

ACTO4

local public service television directory

CASE HISTORIES TWO, THREE & FOUR:

- OPEN CHANNELS GERMANY
- OPEN CHANNEL BERLIN
- TELEVINTE: REALITY SHOWS vs REAL PEOPLE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

- OFCOM local TV Manchester meeting
- book before Friday 21st October

THE LOCAL DIGITAL TV LOGO

ACTO is an advisory committee of local television organisations working alongside the Institute of Local Television. **ACTO**'s initial objective is to share information supporting the introduction of local digital terrestrial television as an independent form of local public service broadcasting.

ACTO was established in 2003 by local television members of the Community Media Association to focus on the introduction of local digital terrestrial television services - or 'local DTT'.

Through the Institute of Local Television **ACTO** is represented on **Open Channels for Europe!** the organisation representing European local and open channels in exchanging information on European practice and in negotiation with the European parliament on small-scale TV provision.

Personal and institutional affiliation to **ACTO** is by a small annual subscription (see page 12) entitling subscribers to copies of Institute of Local Television research and reports as well as to **ACTO**'s research. Subscribers receive early announcement of local TV conferences, forums, workshops and are offered networking and support with submissions to regulators and government and encouragement with local-tv related activities.

ACTO - local public service television directory - summarises recent activity, encourages local lines of research and introduces publications which promote a wide engagement with small-scale local TV.

This is the fourth issue of the directory providing a rolling electronic publication - accumulating information by adding articles, research activities and lists in the form of an expanding updated pdf file. If you have information, research or events - please forward to **ACTO**.

WEBSITES

For information:

on local and community TV in Europe: **www.obs.int/db/persky/eu.html**

on community TV channels worldwide: **www.openchannel.se/**

UK's Community Media Association: **www.commedia.org.uk/**

UK examples of local and community TV programmes:

www.showcase.commedia.org.uk/

.....The Broadcasting Trust's extensive archive of local TV programmes can be viewed on this website - type 'broadcasting trust' into its browser

Ofcom - UK's independent regulator and competition authority includes sections on codes and guidelines, consultations: **www.ofcom.org.uk/**

..... provides an extensive catalogue of consultations and reports - for background to local TV look out the public service broadcasting consultations - 1-3 and join the Ofcom emailing list for updates on future consultations and publications

Institute of Local Television **www.localtvonline.com/**

.... shared with The Broadcasting Trust, website lists publications, provides background papers, illustrates local TV DVDs, 2.4 Ghz TV studies

OPEN CHANNELS FOR GERMANY

Jürgen Linke, Director Offener Kanal, Berlin

For a better understanding of the categorisation of the Open Channels within a media-political and legal landscape, it is necessary to describe briefly the development of broadcasting (radio and television) in the Federal Republic of Germany.

It was after the Second World War that in the Federal Republic of Germany a public controlled radio and television system began to develop. This system is characterised by the Broadcasting Corporations' independence from state influence, as well as by the fact that the fulfilment of programme commissions (information, education and entertainment) is controlled by the relevant groups. Licence fees and advertising provide the financial backing. The licence fees are received from those in possession of a radio or a television set.

Ever since the introduction of private broadcasting in 1984, a dual system has existed. The main aims behind the private broadcasting corporations current ventures is the gathering of profit and obtaining of political influence. Private broadcasting is financed exclusively by advertising.

Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities have been set up in each federal state to deal with licensing and the supervision of private broadcasting corporations. These authorities are financed by a proportion of the respective licensing fees.

Cultural matters, which also concern broadcasting organisations, come under the regulation of the legislative authorities of each German federal state. Affairs concerning either a number of or all federal states are regulated by the minister presidents in the form of state treaties which can then be adopted by the affected parliaments of the federal states via the appropriate laws of approval. Arising from the individual federal states' cultural sovereignty and their subsequent legislative powers each federal state has different broadcasting regulations (media laws).

The first Open Channel in Germany was launched in 1984. In 2004 there were 69 Open Channels on air throughout Germany. The history of their existence goes back to the end of the seventies, when the minister presidents of each federal state agreed to introduce private commercial broadcasting and to try out as many new television and radio programmes possible as part of the pilot projects involved with broad band cable.

Open Channels are both regional and local stations where, instead of professionals, citizens produce programmes as a means of communicating something via radio or television.

Open Channels are television and radio stations accessible to anyone and everyone. Making use of open channels is utilising the right of free expression which is part of the German constitution.

Open Channels offer everyday people the opportunity to use a camera and a microphone to improve and strengthen local communication, to establish dialogues between different social groups, and to be both seen and heard.

Open Channels do not compete with professional broadcasting corporations. To do this would contradict the ideas behind these channels.

The equipment available has to be easy to operate and as a result does not achieve the quality produced by the professional broadcasting corporations. The relatively short training given to Open Channel producers cannot be compared to the years

of training and experience received at professional TV and radio stations. Resourcefulness, then, is the key and open channel producers make more with less. A producer has no choice other than to work with fellow producers. The nature of this production process establishes the first step towards communication.

The restrictions at Open Channels turn out to be the advantages for the producers, for instance there is no tyranny of ratings.

An Open Channel producer has more freedom and flexibility. He can afford to make changes and risks, and even to offend a few people. He does not have to sell the products of the sponsors because there are no sponsors. He does not have to serve a broad audience. He can concentrate strictly on the local area, and serve specific interests.

So, in an age of modern methods of communication and the highly advanced technology serving such methods, open channels reflect the right to free expression (Article 5 of the German constitution) using electronic media. Within open channels, opinions and ways of looking at life can be aired over television or radio by those who have no voice in the mainstream media. The programming is unpolished, direct and plain, truthful and rough. It is what the producer wants it to be.

Open Channels are in reality neither radio nor television, but rather an integral part of a democratic society. Democracy assumes communication, and as instruments of communication, the Open Channels offer the chance for further development of democracy. Not taking advantage of this opportunity would imply a baling out of democracy.

There are certain regulations and rules common to all Open Channels throughout Germany:

1. Open Channels are first come, first served channels. Irrespective of how important a producer of his programme is or is not, everybody is treated equally.
2. The Open Channel staff has no influence over the contents of the productions.
3. The staff does not produce the programmes. The staff members encourage citizens to use the Open Channel. They train the producer, support him and motivate him.
4. There is no censorship.
5. The producer is legally responsible for the programme he wants to be aired. If he breaks the law he will be prosecuted.
6. All commercial activity is forbidden.
7. Access to and use of technological equipment, training and assistance are free.

The legislative basis for the Open Channels can be found in the separate media laws of the different federal states.

In Germany, everybody in possession of a radio or television has to pay a licence fee which is mainly used to finance the two public controlled nationwide TV and radio programmes. A small proportion of these fees is used, in the states where one or more Open Channels exist, to fund, either in part or in full, these channels.

OFFENER KANAL BERLIN - OPEN CHANNEL BERLIN

The Open Channel Berlin (OKB) is part of the Broadcasting Regulatory Authority of Berlin-Brandenburg. It is a non-profit organisation. The OKB is controlled by the Media Council, a body of the aforementioned authority. The council decides on the annual budget for the OKB, which in 2004 was 1.6 million Euros.

The OKB took off in August 1985 as part of the "Pilot Cable Project". These Projects were carried out in five different parts of Germany as a way of introducing private radio and TV. A former factory site in Berlin-Wedding has housed the OKB headquarters from day one. Back at the start, the location was right next to the East-Berlin border, but due to the fall of the Berlin wall, it is now almost in the centre of town.

Many thousand producers have used the OKB. Anyone over the age of 18 who, at present, lives in Germany has the right to use it. This right is set down in and protected by the Berlin media law. Only a majority in parliament could alter this. The government does not have the authority to do this.

The OKB radio and TV channels are broadcast via the Berlin cable system which has more than 1,100,000 subscribers. The OKB transmits 24 hours every day. We employ a staff of 12. They are responsible for the management, administration, equipment and public relations, as well as for the consultation, support and training of producers. We offer one TV studio, two radio studios, cameras, microphones, editing facilities etc. All of our resources may only be used to produce programme material aired on our channel.

The OKB is open daily from 2pm to 11pm. Appointments outside these hours must be prior arranged.

As is the case with all Open Channels, there is a broad range of topics. One of Berlin's specialities is that the producers of the television programmes come from 30 different countries and 30 % of the productions are aired in a foreign language. The radio producers come from 10 different languages and 10 % of radio output is in a foreign language. The majority of the non-German producers come from Turkey. The great need for foreign groups to broadcast in their native language strongly illustrates the idea of Open Channels. Those lacking a voice in the professional media get the chance to speak here.

When special events take place, the OKB always uses the opportunity to speak to new target groups, institutions and projects, and informs about the event's work. Most of the new producers discover the OKB whilst channel hopping. They stumble upon a channel which is completely different from the commercial and professional channels, a channel which opens its doors to the viewer, presenting him or her with the opportunity to become a producer.

Under-represented groups in media, such as immigrants, disadvantaged youth, women and the unemployed receive specific support from the OKB via special training and workshops.

Throughout its many years of existence, the OKB has developed three different sectors of programming:

1. The genuine public access sector which means first come, first served. Apart from the individual's right to equal access, there is opportunity for groups to obtain regular time slots every week.

One of these groups is "Students TV". Independent student groups from the universities in Berlin do their own programme.

Another group are the "Heroes of Unemployment" who criticise, among others, the negative social effects of globalisation.

2. The OKB imparts media literacy. It thereby provides the prerequisites for critical and self-determined dealings with the media, which the latter increasingly influences the development of our society, and in some cases to a disquieting degree.

Media literacy is an important approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

By empowering children and youth to grow from being critical consumers of media to being effective communicators through the media, the OKB helps to create and preserve a democratic process.

The OKB has started cooperation with a municipal media centre for schools: kids on media – kom. The results of this cooperation are being aired daily in a regular one hour time slot.

For each unit of the kom-project we offer non-linear editing, two digital camcorders and light and sound equipment.

3. OKB on the spot (event tv) offers certain institutions the opportunity to air their events in full length at their own liability. Such events are 100 per cent unedited live coverage without intervention from the OKB. The associated foundations of the main political parties (socialist, social democrat, liberal, green and conservative) often make use of this offer. Additionally, the OKB covers a lot of cultural events.

For event tv we are using an outside broadcasting van which makes operation easy and effective. The studio's operation is carried out mainly by students.

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TELEVINTE: REALITY SHOWS vs REAL PEOPLE

Local television as an instrument for participation in the transformation of reality

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With certain honourable exceptions, the battle to dominate viewer ratings has resulted in state-owned TV channels throughout Europe becoming hardly distinguishable from privately owned channels. In most cases, their programming conforms perfectly to the commercial model, relegating their role as a public service to the background. In particular, the exploration of new, audience-pulling programme formats by both private and public channels leads to information and entertainment becoming confounded: show-business techniques invade TV news programmes and magazines to draw viewers, and the “reality show” – widely described as trash TV – has been embraced by programmers as a magic recipe for boosting their share of the audience.

Viewers flock to see “ordinary people” in dramatic situations that, even when spurious (as is often the case), satisfy the spectators’ voyeuristic leanings, their urge to pry into the lives of people who are “just like their neighbours”; and these situations are served up with all the trappings of the cheapest of TV fiction – incidental music, artful suspense, and Manichean characters and plot included.

The reaction of the audience? Emotional identification, morbid fascination; the passive, uncritical intake of visual pabulum drenched in the intellectual equivalent of monosodium glutamate. These programmes breed and prey on gullible viewers unable to question the veracity of the message they are fed. No room is left for reflection, for half-tones and shades of meaning. The communication is one-way, authoritarian, manipulative.

Should local TV stations try to compete with this kind of television? They need not. Their strength is their *proximity* to their audience: their viewers in general are not only *able* to walk in and take an active part in the process of communication; this collaboration is actually *required*, since local TV is about the reality of its viewers’ immediate surroundings. Certainly, viewers may identify emotionally with what they see, but in this case their emotion is constructive and contributes to social activation. Reflection is encouraged by examination of *real*, dynamic, reality, rather than the immobilized sham of infotainment and the reality show.

For local TV, true audience participation is a guarantee of quantitative and qualitative success. In the remainder of this communication I shall present an example of how a TV programme can be produced with the participation of the community.

The privately owned TV station Televinte serves the area around Chantada, a rural municipality in inland Galicia (N.W. Spain) with a population of about 10,000 people, half in the town of Chantada and half in the surrounding countryside. A marked characteristic of this area is its age-group imbalance: young people emigrate to larger cities to study and seek work, leaving behind an increasingly ageing community.

In the spring of 2002, Televinte had a total staff of five, including journalists and technicians. It broadcast daily just 2 hours of self-produced programmes: *Telenovas*, a local news programme that still leads the local ratings for its time slot, ahead of both national and regional channels; and, immediately following *Telenovas*, another programme of local interest that varied from day to day - sports, interviews, round tables, the odd documentary - in accordance with the standard checkerboarding scheme. The rest of the day, the station linked to a channel based in another region

of Spain that mainly broadcasts travel and ecology documentaries. Further production by Televinte itself, which would have required a larger staff, was considered unviable.

Aware of this situation, and of Televinte's willingness to broadcast contributions by local residents, our research group "Communication and citizenry" (CIDACOM) at the Department of Media and Communication of the University of Santiago de Compostela reached an agreement with the company whereby, with a view to analysis of its production process, social echoes and eventual impact, we would actively promote the making, by a team of interested volunteer members of the community, of a serial that would be specifically pertinent to that community, but the characters and plot of which would be decided by the future creative team; Televinte would provide equipment for weekend filming, and would screen the programme when the time came.

A serial fiction programme was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it would allow the involvement of a sizeable number of people, while offering them a broad choice of functions as actors, scriptwriters, technicians, make-up artists, production team members, etc. Secondly, many of these functions require the exercise of a considerable degree of creativity and/or communicative capacity, the encouragement of which was seen as making a positive contribution to the enrichment of community life. Thirdly, since fiction is attractive to the public, this format would enhance the project's chances of success with its intended audience, while Televinte welcomed the idea of extending its spectrum of programmes - hitherto practically limited to news, chat and documentaries - to include fiction.

A serial format was envisaged, rather than a feature film, because the more routine, extensive nature of the serial work schedule would favour worker commitment and the acquisition of experience; because an overtly long-term project would allow a study its echoes in local society; and because screening as a serial would likewise facilitate a study of audience response.

The next step was to form a group of local people willing to become involved in the project. Since we were all strangers in Chantada, we began by contacting local cultural associations, and following their enthusiastic response we organized brainstorming sessions in which the general storyline framework emerged and numerous particular themes and plots were brought forward. To develop these ideas, a scriptwriting team was formed that, given its total lack of experience, was helped to obtain appropriate writing guides and to contact professional scriptwriters willing to provide advice. Following this encouraging beginning, Televinte broadcast appeals to attract more volunteers to the project, and two casting sessions were organized to select actors. The response exceeded our expectations, and many of those who were not selected as actors agreed to take part in other areas: production, direction, sound, lighting, make-up, wardrobe, props, etc. Although numbers have fluctuated, as many as 60 people have been actively involved at any one time, as well as many others who have supported them by providing food, costumes, props or filming locations. Shooting - limited by the availability of participants and equipment to weekends and holidays - began in April 2003. It now remains only to shoot the last of the seven episodes and complete the editing.

The subject of the serial, decided and developed by the volunteers, is Chantada and its folk. The particular topics touched on cluster around two axes: local cultural identity, as constituted by traditions, legends and mythical figures, by its landscape and by the traditional crafts of the area; and current reality, as seen in controversial

aspects of local politics ranging from the procedures employed by local government to environmental issues and rural desertification. To integrate these topics, the development of a main storyline set in the present is interspersed with evocations of legend that are generally located in the proximity of the nearby River Miño, an area converted for the purpose in the mythical domain of Cabodomundo (World's End) from which the serial takes its name.

The precise attitude to be taken in presenting the topics of current political relevance was the subject of considerable debate, final agreement being reached through a dialectical process that might well be taken up by programmers interested in orienting their productions in the direction most likely to gain the favour of the public. Briefly, a number of volunteers expressed the *thesis* that overt criticism of the local government might alienate those who had voted it into power. Televinte was also concerned that such criticism might result in loss of income from local government sources. Against these fears, the younger volunteers and scriptwriters defended the *antithesis* that the objective of the serial was to bring issues of local concern to the forefront of public consciousness, and to stimulate reflection and debate on these issues. After numerous discussions, a *synthesis* was arrived at whereby criticism was maintained but was incorporated within a more balanced panorama that presented multiple points of view. Although the internal logic of the storyline of the serial inevitably leads to its coming down on one side, politically speaking, an effort has been made to avoid pamphleteering and to expose viewers to the arguments of all parties in a way that encourages and allows them to draw their own conclusions.

Another way of looking at this process is to consider that the questions "Who are we making this serial for (for all our potential viewers, or just for the most politically critical)?" and "Why are we making it (what do we want to achieve with it)?" have been jointly responded to by agreement that the serial is directed at the whole community with a view to the engagement of all in debate of its affairs.

Once the project had got under way and shooting had begun, it aroused such interest that in August 2003, by popular demand, a provisional version of the first episode was shown as part of an open-air film festival in the main square of Chantada. Some 3,000 spectators packed the square, and the content of this first episode, and the performances of the actors, were the talk of the town for weeks. There was much comment on details such as the vine-grafting technique of a winegrower with the same occupation in real life; people recalled and aired variants of the legend narrated at one point of the episode; and, most importantly, in fulfilment of the aims of the project, there was vigorous discussion of the present-day local issues that had been touched on.

It is currently envisaged that editing will be complete by Autumn 2005. Televinte will then broadcast the serial, accompanying each episode with debates on the issues broached therein, interviews with those involved in its making, and so on. Surrounding a programme in this way with others that act as a sounding board to amplify its presence in the consciousness of the audience is a technique frequently used by commercial channels to gain viewers and promote viewer loyalty. On this occasion it will not be employed solely for these purposes, but also to spur real reflection and dialogue on the content of the serial.

As a critical phase of the research project of which the making of the serial forms part, qualitative assessment of audience response to the serial will be carried out by means of methods including personal interviews with viewers and focus groups. We are not interested in the number of viewers (which is expected to be a large proportion of Televinte's total potential audience), so much as their understanding of and

emotional involvement with the programme. Will the serial really spur community debate and local democracy? That is the fundamental objective of the project. It ought to be the objective of any television channel that aims to serve society. Reality shows won't do.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Local Authorities & Local TV: Workshop

Institute of Local Television & The Broadcasting Trust

Friday 30 September 2.30-5.00pm

A useful if not so well attended meeting explored scale and prospects for local TV services in following areas HIGHLAND, MORAY, ABERDEEN, INVERNESS, ABERDEEN-SHIRE, WESTERN ISLES, ARGYLL & BUTE, SHETLAND and ORKNEY at Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Cowan House, Inverness Retail and Business Park, Inverness, IV2 7GF. Further meetings to follow on launch of DCMS and Ofcom Local TV Consultations.

A local authority workshop in Central Scotland being planned for 26th October.

Get Your Hands On Local TV!

Institute of Local Television

Saturday 29 October 9.30am-3.00pm

An informal hands-on local TV session for council and voluntary sector staff from across Scotland. We'll look at some local TV examples from Scotland and Europe, work out how they were made, estimate costs involved and try our hand at making short news and interview clips using miniDV and computer equipment that can readily be found in schools throughout Scotland.

Tuesday 1st November from 10.30

Local TV Digital Forum

Ofcom seminar on local TV and interactive content

Manchester Town Hall

The event forms part of Ofcom's project examining the future of local video content and interactive services, which itself stemmed from our Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting.

Ofcom plans to issue a report, containing policy options, around the turn of the year. At this event, we want to gather as many facts and opinions from those with an interest in this area as possible. The day will include:

- Keynote address by **James Purnell MP**, Minister for Creative Industries and Tourism
- Brief presentations covering a wide range of approaches to funding, content and delivery of local services
- Sessions on BBC plans and technical issues
- Opportunities for debate, chaired by **Tim Suter**, Ofcom's Partner for Content and Standards.

For an invitation contact caroline.o'dwyer@ofcom.org.uk by Friday 21 October 2005

Saturday 26 November 9.30am-3.00pm

Discussion of the Autumn's major local TV consultations from Ofcom and the Department for Culture Media and Sport.

Further details will be available in the coming weeks on this Saturday workshop to explore frequency and business plans to coincide with the Autumn Ofcom and DCMS consultations on the introduction of local digital TV. Presentation from Ofcom on their local TV plans.

These October 29 and November 26 events are part of Drummond High School's community programme. The course fee for each event is £25. Payable to "Drummond Community High School". Book early by email to: **local.tv@virgin.net** with your name, postal address and invoice address (if different) so that Drummond can forward invoice.

Invitation to the Berlin European Media Literacy Conference IV Media and Social Intervention

November 11 - 13

Location: Offener Kanal Berlin, Voltastr. 5, 13355 Berlin

General aim

An increasing number of media initiatives across Europe show a wide range of different content, contexts, audience groups and local media output. This Media Literacy Conference invites people from these initiatives to develop a better expertise in the approach and results of their media work and to deepen democratic and direct media impetus in Europe.

The topic of "**Media and Social Intervention**" focuses on methods and examples which helped people to develop their own critical voice through the use of independent media.

The Media Literacy Conference IV would like to continue the dialogue which was started three years ago. Project presentations, workshops and open discussions will contribute to develop our coalition of European partners supporting media literacy within the wider framework of the new organisation "Open Channels for Europe!".

BOOKS, REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS

NEW LOCAL TV BOOK

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED: essays on local television 1994-2005 published by School Press for the Institute of Local Television, August 2005. 112 pages, available in pdf format at £7.00 from 5th August or as a softback book at £13.50 inc p&p from 30th August 2005.

REVIEW COPIES - to order FREE copy for review please email and advise of journal and publication date. Review copy will be pdf 620KB.

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED provides a vigorous critique of the political impact of public service broadcasting since 1990 and argues for two hundred plus independent local, community and municipal television channels in line with developments under way across Europe. **LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED** outlines how these proposals for local TV channels can be introduced as part of digital switchover from 2008 and expanded via broadband.

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED is the fifth volume on local television to be published by

the Institute of Local Television - published with John Libbey, the Community Radio Association (CRA, now the Community Media Association) or on the ILT imprint: School Press.

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED: essays on local television 1994-2005, ISBN:1 899405 03 8

Dave Rushton, published by School Press (2005) £13.50 inc p&p 112 pgs Softback (or £7.00 for single copies in pdf format downloaded to your email address.) Preamble; Introduction; Technical Background; Virtual Reality; Vicarious and Experiential TV News; A General Theory of Spectrum; Defining the Social Geography of Local News Identity; Assessing opportunities for local digital TV across Europe; Add/Drop and the Local Network Channel. APPENDICES: A Local Television Reader; Scottish Local TV Forum Report; Some pointers for filming local TV news and short documentaries

Personal cheques for books and/or the pdf version of Local Television Renewed should be made payable to 'Institute of Local Television' and sent to

Institute of Local Television 13 Bellevue Place Edinburgh EH7 4BS Official orders and further enquiries can be sent to the address above or to local.tv@virgin.net.

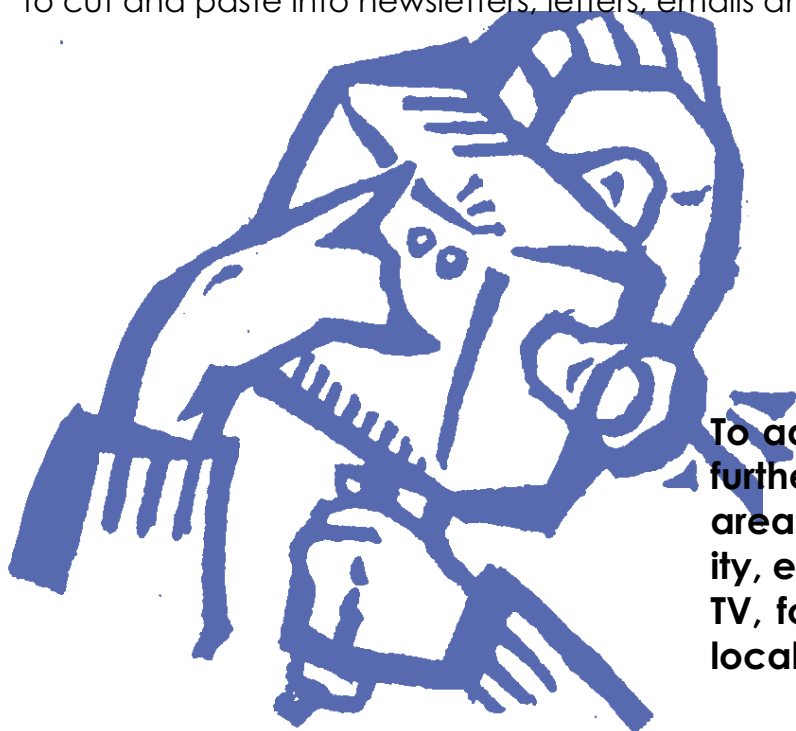
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AND FINALLY two finallies



request a copy of the local TV logo - will be sent to you as a small jpg file and pdf file to cut and paste into newsletters, letters, emails and publicity



To add to this directory - offering further reasons for local TV in your area, examples of local TV activity, expressions of interest in local TV, forums, events etc - email to local.tv@virgin.net

To be removed from the ACTO electronic mailing list please advise local.tv@virgin.net