Digital Media
Industry Skills Panel Minutes
November 12, 2020

Panel Moderator:
- Dan S. Watanabe - Instructor, Cinema Television
  - Los Angeles Valley College, Loyola Marymount University

Industry Panelists:
- Dr. Todd Taylor - Senior Strategic Development Manager, EDU
  - Adobe
- Richard McKernan - Pro Audio Manager
  - AVID
- Tony Papa - Director of Operations | Broadcast Media Systems
  - Empire KVCR
- Regina Wilson - Executive Director
  - California Black Media
- Daniel Martinez - Designer
  - MediaMonks
- Tom McCarthy - Executive Vice President, Post Productions Facilities
  - Sony Pictures Entertainment
- Bernard Weiser - President
  - Entertainment Industry Professionals Mentorship Alliance (EIPMA)

Question: 2020 has been a year of enormous upheaval in the entertainment industry, partially caused by the pandemic, but also by other issues. How do you feel [the pandemic] has changed your particular area of the industry, and do you feel that this is a permanent change, or something that will go away?

Todd: My mission for the last 25 years has been to promote digital literacy and media literacy, as a fundamental pedagogy for transforming teaching and learning across the curriculum. I'm an English professor who has used a pedagogy of documentary filmmaking embedded with NGOs and service learning organizations for 20 years. So, it has accelerated that move towards experiential learning, media literacy and production across the curriculum. My latest rig (iPhone); I have a lot of film equipment and light in the closet, but this is what we're using to produce films now in our documentary film classes.

Question: Mr. Papa, can I toss it to you next?

Tony: KVCR is a PBS member station here in the San Bernardino County area. Our fiscal year started in July and we have changed dramatically in the last six months; and that we haven't conducted any production. The pandemic has changed us from a budgeting standpoint dramatically. The first six months of this year, we didn't know what the school systems or how the industry would change coming into the next six months of the year. We've had to adapt with our studio, for example, our studio has been asked to do some filming. Most recently, this summer, for the graduation services for the community colleges. We had to institute some of the CDC guidelines on when it came to visiting the studio for the production. The production was essentially one speaker in the studio, but still meant staggering those people that came in; mask requirements at all times, limiting the staff, a person was on a monitor to witness these productions, but they were out of the studio. So we've had to change. And we've had the support from our district from the custodial standpoint, helping us with making sure hand sanitizers are around, handing out masks because people were to come in to do their speeches in the studio. So really, from a big picture. Yes, we've had budget limitations. We're not shooting outside of the studio. In the studio, we are in a controlled environment. So the productions for the next six months of the year. We'll continue that way. My industry friends are saying the same thing. Those that are working in the industries are testing before they're going on site. They are required to wear a mask at all times. I had a DP do a whole shoot for monitors in another room, and the director was in a room next to him on monitors.

Question: Does anyone else have an answer for this specific question?

Bernard: The sound community has taken extraordinary precautions, right and left on the mixing stage, as the studios have done a fantastic job of making sure things are safe following protocols. They coordinated writing up those protocols and submitting them to the major unions to make sure everybody was on board. Tom McCarthy can tell you that Sony and all the studios worked very, very hard to make sure things are safe. Testing, testing, testing - they're all doing that. I do most of my work from home remotely, and having a home studio is important. Many of us, as Anthony was saying, have been ready for this type of thing with a lot of equipment that allows us to do these things. It's really just upgrading our bandwidth, so we can move files quickly. They've upped from being tested once a week to now twice a week. These results come in within 24 hours. Oftentimes, by the end of the same day. The monitor brings all sorts of extra masks, extra

sanitizer; everything you can think of! We're adapting and in fact, there are aspects of this that will carry on past this pandemic.

Question: I'm going to ask this in a very targeted way. Regina, given that the pandemic has put everything on fast forward, and it's caused a lot of disruption within, how do you see this affecting the industry's quest for greater diversity; in terms of both the above the line and the below the line, and especially the executive ranks moving forward?

Regina: I think technology has become the great equalizer. And I think that Bernard said this earlier, but where I've taken everything, is actually the basics. It's the basics of storytelling. You have to have that down. It's the soft skills. Even if they're not trained, if I find that you're competent and that you're smart, and you can learn fast; I want to work with you. If I can trust you; I want to work with you. End of the day, the soft skills are never going to go away, in terms of how you're going to make your way up. This has been a great and fantastic opportunity for young students who are ambitious. My parents built tenacity in me, and those soft skills. One of the things that I hope students know, is that this is the opportunity. Do you stuff on YouTube, do your stuff on any of these digital platforms. Don't say "I can't get a job". Do it anyway because, guess what, people like me may be searching.I just paid out $15,000 to a creator who did animation. I just want people to know. Don't let any of this stuff limit you. Do it, put it out there, but be accessible; be dependable; be trustworthy. Those are the soft skills [you need]. Know how to write. Have that tenacity to keep moving forward, even when things look very bleak. Don't just sit back and think, oh, you know, it's a pandemic and I'm not going to be able to get a job. Create it! If you're a creator, create it!

Question: Daniel Martinez, can I ask you that question? Do you see the pandemic as having been beneficial to people who are coming from the non-Caucasian community, or do you see it as being now an additional challenge for doors being open to you?

Daniel: For me personally, I feel it is very similar to what it was prior to the pandemic, just because the company that I joined, is a very diverse company. It's probably one of the most diverse companies that I've ever worked for. And I realized how important it is to have a diverse workforce; having different opinions and different perspectives. I don't know if the pandemic itself has changed that.

Richard: The tools are there to facilitate. There are industry standard tools like Adobe and the AVID product line. They're all useful. AVID had a protocol called EUCON, which they facilitate to any of the applications like Adobe. Ableton Live. So, it's whatever tool you choose to create with. It's an aid to creation. As an industry standard, and all across the film and post production, you see Pro Tools as the dominant on all the stages. If you go to any studio, whether it be music, broadcast to post production, the people in charge of hiring will ask if you know Pro Tools or Media Composer. In essence, those who are hiring, and companies, they don't want to be the trainers. They leave that to the educators. As far as equipment, AVID has control surfaces like the D-Command or D-Control that came out in the early 2000's; they are still relevant now. They're very inexpensive, they're still relevant to the latest version of Pro Tools or Media Composer. They are still supported through third parties, so there are parts available if anything goes wrong, especially with a piece that could be close to 20 years old. AVID, with their products, try to make the experience and the ecosystem relevant to no matter where and what you buy.

Question: Mr. [Todd] Taylor, has something to add to that.

Todd: When you're getting to the final part of your degree or certificate program, and you want to be an industry professional in a particular modality, you need tools and you need the surfaces. But in order to get lots of students near or into that funnel, I think we want to look at ubiquitous storytelling technologies that can apply anywhere across the curriculum. So they're starting to scaffold those experiences and those literacies in those abilities in basic storytelling or digital storytelling in their first or second semester in any program. My experience has been that the people who are destined for the industry themselves, they're going to go find their way to those specific technologies themselves. What we want to do is focus on the big picture, that is, what do you want to accomplish, what story do you want to tell? And then let's use the tools or the instruments to leverage the opportunity to share those ideas and reach those audiences, as opposed to being technology focused. Designing programs and curricula and student experiences that focus on those fundamental skills, that are not just soft skills but durable skills that will serve them in lots of different avenues, all the way across

the curriculum, regardless if they're going to be an entertainment industry professional or not.

Bernard: Quick follow-up to that, is with a lot of technology, things are changing so fast. As students who are just coming into a four year school now, they look at the technology that is existing at this moment. When he or she graduates, it's going to be different technologies. It'll be similar, but there will be advances; and there's a constant learning curve with technology. And as Todd mentioned, the skills are really about storytelling. And when you know what you want to do with that storytelling, then you're going to pick up the tools you need, and because it's constantly changing, as long as through the education you get those basics; even if it's some equipment that isn't state of the art, but it gets you to where you're going. Like in sound, if you know what faders are, and you know the basics of how that works and how to mix, it's an easy step to adapt to the latest technologies. That's going to be easy to do on your own and any company is going to help you do that. But knowing your storytelling skills and how to use technology to support what you're doing, that's the most important part.

Question: Mr. McCarthy, what are the technical skills or certifications that you feel a student should have if they hope to be able to land that entry level position?

Tom: It's really important, and Todd brought up a great point, I want to reiterate on that; as you start in your education, it is about storytelling. It's important that you know the fundamental skills that are required in what you're trying to accomplish. Whether those skills are sound editing, sound designing or re-recording mixing. It's important that you understand the philosophy behind it. And how those tools that you're working with can help collaborate in the storytelling process. But as you start to get closer to where you're having entry into the business, for me, if people come to my office and they say, I want to be a re-recording mixer, a sound editor, sound designer or a mix tech; the first question I'm going to ask is, are you familiar with AVID technologies being Pro Tools? Since schedules and budgets are tighter, it's hard for us to train somebody for job placement. If it was someone coming in for mentorship or internship, that's a different story because we're putting them with people, so they can shadow and learn and progress. Then at a certain time, we'll give them an opportunity to go on to the hardware solutions and software solutions that the professional industry uses in post production. So, they can train themselves on site and have access editor-to-editor next door to them. For our facility and most major motion picture studios, the technology that drives is Pro Tools.

Daniel: As far as technical skills, if we're talking about software, you have to have a great understanding of the Adobe Creative Suite. I don't think you have to know every single program, but you'd have to know the standard ones, like Photoshop. But once you understand that interface and how it works, you can translate that to other programs within the suite, because the terminology is the same. Beyond that, I don't know if there's certification needed. But there is a way for us to look at someone and see if they know their stuff; and that would be a portfolio! These days you need a digital portfolio. Something that can be online and we can look at. Just by reviewing your work, we can tell if you know and understand hierarchies and compositions, and how things should be laid out. You can kind of have an eye, for someone who has an eye, by looking at their portfolio.

Question: I want to throw that question out to everyone here. Should a student have a digital portfolio, and if so, what should be in it?

Regina: I think a digital digital portfolio is definitely a must.

Todd: I want to share my screen and share a digital portfolio from a student who started digital storytelling her first semester in my English class, with no intention of going into media at all. She spent her summer and an internship with Adobe making her first motion graphics animation, in After Effects. She now has a job waiting for her in June when she graduates. And so, to me, this is what it looks like to be agile and literate today. To be able to move between all of these different modalities, making podcasts, making films, making motion graphics, making infographics. That kind of ability can plug into anything. So, the conversation ends up not being so much about what technical skill you have, but what have you accomplished with these particular technologies? That is an example of the abilities, literacy and capabilities that you have, and can bring to our organization.

Tom: In our studio we have an internship program called Spectrum. If you're interested, that is what you apply for. I receive candidates that have been chosen through that program for possible internship in our post facilities. A digital profile (or portfolio) is actually very beneficial for me, because it allows me to see exactly where they're at; in their technical skills; their creative skills and then I

meet with those individuals, and the group may be narrowed down to 10. I meet with them because I want to know their people skills. That's the most important part of getting a job in this industry; people skills (soft skills). You need to be able to collaborate and network. Networking is one of the most important things a person can do when they get into this business. So, networking, people skills and having a digital profile (portfolio). It is extremely beneficial for me because it allows me to see initially where you are starting off. The final goal is to hire that intern. So, I think knowing where you want to be, what your goals are, and having a presentation of where you are through your schooling program is advantageous to one; getting an internship and second; being placed in a job position in the industry.

Question: What are some of the biggest skills gaps that you have identified with the incoming student population?

Bernard: I think it would be understanding professional workflows. For example, with motion pictures, dealing with studio film or dealing with an independent television broadcast; their workflows all have differences to them. Soft skills are so important. After all, these are crews that work on these films. You need to be able to collaborate with everybody. And understanding those dynamics; working on independent or studio films - those dynamics are quite different. Also, networking, followed up by relationship building; these skills are super important. Allowing students to understand that they have networking and relationships already built in. If they're in a program, from that class, you have a few that will get opportunities. And you're best known by your fellow students and they can bring you along. So, they need to be aware of that.

Regina: You want to start building that pipeline because somebody like me who may not be able to fully hire you, I still have connections with people. Make those connections and people will start referring you, even if they don't have that job for you.

Bernard: When you're sending emails, never feel like you're begging people. People are very busy, and they might not respond, but just keep sending emails. Constantly stay in touch with people.

Regina: And handwritten Thank You cards, when you can!

Dan: A suggestion on handwritten cards - Get a thank you card that somebody will want to keep. I used to give out Snoopy cards in Japanese because you know somebody will keep that because it's unusual.

Question: What could a person expect an entry level job to be like; including the task environment and expectations?

Tony: My personal experience, through my 20 year career, I started by working every job. I took every opportunity to be on every set, and every post production house that would take me. I had to adapt constantly. There was a question that asked "What is one of the top soft skills that employers desire?", I went right to problem solving. Being able to problem solve in this industry is important. When I think about an entry level position at KVCR, there's a lot of prepping. You're prepping equipment, projects, you're ingesting media. You're doing some basic fundamental work to construct the project. And that's important. That's where we all start. But it's a journey if you choose this craft. And it's all about storytelling. If you don't have a phone or a computer, you have a pen and paper. You can start storyboarding. For your first opportunity and entry level, it's about being adaptable and accepting that you are setting the foundation for people to really do their work higher up above you. But that's part of the journey.

Bernard: I think oftentimes, it depends on if you're coming in with a minimal education or no education. That doesn't mean there's no opportunity for you. Certainly coming into a facility, they have their basic jobs that will give you experience. Also, take it upon yourself to teach yourselves. Read manuals. It's also very important for the student to know themselves; where their strengths are and how to push yourself is a huge component to soft skills.

Question: This is one that is addressing our community college population - because our median age is usually 28 years old, we've got a lot of incumbent workers who have the entry level soft skills and even an ability to learn the technical skills stuff down. What are some of the skills that are needed to jump in, in a career change position to be middle management or even junior executive level?

Tony: That's a big part of that leap; if you've got some confidence in the technical abilities you have and have been a part of a creative process, the next logical step is budgeting, scheduling, resource and union issues. When I was producing commercials, there was a lot of union knowledge that you just have to start reading and picking up on.

Tom: That's a great point. I worked for studios as a sound supervisor designer, and then at a young age, I opened up my own sound editorial business. Then I realized I'm creating budgets. And creating the budgets for the shows, now I'm interacting more at a studio management level, although I'm still on the creative side. And if you have the creative experience; if you've actually been in the trenches for what your new position is going to manage, you're going to be much more beneficial to those that have hired you. Because now you absolutely understand any issue that's going to arise, you're going to have solutions for problems that could happen. I came from the creative side and then I started doing budgets, and then I became management. Now I'm dealing with the unions, Sony Japan with technological involvement. WIth the experience and knowledge I had, I migrated myself into something different.

Tony: That's an excellent point, streaming has been my new exciting career. Development after 30 years is learning and developing streaming knowledge and we've just installed that within the last two months at KVCR. You never stop learning in this profession and from a management standpoint or a creative standpoint.

Regina: I didn't know how to do budgets, and then I got a $2 million grant. I didn't want to pay somebody to do the job, so I learned. Students should take Accounting 101 to learn how to understand budgets. Also, learn about every level of the company.

Question: How is the industry approaching aspects of accessibility with software for students with disabilities, especially with the integration of LMS programs such as Canvas? Is the industry looking at outcomes to support academic institutions with online cloud collaboration?

Todd: Adobe is continuing to invest in LMS integration between Creative Cloud and in Canvas and Blackboard, the leading LMS'. But the larger issue of access here, I think connects to a complex of things that also relates back to the last things we were talking about: the world has changed dramatically in the last five years. The change in demographics and the workforce has meant that people need to be as flexible, and agile as possible in deeply cognitive ways. Accessibility is one of the key facets that we need to increasingly respond to. Especially when something like COVID or a recession happens, the digital divide between those who are included and excluded widens. Which is why I'm very proud to work for a company like Adobe, who is doing a lot of initiatives.

Question: This question is for everyone - What do you think of the fact that so many of our students are interested in being content creators, whether it be on YouTube, BitChute or anything else? Do you feel that this is something that we should encourage them to try, or do you send them on a more "realistic" pathway? Or do you feel it's a great digital portfolio?

Todd: I think that we want to move students away from being passive disconnected consumers of other people's content as much as possible. They should produce and share their own ideas, so they figure out how to represent evidence accurately, how to reach an audience, how to develop and tell a story. So, my feeling is the more structured practice they get in developing and sharing their own content as opposed to consuming others.

Bernard: I agree! Anything that involves creating content and the students doing that, is going to be helpful, because that's going to lead to bigger and better things. Anything they can do to create content is really really important. You never want to say that they can't. This industry is going to be always filled with a zillion people saying they can't. You have to ignore that, because every journey starts with your first step. And if you're pushed back so much that you can't make that first step, you're not going anyplace. Yes, they're all a collection of small steps, but you have to be moving those steps forward.

Tony: Data is the new oil, right, it's growing exponentially. We need to own our data as individuals; technology is moving in that direction. Being a content creator, in this day and age, there's many different platforms to let your ideas go out there. But that content starts with everything we've talked about today, which is storytelling, having networks, and relationships so that you can learn from them and get job opportunities from them. We need to give students the skills, whether it be Adobe or AVID. I came up with Final Cut, but those skills transfer to Adobe or AVID. In my studio, everything is Sony based with camera and gear, but we have AVID and Adobe throughout. Pro Tools is the industry standard, and everything you've heard today, I think it is important to emphasize that in your curriculum and make the next generation of storytellers, no matter the platform.

SUSANNE MATA: If anyone wants to ask the panelists questions; you can email me the questions, and I can connect you with some of the panelists.