentary filmmaking. Students are first immersed in critical courses and encouraged to let their ideas about future projects percolate before they ever get their hands on a camera. After 4 weeks of getting a sense of the documentary approach through screenings and written assignments, the small group of students (15 or so) begins learning the basics of production. Eventually, the group chooses a topic for a thesis film that they all work on together for the final eight weeks. Contact: http://www.gwu.edu/doccenter/institute2.htm

The Maine Media Workshops’ Documentary Filmmaking course (Rockport, Maine) is 4 weeks, though it offers shorter, more specialized workshops as well. Students can choose from a sizable list of rare courses, such as Producing the Historical Documentary and The Art of the Interview. The Maine school is perhaps the best bet for students already versed in narrative filmmaking who are seeking more advanced documentary experience. Rather than start from scratch, they can go straight to learning about making a feature documentary without having to retake unnecessary production classes. Contact: http://www.mainemedia.edu/workshops/film

The New School’s Certificate in Documentary Media Studies (New York City) is a 1-year, full-time, graduate-level program. The certificate program offers students an opportunity to study documentary history, theory, and practice in a small, intensive program. Upon completion of the program, certificate holders will be qualified to enter documentary professions through a variety of routes—documentary director/producer, documentary television business, theatrical distribution business, work with film festivals, film magazines or museums—or to continue graduate school. Contact: www.newschool.edu/doc14

The New York Film Academy (New York City and Los Angeles) offers a 1-year certificate program in documentary filmmaking. The curriculum challenges each student to make six documentary projects of increasing difficulty. Successful graduates leave with real craft skills, a quality documentary education, and a portfolio of work. Contact: http://www.nyfa.edu/film-school/documentary-filmmaking/documentary.php

UC Berkeley School of Journalism offers a 2-year program that yields a Master of Journalism degree. Berkeley’s documentary program is grounded in the values of professional journalism—accuracy, clarity, aggressive research and reporting, and ethical practices—combined with fundamentals of solid filmmaking. Documentary production here places great value on visual imagery and a wide range of storytelling styles: investigative, historical, biographical, etc. Contact: http://journalism.berkeley.edu/program/documentary
Chapter 4

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The goal of this Independent Learning Project (ILP) is to inspire novice filmmakers, educators, and activists to pursue documentary filmmaking and accomplish their persuasive objectives pertaining to environmental sustainability, animal protection, human rights, and other issues couched in compassionate perspectives on cultural issues.

To facilitate the goal, this ILP culminates in a guide to help novice documentary filmmakers optimize the transformational potential of their films, rather than creating films that only inform or entertain without mobilizing audiences. The guide emphasizes filmmaking strategies that will motivate viewers to want to make a difference. It also includes general information to help novice filmmakers finance, produce, promote, and screen independent documentary films. However, the guide is not intended as a technical manual to walk novice filmmakers through every step of the process; further learning will be necessary, and the guide includes numerous filmmaking resources to consider.

The guide includes a chapter on Getting Started, which addresses filmmaking basics, equipment, editing, music, and funding. The Making Persuasive Documentary Films chapter includes an overview, examples of successful films, establishing the film’s subject and goals, research, optimizing the film’s persuasive potential, storytelling, interviewing, legal matters, safety concerns, and tips and insights from established documentary filmmakers. The Promotion and Distribution chapter examines public screenings, film festivals, community networking, Internet broadcast options, television broadcast options, and marketing DVDs. The guide also includes a list of relevant resources to foster further learning and networking.
The guide within this ILP discusses the basics of getting started, including an overview of borrowing and buying equipment. Like anything else, investing in higher quality equipment is wise—in terms of its longevity and the quality of the video. Because camera technology is constantly evolving, it’s important to research what’s on the market, based on the filmmaker’s budget and goals. The Internet is ideal, compared to books, since the information on sites is typically current and user reviews are common.

When it comes to learning to make documentary films, beyond the scope of the guide within this ILP, it is recommended that community classes be pursued, whenever possible. The advantages may include contact with other novice filmmakers; access to equipment lending; collaboration in producing and promoting the film; and the cost savings of local transportation and, when applicable, reduced tuition and fees for residents.

**Conclusions**

*The foundation of persuasive films: Good storytelling.* Every documentary film starts with a story that needs to be told, and the primary challenge facing a novice filmmaker is choosing the right story to tell. Once an idea is born, the passion of the filmmaker for the subject of the film is paramount to seeing it through to completion. The subject must be something that is close to the filmmaker’s heart, yet it also needs to be of potential interest to many others. According to Rosenthal (2007):

> Although a topic may obsess you for years, that obsession is not enough. You also have to ask yourself the question, ‘Is there a good story there?’ I really consider this to be vital. If you merely have material for a discussion, then you should be making current affairs talk shows. (pp. 10-11)
Various research and interviews with established filmmakers indicate that the foundation of a persuasive documentary film is a powerful story that engages and moves viewers emotionally. “Film’s strength is in its ability to create a temporal moment and an emotional connection,” said Ian McCluskey, founder of NW Documentary and director of *Eloquent Nude: The Love and Legacy of Edward Weston & Charis Wilson* (2007). “The films that seem to be most effective are the ones that tell compelling stories of compelling people, using the strengths of the medium to evoke empathy” (personal communication, February 20, 2011).

Effective films often focus on individuals in the context of a problem, and follow those individuals through a transitional, perhaps transformational, time. It is usually the stories of people coming to new perspectives through trials and loss, or their experiencing a change of heart … those stories presented in film often move viewers emotionally.

Whether or not a documentary film affects change is not easily measured. A feature-length documentary may (on rare occasions) be profitable at the box office, but that doesn’t necessarily correlate to viewers changing their behavior and/or supporting the film’s cause with their money or time. Thousands may view a documentary on the Internet, but its societal impact remains challenging to quantify, although there are cases that illustrate the impact of certain documentary films. Documentary film, despite its growing influence and many impacts, has mostly been overlooked by social scientists studying a broad spectrum of media and communication (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009).

With the exception of a few scientific studies that examined viewers’ perspectives on issues based on their viewing of a documentary film, it is largely anecdotal experiences that point to the power of films to influence behavior and affect change. However, as noted throughout this ILP, a number of documentaries have contributed to societal change.
Patricia Aufderheide, a documentary film historian, said it is possible to name documentary films that “have had a real-life, real-time effect in the world” (Puente, 2010, p. 1d). Errol Morris’ *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), for example, helped overturn the conviction and death sentence of a man wrongfully convicted in the 1970s of killing a police officer. *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007), a documentary about U.S. use of torture in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay, which made less than $275,000, is being used as a teaching tool at the Army Judge Advocate General (JAG) school, according to its director Alex Gibney. *Lioness* (2008), about the first American female soldiers to be sent into combat, sparked legislation to help them gain access to veterans’ health benefits (Puente, 2010).

Davis Guggenheim recalled his Oscar-winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), in terms of its impact. “There is this immeasurable thing, which is that people’s behavior changed,” he said. “Movies do not write policy, but they have a very potent ability to inspire and inform, and I know *Inconvenient Truth* inspired and informed millions” (Puente, 2010, p. 1d).

In an interview focusing on human rights filmmaking, Bruni Burres, former director of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, commented on what makes an effective film (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2008):

The necessary ingredients are the same as they are for any great film—great story, enthralling character, cinematically riveting. It has to be engaging and take the viewer to a new place. It has to be visually precise—that’s the joint responsibility of the cinematographer, the director and the editor … In a good film, every element is working together—dramatically, aesthetically, morally. (Burres’s response to question #3, ¶ 2)

*Community and collaboration: Vital partners.* Filmmaking is rarely a solo endeavor. Novice filmmakers may start out alone, perhaps making a 5-minute film and uploading it to YouTube.
But as they pursue larger projects, they will want to find others who share their interests and goals. They may end up leading a team or partnering with someone and ultimately guiding the film as co-directors. Having a team will energize the production and combine disparate resources.

Charles Ferguson, director of the Oscar-winning *Inside Job* (2010), credits his success to his own learning abilities and the skilled and talented production personnel who worked with him. “If you surround yourself with really fantastic people, they will teach you your job,” said Ferguson. “For this film (*Inside Job*) I tried to get the very best people I could, and I think we got amazing people” (Crowdus, 2010, p. 43).

The experience of networking in the community and working hard on a documentary film project may lead to rich, rewarding, and surprising outcomes, observed Fadiman and Levelle (2008):

Once you ‘pay the entry fee’ by doing your homework, reaching out to various communities, and organizing what you discover, you enhance the possibilities for connections between events and people. While some of these convergences may seem coincidental, others appear to be beyond chance. Many filmmakers feel they’ve entered a world of synchronicity. A string of uncanny coincidences may unfold as you shoot and edit your film. I experience this on every project. (p. 36)

*Funding people, not projects.* Funding is a major concern for novice filmmakers, and the guide within this ILP addresses a variety of relevant points, including links to potential funders. Once filmmakers are clear about their subject and have a plan to produce the film, including a budget, they will be in a position to seek funding. They will need to take time to consider potential supporters, which may include foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and/or other
groups and individuals. Fadiman and Levelle (2008) emphasized that people fund people, not projects:

When you make a commitment to raise money, you take on a mission, which is to communicate your vision wherever you go. You need to bring your enthusiasm for the project into conversations with potential funders, and potential funders are everywhere. It is your vision which will attract donors. (p. 68)

Rebecca Cammisa, director of Which Way Home (2010), stressed the importance of creating a trailer (a film of a few minutes in length that conveys the gist of your project and makes viewers want to see the entire film) as soon as possible, or unedited footage, to show potential funders. “They need to see you have access to your subject and that you are capable of getting good footage” (personal communication, March 3, 2011).

Playing a role in a larger effort. One documentary film alone can influence viewers to take action that they otherwise would not have taken—action that may help save the lives of animals, protect a piece of the planet, or respond to the suffering of affected children, women, and men. When a film is part of a larger communication effort toward the same goal, the impact is multiplied. As Whiteman (2009) noted:

With the increasing popularity of documentary film, and the wide audience for films like An Inconvenient Truth and Super Size Me, the temptation might be to return to the notion that documentary films achieve their influence through mass education and perhaps even mass mobilization of the general public. However, for the vast majority of activist documentary films, much more of their impact can be revealed by attention to recruitment, education, mobilization, and framing within the relevant activist organizations and within the issue network of which they are a part. (pp. 475-476)
The infinite opportunities. Documentary films are a powerful educational force, and it is the hope of this ILP author that this work may inspire novice filmmakers to pursue documentary filmmaking with confidence and enthusiasm. In the Internet age, the possibilities for sharing films conveniently and inexpensively are virtually unlimited. Documentary films, particularly the films relevant to humane education, have reached millions with thoughtful and compassionate perspectives on challenges affecting animals, people, and the environment—and they will continue to do so, and there always will be an opportunity for one more filmmaker with a passion to change the world.

Film festivals in the future. Documentary films relevant to humane education are brilliantly suited to festival screenings in which audiences may view several films, participate in discussions with the filmmakers or facilitator(s), learn more about the issues addressed, and take action relevant to the films’ messages. Communities worldwide can benefit from a concentrated cinematic exposure to a variety of topics focusing on animal protection, environmental preservation, and human rights. This ILP author looks forward to organizing film festivals in the future along these lines—and may pursue documentary filmmaking himself.
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**RÉSUMÉ**

**Work Experience**

1998 – present: Office and Communications Manager – NPC Research, Portland, OR. Collaborate with research staff in writing, editing, formatting, and submitting grant proposals and evaluation reports. Manage Web site (www.npcresearch.com) and office systems. Design charts and graphic presentations. Member of Web site, safety, and social committees.


1991 – 1993: Communications Officer/Associate Editor – U.S. Bancorp, Portland, OR. Re-searched and wrote feature and news articles for monthly employee magazine. Interviewed executives, managers and employees regarding new developments. Assisted editor and designer in planning each issue's contents, cover and design. Photographed employees and special events.


**Volunteer Experience**

Served in various roles for Northwest VEG (Portland, OR) including Board President, Newsletter Editor, and Web site Manager. 2003 - 2009
Taught English to refugee family through Catholic Charities Resettlement Program, orienting the family to Portland area and assisting with employment searches, school applications, and citizenship exam preparation. *1994 - 2000*

Facilitated parent support group through Parents Anonymous (Portland, OR). Met weekly with parents to assist in stress reduction, anger management, and parenting skills. *1995*

**Skills**

- MS Word
- MS PowerPoint
- Adobe Photoshop and Photography
- Dreamweaver and Web site Management
- Event Planning

**Education**

Graduate level courses in education, Institute for Humane Education in partnership with Cambridge College (Cambridge, MA), M.Ed. expected in August 2011

Bachelor of Arts, Journalism, University of Oregon, 1988

Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking, NW Documentary, 2005