

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA

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For almost an hour, three Washington journalists had been answering questions about the week's top news events from C-SPAN viewers across the nation. Moderator Brian Lamb received a message from the show's producer that the next call was ready. "Dover, New Jersey," he announced to the camera, "your question for our guests, please."

On the line, to the surprise of the panel, was not a single C-SPAN viewer but an entire 12th grade social studies class prompted by their teacher to quiz the assembled experts on federal antidrug efforts. Student Michelle Boyce was selected to pose the on air question to the panel while her classmates listened to the journalists' responses on the television monitor in their classroom. Afterwards, with the guidance of their teacher, Raymond Schwartz, the 12th graders debated the topic with the added perspective of the C-SPAN guests.

Schwartz has been using C-SPAN in his high school classroom for seven years. He is just one of a growing number of educators who realize that C-SPAN's unusual approach to news coverage can help stimulate and instruct students in social studies and American Government classes. Television and the telephone are key to his teaching approach. Schwartz and his students frequently watch C-SPAN's unedited coverage of events from Washington; his young people are encouraged to phone in questions to the lawmakers, journalists, and public policy experts who appear on the cable channel's call-in programs.

Call-In Program

While not all classrooms are as well equipped as Schwartz's, lack of immediate access to technology does not have to hinder C-SPAN use. Last year, when U.S. Congressman Andy Jacobs appeared on C-SPAN's call-in program, an 8th grade class in the congressman's Indiana district selected a peer who had cable TV and a videocassette recorder (VCR) at home to phone the C-SPAN program on their behalf. Together the class developed three broad questions for their student representative to ask Congressman Jacobs. The next day, the students listened to the videotape of Jacobs' responses and engaged in lively discussion about his opinions.

C-SPAN

Reaches the Classroom

Susan Swain

C-SPAN is a nonprofit ^{public} affairs channel carried by satellite to cable systems across the nation. Some 32 million homes are currently wired to receive C-SPAN programming, either through cable subscription or home satellite dish. Most schools wired to receive cable can find C-SPAN on their converter box; schools equipped with satellite dishes—a growing national trend—can receive *two* C-SPAN channels with ease: C-SPAN's original channel, offering live coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives and a variety of other public affairs events, and C-SPAN II, a service created in 1986 to provide live telecasts of the U.S. Senate.

C-SPAN programming is a veritable feast for "news and information junkies." One week's monitoring of the cable channel last summer, for example, revealed a sampling that included daily live coverage of congressional debates, a weekly series examining the history and impact of the U.S. Constitution, campaign speeches from presidential candidates on the trail in Iowa, actress Elizabeth Taylor's speech to the National Press Club on AIDS research, a panel discussion about Thurgood Marshall's 25 years on the Supreme Court, and sessions from the U.S. Conference of Mayors' meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. All events covered by C-SPAN cameras are presented in their entirety and without commentary—a sort of "you are there" approach to the public policy-making process.

About 2 years ago, the cable network embarked on a low-key campaign to make more educators aware of its programming fare, hoping to promote the use of C-SPAN as primary source material for social studies, speech, and journalism classes. Armed with several simple pieces of

literature, the endorsements of individual educators, and the enthusiasm provided by a sound product, C-SPAN has repeated its message to virtually anyone in the educational community who has expressed an interest. The word is slowly spreading to schools in committees across America.

"As a nonprofit organization, C-SPAN simply doesn't have the dollars to produce many supplementary instructional materials or conduct large marketing campaigns," explains Lamb, who in his off-camera role serves as chief executive officer for the channel. "However, we don't see ourselves as needing to compete with the big guns in instructional video. C-SPAN in the classroom is an un-complicated concept; we hope to some degree it can sell itself."

C-SPAN's message to educators is simple: anything televised by the public affairs network is fair game for classroom or research use. Teachers may air it live, record C-SPAN for later use, assign students to watch in media centers or at home, or create their own edited videotapes. C-SPAN has a liberal copyright policy for in-school use; prior permission from the network is not required as long as no commercial or political use is involved. Generally, rebroadcasts of any C-SPAN product are not permissible.

Free Educator's Kits

So far, more than 1200 schools have requested a free Educator's Kit of materials that explains the network's programming fare and suggests classroom applications. Along with the requests have come enthusiastic letters from teachers who have been using C-SPAN for years.

The Reverend John Lutka, a government teacher at Cincinnati's Moeller High School, wrote C-SPAN:

Several of my students have become C-SPAN junkies. [They] thrive on the House in session. Many of them have become fascinated by the use of special orders to call attention to significant issues... and refer to what "Newt" or "Bob Walker" or "Vin Weber"—all members of Congress—have to say on the House floor with so casual a reference that you would think they were referring to mutual friends.

It is those kinds of individual stories that make the C-SPAN staff ~~happy~~ about their jobs. They view their network as "narrowcasting"—appealing to a smaller

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mass audiences.

population segment rather than to ~~the masses~~. "We hear so many personal stories of impact on people's lives, of people getting interested and involved in the political process," says C-SPAN Executive Producer Carrie Collins. "It is really gratifying for us."

C-SPAN staff credits the cable television industry with the creation and financial support of their channel. "The cable companies on our board see C-SPAN as a way to use their marvelous satellite technology to return something to the American public," said Lamb.

No public money is involved in C-SPAN's operation and its nonprofit structure allows it to escape the pressure of having to be flashy to attract advertising dollars. Explained Lamb, "Instead we serve as a resource for the American public, a service that is there day in and day out to shine a light on the public policy process."

Advanced Notification of Programs

Educators' most frequent complaint is one C-SPAN hears from other segments of its audience as well—not enough advance schedule notification. Although finding out in advance what will be on C-SPAN—"It's a bit like predicting tomorrow's news," explains Ms. Collins—can be a teacher's biggest challenge, C-SPAN does have a few suggestions. The educators' kit contains a toll-free number with a recorded schedule tape.

The network also produces a weekly 12-page newspaper called the *C-SPAN Update* that contains some advance program schedules and background articles on major events covered by C-SPAN. C-SPAN cuts its *Update* yearly subscription price in half for teachers, charging just \$12 for 50 issues.

C-SPAN has some ambitious plans for the future of its classroom outreach project: a guidebook for high school teachers, training tapes, lesson plans, and teacher seminars. For C-SPAN, it's just a logical step in an ongoing mission—~~getting~~ getting people involved in the democratic process. □

Susan Swain is Vice President of Corporate Communications for the Washington-based C-SPAN cable network. She has been with C-SPAN for more than five years, hosts C-SPAN's nationally televised viewer call-in programs, and serves as coordinator for "C-SPAN in the Classroom," the network's educational outreach program.

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C-Span Reaches the Classroom

by Susan Swain

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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES
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April 2, 1987

Ms. Susan Swain
C-Span in the Classroom
Suite 412
400 N. Capitol N.W.
Washington D.C. 20001

Dear Susan,

It was good to talk with you this afternoon. I am pleased that you are willing to do an article for Social Education. Under separate cover you will receive two recent copies to help you with format, etc.

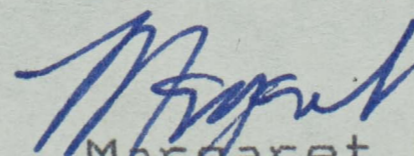
Our executive editor, Charles Rivera, confirmed the number of pages we would like to use. You were correct that 1200 words is just about right if we add a couple of pictures. This will be nice, because it will make a two page spread. For the time being, it will be a feature without Close-Up. If there is a change on this, I will let you know.

One small change and a favor. Could you have copy to me by June 15, rather than our agreed upon date of July 1? If we make this change, there is a good possibility it will make the November-December issue. This issue enjoys a wider distribution because of the annual NCSS meeting in November.

My work phone is 279-3696. My home phone is 652-3226.

Thank you for giving information which will be so valuable to many. Copy should be sent to me at 7106 Beechwood Drive, Chevy Chase, MD. 20815.

Sincerely,



Margaret Lefever
Contributing Editor,
Instructional Media

C-SPAN

IN THE

CLASSROOM

Article for: Social Education
Author: Susan Swain, VP. Corporate Communication
Date: June 17, 1987

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Ray Schwartz has been using C-SPAN in his high school classroom for seven years. He is just one of a growing number of educators who realize that C-SPAN's unusual approach to news coverage can help stimulate and instruct students in social studies and American Government classes. Television and the telephone are key to his teaching approach. Mr. Schwartz and

students frequently watch C-SPAN's unedited coverage of events from Washington; his young people are encouraged to phone in questions to the lawmakers, journalists, and public policy experts who appear on the cable channel's call-in programs.

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NEWS FROM:

C-SPAN AMERICA'S NETWORK

Suite 155 • 400 N. Capitol Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001

Release:

Contact:

a note on the author:

Susan Swain, is Vice President of Corporate Communications for the Washington-based C-SPAN cable network. Ms. Swain, who has been with C-SPAN for more than five years, also hosts C-SPAN's nationally-televised viewer call-in programs and serves as the coordinator for "C-SPAN in the Classroom," the network's educational outreach program.

CABLE SATELLITE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK