

Community Media Partnership: A Vision for the Future of the White Plains Public Library and White Plains Community Media

The Vision. The White Plains Cable TV Access Commission was formed in 1981 to provide a conduit for information and entertainment for the White Plains community through the cable TV system that was being built at the time. The organization has served the community with high end production facilities for 30 years, enabling businesses, organizations, individuals, and the City government to create and distribute programming to local cable subscribers.

For the last 20 years the Commission has occupied a subterranean space away from the notice, and to a certain extent, the participation of the public, while ironically operating a public access channel. The confines of the space has made it impossible to expand and difficult to broaden its mission. In 2010 the Commission started streaming its channels over the Internet and in 2011 began operating as White Plains Community Media (WPCM).

A three camera TV studio is still the core production center for public access TV, but it no longer needs to be built in the style of professional broadcast TV. Cameras are smaller, and low-voltage lighting reduces electricity consumption and the need for heavy-duty air conditioning. However, a studio is just one piece of the modern media creation picture. The age of YouTube has fostered great interest in amateur video, but it has also cluttered the Internet with video of kids skateboarding off garage roofs to a foregone conclusion. The medium has the potential to deliver a much more meaningful product.

The White Plains Public Library (WPPL), for its part, has been going through a period of renewal, fueled by a master plan for the building and the completion of a strategic plan. The Library is seeking opportunities to place itself at the crossroads of the community, to create increased learning opportunities for teenagers and adults, and to become a leader in providing the White Plains community with the resources to create digital content.

The WPPL's redesign of its first floor provides the Library and WPCM with a unique opportunity to create a new media creation and education space within the Library's footprint, while expanding on the Library's mission as a media resource.

We believe that this partnership can benefit both organizations—and the City of White Plains—in ways that are both obvious and unforeseen, while having no negative impacts on either of our organizations.

The Space. The library has identified a space on the first floor, slightly larger than the Cable Commission's existing studio and control room, which could serve as a new studio and control room. This space is located in what will be a high-traffic area of the library, adjacent to both the café and the adult technology area. This would provide greater public exposure to WPCM and be more accessible.

Both the Library and WPCM need to update computers on a regular basis. Why not put the power of video editing into library computers and utilize the planned media lab as an editing classroom, and enable a host of library patrons to learn and practice new skills while creating video content for White Plains? Why not let patrons sign out production equipment just as they sign out books?

The library's space needs are changing. As content migrates to digital formats, the need to warehouse so much material is beginning to decline. This opens up space on the first floor. In addition to the first floor space, internal reorganization has freed up much of the staff space on the

Library's third floor. Space has been identified to accommodate the following media creation and channel administrative needs:

Studio/control room - 1200 sq. ft.-1st floor

Green room - 100 sq. ft.-1st floor

Office space - 3rd floor

Master control - 3rd floor

Editing - staff internal - 3rd floor

Editing/instructional space - proposed media lab in the Edge, and adult public computer access area

Auditorium wired as second studio for programming with a live audience - 2nd floor

The available space is not confined to one area. This may not seem ideal, but it will make use of public spaces to raise awareness of WPCM while also showcasing the idea that the Library offers more than just books. Just as the library is a center of media consumption, it can also become a center for media creation and distribution through collaboration with WPCM.

Moving ahead: We recommend the formation of an exploratory committee, chaired by Common Council Member Dennis Krolan, with two representatives from the Commission and two from the Library's Board, as well as James Kenny and Brian Kenney. The committee's responsibility will be to investigate this proposal in greater depth and formulate a recommendation on whether to move ahead. Key concerns include the establishment of a capital project for the construction of WPCM's space in the library, funding for such work, and a timeline that integrates this construction with the Library's master plan.

Brian Kenney
Director - White Plains Library

James Kenny
Executive Director - White Plains Community Media