Documentary Producing and Interactive Platforms: Opportunities, Evolving Processes and the Changing Craft

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Declaration

This thesis is my own work containing, to the best of my knowledge and belief, no material published or written by another person except as referred to in the text.

Signed

Atalanti Dionysus
Date: 31 August 2012
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Introduction

This research project, in fulfilment of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School Master of Arts by Research, began as an inquiry into: How interactive cross-platform technologies and creative opportunities are changing the way documentary filmmakers are approaching their craft.

This research question led to investigation of some of the changes that have occurred in the documentary filmmaking industry and consideration of how approaches toward making a documentary are shifting, challenging all filmmakers to consider how and whether their project ideas can function using the new technologies and to look further into the opportunities that have arisen as a result. Recognising that filmmakers are seeking an understanding of these new opportunities in order to give their work a life as an interactive multiplatform documentary, from the cinema to DVD, the iPad, iPhone, radio, gaming and the web, this paper aims to provide research that will create access to these platforms for traditional and emerging documentary makers.

Part of this research is in the form of a website, which is, in effect, an online documentary about how to make an online documentary.

Methodology

This inquiry has looked into: How interactive cross-platform technologies and creative opportunities are changing the way documentary filmmakers are approaching their craft.

The process that I engaged in during this research was to begin by interviewing professionals in the field, asking them how interactive cross-platform technologies and creative opportunities are changing the way they are approaching their craft. The purpose of these expert interviews was to gain an understanding of how the cross-platform documentary was being made. I wanted to learn if producers/filmmakers needed to learn new skills and what those skills were. I was endeavouring to make
my own documentary and was interested in creating a cross-platform project but wasn’t aware of all the changes, challenges and innovations that were present in this space.

The interviews were conducted using a variety of technology software and hardware resources, as a way for me to examine how well the interviews were going to integrate with the technology. For example, some of the interviews were recorded using a digital camera, others were phone interviews, which were recorded on audio devices, and another interview was conducted over the Internet using the software technology of Skype\(^1\), which was filmed. I attended several conferences, which enabled me to listen to professional speakers from around the world, ranging from the games industry to the multiplatform/transmedia space, discussing and sharing their experiences and their trials and tribulations of creating multiplatform interactive documentaries.

The following is a list of filmmakers and documentary experts who were interviewed as research for this paper and who also form part of the web series:

*Robert Connolly*, a highly experienced film producer and director, talks about the making of *Warco* (2011), a documentary game looking at the production process and methodologies through which a traditional filmmaker needs to navigate.

*Sue Maslin*, also well known in the film industry for her work as a screen producer, discusses the ordeal of making cross-platform documentaries and the challenges faced by producers.

*Bob Connolly*, one of Australia’s most renowned documentary makers, shares his experiences with his longstanding practice of distributing his own films and how he went about distributing *Mrs Carey’s Concert* (2011).

\(^1\) Skype is a software application that allows users to make voice and video calls over the Internet.
Dr Colin Perry, author of ‘The Narrativization of Actuality: Convergence of Form and Genre in Film & Television’, submitted as a PhD in 2000 at Deakin University and Screen Media Leader at Holmesglen College, expresses his views about the Facebook documentary and the rise of the citizen journalist.

Shoni Ellis, consultant to cultural organisations in mobile media, explains the benefits of using mobile devices in creating experiences for documentary projects.

Paul Callaghan, an independent writer, games developer and speaker at games festivals around the world, outlines how gaming and documentary could share the same environment, coming from the perspective of a games developer.

Deb Verhoeven, Professor and Chair of Media and Communication at Deakin University, discusses the new cultures of producers and producing based on a national study being conducted at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia.

Robyn Logan, Internet marketing and social media expert, discusses tools and processes of strong social media marketing campaigns and how these might work for documentaries.

Mike Jones, story consultant for Portal Entertainment and lecturer at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, explains how the ‘web series’ works and suggests that is the new way for emerging filmmakers to become recognised.

Dr Christy Dena, director of a transmedia consultancy company Universe Creation 101, shares her views on the world of transmedia.
These interviews form a substantive component of the research data gathered on this project. They provided me with insight into interactive platforms, opportunities, evolving processes and the changing craft of documentary making from the perspectives of practitioners who are successfully navigating and thus defining this changing terrain. The website provides extended edited excerpts of these interviews for the benefit of emerging documentary makers. This accompanying paper synthesises selected quotations from the interviews to support its investigation into current activity and processes in the emergent field of cross–platform and interactive documentary.

The other significant methodology in this project was practice–led research in the form of creating a cross–platform documentary as a case study. The result of this process is the website www.thejourneyofdocumentary.com, an interactive online documentary which has been in production for two years, and forms the balance of this submission. Having an actual project to work on during this research enabled me to understand first–hand the challenges and issues of making an interactive multiplatform documentary. It enabled me to develop my research further by putting the concepts and ideas I was learning directly into practice and therefore strengthening my understanding of the processes which also allowed me to integrate them for discussion further in this research.

**Findings**

A key finding is that: one thing that has changed significantly about documentary is the media through which we experience it, which I propose has a substantial impact on the content and audience engagement. Active audiences can actually have an impact on how stories are told; they also have personal or direct access to government/stakeholders in raising issues. Through examination of my research data, including my own practice–led research, I have found that the focus of the discussion is not or should not be on technology but
what audiences and filmmakers do with it. The storytelling is the most important aspect of the project; this part of the process remains the same; the part that changes is how the storytelling is told, and by whom, as audiences become in some instances equally as participatory in a project as the filmmaker.

Chapter 1, therefore, will look into a range of participative production practices and articulate some of the considerations producers face when making documentaries in new media forms and platforms using these practices. Case studies are used as a way to examine each of the participative production practices. This chapter also explores social media as a platform and the benefits of using social media for both the marketing of a project and the development. The objective of this discussion is to give the documentary filmmaker an opportunity to consider the possibility of exploring audience participation as part of the production process of their documentary. This chapter will also discuss how the documentary evolution created a revolution, and ask, “Are audiences the new wave of documentary filmmakers?”

Chapter 2 looks at the changing methods and considerations a producer/filmmaker now needs to be aware of as the documentary evolves. It will discuss how and why filmmakers are changing the way they have been producing their projects, starting with the new kinds of creative collaborations which seem to be replacing traditional crewing roles. The chapter examines new kinds of issues around budgeting, which add a challenge to the production process, as the lifespan of a documentary is almost indefinite. It then considers independent distribution and the online broadcaster as some of the new opportunities for filmmakers to take advantage of. Finally, the chapter finishes with a case study looking at my web series The Journey of Documentary, which looks into the challenges and opportunities that I faced, making a web series.
The Website

The primary benefit of presenting this research as an interactive web documentary is that it creates the opportunity to experience the ideas in action on an interactive platform – the ideas being explored about online media are conveyed through online media platforms. Further, through the website, the target audience for these ideas and this information has the opportunity to view each of the interviews from specialists in the documentary field and not be limited to written quotes. This access should enable the viewer to have a wider understanding of the issues presented.

The website is a work in progress and is being set up as a collaborative community-driven initiative, which makes it another effort to put the concepts uncovered in this research into practice. As the site develops and gains momentum, my hope for it is that it will become a place for emerging filmmakers to discuss issues they are facing and to reveal innovations they have created or found.

The paper and website do not prescribe any process for making a documentary; rather, they provide a forum for exploration and discussion of the form and potentially for creation of future innovations in documentary.
1. PARTICIPATIVE PRODUCTION PRACTICES

“The form must be the same, but the material may vary, and still the instrument may be equally good of whatever iron made.”  
(Plato 360 BC, 389 A)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will consider a range of participative production practices and articulate some of the considerations producers face when making documentaries in new media forms and platforms using these practices. Each of the participative production practices discussed is examined through a case study of a documentary made using an interactive process or technology.

A case study of The Virtual Revolution (BBC 2010) describes the process and impact of giving the audience access to raw footage and then including their cuts as part of the online storytelling.

Case studies on Notre Poison Quotidien (Marie–Monique Robin 2011) and One Millionth Tower (Katerina Cizek + friends 2011) each consider a specific piece of interactive technology and look at how that technology shapes storytelling and audience engagement.

Crowd sourcing of footage is considered as a production technique. This technique is generally practiced using two varying scenarios each of which will be looked at briefly. In the construction of 18DaysInEgypt (Jigar Mehta & Yasmin Elaya 2011), the footage is structured largely from user-generated content with the audience telling the story, where as the The Green Wave (Ali Samadi Ahadi 2010) uses crowd sourced material by integrating it into a project which is driven and authored by a producer who maintains control of the project.
Several examples of the collective approach are discussed with regard to ‘social impact’ documentaries, elucidating some of the opportunities for these documentaries to have much greater impact and nurture ongoing activism, but also shedding light on some of the costs in time and human resources of these processes. This section will also look at the collective approach in regards to bringing on board stakeholders, audiences and NGOs earlier in the process.

Having considered these variations on participative production practices, counter arguments are made by two highly esteemed documentary makers, Alan Rosenthal and Tom Zubrycki. Each of these filmmakers makes a case for continuing use of traditional methods in some instances or for particular purposes.

From there I look at how social media is being used to market documentaries, touching on Kony2012 (Jason Russell 2012). Social media being used to make documentaries as a way of managing time–critical subject matters is looked at through two films that are considered social media documentaries, Vaquita (Chris Johnson 2010) and Undroppable (Jason Pollock 2012), are using social media to help distribute their films because of the time limitations and constraints attached to making traditional documentaries.

Building tribes to help create a movement for a cause is looked at using Seth Godin’s views taken from his book Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us (2010). An award winning author and social media expert, Godin is suggesting that the notion of building tribes is not new but methods of building them online are. I look at Al Gore’s documentary The Climate Reality Project.org as an example of this shift of thinking.

Dr Colin Perry, a Screen Leader at Holmesglen College, and Michael Rabiger, a director of over 35 documentaries, counter an argument made by Simon Nasht, an acclaimed documentary producer and director, who is suggesting that because anyone can make a documentary the craft is at
risk. Perry challenges Nasht’s comment by stating that the term ‘documentary’ is misused and that ‘we can not afford to do that in the post modern era’. Rabiger adds that ‘documentary is no longer a product, but also a cultural process and metaphor’.

Finally, this chapter considers how social media has contributed to greater transparency within documentaries, making it difficult to hide facts and information from the audience as they now have the technology to cross-reference information that the media, governments and societies publish. I also discuss how many of the human rights issues being documented are by individuals recording events as they are unfolding and that with this type of filming comes a great responsibility to be documenting the truth.

### 1.1 THE PARTICIPATORY DOCUMENTARY

By accessing the advancements in technologies associated with the web, some documentary filmmakers have been experimenting with open source\(^2\) software and integrating it into their production practices, thus shifting audiences into the role of filmmaker. The participative approach has the potential of involving audiences from the pre-production process right through to distribution. For example, the producer may ask the audience for their opinions on story ideas, requesting inputs via blogs and tweets, at the development stage of a project. In some instances the production company may also release rushes\(^3\) from the film to audiences under a ‘permissive license’, which allows the audience member to use the content and redistribute through their own social networks, adhering to certain aspects of the production company’s license agreement (Open Translation Tools 2009).

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\(^2\) Open source software is software whose source code is published and made available to the public, enabling anyone to copy, modify and redistribute the source code without paying royalties or fees.

\(^3\) Rushes or dailies, the first print made of a day’s filming.
Having the audiences participate and become part of the production process, from the outset, opens up an opportunity for the audiences to become co-producers, and in some instances the director of their own documentary using shared content. The downloading of rushes, and editing process, all takes place online, made easy by free online editing software. The aspect of handing audiences production rushes is a very different approach to the traditional documentary approach. One aspect of handing audiences production rushes is the change of direction the story can take. It opens up the possibilities of having a different story told by different people, even though they all have access to the same rushes to work with, because each recombination of the original material creates different emphasis, perspectives, inclusions and exclusions of ideas. Does this hinder the original filmmaker's creative process, or does it add to it? It's a new practice and not something that many producers would have been persuaded to do in the past, when rushes were used in the final edit, and considered owned by the producer and never released for public re-manipulation.

The participatory documentary exposes the production process to an activity, which was not used in traditional documentary making. Audience contribution at the pre-production stages was never considered part of the craft of producing or documentary storytelling when the documentaries were made solely for one-way transmission on single screens.

In an interactive production process the filmmaker must be prepared for interactive critiquing of the content much earlier in the production phase, as opposed to at the end of the film’s release. This interaction could possibly change the documentary maker’s production by steering the project into a different direction, based on comments and feedback in the early stages. The producer does have the control, however, to disregard the feedback and continue on without any changes to the project, but at what price? If the producer takes on board the critique, does this win
them points with their potential audiences? The answers to these questions cannot be known with any absolute certainty but it is possible that this type of process is creating a new methodology, one which requires documentary makers to follow up by making adjustments to their films via requested suggestions from audiences, and publicly justifying decisions that were made.

When filmmakers consider using social media interaction as part of a production process, this sets up a platform for those interacting with the project to ‘be heard’. Listening to audience comments and ideas, and responding to them, can happen through different methods and technologies, some of which will be examined through the case studies below.

**Case Study: The Virtual Revolution**

In the following case study we see how audiences helped shape the outcome of the documentary *The Virtual Revolution* (BBC 2010) via taking part in the process. *The Virtual Revolution*, a four-part, one-hour documentary series for the BBC Two Channel, was a co-production between the BBC and Open University structured as a collaboration with audiences by encouraging them to participate. Its subject is the impact the World Wide Web has had since its creation.

The producers call it an ‘open source documentary’ which they define as having asked audiences to share views, debate themes, provide suggestions for questions that would be asked to interviewees and then offer comments and feedback to filmed interviews (the rushes). Communication took place via the production company’s website blog and Twitter sites where audiences were able to leave comments and feedback (Biddle 2010). The website was active long before shooting of the interviews began, and was composed of blogs from the filmmakers, story pathways and ideas. Social media was used during pre–production; for example, Twitter was set up to ask audiences to contribute to create a
title for the documentary, which was later created as a mash-up taken from both the audience suggestions and the producer’s.

During the production phase, there was less interaction with audiences in regards to scripts and stories, as this was set up during pre-production. The production team did, however, upload rushes to the site and were in constant contact with their audiences using Twitter whilst on locations, asking them if there were extra questions that should be asked to the subjects. The producers also asked their audiences for input in regards to interesting location shots, whilst they were trekking across Silicon Valley (Biddle 2010).

The editing process invited audiences to comment on the direction each edited episode was taking. The producers also offered audiences access to rushes from the series and provided information on their website on how to ‘make your own documentary’.

The image above displays the episodes as they appear on the BBC Two interactive documentary website, one of the platforms used for the series. The documentary also played out as a four-part, one-hour series broadcast on TV.
Even though *The Virtual Revolution* (2010) is participatory and is considered an ‘open source documentary’ by the producers, the producer and the production company still have full control of the final edit and output of the end product. Some might argue that this is not ‘open source’, as it is still controlled rather than left open without interference from anyone. Whether it is open source or not, the producers have managed to set up an instant audience for the film’s release and ensure the film’s longevity by involving the audience in some capacity. Each audience member who participated in the project was given a film credit\(^4\), which is in a sense a metaphor for giving them ownership of the project.

*The Virtual Revolution* (2010) and other documentaries now experimenting with the ‘open source/participatory documentary’ are taking advantage of the opportunities associated with using this technology in that it provides direct access to audiences. Giving audiences the opportunity to engage in an issue by contributing to ideas, making comments on suggested concepts and using the footage to cut their own documentaries also creates a distribution network for the film. Each audience member who contributes tells friends, who tell their friends, and the result is many followers who feel a sense of ownership when previously they were only able to watch.

The production team for a project like *The Virtual Revolution* (2010) offers a different model than the way a traditional documentary team would crew and operate. For example, the *The Virtual Revolution* documentary production team consisted of series producers, presenter, four directors of programme, one for each programme, four assistant producers for each programme, two multiplatform content producers, a researcher for programme and web experiments, an archive researcher and a media manager for all four programmes and multiplatform content, a web developer, and over 400 audience contributors to the project. Almost

\(^4\) Link to audience credit page [http://www.bbc.co.uk/virtualrevolution/credits.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/virtualrevolution/credits.shtml).
every member of the production team had a Twitter account and was encouraged to tweet during the production process. There is an obvious change of the roles as a result of the documentary being made for the online space, though not all roles have changed. The series producer, presenter and programme managers, as well as the researchers, remain the same in linear documentaries, but the addition and expansion of web developers and multiplatform content creators shows there is an adjustment that has taken place in the production process in response to an obvious need for possible collaborations with a different range of experts.

**Case Study: *Notre Poison Quotidien***

*Notre Poison Quotidien* (Marie-Monique Robin 2011) was created using open source software code, and invites audience feedback during the online screening. Initially made as a long-form documentary produced by ARTE to be screened on broadcast TV, it was repurposed and cut, and seemed a good fit for the web, as it had more good footage than could be used in a broadcast length documentary. *Notre Poison Quotidien* was made into a four-part series and it examines some of the complex science and conflicts that determine how chemical ‘safety’ is defined.

Each series includes direct links to Google News, Twitter and Wikipedia. The software used in the online version of this documentary is Popcorn.js\(^5\), which uses an HTML.5\(^6\) media framework designed for filmmakers and web developers. Popcorn.js helps to present information relevant to the documentary by linking to live feeds and information from the Internet whilst the video is being screened online.

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\(^5\) Popcorn.js is an HTML5 media framework written in JavaScript for filmmakers, web developers, and anyone who wants to create time-based interactive media on the web. Popcorn.js is part of Mozilla's Popcorn project.

\(^6\) HTML5 is a mark up language for structuring and presenting content for the web; [http://www.focus.com/fyi/wtf-is.html5/](http://www.focus.com/fyi/wtf-is.html5/).
In the image above, the video is screened on the left and is embedded into a website. To the right are the live web links, Google News, Wikipedia and Twitter. They are constantly changing to reflect what is playing in the video on the left of the screen, making it a time–based interactive documentary. This means the information presented on the right is relevant to the current time the audience is viewing it. Popcorn.js software draws on current live feeds and information uploaded to the Internet.

This documentary is being presented using social media interaction instantly and succinctly. The information that is linked to the video content can create a way for audiences to start researching topics and ideas raised by issues being documented whilst they are viewing it. This type of documentary using the Popcorn.js software allows for instant communication with audiences worldwide to share views and ideas. It sets up an effective way to build a campaign as it presents easy to use tools for audiences to become actively involved. This format of
Documentary openly exposes itself to audience critique by having live Twitter feeds associated with the content for all to see. Nothing is hidden, everything is exposed.

The challenge for the filmmaker is whether or not they want their film open and exposed to receive live Twitter feeds and comments. Another question is: How would they respond (or not) to a negative comment? This form of documentary offers a change in the craft of storytelling, as it is exposed to open comments directly from the audience whilst it is being screened. The pressure here for the filmmaker may be to tailor the film to suit the audience and hope for good feedback, rather than make a film that may receive some critique. A question this raises is: Does this also hinder the creative process and deviate from the story that a filmmaker may want to tell? Does it pressure them to move toward the perspectives of their active, though possibly niche audiences? These will be interesting questions to pursue in future when sufficient data is available to study.

Case Study: One Millionth Tower

One Millionth Tower (Katerina Cizek + friends /2011), an online interactive documentary that explores the way in which humans live within a vertical world in global suburbs, is another component of the Highrise series media projects produced by the National Film Board of Canada. This interactive documentary is pushing the boundaries of open source software by being one of the first open source 3D documentaries. It uses Popcorn.js and Web GL\(^7\), which enables 3D generated graphics to play within the browser. The story exists within a 3D setting, and uses Three.js\(^8\) software code which enables the audience to move around the scene on their screens, interacting with the active elements surrounding them, in ways that residents of this urban city would in order to change their world. Technically, the way this works is: the interactive

\(^7\) Web GL (Web Graphics Library) used for rendering interactive 3D graphics: http://www.chromexperiments.com/webgl/
\(^8\) Three.js is a lightweight cross-browser JavaScript library/API used to create and display animated 3D computer graphics on a Web browser.
documentary pulls in images from Flickr, street views from Google Maps and even real–time weather data from Yahoo. For example, when it rains in Toronto, which is where the documentary was filmed, you will see rain integrated on the image on your screen. Everything is linked through the Popcorn.js tool, which drives the changes in links and video content. Brett Gaylor, filmmaker and Mozilla lead on the Popcorn project, says, “This is the moment where web video grows up as an artistic medium. In the same way that earlier film pioneers experimented with new techniques like montage, we’re now seeing ‘web–made movies’ that pull in real time information from the web” (Thompson 2011).

Using interactive real time updates gives filmmakers different ways to engage with audiences by bringing them ‘virtually’ into the content of their film. Software such as Popcorn.js, and WebGL is extending the life of a documentary long after it has been made by linking real–time content to the documentary’s video. This will keep the documentary current and updated as the content that it is linking to will always remain as current as it is on the web.

“The result is a new form of cinema that lives and breathes like the web itself” (Thompson 2011).

“Telling stories in the digital landscape requires a different set of skills, from knowing what audiences are now engaging with, to knowing how and what to build for them. Interactive production methods require longer engagement by producers and production teams because they continue after broadcast” (Wilson 2012, p. 13).
The change in the way that documentaries can be told as seen in the above case studies takes the content totally away from the DVD, theatre and TV broadcast release model and places it online. The advancement of technology along with innovation in software development allows for the interactivity that has been created to make these documentaries. As a result, the traditional documentary filmmaker has opportunities to create and tell stories in a very engaging way but also has to relinquish some aspects of control of the project to the audience. The question the filmmakers need to ask themselves, before considering the participatory documentary as a process, is if they are ready to hand over some of the production practice to virtually unknown audiences. If so, how much? If the answer is ‘none’, they may then need to ask: How much audience, life span, income and relevance will their projects experience as a result of that decision?

1.2 THE CROWD–SOURCED DOCUMENTARY

The crowd–sourced documentary can be based on two varying scenarios; (1) the audience telling the story by uploading their own footage and becoming the filmmaker, or (2) material crowd–sourced and integrated into a project driven and authored by a producer.

Scenario 1: The producer puts out a call to the ‘crowd’ (audiences) as a way to source footage generated by the general public, which is also known as ‘user–generated content’⁹. The producer’s role becomes one of setting up the back end of the project, the website, and acting as the editor of the project, managing and sorting the content as it streams in from audiences. The result of the crowd–sourced process is that footage can be sourced from anywhere in the world. This creates opportunities for the producer to amalgamate global stories told by more than one

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⁹ User-generated content (UGC) video, discussion form posts, digital images, audio files, and other forms of media that were created by consumers or end-users of an online system or service and is publically available to other consumers and end-users.
source as, for example, with the Middle East uprising. This form of documentary is providing a diverse range of content than a traditional documentary would have had access to, because it is virtually impossible to have that many crew in place at the right time when an event is taking place, no matter how much money is available to spend. Producing this kind of footage does not require a cash outlay from the producer or production company, as the public who are filming it generously donates it. There is no paid cinematographer or sound recordist used as part of the crew. The production crew may consist of a producer, a researcher and a web developer.

**Case Study: 18DaysInEgypt**

*18DaysInEgypt* (Jigar Mehta & Yasmin Elaya 2011) is a crowd-sourced, cross-platform documentary, which is using user-generated content to build an interactive web documentary, a linear documentary and a location-based app around geo-tagged\(^{10}\) content, which allows users to find out what happened and exactly, where. It is based on a group storytelling environment, where one person starts telling a story, then the next person adds to the story as they witnessed it, and so on. The means in which *18DaysInEgypt* uses this method is by inviting participants to upload footage that was shot during the uprising to the website, allocating it day by day. It then asks the participants to invite their family and friends to add to their story by sharing the events that they witnessed using the group storytelling method. This ensures that almost every angle and aspect of the event is being captured and preserved. Each story page on the website has social media links and opportunities for the stories to be forwarded and distributed.

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\(^{10}\) Geotagging is the process of adding geographical identification to various media such as a photograph, video, website, and SMS messages. Geotagging can help users find location-specific information. It can also tell users the location of the content of a given picture or other media or the point of view and show some media platforms relevant to a given location.
The difference with this project is that it is entirely made by the people who were witnesses and recorded the actual events during the uprising in 2011 on hand-held devices/mobile phones. The role of the producer/filmmaker for the online version of this project is to manage the upkeep of the website, moderate it and encourage people to contribute.

This type of documentary does not have a time-slot restriction or story limit on the content; it can take as many stories as the public wishes to upload. Technology has allowed limitless capacity in cyberspace.

Image courtesy of 18DaysInEgypt

The image above shows the steps that participants take to upload media to the crowd-sourced interactive documentary *18DaysInEgypt*. This process is totally managed by the software that has been implemented as part of the website, so the producers/filmmakers are not having to upload and link thousands and thousands of stories. It has all been built into the website.
This image shows the interface of the web documentary *18DaysInEgypt*. The producers of this project realised that there were still thousands of media fragments still on cameras, mobile phones and on hard drives throughout Egypt and didn’t want to lose any of this unique content, so they launched a campaign using ‘crowd funding’\(^{11}\). The pledge was for $18,000; it raised $20,142 via 325 backers (investors). The money was used to send out young Egyptian journalists throughout Cairo, gathering the stories from the people during the uprising. The producers of this cross-platform documentary are using all of the devices that were present during the uprising as they would like the story to be told by the Egyptians who witnessed it, using footage, photos, emails, text messages, tweets and Facebook updates that were captured during this time (Mehta & Elayat 2012). Though the editor is still considered quite an important person in the process, an online interactive documentary like *18DaysInEgypt* is using a form of ‘crowd-editing’ to help the producers verify the material that will be selected to produce the linear documentary as part of this project (Carter 2011).

\(^{11}\) Crowd funding is a collective approach toward pooling of money and other resources, usually via the Internet, to raise funds to support films/projects initiated by other people.
Scenario 2: The material is crowd sourced and integrated into a project driven and authored by a producer who maintains control of the project. The producer in this instance maintains ownership and will put out a call for footage that may be used to create and form part of the project.

**Case Study: The Green Wave**

*The Green Wave* (Ali Samadi Ahadi 2010) an 80-minute documentary about Iran’s green movement uses crowd-sourced material with authored control by the producer/filmmaker. This film documents the dramatic events and feelings that people had during this revolution. Phone footage, blogposts, tweets and Facebook reports that were posted on the Internet during the revolution were included in the film.

Hundreds of blogposts were condensed and formed the narrative and thoughts of the two fictional animated characters used in the documentary to thread the story together. Interviews from prominent human rights campaigners and real footage of the revolution taken with mobile phones and cameras were interwoven throughout the documentary piecing together a day-to-day recording of events.


As recently as 2007, a producer/filmmaker would have used archival footage supplied by stock footage organisations, or put out the word via letters, emails, advertisements in papers and radio as a way of sourcing footage from the public. Most of the archival footage would also be supplied in some kind of tape format, which the producer would have to pay a fee to have digitised to a higher quality, preparing it for broadcast. The sourcing of footage has altered and has been sped up by social
media, making it easier to obtain footage from the public and in a format that can be easily integrated with the web. The footage does not have to be of a high-resolution if the documentary is made for the Internet. Technology used in mobile phones and movie cameras has a sufficiently high megapixel resolution and can create quality imagery, therefore no longer requiring the use of professional movie cameras.

1.3 THE SOCIAL IMPACT DOCUMENTARY AND THE COLLECTIVE APPROACH

Interactive documentaries also open up a variety of ways for audiences to engage and support social issues. They create pathways for social issues to be exposed to a larger audience at a faster pace. The participative process facilitates an immediacy of worldwide awareness and, in some cases, actually contributes to the social impact of the movement they are ‘documenting’. The social impact documentary relies on the active engagement and contribution of its audience/web-users as they use the web to integrate and create rallies for social change. Such films as The Cove (2009), Page One (2011), Food Inc (2008) and The Oasis (2008) all use social media networks to keep communicating strong messages whilst building activism around their causes. These are films that are not created only to be seen, but to encourage an audience to act in a concerted way toward bringing about particular social change.

Case Study: The Cove

The Cove (Louie Psihoyos 2009) has over 465,000 Facebook fans and 20,000 subscribers who receive email updates. Over 1,300,000 people played some kind of role in taking action against the slaughtering of dolphins in Japan, spreading the word via social media, making donations and writing to world leaders.
The Cove site is quite active and employs outside companies to manage the ongoing awareness and campaigning that the film was made to serve. The Cove (2009) engages Takepart.com to help them amplify the work they are doing and create ways to contact and connect to the community by providing the audience member with easy to use options; e.g., a simple click of a button will connect the user with communities wanting to make change. TweetDeck.com are engaged to manage the Twitter accounts of The Cove (2009). Fundraising schemes such as Call2Action.com help keep the online movement for social issue campaigns active by using viral marketing to raise awareness. The Cove (2009) is also using Zannel to spread the word. The Zannel service helps users share videos and images related to the campaign with their friends on Facebook and Twitter.

As the workload for social impact documentaries seems quite intense, how does a producer find time for other projects? How sustainable is this type of project and what types of networks need to be put in place to manage these processes? The answers to these questions are still evolving, and remain open for future researchers to consider. This paper does make reference to using ‘tribes’ as a suggestion toward helping filmmakers manage the workload, which is discussed further in this chapter.

Collaborations and authentic partnerships with NGOs, community groups and non–for profits are the fundamental ways that social issue documentaries seem to be engaging with and opening up possibilities of new audiences, and a way to break through and influence public policy and strengthen the social issue campaign (Schlaikjer 2011).

Working Films, for example, is a non–profit company working with communities, actively building campaigns around films. In 2010 it created an audience engaged youth–led national campaign called ‘I am Norm’, in support of a documentary about social inclusion for people with disabilities called Including Samuel (Dan Habib 2009). Working Films
launched a two-day workshop with national educators, students and disability rights advocates, calling for complete “social and educational inclusion of people with disabilities”. The website acts as the film’s hub, providing resources that support becoming an activist in this movement. For example, it is possible to download an Education Guide, a Take Action Guide, a Facilitators Guide, and a purchase pack, which includes the film on a DVD. The site also features a Resources page that provides material for an audience member to actively become a host of the ‘I am Norm’ presentation. As a supporter and activist of a cause such as ‘I am Norm’, an audience member can easily set up a campaign in support of the cause by following steps set up on the project’s website.

Robert West, co-founder of Working Films, says “it’s not necessarily about being an activist, as much as it is about bringing your film to the activist community, forming strong, legitimate relationships” (Schlaikjer 2011).

Robert Greenwald, an American film director/producer and political activist, has moved from the traditional model of documentary making and is using new skills, new tools, and his audience as active members of his crew. During a conference called ‘Making Documentary Matter’ (held at the Center of Social Media at the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C., in 2007), Greenwald talked about his notion that film does not make social change, partnerships do. He also proposed that, in order to get audience reach, you need to partner with grassroots organisations who can get your film watched by the people who will not just sit back and watch a film passively, but will take action. “Forgo the TV broadcasters and theatrical release if you want your film to have impact and movement”, says Greenwald.

Greenwald’s production company Brave New Films uses very unconventional ways to produce and distribute their films, devolving some of the workload to audiences.
For example, Brave New Films enlisted audience members as researchers. For their film *Outfoxed* (2004), they recruited 10 people to research. For their film *Walmart* (2005), they recruited 1,500 volunteers as field producers who shot footage of empty Walmarts around the country (Ginsberg 2007).

Greenwald is also using audiences to help in developing his projects, which appears to be a method of building audiences at the pre-production stages (Ginsberg 2007). This is a large shift in production thinking – a broadcast model of building an audience begins at the film’s completion, and, in that model, crew members are quite distinct from audience members in that they are highly specialised and hired for individual tasks.

Greenwald maintains that talking to activist groups and stakeholders is very important and that this should be done before filming starts, as doing so can also have a positive impact on the distribution of the film. Greenwald also suggests that the “key to successfully teaming with nonprofits is don’t ask what the nonprofits can do for you, rather ask what you can do for the nonprofits”. In Greenwald’s model, it is the non-profit organisation’s job to work for change, and the filmmaker’s responsibility to help them achieve that (Nisbet 2007).

Angelica Das, Associate Director at the Center for Social Media of the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C., also suggests that social impact documentaries need to have a strategy from the very start; as early as the film’s conceptualisation, there should be a social campaign in place. Jessica Clark and Barbara Abrash, from the same Center for Social Media, published a working paper called *Social Justice Documentary: Designing for Impact in 2011*, and did a study over several years using six award winning multiplatform social issue documentaries which had strong campaigns attached to their projects. The purpose of the study was to assess whether the documentaries produced social change, and to what extent. In their study, Clark and
Abrash are suggesting that, if the filmmaker’s objective is to create social change, social media is a tool for creating it before, during and after the film is made. This research also noted that social documentary issue campaigns take up to three years to develop and then there is a constant upkeep. The research does not address the question of how a producer with experience in making broadcast documentaries can accommodate the time and investment required to undertake these three-year campaigns, but it does refer to an approach that may be able to sustain it (Clark & Abrash 2011, p. 11).

The report Designing for Impact (p. 11) suggests that a strategic design plan be put in place, much like the product design plan, called ‘design thinking’, pioneered by design firm IDEO and currently used by large corporations and education institutions. The design thinking methodology is discussed in Chapter 2.

1.4 THE DISSENTING VIEW

This section will offer some aspects of an argument for continuing to make and broadcast documentaries without participative processes, as articulated by Alan Rosenthal, an established traditional documentary filmmaker living in Israel, and Tom Zubrycki, a renowned Australian documentary filmmaker. It seems, from discussion with these two highly esteemed and very experienced filmmakers, that not all methods and opportunities of interactive media and social media engagement during production are suitable for all documentaries or documentary makers.

Rosenthal refers to himself as a media philistine and says he is only interested in making films for television and the screen (theatre release). He says, “I want a broad number of people to see it, and I want them to see it in a decent way” (Rosenthal as quoted in Dionysus 2012). This comment suggests that Rosenthal considers online viewing to be a lower
quality option, and that he sees his audiences as mostly accessing documentary content by watching TV and going to the theatre.

A study conducted by Screen Australia, called ‘Beyond the Box Office – Understanding Audiences in a Multi-screen World’, seems to support Rosenthal’s perspective that the audience for his work is still watching TV. The Screen Australia research reveals that the amount of people in Australia watching free-to-air and subscription television hasn’t changed – it remained steady over the five years between 2006–2011. Cinema and console gaming, however, have slightly increased. DVD has slightly fallen but has been offset by the increase of online video viewing. The study did, however, highlight that the younger generation tended not to watch free-to-air television, and they have the highest participation rate across most screen platforms (Screen Australia 2011), which may mean that Rosenthal’s audience base in broadcast and theatrical release, could diminish as the population ages.

Rosenthal is not disputing that filmmakers should be considering using different platforms as a means to have films screened, but it’s not an area he is interested in exploring. Tom Zubrycki, on the other hand, also an established broadcast documentary filmmaker, is eager to learn about how to manage and access the digital platform and agrees that it is a positive move, but goes on to say that he could not do this with all of his films. For example, a major obstacle to participative production processes is that his characters usually request privacy during the production phase. This concern points directly to the possibility that different forms, genres and approaches to documentary may either be unsuitable for participative processes or that the processes associated with interactive, participative or social media documentary making thus far are not the ones which accommodate, for example, personal portrait documentaries, poetic or aesthetically-driven documentaries or documentaries driven by expert knowledge.
Most of Zubrycki’s films are based on social issues, which could conceivably be adapted to creating focused campaigns around them in the early stages and based on methods proposed by Greenwald (above) for creating greater awareness for documentaries. Zubrycki, however, chooses to comply with the wishes of his characters and wait until the film is completed before he starts marketing and exposing the underlying issues. Though this may create some compromise for the film’s success, Zubrycki stays true to his subject’s requests rather than risking the privileged access his subjects give him into their lives (Zubrycki as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

1.5 THE SOCIAL MEDIA DOCUMENTARY

Social media has made it easier for the filmmaker to reach audiences and spread the word about their film, as seen with many of the films discussed earlier in this chapter and as seen with Kony2012 (Jason Russell 2012). Many aspects of this documentary have been and will long continue to be scrutinised for their social, political, cultural, ethical and filmmaking craft implications. However, the project is raised herein solely as an example of using social media to create mass awareness around a project. This is only one aspect of the Kony2012 phenomenon that I will touch on.

Kony 2012 (2012) is, ostensibly a 29 minute documentary campaigning against Joseph Kony, Leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) wanted for war crimes and responsible for the death and abduction of over 30,000 children. In less than one week from the date of its release, it was watched more than 100 million times on YouTube. ‘It became the most viral video in history with more than 100 million views in just six days’ (Wasserman 2012).
In Australia *Kony2012* (2012) went from social media to mainstream National TV in a matter of days. Network Ten broadcast the half-hour film uninterrupted saying it had responded to tweets and the ‘*Kony fication on our Facebook page*’ (Rourke 2012).

Social media was responsible for bringing *Kony2012* (2012) to the networks attention and in one sense handed the network an opportunity to screen to an existing audience base. Channel Ten dropped its normal schedule and aired *Kony2012* (2012) in a primetime slot to a total average audience of 647,000 among 16–39 year olds (Mumbrella 2012).

Jason Russell, Invisible Children’s chief filmmaker apparently designed *Kony2012* to become extremely popular by focusing on ‘its target audience; teenagers and twentysomethings browsing Facebook and Twitter,’ says Claire Suddath, a journalist from Bloomberg Businessweek.com. Suddath also states that Russell added a feel–good philosophy about the interconnectedness of society, scored the film with a dubstep song and put his young son Gavin in the film as a way of getting a larger audience reaction online, she says that the Invisible Children’s director of idea development, Jedidiah Jenkins stated that, ‘if you wanted to get something watching online, you either have to put funny cats in it or little kids’ (Suddath 2012).

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12 *Invisible Children*, is an organization founded to bring awareness to the activities of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Central Africa, and its leader, Joseph Kony. The group seeks to put an end to the practices of the LRA, which include abductions, and abuse of children.

13 *Dubstep* is a form of electronic music that combines heavy bass with samples, synthesizer, keyboard, turntables and hard-hitting drum tracks.
Social media is also being used to help produce films that have a ‘time critical’ factor attached to them. The following two projects will consider ‘time critical’ elements. ‘Time critical’ elements or stories in these cases are stories that require, in the filmmaker’s view, immediate public attention.

The creators of the following two projects may have felt that the impact of their projects would be substantially diminished or even rendered irrelevant if they were to take the time to write scripts, find crews, apply for funding, wait for funding announcements and so on before beginning to make their documentaries. Social media and technology have provided both these filmmakers with the flexibility of choosing to produce their films using platforms and methods that best suited each cause. There are distinct advantages for these particular projects to making use of interactive, participative or social media options; for example, significant reduction of time between conceiving an idea and finding the audience for that idea.

However, these options can also mean that the filmmakers need to fund the projects themselves and/or look for alternative funding options such as crowd funding during the production of their film. Using crowd funding still requires a lot of work from the producer in order to gain community attention and get people to make donations. So, it is possible that, for the producer, the savings of time and energy realised by communicating directly with audiences are offset by the extra expenditure of time and energy spent crowd-sourcing money and raising public awareness. The impact of this trade-off on producers may be part of future inquiries into the craft of documentary making.
Case Study: Vaquita

The documentary *Vaquita* (Chris Johnson 2010) is a film about the vaquita, the desert porpoise, a small cetacean living in the northern reaches of the Gulf of California, Mexico, which is on the edge of extinction. The filmmaker felt that he could not waste time in making a traditional documentary for this project as the ‘vaquita’ was quickly becoming extinct and he needed to act on the issue immediately. The documentary that was created is an interactive website made in seven parts and reliant entirely on social media to market and promote it. In a recent blog post on the website, Johnson’s asked, “*Can social media save a species?*” and commented on how “*Social media is a great ally during the production of a project, the marketing of it, and potentially keeping the issues addressed in your film in the media for a long time after someone has watched it*”. “*I believe that you never finish making a documentary film; it can be an ongoing development*” (Hotz 2010).

The image above displays the interface for the *Vaquita* (2010) web documentary. The documentary is accessed by selecting webisodes which are sequentially numbered 1 to 7 and titled based on their content, making access to each part of the series quick and easy. The front page of the web documentary also features the latest comments from audience’s expressing their concerns for the vaquita and their thoughts on the web documentary.
Case Study: Undroppable

Undroppable (Jason Pollock 2012), called a ‘social media documentary’ by its filmmakers, sheds light on the high school dropout rates in the United States of America. The aim of the documentary is to use social media to tell the stories of students and communities that deal with high dropout rates and to create a campaign to educate the voters and politicians about the issue by using social media. The filmmakers wanted to make sure the film was going to be ready to launch in time for the 2012 American election. The project’s social media campaign and website focus is on supporting the schools that have been selected for the filming.

The filmmakers engaged ‘Get Schooled’ to launch the social media aspect of the project which would coincide with the development of the film and provide them with access to schools and students. Footage was uploaded to the website which served as the central hub for the film and the broader social media aspect of the project. A full–length feature film is being produced as a result of the footage that was captured at each school, and will also be ready to screen in time for the 2012 elections. Each platform – social media, website and film, will direct audiences to the other platforms so that they can become directly involved, gathering more detailed information and experiencing characters through the various platforms. In this way, each platform augments the impact of the others.

Image courtesy of http://undroppable.com/ The Undroppable website interface shown above, features stories in the form of written posts and video clips told by students.
Johnson makes an interesting statement in saying that a documentary project can be ongoing and in development; as a social impact issue may never be resolved, therefore it needs the constant input by activists serving the cause and building support and awareness around it. The documentary may catalyse attention to the social issues and can keep developing with the cause. The filmmaker may need to decide if they wish to continue fighting the cause as this might require them to keep updating and adding new content to their documentary indefinitely, which, of course, would require further funding and time. How feasible and sustainable is this type of business model? If the documentary was handed over to the community advocating the cause, could this solve the issues of better management and feasibility of the project? Are filmmakers prepared to do this?

1.6 THE IDEA OF BUILDING A TRIBE

This section will look at an idea articulated by Seth Godin, author of the book *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us* (2009), that online communities are comparable to ‘tribes’ and that actively developing these ‘tribes’ is a way to foster audiences for projects.

The word ‘tribe’ is used by Godin to describe people joining and connecting as a result of common interests. In his book, Godin illustrates how building tribes has been part of our nature for millions of years and how now the Internet has eliminated the barriers of geography, cost, and time. As a result of the Internet, tribes are growing and expanding around the globe, connecting people and getting them to do things that they enjoy together. Godin believes that it is tribes, not money or factories, that can change our world, because people are not being forced against their will, but because they are wanting to connect and are aligning with like minded people. Godin argues that the “Internet has ended mass marketing and revived a human social unit from the distant
past: tribes. Founded on shared ideas and values, tribes give ordinary people the power to lead and make big change”. Presenting his concept of ‘tribes’ at the TED Talks Conference in Long Beach, USA, in 2012, he argues that “we as people want to find something worth changing and then assemble tribes, that spread the idea and keep spreading the idea which becomes far bigger than ourselves, it becomes a movement” (Godin, TED Talks 2012). He goes on to say “that it’s not about having every single person join your tribe but rather finding people who care enough about your idea or your project and want to join you in creating change”. He argues it’s about finding the true believers, not the masses who may not be prepared to help and follow you into your quest. The tribe can be a very effective tool as it acts as the filmmaker’s ‘word of mouth’ and helps promote the film, raise awareness and can even create movements supporting the issues documented in the film.

An example of this is when Al Gore sought to create change in the world by using his project The Climate Reality Project (2011). He created a movement using thousands of people around the world that could give his presentation for him, sharing in the cause and covering more ground than he ever could on his own. “The Climate Reality Project has more than 5 million members and supporters worldwide. It is guided by one simple truth: The climate crisis is real and we know how to solve it” (Climate Leaders 2011).

Gore founded The Climate Reality Project, developed a tribe around it by finding people that really had a belief in what the project was trying to achieve, and then got them to join the movement. He developed a tribe around his idea, which freed him up to work on other projects. This type of production model offers a solution to Johnson’s comments in saying that a documentary project can be ongoing and in development, as a social impact issue may never be resolved, therefore needing constant input of which the filmmaker is unable to continue supporting.
Godin uses the image above as an example based on four principles that can lead to change based on his ‘tribes’ concept. He says that in order to create change you need to reach out and start by: (1) Telling a Story – to people who want to hear it; then (2) Connect a tribe of people who are desperate to be connected to each other (meaning there are many people who care about the same issues but are not connected); (3) Lead the movement – people need to have a leader, which in turn will (4) Make Change.

This concept of the ‘tribe’ creates a platform for the filmmaker to become a leader, setting themselves up with groups of passionate supporters. These supporters may become strong followers of all the films that the ‘leader/filmmaker’ produces and remain loyal for as long as the filmmaker keeps making films. The benefits of a loyal group of supporters are self-evident, but this structure also puts pressure on filmmakers: they have to keep producing films that their tribes of followers are going to find interesting in order to sustain and nurture the group’s loyal and active engagement.
1.7 DOCUMENTARY EVOLUTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA REVOLUTION

The Internet creates a space for the consumer of content to be able to gather information at an extremely rapid rate, analyse it, assemble it and output it, to whoever is connected. In this instance the consumer also becomes the documentary maker, the distributor, and the programmer, as they forward the content onto other audiences via social media networks.

Michael Rabiger, a director of over 35 documentaries, says, “Who could have imagined that the phone camera, meant to document our children at the zoo, would help trigger social revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa? Or that, by propagating feelings, evidence, and opinions, innocuous websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube would somehow mobilise protest and topple dictatorship?” (Rabiger 2011, p. 10).

Such devices as the phone camera, which were originally developed for family happy snaps as stated by Rabiger, are creating some concerns with filmmakers who believe that the craft of storytelling may be at risk.

Do we need to draw the line between a professional who has spent years honing their skills and the new kid on the block who is producing content at rapid rates via a mobile device?

Alan Rosenthal, an acclaimed writer/director/producer of documentary, believes that easy access to phone cameras and digital technology means that people are not taking the time to make well-researched documentaries; he argues that this is one of the dangers that the craft of storytelling is facing: “people are not spending time researching their ideas, when researching is two-thirds of the project, before you should even consider going into production” (Rosenthal as quoted in Dionysus 2012).
Though Rosenthal’s concerns are quite valid and it is possible that the danger with new technologies may bring about a shallow form of storytelling, we should also bear in mind that the content being created using mobile devices in some instances is out of a deeper concern for humanity rather than a quick way to tell a story.

Simon Nasht, a producer and director of documentaries such as The Bridge (2007), Addicted to Money (2010), How Kevin Bacon Cured Cancer (2008), and Dick Smith’s Population Puzzle (2010), believes that making documentaries is a business and one, which comes with a powerful force for creating change. He, like Rosenthal, argues that, “when anyone can make a documentary about anything, who is to say what matters anymore? Editing software such as Apple’s iMovie which includes a template can make any old rubbish home video into a slick looking theatrical trailer”, adding that, “warning bells go off as this type of filmmaking is putting the craft in danger of becoming just another $1.99 app” (Nasht 2012, p. 7).

Rabiger, on the other hand, argues that documentary is no longer just a product and that it has now become a cultural process and metaphor. He also states that people are becoming active as has been proven in Egypt, Yemen and Libya, in knowing “that they can do something when something important is happening” (Rabiger 2011, p. 10). He also states that, from the beginning, documentary makers have tried to inspire people to take action in causes, by making films that exposed injustice. He also argues that documentary has taken a long path before transpiring into the direction it has taken recently. And although technology does play a part in its ascension, he says that “the documentary spirit, unconsciously applied, has activated democratic ideals on a grand scale” (Rabiger 2011, p. 13) and that it is the determined community action that “social activists among documentarians have only dreamed of” (Rabiger 2011, p. 16).
Dr Colin Perry, author of *The Narrativization of Actuality: Convergence of Form and Genre in Film & Television* (PhD Thesis, 2000, Deakin University) and Screen Media Leader at Holmesglen College, supports Rabiger’s argument in stating that the term ‘documentary’ has changed. In his opinion, to draw boundaries and label something as documentary and other media as ‘not documentary’ is something that “we cannot afford to do in the post modern era”, (Perry as quoted in Dionysus 2012). What we are dealing with, he says, is an image or a sound functioning in a documentary manner. He says that when we are dealing with social media in the content of YouTube and Facebook we have to ask “are these clips documentary in their function?” rather than “can we apply the tag of documentary to these clips or can we draw a box around them?”. He goes on to say that documentary is a descriptive term of what exists, and “if it’s documenting reality, if it’s documenting actuality, then we can call it documentary”. By his definition, a lot of visual material available on social media is in fact documentary (Perry as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

Perry also argues that ever since the invention of the portable camera there has been conflict between “documentary as the professional practice and documentary as the statement by the individual”, and very obviously social media is currently being used extensively, he suggests, as the statement by the individual, which, he goes on to say, “is currently a powerful democratic force in the world”. For example, the Facebook revolution in Egypt used social media as the catalyst which brought about enormous social change. “I heavily doubt that a one hour documentary”, he says, “screened in a cinema or on television would have had the same kind of impact”. He asks, “is that not the goal of documentary, to do that to make change and impact on society, to have some sort of social credibility and meaning?”. He states that, if a filmmaker is making a business out of the craft, it is totally irrelevant to what the idea of documentary is: making an income and structuring a business plan and a career is not what documentary is about. He says that documentary makers in the industry tend to get a bit precious and want to protect their
Perry challenges the producer/director role and talks about the shift from director control to group collaboration, as, for example, multiple clips are posted onto group Facebook pages, shifting the ‘audience’ from a viewing position to one of participation. He suggests that this is a vital change for documentary, that the absent director/producer is replaced by the Facebook page manager. Every time someone hits the ‘share’ button, the film is distributed (Perry as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

Documentary production techniques in general seem to be bringing about a diverse fusion of approaches and methods toward engaging and utilizing new technologies and screen possibilities. This moves the craft of making and distributing documentary into a whole new area: the Internet is being used to make documentaries by communities feeding and uploading content, and linking audiences into communities, groups or even ‘tribes’ on Facebook.
As stated by Rabiger and Perry, shouldn’t we be celebrating that communities are taking active approaches toward challenging the status quo for the betterment of their existence, and if this means that documentaries are made quite quickly and succinctly in order to create change, should that not be seen as a victory and triumph of the human spirit? If the mobile camera is able to break down boundaries that have been challenging filmmakers for years, in regards to funding and broadcasting methods, and filmmakers are able to pick up their phones and film an interesting subject which can be distributed online instantly, isn’t that something we should be celebrating?

1.8 TRANSPARENCY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Looking at a modern example, the ‘Arab Spring’ uprising was documented in real time, using social media across multiple platforms, and could have possibly played out as a propaganda story, had the technology not been in place.

The Egyptians were using mobile devices to capture and upload content such as video, images and audio to Facebook, and as a result were able to gather many people into one place, at the same time creating awareness throughout the world and building momentum toward what became a revolution.

Social media was used as the tool in support of providing enormous transparency for the world to be able to witness what was happening from the perspective of those on the ground. Egyptian Filmmaker Wael Omar, in an interview with DOX magazine, stated that the Egyptians became citizen journalists using Facebook and Twitter as the media to carry the message: “there’s an overall feeling that the media is not treating us fairly, and so we’re the only ones that can actually do the work on the ground and be honest about it” (Sevcenko 2011, DOX, p. 13).
As a result, greater transparency was able to be achieved using social media to document events and as an information-gathering resource. One of the changes in documenting human rights abuses has been that the individuals involved are creating the documentary records of events as they are unfolding. They no longer have to rely on a ‘filmmaker’ to be available the moment of the event, in order to document the story. One person, holding one phone, can now achieve this.

Rabiger says “the positive result of this is that we the people now have an unstoppable freedom of exchange, one that triggers a greatly enlarged process of collective processing and decision-taking. The losers on the new freeway are the power structures that previously controlled what their public knew. Internet freedom threatens governmental ministries, national security arms, global manufacturing, property or finance corporations, broadcasting and advertising, companies, religious and political pressure groups, owners of newspapers and broadcasting networks and the shareholder and stakeholder organisations of all these institutions” (Rabiger 2011, p. 14).

The line between creator of documentary and subject of documentary is much more blurry than it was when people were consumers of content and had no real access to the means of capturing images and even less access to the means of distributing them. The immediacy that social media offers helps stimulate an issue and can cause uproars as we have seen in the Middle East. With this freedom comes great responsibility and based on the power of social media the responsibility lies with the individual. To be tempted to exploit this technology and create situations of danger and chaos to humanity certainly is a possibility and one that needs to be somehow monitored. A filmmaker needs to take full responsibility and be accountable when making a film about an individual or an issue.
Are we seeing the documentary makers of this new age? Or has the technology opened up an entire new world of storytellers who are documenting their individual perception of truth, and, as stated by Rosenthal and Nasht, opening up a wave of documentaries about anything and everything without structure?

Who is held accountable in this new form of documentary making?

**SUMMARY**

This phase of the evolution of documentary is distinguished by the opportunity the viewer has, in some cases, to interact in a very personal way and connect with the social issues that are the subjects of some documentaries. The software that is being developed for the Internet is providing audiences with the capabilities of becoming active in causes, debates and the creation and distribution of images and information. The result of this shift in audience participation is the opportunity for producers to start thinking about different ways to engage with their audience by creating innovative interactive projects.

The manifestation of these changes is seen in the case study *The Virtual Revolution* (2010) where the audience is invited to participate by inputting their ideas, providing feedback on rushes and also making suggestions about what questions to ask. This type of participation from the audience member changes the way a filmmaker thinks about their project by allowing some room for the audience’s point of view and input, even to the point of asking: ‘What type of project is worth filming?’.

In the case study of *Notre Poison Quotidien* (2011), there is software being developed and used which allows for documentary footage to be updated in real time. Using this software changes the documentary crafting process by requiring filmmakers to devise structures that will accommodate new information and ideas being brought into their documentary project throughout its life.
The crowd-sourced documentary in the case study, *The Green Wave* (2010) explores the scenario of material being crowd sourced and then integrated into a documentary giving the producer/filmmaker ownership and control of the project, where as *18DaysInEgypt* (2011), is made up of footage, images, sounds, emails and text messages produced entirely from audiences. This type of production adjusts the craft by turning the filmmaker into the person who needs to stimulate the process, drive the project, develop the website in order to keep the content moving.

The social impact documentary process is using the collective approach by bringing on board NGOs, community groups and building an activist approach long before the film has started production. Though this may seem like a good way to build a campaign and an audience around a film before and during production, not all social impact films can rely on this model, as the privacy of the subject in these stages of production, as argued by Tom Zubrycki, is far more important. Filmmakers in such instances may need to assess their subjects and make them aware of the level of exposure that is connected to a campaign that becomes active before it is distributed.

The research highlights how social media is being used to not only create mass awareness as seen with *Kony2012* (2012) but also using social media to make a documentary. In the case studies of both *Vaquita* (2010) and *Undroppable* (2012), the filmmakers chose to make their films using social media as the subject matters were time critical and needed to be produced quickly. There was no time to wait for funding and distributing the film via the festival circuits or to look for a broadcaster. This change to the production process requires the filmmaker to source crowd funding or look toward alternative means. Producers need to be ready to develop fast and effective means of communication using social media to spread the word.
The influence that can be generated by having a tribe associated with a filmmaker can create continued support for the cause and an ongoing relationship with the audience (tribe).

As these changes take effect, a project shifts from the filmmaker’s control into the audience’s control, creating a relationship of colleagues rather than one of viewer/filmmaker.

Social media is a tool that is playing a considerable role in the immediacy of circulating social issues based on freedom of expression through sharing of information – whether considered ‘documentary’ or not, this is a very powerful tool and one that should be treated with care.
2. CHANGING METHODOLOGIES

“You cannot solve a problem from the same consciousness that created it. You must learn to see the world anew.” Albert Einstein.

INTRODUCTION
Chapter 2 looks at the changing methodologies and the new role of the producer. It surveys the different viewpoints put forward by the interviewees for www.journeyofdocumentary.com to reveal how varied the different practitioners’ ideas are on the role and function of a producer in online interactive documentary.

Next, a process known as ‘design thinking’ is described by drawing on research conducted by the Center for Social Media at the School of Communication, American University, Washington, D.C., and compared, step by step, to a production process for traditional methods, which has been articulated by documentary maker and professor Michael Rabiger. My commentary on this section describes the benefits to the documentary maker by engaging with design thinking.

The collaborations that a producer/filmmaker needs to consider as a result of working across different platforms are also discussed in this chapter. The point I am making here is that a producer doesn’t really need to upskill in every area when working across platforms; what they need to be aware of is what each platform’s function is and how to best connect with their audiences through particular platform capacities. What I will argue is that the producer needs to develop a common language for collaboration and to understand the technical language and culture that comes with each platform before committing to a collaborative project.
Budgeting challenges seem to be one of the results of the prolonged lifespan of an interactive online documentary project. Filmmakers are faced with open-ended projects and locked-off budgets. I discuss how development of ‘tribes’, as outlined in Chapter 1, may be a possible solution for this new kind of budget issue.

The independent distribution model is compared to the traditional distribution model by DIY distribution expert Peter Broderick, who argues that the recoupment chain is opening up for the filmmaker who takes the challenge. This argument is further reinforced by veteran documentary filmmaker Bob Connolly who discusses his recent experience of self-distribution with his documentary *Mrs Carey’s Concert* (2011).

The online broadcaster is looked at briefly as an example of the varying opportunities available to filmmakers. As stated by Mike Jones, a lecturer at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, the web series is becoming recognised as the new calling card for emerging filmmakers, as audiences migrate to watching and sharing content via online carriers such as YouTube.

And, finally, I present my web documentary *The Journey of Documentary* (2012) as a case study, looking at the challenges I faced and the opportunities that were realised as a result of making a web series.
2.1 THE SCREEN PRODUCER

Sue Maslin, a documentary producer whose credits include *Japanese Story* (2003), *Hunt Angels* (2006), *The Edge of the Possible* (1998), and *Re-Enchantment* (2010) has migrated her work to the online space and uses the term ‘screen producer’ to describe her role. Maslin produces content across different screens: cinema, TV, Internet/online and the iPhone. She says that, basically, the fundamentals of producing have stayed the same, including development of an idea, building teams and financial resources, but the process varies depending on the platforms on which you are working.

Producers, however, are not rapidly embracing the online environment and Maslin believes that this may be because there is a “*notion that a traditional producer’s skills are not transferable*” (Maslin as quoted in Dionysus 2012). She says that, once a producer starts to work in the digital media space, they are working with team members/collaborators who are digital natives\(^{14}\) and are accustomed to working extensively in this environment which consists of different methodologies, budgeting, scheduling procedures and business models. So, in fact, the learning curve is steep and experienced producers need to engage with it if they wish to work in this environment. But Maslin suggests that the team you put together will have the capacity to realise and create the ideas that will work. If the collaborators are experts in their field, they hold the technical know-how and the producer’s main role is to make sure there is effective communication between all team members and stages of the project. Producers need to understand how each digital component and platform works, but they don’t need the technical expertise to build or create these components themselves.

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\(^{14}\) A digital native is a person who was born during or after the general introduction of digital technologies and, through interacting with digital technology from an early age, has a greater understanding of its concepts.
Deb Verhoeven, Professor and Chair of Media and Communication at Deakin University, on the other hand, argues that a recent survey she conducted with producers in Australia resulted in her team suggesting that a specialised producer position is required. Rather than up-skilling and having one producer learn a variety of different skills and vocabularies, Verhoeven says that it’s better to have each producer focus on a role that they specialise in. For example: one producer might be experienced in working with talent and film crews, so this should be their specialised role; another producer might have strengths in working with legals and financials and should take the role of dealing with funding bodies and financiers; and a producer with skills in marketing and development could then focus on working in areas of cross-platform. In this model, all these producers should be working together as a team rather than singularly. Verhoeven suggests we should streamline the producer’s skills and think about building production teams around those skills.

Producer/director Robert Connolly’s approach to working across different platforms is to engage with collaborators, along the lines of the model that Maslin suggests. R. Connolly suggests that collaborators bring to the project their own set of skills and expertise that the producer does not need to learn and crowd their minds with. He has been working with collaborators on many of his projects and says that this is one of the things he really enjoys about his work. R. Connolly suggests that producers, directors and filmmakers still need to learn how to work within the different platforms, as he experienced when he built the prototype for Warco the docu-game, but that their knowledge of these platforms serves to inform their process with applying their skills from filmmaking to the new platform. For example, he had to learn how to direct characters within a game. “Some of the craft still needs to be up-skilled in order to understand how to relate it into other forms. Directing may still be directing, but the process is different and so is the way in which the roles
are shared; the director is not the main person on set” (R. Connolly as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

Jennifer Wilson, a director of The Project Factory (a digital production company based in Sydney) suggests that telling stories in online interactive forms takes a different set of skills than other types of storytelling. “You have to know how to build something where you really don’t always know what the participant will do next”. She says that it is important for the producer to know the device that their audience is using, as this changes the way they engage with the content. Experimenting with digital media is an important part of the process, says Wilson, and not getting it right the first time is not so bad. As with traditional documentary filmmaking, hours of footage are shot and sometimes it is only in the edit that the story starts to unfold. Similarly, according to Wilson, the process with digital production includes trial and error in the concept, design and even the content (Wilson 2012, p. 13).

Thinking about which platforms to use may change as the filmmaker’s project starts to develop. “Early thoughts on a project might include a game or a mobile app, but as time (and budget) moves on – these might give way to a simpler website.” (Wilson 2012, p. 13).

As producers slowly migrate to the digital space, there are many that are still strongly grounded to work in the linear long-form traditional space. Rosenthal, known for making docu-dramas, says that he will only make long-form traditional documentaries, as he believes that these types of films lose their quality and essence when reduced to being viewed on a 2 × 2 inch screen (Rosenthal as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

Documentaries are made by varying people who take their own approaches based on what suits their temperament and how they wish to explore the story. Maslin and R. Connolly are both producers who have diversified as a result of the technology that now exists and are making
projects across varying screens, engaging varying audiences using a range of collaborators to accomplish this. Rosenthal, on the other hand, enjoys making films about historical moments and prefers to make the long-form documentary as he takes pleasure in watching them on a large screen. Verhoeven argues that we should be considering a range of producers working on different aspects of the projects based on their strengths and skill sets. She also believes that producers need to start working in a more tactile approach, as is discussed in the next section.

2.2 PRODUCER A VERSUS PRODUCER B

A Theory by Deb Verhoeven

During an interview with Deb Verhoeven, she outlined her Producer A and Producer B theory. She categorises producers into two slots: Producer A and Producer B. In her “tactile approach”, she says that Producer A thinks that they are embracing the digital and being productive in new ways – the first thing of the day they do is check their emails, make a call to their funding agency, have meetings, develop products for the conventional distribution model then process onto DVD. They would also have an online website and a possible Facebook page. And this she states is probably as much as they would do in terms of engaging with the digital. Producer B uses the digital to completely change and reframe the way they work. They don’t operate from a single location, they spread their work around the globe. They don’t operate on a single timeframe, they work on a 24/7 basis. She states that they would use the web not just to promote their work but also to research it and work out where the demand is. They use tools such as Google Search to gauge levels of momentum around topics and themes. They may put out web properties to test their ideas, commercialise them, and see if they work, and this may result in turning a project into a film or using it as a web property.
Producer B, as per Verhoeven’s research, states clearly that they are really embracing the digital landscape and using the web to create a different way of telling stories, not only by using its tools and open source technologies but by integrating their projects into different format and forms, thinking about the screens that audiences are viewing content on and creating projects for those screens. As stated by Verhoeven, “instead of producers asking what can the digital do for me, they should be asking how does the digital change everything for me; think of it as an opportunity to completely reframe the way we work in terms of time and space, so it’s not just about taking things to a new platform, it’s about thinking, shifting what used to come first and pushing it somewhere else and completely taking on the opportunity for a more fluid kind of practice. What multiplatform can do for us is allow us to engage with segmented audiences, which are the reality of marketing product now in the 21st century, to use audiences to drive those projects we want to push into particular types of formats. Use a tactical approach for producing each project based on its own merits. Looking at different forms of funding avenues rather than just hoping that funding bodies will fund your project. For example, crowd funding, philanthropic, use the web to commercialise your product” (Verhoeven as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

Maslin suggests that the fundamentals of producing have stayed the same, and that producing is producing. Some of the aspects that do change, she says, are when a producer is working across different platforms. Whereas Verhoeven suggests that producers need to work in a more tangible manner, and start thinking ‘digital’, which means shifting their ideas about what they already know about producing and start thinking more tactile. She suggest that producers can work more effectively 24/7 by setting up structures that will allow for this to happen and bringing a more fluid approach to their practice. She also suggests that producers should be using the Internet to gauge what platforms audiences are viewing content on and making projects for those platforms. R. Connolly also suggests that making product for audiences
based on which platforms audiences are migrating to is a smart way to build a business, as he observed when making his docu-game Warco.

2.3 DESIGN THINKING VS THE TRADITIONAL METHODOLOGY

Design Thinking, as described by Tim Brown in an article from Harvard Business Review (Brown 2008), found its roots in an approach that Thomas Edison continually used when creating innovations. Apparently Edison’s ability lay in the way he was able to understand how people would want to use what he made, and his focus was on engineering toward that vision. His ability lay in the understanding and consideration of the user’s needs and preferences. “Design Thinking uses a human-centered design ethos, in that it is a direct observation of what people want and need and what their likes and dislikes are about the way particular products are made, packaged, marketed, sold and supported”, says Brown (Brown 2008).

Design Thinking is an iterative approach and is directed toward a proposed solution; it is solution focused and it has been suggested as a helpful tool that can offer filmmakers another way to think about research and evaluation of their project in order to gain a greater impact for their film. The research conducted by the Center for Social Media, called Designing for Impact, goes on to say that product design, where design thinking is mostly used, is said to share many similarities to social issue documentary making in that it is centred on storytelling around issues of culture and people. To understand and plug into this model of thinking, the filmmaker needs to reassess their current approaches and almost redefine their production methodology (Clarke & Abrash 2011).

Application of design thinking to social impact documentary making begins with the premise that social impact documentaries need to be continual and ongoing in their nature if they are to have any success at sustaining an issue. This puts a lot of pressure on the producer. It
increases their workload and requires that new relationships and collaborations be formed. In response to these pressures, I propose that design thinking may be useful. It seems to be a sensible, structured framework that has been proven to work for other organisations toward a successful outcome under these new pressures.

Application of the underlying principles of design thinking to producing a social issue documentary might include some of the following steps, as described in the research *Designing for Impact*, written by Jessica Clark and Barbara Abrash (Center for Social Media). In the table below I compare these design thinking procedures to the steps that a traditional documentary may take. The traditional documentary method used in the table below is referenced from Michael Rabiger’s ‘Keynote/Synaptic Documentary’, *Lumina, The Documentary Issue*, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Issue 8 (Rabiger 2011, p. 11).

**STEP 1**
Design Thinking Method for Social Impact Filmmaking

- Define the project’s brief – design thinking aims to identify new solutions. What problems does the film solve?

**Traditional Documentary Method**

- Hypothesis – develop an idea or principle about actuality to which you are passionately committed, and that you want to deliver to an audience.

**STEP 2**
Design Thinking Method for Social Impact Filmmaking

- Design with users – design thinking is user-centered. Surveys, interviews and observation before production can help to reveal how users will put a documentary project to work in policy, education and civic settings.

**Traditional Documentary Method**

- Research – find out all you can about your subject, then choose the best situations and characters to enact your hypothesis. Plan what expository, conflictual and other scenes you’ll need to make a strong dramatic arc.

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15 Rabiger references the traditional documentary method to express the long path that documentary has taken, as a comparison to how it is being used currently through mobile and social media devices.
**STEP 3**

Design Thinking Method for Social Impact Filmmaking

- Build the production team – design thinking is multidisciplinary, and so is filmmaking. Documentary filmmakers must think collaboratively; involve users, stakeholders, researchers, developers at each stage.

**Traditional Documentary Method**

- Shooting – cover your film’s intended interactions with appropriate artistry; expect the unexpected; change your plans or entire hypothesis if emerging truths require it.

**STEP 4**

Design Thinking Method for Social Impact Filmmaking

- Prototype – design thinking is iterative. Filmmakers should road test storyboards, short videos, campaigns with users to think through how their campaign and platforms will help them meet their mission.

**Traditional Documentary Method**

- Edit – assemble your most effective materials into the stream of consciousness that delivers the information, ideas and emotional experience you want your audience to experience.

**STEP 5**

Design Thinking Method for Social Impact Filmmaking

- Understand limits – design thinking includes a keen awareness of constraints. Documentary makers should consider the desirability, feasibility, and viability of their film or campaign, and how long each phase will take.

**Traditional Documentary Method**

- Product – test your film’s dramatic effectiveness; hope the audience feels changed by it and perhaps inspired to take action.

**STEP 6**

Design Thinking Method for Social Impact Filmmaking

- Evaluate, and then iterate – design thinking relies on both qualitative and quantitative measures to determine if a design solution is working, or should be retooled.

- **Traditional Documentary Method**
  
  Reaction – gauge how much the audience is taking the action you hoped for.
The design thinking methodology could assist the documentary filmmaker in assessing and conceptualising their project idea with its suggestions of some very practical mechanisms for building strategic campaigns and audience engagement. Assisting the filmmaker identify earlier on if their project is viable, as opposed to the traditional method which suggests planning your shots and scenarios and making sure you get the best dramatic outcome for the story, seems a vastly different approach and one that could save time and money. Step 3, for example, in the design thinking model talks about building collaborations with stakeholders, users and developers, whereas the traditional model is already shooting the footage needed to cover the story, not taking into account other platforms the film could be re–purposed for in order to gain access to a wider audience. Compared to the traditional documentary, the differences here are: the strategic campaign is not passively ‘hoping’ for an outcome, rather it is actively seeking to raise awareness amongst communities and activist groups and also suggests taking the approach of iterating the story in order to make it work for the audiences, rather than waiting for a reaction from the audience once the film has already been shot, edited and distributed.

Accessibility to digital cameras, editing devices and uploading facilities such as YouTube and Vimeo make this a viable financial proposition. Filmmakers who own or have access to high quality, relatively low cost cameras (including their phone cameras) and manageable editing software are able to upload material inexpensively. Therefore they can practice raising awareness from early on and use an iterative model that is responsive to feedback. Formerly, when filmmakers used film cameras, for example, and waited for broadcasts to get feedback, the iterative model was not viable.
2.4 CREATIVE COLLABORATIONS

We are seeing documentary storytelling move into many different forms and, as a result, filmmakers are having to build collaborations with a different range of people, from user experience designers, transmedia producers, games developers, web developers, social media producers, digital media producers and audience members. Interactive documentaries require different skill sets and can provide a technical challenge for producers who have not worked in this space previously. The digital space is also changing the way producers now have to work and this means different methodologies for different projects. Verhoeven argues that the digital project should be considered to be the first part of the project rather than to be seen as the add on. She also suggests that new positions are being created because we are changing the way we work, rather than because of the new platforms that are being created. The implications of this, from Verhoeven’s perspective, seem to be that positions/crew should not be added along the way but engaged from the beginning of the project, helping the project unfold and develop further (Verhoeven as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

Collaborators will differ for each project, as will budgets, production schedules, distributors and audiences. When developing an experience across multiple platforms, it is important to understand the opportunities that technology offers and that the technical constraints will be dealt with by the technical crew. Creation of different types of experiences requires different types of skills. As a result, a greater range of collaborations are put into place, and in some cases may form equal partnerships on a project outcome. For example, Warco (2011), a docugame, was developed as a partnership between Tony Maniaty, a journalist, Robert Connolly, a film director, and Morgan Jaffit, a games developer.
Creating an interactive factual story for a variety of platforms would require a range of collaborators working together to insure integration across the platforms is seamless. Below is a hypothetical example of what the collaboration would look like if you were creating a documentary game across multiple platforms. This example is a hypothetical docu-game for integration on a website, on an iPhone as an Augmented Reality, then onto an iPad as an interactive touch documentary. In this case the collaboration team would look something like this:

The **user experience designer** will talk through all the experiences and consolidate them with the filmmaker. The filmmaker would require a **web developer** to build a website for their interactive documentary, a **designer and developer working in the mobile platform space** to build and develop the Augmented Reality iPhone app, who could also build the touch documentary for the iPad, and a **games developer** to write the program and build the game for integration on the web/iPhone/iPad.

*Note: these roles are further defined, and links to existing practitioners in these roles can be found on the website accompanying this thesis: [thejourneyofdocumentary.com](http://thejourneyofdocumentary.com).*

The producer/filmmaker’s role in this instance is to bring on board the collaborators needed for each project and then to manage each platform experience as a separate project or, as Verhoeven’s research recommended, hire a team of producers for each aspect of the project, based on areas of strengths in skill sets.

As suggested by R. Connolly, the producer does not need to become a developer, learning programming and code; what they would benefit mostly by doing is understanding how the project needs to be developed. For example, what are the fundamental principles and structures of each platform? For instance, what is the process and who needs to be involved? What are the costs associated with game developing, on how many platforms can it be released and should it be released? Is the
software compatible across all platforms? If not, what is required for this to become viable and how much will it cost? What do you want your audiences to get out of the experience? These are questions that could be posed to user experience designers and various kinds of developers, in the first instance. Some experienced producers and user experience designers have been interviewed for *The Journey of Documentary* website and provide insights on their particular responses to these questions in the web series found on thejourneyofdocumentary.com.

According to experienced film producers that are moving into interactive platforms, the skill here is about learning how the interactive space functions and subsequently finding which platforms your audiences are engaging with. The aspect of the process that hasn’t changed is that the craft still remains about being able to tell a good story.

The production pathways are very different in the digital media space than they are in the linear documentary, and there are many more varying factors to consider. Sue Maslin from Film Art Doco says that “it’s essential to have an experienced digital media producer or project manager engaged on convergent productions so that there is an effective ‘bridge’ for understanding and communicating the different kinds of needs across the teams” (Maslin as quoted in Dionysus 2012). Maslin also talks about the enormous challenges that writers, producers and directors would face working in this new space – as the technology is constantly evolving, new platforms are continually being invented and by the time productions are produced they can be out of date (Maslin 2011, p. 208).
2.5 A COMMON LANGUAGE

The collaboration brings along with it its own sets of issues for the producer. Apart from having to production manage an entire range of diverse creative experts, there is a set of new languages that need to be learnt and understood. In order to minimise risks of misunderstandings, the producer needs to be aware of the technical language and culture of the collaboration they are getting involved with before they engage the services of an outside company.

One of the constant issues raised during the interviews I conducted for this research was that there was a great need for a common language between collaborators and filmmakers; a bridge in language is needed to combat misunderstandings between these dynamic groups of creators.

How do we find a bridge between languages?

A possible solution for this might be education set up to teach interactive experts how each other operates, discussing the different approaches and workflows, roles and responsibilities and defining the workflow approaches. Collaborators may be able to achieve this between themselves, as long as they understand that they are from very different backgrounds and do not assume that others know their workflow practices. It may not be possible that ‘one common’ language will ever exist as we are still trying to define the terminology for documentary, as stated by William Uricchio, Director of MIT’s Comparative Media Studies program at the MIT communications forum during the Documentary Film and New Technologies conference (MIT Campus, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA 2012): “We are still challenged by the language in this space; do we call it documentary, interactive or collaborative?” Uricchio describes the current times of documentary as incredibly exciting: “as new forms are being created, they bring a range of
challenges and uncertainty, as there’s no set conformity for people to move into as yet”. He also states that collaborations are currently one of the key issues in the new forms being created in documentary, as the bringing together of individuals with different expertise brings with it the difficulty of building a common language (Edgerton 2012).

Paul Callaghan, a freelance writer and independent game developer who has worked in the games industry since 1998 and is also the director of the Freeplay Independent Games Festival which runs annually in Melbourne, says that finding a common language amongst collaborators is a very difficult area to tackle; for example, “How would you create games literacy within documentary filmmakers; what is the process? How do we find a bridge in language between games design and a documentary filmic language?” (Callaghan as quoted in Dionysus 2012). He believes there are overlaps in language but there are some very different definitions and elements in each that are quite foreign. For example, Callaghan says that when a “games designer talks about systems and mechanics, this is not something a filmmaker is going to understand, and when a filmmaker starts talking about scenes, beats and acts, this is not something necessarily that a games designer is going to understand” (Callaghan as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

As the terminology for certain functions change when working with a variety of collaborators, it is important to understand what each person is offering, as this could lead to major budget blowouts. “When dealing with IT and other service providers, each has their own ‘lingo’; be sure you’re both on the right page” (Maslin as quoted in Dionysus 2012).
2.6 BUDGETING CHALLENGES

Budgets are changing, as crew requirements are adjusting and interactive documentaries are having longer life spans and require constant maintenance. Budgeting across the different platforms requires separate sets of figures as each platform is considered a separate project. Each component has its own plan, budget and business model.

Interactive online websites may require constant updating of content and software; implementing the latest social media network plug-ins, for example, will require the filmmaker to engage in ongoing work on the project or to find other ways in which to manage the project. The ongoing effort needs to be paid for and included in the budget. The problem that this raises is how much does a filmmaker need to budget to cover ongoing costs?

Callaghan suggests that “Bringing on board the people who understand the process of the platform you are implementing your project on is very important, as they are familiar with the environment and will guide you toward creating only what is important to your project when faced with budget constraints and complications” (Callaghan as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

This suggestion from Callaghan is a way to help manage budget constraints, and could alleviate unforeseen budget costs; for example, ongoing web server and hosting fees when building a website.

The interactive social impact documentary poses some problems in that, as an ongoing project, it needs to be constantly updated and kept relevant, as discussed earlier on, and, as budgets are rarely open ended, the filmmaker needs to find a way to budget for this in the short term. The traditional documentary budget seems easier to calculate, as costs are foreseen and are not necessarily ongoing once the film is in
distribution. The interactive documentary, on the other hand, is an area of creative potential and unmapped budgeting issues and possibilities.

2.7 LIFESPAN OF A PROJECT

As a result of technology, both linear and non-linear projects can have longer lifespans, outlasting the traditional documentary model of cinema release and TV broadcast.

Digital distribution on the Internet means that a documentary has a better chance of finding an audience as the world has broader, on demand access to it. However, the longevity of an interactive multiplatform documentary relies on the filmmaker keeping it updated and relevant. For example, a social impact documentary will require constant updating and feeding of information that is relevant to the cause; in this instance, updated information is very important, otherwise the website becomes obsolete and irrelevant.

Henry Jenkins, Provost’s Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California and co-author of the paper ‘If it Doesn’t Spread, it’s Dead’ (2008), talks about spreadable media and circulation. The paper outlines that, “Circulation refers to an emerging, hybrid system where the spread of media is partially shaped by the authorised and unauthorised behaviour of consumers, not in the context of distribution but as an emergence system”, and that “content will spread only when it can serve the particular communicative purposes of a given community group, and only community members can determine what those might be” (‘If it Doesn’t Spread, it’s Dead’ 2008, p. 77). He suggests that allowing your content to be spread by people who use it for their own purposes may seem as though it is being pirated, but he challenges the filmmaker to think of it as a form of distribution at the ‘grassroots level’. “No-one can really steal your content, what they do
"is share it" (Jenkins 2011). This concept of spreadability is proposed by Jenkins as a contrast to the ‘stickiness’\textsuperscript{16} model, which puts emphasis on the control of distribution of content.

The lifespan of an interactive documentary depends on a variety of things, and, as stated by Jenkins above, the audience/consumer can have a great impact on how it’s circulated. The other important factor is that the project needs to be maintained once it is live. This is relevant across all platforms. For example, when working with mobile devices, new software updates means the filmmaker needs to go back and re-iterate, updating their content with the new product to make sure it maintains its relevance with audiences and technology. Shoni Ellis, a mobile device user-experience designer, says that some of the platforms are very dynamic and need constant development. She also states that, “As technology is evolving at rapid rates, the filmmaker needs to remain engaged with their experience or take down the project off the platform” (Ellis as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

A docu-game, on the other hand, communicating the one idea, could be designed and put up on a mobile platform and left indefinitely, not needing to be touched again. Callaghan states, however, that a docu-game that has social media inputs would need to be updated and maintained constantly (Callaghan as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

This is another consideration for the filmmaker: when thinking about which platforms their projects are better suited to, they should also consider which platforms their time management and workload capacities suit. Again, consultation with various experts in the field such as user experience designers and developers can be helpful here, as can talking with other filmmakers who have embarked on exploration of this territory. However, as the media continue to evolve, costs, workflows and time

\textsuperscript{16} Stickiness is when a website encourages a visitor to stay longer. A website is termed sticky if a visitor stays for a long time and then frequently returns.
frames will also continue to evolve and producers may well need to expect to become pioneers themselves in working out how to manage changing technology, opportunities and storytelling.

2.8 INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTION

Digital distribution changes the way conventional distribution operates, as its mode of delivery is online and can be managed by the filmmaker.

Traditional distribution models such as the theatrical release, prime time broadcasting and DVDs are being challenged. The distributors, also known as the ‘gatekeepers’, usually taking an 80:20 percent share of the profits, controlled access to the ‘old’ audiences. Under this model, producers would raise the finance, and sell the rights to the distributor to cover their production costs. Distributors earned the most revenue, as producers didn’t have access to the recoupment chain.

Digital distribution is providing independent filmmakers with the freedom of distributing their content and having access to the larger slice of the pie, which in turn is also giving them independence in the production process.

Sue Maslin and Daryl Dellora, filmmakers in Melbourne, Australia, have set up their own distribution company, Film Art Media, in order to self-distribute their content and tunnel the profits back to their company. Their website filmartmedia.com includes a ‘shop’ button on the main menu which sells all the films and projects made from their associated production company Film Art Doco (Maslin 2011).

Peter Broderick is President of Paradigm Consulting, which helps filmmakers and media companies develop strategies to maximise distribution. He has consulted with over 500 filmmakers and is recognised for his DIY Distribution model and his widely read articles
Welcome to the New World of Distribution and Hybrid Distribution.
Broderick argues that the recoupment chain is opening up, as the filmmaker becomes the distributor. In an article published in Documentary magazine, called ‘The New Age of Independent Distribution’ (2007), he wrote, “A revolution in distribution is well underway. The old rules no longer apply, but most distributors continue to do business as if little has changed. Many filmmakers don’t yet fully understand the unprecedented opportunities newly available to them.

Before the revolution, it was the Age of Dependent Distribution. The studios and other distributors were in full control. As gatekeepers and middlemen, they controlled access to audiences in a top-down distribution system. Filmmakers approached them as supplicants, offering them exclusive control of their films. The vast majority of filmmakers became totally dependent during distribution. Many sought overall deals, giving one company all of their distribution rights. Although many filmmakers who made overall deals ended up unhappy, this didn’t deter others from pursuing such deals” (Broderick 2007).

The following chart illustrates the essential differences between ‘Old’ and ‘New World’ distribution as outlined by Peter Broderick.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD WORLD DISTRIBUTION</th>
<th>NEW WORLD DISTRIBUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distributor in Control</td>
<td>Filmmaker in Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Deal</td>
<td>Hybrid Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Release Plans</td>
<td>Flexible Release Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Audience</td>
<td>Core and Crossover Audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising Costs</td>
<td>Lower Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewers Reached thru Distributor</td>
<td>Direct Access to Viewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Party Sales</td>
<td>Direct and Third Party Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory by Territory Distributor</td>
<td>Global Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross–Collateralized Revenues</td>
<td>Separate Revenue Streams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous Consumers</td>
<td>True Fans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.peterbroderick.com](http://www.peterbroderick.com)
More creative strategies are becoming available via the Internet, providing filmmakers with direct access to audiences, global distribution opportunities, and direct and separate revenue streams. These, in turn, provide the filmmaker with a greater control and independence that would not have been possible through the traditional distribution model.

In an article published by Peter Broderick for *Indiewire*, ‘Welcome to the New World of Distribution’ (2008), he outlined some guiding principles of digital distribution, highlighting greater control by the filmmaker who was willing to do the work and become their own distributor. In it he wrote that if a filmmaker hired the service of a booker to arrange the theatrical release, the filmmaker also controls the marketing campaign spending, timing and release of the film, as opposed to the traditional model where a distributor acquires all the rights and they also have total control of distribution and marketing decisions.

Given that distribution may not be an area of expertise that producers have or want to develop expert skills in, Broderick also recognises that a hybrid distribution model has been getting results for filmmakers. In this model, filmmakers are splitting the rights up between working with distribution partners in various sectors and keeping the rights for themselves to make direct sales by selling DVDs from their websites, making separate deals with the education sector, television rights, non-theatrical and video-on-demand.

Bob Connolly, director of over 30 documentaries and most recently producer/director of *Mrs Carey’s Concert* (2011), has been distributing his films himself, controlling as much of the process as he could, using a somewhat hybrid model as outlined by Broderick. With his three documentaries, *First Contact* (1989), *Joe Leahy’s Neighbours* (1989) and *Black Harvest* (1992), he assigned certain specialist aspects to various

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17 Video on Demand (VOD) is a system, which allows users to select and watch video content on demand. IPTV technology is often used to bring video on demand to televisions and personal computers.
distribution companies, but distributed the content himself to international television distribution companies. When dealing with non-theatrical distribution and large markets such as the United States, he sourced an independent distributor to manage this aspect of the distribution.

He argues that, so often in documentary, the filmmaker makes the film and loses control of the distribution and whatever revenue comes: “if it does well, the distributor does well, and it’s very rare that the filmmaker does well” (B. Connolly as quoted in Dionysus 2012). When it came to distributing Mrs Carey’s Concert (2011), B. Connolly decided early on that he would control as much of the distribution as possible. He was advised that the film had potential as a theatrical release but this is not where he would make the money, and that he should be looking at this only as a way of setting up a platform for the distribution of the DVD, which is where the film was going to earn a profit. He was advised by a consultant that he should consider distributing the DVD himself, otherwise he was not going to see any return if he handed over the entire rights to a DVD distributor.

“The sole reason”, B. Connolly says, “you release a documentary theatrically is to set up the audience profile of the film for the later platforms like DVD and downloading” (B. Connolly as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

B. Connolly suggests that, “in order to become a distributor of your own film, the filmmaker needs to start thinking as a distributor, design a website, collaborate with a person who speaks the language of the cinema exhibitors and start identifying the audiences using all the social marketing tools and then approach your audience” he also states that “the Internet is the key for filmmakers to start becoming their own distributors in this highly complex and difficult, impenetrable, world” (B. Connolly as quoted in Dionysus 2012).
He says that it is a tough game, and a steep learning curve, but once the skills have been learnt, it's much easier to apply them the next time. He does stress, though, that you need a good consultant on board to help you manage and understand the process before you embark on distributing, on your own, for the first time. This advice aligns with Maslin’s earlier comments about not becoming the expert in a particular speciality, but learning enough of the language and processes to be able to communicate effectively and collaboratively with the experts. It seems likely that this developing theme of ‘learning a shared language but not the technical expertise’ will be useful to a producer as new technologies and methods continue to evolve. The producer retains the traditional producer’s skills of communication and creative management, but learns to apply them in new arenas.

The research and development challenges for the filmmaker remain the same when thinking about developing a project for an online commercial broadcaster. Filmmakers must do their research and find out who the audience is and what sort of content the online broadcasters are commissioning. The opportunities at the moment are greater than they have ever been; as Internet TV starts to increase its programming and audience share, the need for content also increases.

Some examples of broadcaster/distribution models include BeamaFilm, an Australian video-on-demand company focusing on all things documentary. This company charges the viewer $4.99 to download the film and viewing time is limited to a 48 hour window. Snag Films, an American company, offers its users instant free downloads of documentaries, which can be shared and distributed via social networks. This model uses placed advertising during the film as a way to create revenue for the filmmaker and splits the profits 50:50 between the distributor who is also the broadcaster, Snag Films, and the filmmaker. Film festivals are also now offering buyer and seller networking opportunities on their websites; for example, Docs For Sale, an initiative of the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam, allows
interested parties to work deals around the product online. *Marketplace*, which is part of the Australian International Documentary Conference, provides a platform on their website for projects to be financed, marketed and acquired, year round.

2.9 Broadcasting Your Web Series

Mike Jones, story consultant for Portal Entertainment and lecturer at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, claims that we are seeing a rise in the production of web series and webisodes, as the immediate access to audiences using online carriers cuts out the middleman, the distributor and broadcaster completely. Jones suggests “direct uploading of a web series makes it more open and accessible for drafting and testing of projects and as a result is more responsive to audiences” (Jones as quoted in Dionysus 2012).

The two examples of online carriers of the web series model are *YouTube*, who are now commissioning original content, and *Blip TV*, who focus primarily on web series content, ranging from 15 second clips right up to 25 minutes.

The opportunity in this instance is for the filmmaker to create a project, and access world audiences directly by putting their series online. This has, in some cases, also provided direct revenue to the filmmakers when the series get enough viewers to attract advertising. Jones says that emerging filmmakers who are looking at ways to define themselves in the industry are using alternative methods to film festivals, and the web series is one method that seems to be working very well. Making and uploading a web series gives filmmakers a direct way to engage with their audiences, whereas Jones believes that “making a short film for the festival circuit almost discourages dealing directly with audiences” (Jones as quoted in Dionysus 2012). This is in stark contrast to five years ago.
when the film festivals route was almost the only choice for emerging filmmakers to be recognised.

2.10 MAKING A WEB SERIES: THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Case Study: The Journey of Documentary

When making my online web documentary, The Journey of Documentary, I wasn’t sure whether it was going to be a linear documentary, played online, or a web series. I thought about the different topics I wanted to cover and wanted to relate each interview to a specific area. For example, Robert Connolly recently built a prototype for a docu-game called Warco, my questions for R. Connolly would be about the production of a docu-game. I put together a range of questions and found that I still wasn’t sure about whether to ask all my subjects similar questions, or to focus only on identified topics. Should I prepare my interview as if shooting for a linear documentary or do I adjust it for a web series? What is the difference?

The difference was that I was still thinking linear in an online space. That is where my problem lay. Making a web series seemed straightforward but it was somewhat confusing as to which was the best way to direct it.

I asked both a traditional filmmaker and a webisode expert for advice as to how I should structure my questions, and which would be the best way to develop them for a web series. The traditional documentary filmmaker suggested I ask as many questions as I could and try and get hour-long interviews, followed by a pickup shoot at rough-cut, suggesting also that I might be able to develop new perspectives on my subjects further down the track. The webisode expert suggested I think about the end product as I develop my questions and to hone in on and be very precise about the information I was gathering for each webisode topic, as I needed to keep the clips short and sharp.
Whilst considering both possibilities, I started thinking about how the audiences were going to interact and engage with the content. The traditional method brought with it the advantages of shooting a lot of footage, giving me options of choice, but also the challenge of ‘too difficult an edit’, and possibly not getting precisely what I needed from the interview to be able to cut an engaging clip. I did not have the time to go back and do a pickup shoot as suggested by the traditional filmmaker and was also aware that my subjects ran very busy hectic lives.

As I was producing a web series, I needed precise content so I followed the advice of the webisode expert and kept my questioning focused on certain topics that I wanted each subject to talk about rather than ask them all broadly the same type of questions as I would have done if producing a linear documentary.

**PRODUCTION**

The result of this type of production required me to shoot the documentary differently to that of a traditional long-form documentary in that the questioning moved quite rapidly from one topic to the next. In the traditional method I would have asked additional questions relating to the same topic in order to get a more elaborate answer that was also going to give me the room to add my cutaways, and also give the story enough time to build up to its climax. Shooting for webisodes, the climax of the content needs to happen immediately in order to grab the attention of the audience. As the director I had to make those decisions on the spot and decide there and then if the content was going to be engaging enough before I moved onto the next question. My other consideration was that the answers needed to be delivered within a certain time frame, as I knew the cutting was going to have to be quick and relevant, using much as the same technique that is used in current affairs journalism.

As an experiment for this research, I also shot footage and conducted one of my interviews using the traditional method as an exercise for me to
test the results. The outcome was that during filming the atmosphere was a lot more relaxed, and the interview became a conversation, rather than jumping to the next point. The result in the edit meant that it took longer to sort through the footage, as I had to mix clips up in order to get engaging content for the purpose of a webisode. It was difficult to get the point I wanted across and had to be very creative in the edit. The subject didn’t really get into the guts of the question until moments of tape rolling, and their answers almost became short stories.

**POST PRODUCTION**
The post production, however, is similar to that of the traditional documentary in that the edit requires images, sounds, titles, and time spent making sure it delivers a very engaging and interesting clip. Even though the clips are shorter, the production value still needs to remain high. The craft of the editing in this instance is making sure the content is engaging from the first frame and finding a way to maintain that engagement through to the end of the clip. There is no room for a story to grow and develop; the content needs to be able to communicate the message instantly.

**ONLINE BROADCAST CARRIER**
I set up a YouTube channel specifically for this web series for the interviews to be uploaded onto. YouTube allowed me to broadcast my web documentary without having to rely on funding organisations determining whether my project was worthy of funding; it gave me the freedom and confidence to produce a project that I was passionate about without any interference.

**SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**
A Facebook page was set up before the first interview was uploaded as a way for me to start creating awareness. I emailed a synopsis and image to filmmakers, educational institutions and film institutions world-wide, asking them to ‘subscribe’ to the website and to ‘Like’ the Facebook page
in order to be kept updated. My target audience are the emerging and practicing filmmakers, educators and creators of all formats of documentary making.

**THE SCREENING**

My marketing entails a different webisode clip be uploaded monthly giving audiences a reason to come back every month to the website. In total for this web series I interviewed 16 experts in the field of documentary and each interview is presented as a ‘Part number 1–16’, ranging from 1–7 webisodes per interview. The web documentary will be released over a period of 16 months, though this is not set in concrete. I may reassess further down the track and possibly upload one per fortnight depending on the audience engagement and feedback.

This type of content distributing is vastly different to the traditional documentary where the film is distributed as a whole and audiences are able to ascertain whether they like it or not based on a complete viewing in one sitting.

The webisode series brings a few challenges in the way that it is viewed; for example, some audiences may not engage with its entirety as it is presented over a period of time, in a fragmented format. This allows audiences to pick which interview they wish to watch, bypassing clips that may not interest them. The risk here is that audiences may judge one clip they didn’t like and decide not to watch the rest of the series.

The opportunities this brings to the web series is that it opens up access to different audiences who may be interested in different aspects of filmmaking. For example, those interested in learning about the cross–platform documentary presented by Sue Maslin may be different to the audiences engaged in learning about the radio documentary presented by Dr Colm McNaughton.
The marketing therefore needs to account for the various types of audience that the series may attract. It also needs to be consistent and enticing. For example, part of my marketing is to create awareness about the subject by highlighting aspects of their work. Alby Mangels was the first interview of the series; I posted a photo of Mangels and a quote about his humanitarian work with indigenous communities. Two days later I posted a one-minute clip, which talked about how Mangels was only 23 years old when he set sail around the world. I used content in my marketing which I thought people would respond to by highlighting some of the extraordinary things that one human does which may strike a chord in another. In my forth-social marketing campaign, I posted information about how Mangels’s film *World Safari* grossed more than *Star Wars* when it opened in Sydney in 1978. At the same time I released this enticing fact, I also began marketing Part 2 of the web series, which features Robert Connolly.

A key piece of learning for me in this process was that using social networks to distribute and market content is not always enough. You need to put in a lot of time and energy to get any type of response from audiences and you need to be constantly uploading new content for audiences to engage with.

This level of distribution and marketing gives so much control to the filmmaker but also loads them up with constant work. As much as it is liberating to have control of your product, this method also takes control of your time and this is one of the things that filmmakers need to be aware of. If the project is not in the constant eye of the audience, then the project has no chance of being viewed and will eventually sit in cyberspace all alone. It needs constant attention in order to gain any type of momentum.
SUMMARY

The opportunities for filmmakers seem endless as the documentary process keeps evolving, creating new and interactive pathways for filmmakers to consider. As the range of platforms broadens, so do the skill sets and vocabularies the filmmaker needs to understand in order to obtain the maximum audience engagement and creative satisfaction in online and interactive media. Audiences are playing an integral role not only as viewers of content but also partaking in the creation of documentaries as collaborators.

Design thinking as a methodology sets up ways for the filmmaker to create an effective social issue campaign using a structured procedure and identifying solutions for the film before production begins. This changes the craft as it asks the filmmaker to identify early on in pre-production who and how their documentary will benefit, rather than making the documentary and trying to find beneficiaries.

Creative collaborations are being considered across various platforms bringing together experts in digital interactivity and filmmakers working together as a team. This greatly impacts the traditional craft, as filmmakers need to consider different processes and methodologies. There is a need to develop a common language between collaborators as a way to understand the workings of each profession, which will in turn also help reduce budget blowouts for filmmakers.

Budgets are becoming trickier to manage as interactive online projects have longer lifespans than the traditional documentary. This is creating some issues for filmmakers in finding further funding. As a result, filmmakers may have to look further into handing over their projects to communities and activist groups whose focus is to keep driving the issue and cause. Utilising tribes may be a resourceful option in order to keep
maintaining a project, which seems to benefit the filmmaker as well as the cause.

Independent distribution gives the filmmaker more access to the revenue that their film has the potential to generate, rather than handing over all the rights to distribution companies. But this in turn challenges the filmmaker to learn how to become a distributor, or at least share the language of a distributor and actively set up different modes of distribution.

My own journey with producing, distributing and maintaining my project, *The Journey of Documentary*, is proving to me in very practical terms many of the principles that producers spoke about in their interviews for the site. In particular, I am learning about finding and keeping an audience for the web series and using social media as a marketing tool. I have also begun to understand the production process as its focus changes from the broader scope of a traditional documentary to the more precisely focused scope of a web series.
CONCLUSION

My questions cannot be answered in any final or absolute way, in part because the craft and technologies continue to evolve. However, my research has provided me with some insights into changing approaches to the production processes and storytelling craft of documentary.

The case studies on participative production processes demonstrated that there are many variations on traditional production pathways being explored. These variations may add value by giving the filmmaker an insight into what audiences want to see, but this may also cost filmmakers control over their project. The question of whether the net gain for documentary craft is more, or less, than the costs will be an interesting one for future research.

The opportunities for creating social awareness around issues has seen individuals using mobile devices to film a subject, and social media as the online platform to broadcast it. Using inferior capturing devices, this new wave of filmmakers are bypassing the traditional production model which, amongst many differences, has challenges in funding and distribution, and are creating films at little expense. Are we seeing a new breed of documentary filmmakers? Is this how all of documentary may eventually be produced?

It is possible to conclude from my research that producing processes in the interactive space take a different approach to that of a linear documentary in that collaborations and methodologies alter depending on the platform being used, but their underlying principles remain the same in that a producer still needs to develop a project, realise its potential and then source funding. Of course, as noted, change is a constant and so the question is far from being closed.
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APPENDIX A

THE JOURNEY OF DOCUMENTARY WEBSITE OUTLINE
(Some aspects of the website are live, asking audiences to contribute content – as an example of how interactive online documentary can work.)

Home
Outlining why the site was built and its purpose.

About
A breakdown about what is on the website.

Crowd-Sourced Timeline
A timeline playing within Dipity Software and integrated on the website. It is a crowd-sourced timeline and invites content from audiences to contribute, either their own video or reference other videos and information in regards to the evolution of the documentary and the technology trail.

Web Series
Interviews with filmmakers and innovators of documentary. This will be an ongoing aspect of the website’s web series.

Guide
• Making a Web Documentary – a step by step guide to making a web series. Content will be made up of text, video and audio with educational resources referencing writing, lighting and editing techniques.
• How To–By You – seeks contributors of open source codes, technology tools and any helpful information and software tools, relating to making innovative documentaries.
• Self Distribution – an informative guide covering DIY distribution.
• Terminology – definitions for some of the new language in the new media space.

Resources
• Funding – funding initiatives worldwide.
• Social Media Platforms – a list of social media platforms for documentary filmmakers to explore. The site asks audiences to contribute by sending in the latest social media tools.
• Sources across Platforms – a list of organisations, communities, associations and digital culture covering a variety of platforms.
• Innovations in Documentary – links to innovative documentaries made from around the world providing an insight to what other filmmakers are producing.
• Distributors/Broadcasters – a list of online broadcasters and distributors of documentaries.
Community

- Digital Media Awards – a list of website and digital media industry awards where filmmakers can showcase their work.
- Documentary Conferences & Festivals – conferences and festivals worldwide with a focus on documentary.
- Documentary Test Kinema – a ‘test screening’ platform for new documentaries. Testing audiences are accessed from around the world; the film/teaser is screened on the website with audiences providing the filmmaker with feedback via the site’s Forum.
- Collaborators – open source, crew/collaborators to add their details and set up networks amongst.

Forum

The forum will host a variety of things, including test-screening feedbacks, conversations with filmmakers about processes and techniques, and conversations about innovative projects and software tools.

Blog

Insights into innovations in documentary and technology.

Contact

Contact details of web documentary producer

Social Media Links

Facebook
Twitter