

The Washington Program  
The Annenberg School of Communications

Maurice Mitchell Director  
Barry Cole Deputy Director

600 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Suite 750  
Washington, D.C. 20024  
202 484 2663

August 3, 1983

Mr. Merrill Panitt  
Editorial Director  
Triangle Magazines  
100 Matsonford Road  
Radnor, PA 19088

Dr. George Gerbner  
Professor and Dean  
The Annenberg Schools of  
Communications  
3440 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear George and Merrill:

You would be interested in the enclosed from Ithiel Pool which expresses some very strong sentiments about the Annenberg/CPB program.

Ithiel's comments are not unlike those that I am picking up from others. This is why I continued to express grave misgivings about the Program in its present form. I am not sure that I see the Program in the same terms as Pool, but I cannot escape feeling that there is trouble ahead.

Very truly yours,

*M. B. Mitchell*  
Maurice B. Mitchell

*nh.*

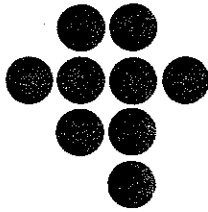
MBM:nh

Enclosure: Letter from Ithiel de Sola Pool

(Dictated but not read)

Massachusetts  
Institute  
of Technology

Cambridge  
Massachusetts  
02139



Research  
Program on  
Communications  
Policy

A Joint Project:  
Please reply to  
the address  
checked below.

July 27, 1983

Mr. Maurice B. Mitchell  
The Washington Program of the Annenberg School  
Suite 750  
600 Maryland Ave. S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mitch,

I have written the Cosmos Club about Barry. The letter was delayed by illness, but I trust is still on time. It is a pleasure to support him.

Enclosed are copies of the relevant correspondence.

It would be less than honest, if while writing you I did not express my views of the actions of the Board of the Annenberg/CPB program, though I am reluctant to do so for what I have to say is harsh. I have no intention of going public on this for as a spurned suitor, my testimony is too easily dismissed, but I owe it to you to tell you what I have to say to anyone who asks me. It is hard for me to think of any previous instance in the history of philanthropy where as much money has been wasted as rapidly as by the Annenberg/CPB project. The record is an unbroken one of lack of imagination and bad Board decisions. Every project that has been approved has been for a rather routine course that cannot be criticized as bad in itself, but is not likely to make much difference to American education, one way or another. Every proposal to do anything that takes advantage of the media in a creative way, and that could justify the large Annenberg/CPB expenditures by making a difference in American education has been rejected.

There is much question as to whether the Open University has done what it was intended to do in Britain, but that it has made an important contribution is beyond doubt. But the US is not the UK. The notion that by putting a standard college curriculum, including well established courses in writing, physics, and computer programming on TV and on videotapes or disks, you will add anything to American education is absurd. No country in the world is as well served by a pervasive system of colleges, junior colleges, community colleges as the US. It is simply not so that there is a large population out there now deprived of higher education, to whom it can be brought by TV conveying the standard content that they otherwise could not get. The community colleges and other evening courses are there for those who want them.

Center for  
Advanced  
Engineering  
Study  
Room 9-228  
MIT  
617/253-7409

Center for  
Information  
Systems  
Research  
Room E53-309  
MIT  
617/253-2971

Center for  
International  
Studies  
Room E53-401  
MIT  
617/253-3124

Center for  
Policy  
Alternatives  
Room 39-551  
MIT  
617/253-1661

Laboratory for  
Computer  
Science  
Room NE43-105  
MIT  
617/253-2145

Laboratory for  
Information  
and  
Decision  
Systems (LIDS)  
Room 35-308  
MIT  
617/253-2141

It is true that the weaker institutions can take advantage of courses out of a can done better than they can do them themselves. That means that TV courses of a slightly esoteric kind could serve a function. But given the legitimate defensiveness of human teachers about their superiority to anything out of a can, and their fear of being displaced, the last thing that the Annenberg/CPB program should produce and expect to have used is the courses that the pervasive institutions of higher education are already offering. The only way to improve those basic courses is not to do them over in your format, but to provide auxiliary materials that the teacher can use in his or her own way. Thus everything that Annenberg/CPB support should be beyond and different from what is being done in the widespread institutions that exist.

Having been turned down twice on a proposal that fits that philosophy (the second time at the Programs invitation to resubmit), and each time on grounds that make it clear that the philosophy of the Annenberg/CPB Board is to do nothing creative, I have no intention of going through this process again. If anyone thinks that the history of the computer is going to be unimportant in the coming decades, that it has nothing to do with the issues and changes that are taking place in computer science today, that there will be no interest in that material in the coming decades, that simply proves that they know nothing about the subject. This is certainly not material that is generally available in colleges around the country, and it is material that the existing institutions could use for their own enrichment. But my point is not to protest a single decision. Given the criteria that the Board has applied in all its decisions it could not reach any other conclusion than it did. The result is a program that in the end will be generally viewed as a vast waste of resources. It will be a severe blow to the use of new media in education because it will be cited as a classic example of the failure and uselessness of those media. It is probably too late for a turn around since the Board obviously has a stable and consistent view of what it wants to do. Nonetheless, I feel I owe you a frank statement of how a lot of us on the outside regard that established view.

Sincerely yours,



Ithiel de Sola Pool

## Announcing a Program and Positions in Communications Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.

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Faculty will be members or affiliates of the existing faculties and degree candidates will be regular students of the existing graduate programs of one of the two Annenberg Schools.

The extended program, complementing the resources of other Washington-area universities, will

- offer graduate credit work in communications policy, including internships for degree candidates.
- present professional development opportunities for persons employed in communications regulation, management, and other policy-related activities.
- offer faculty from the U.S. and other countries academic development opportunities in a world center of communications policy activity.
- conduct research in communications policy, broadly conceived.

A joint committee of the two Schools is conducting a search for staff, including the head of the program, a director of professional studies, and other positions still to be designated. The allocation of responsibilities to these positions is still somewhat flexible, depending on the combination of skills of the persons filling the positions.

In general, the head of the program, who reports to the two Annenberg School deans, will provide principal leadership for the program, help design, supervise and teach courses, work closely with other administrators and faculty in developing program activities, actively participate in research, and report on the execution of program activities. The head of the program should be a senior scholar with substantial academic and professional experience in communications policy studies.

The director of professional studies (tentative title) will work with representatives from government and business in designing workshops, institutes, and other activities for professional development. Advanced academic qualifications and professional experience in communications policy roles are required.

Send expressions of interest, curriculum vitae, publications list, and names (but not letters) of referees as soon as possible but not later than August 10th to

George Gerbner, Dean  
The Annenberg School of Communications  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

or Peter Clarke, Dean  
The Annenberg School of Communications  
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University Park  
Los Angeles, CA 90007

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Women's and Minorities Professional Associations in Communications

American Women in Radio and Television  
1321 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036

Association of Black Broadcasters  
3 E. 4th Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters  
1629 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC

National Association of Spanish Broadcasters  
1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20037

National Black Media Coalition  
1802 T Street, N.W.  
Suite B  
Washington, DC 20009

Women in Cable  
1725 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006

Women in Communications, Inc.  
Box 9561  
Austin, TX 73766