

Thursday, September 24, 1981

# Cable brings college courses into home

By Kathy Parriah  
staff writer

When John Kotre teaches his morning psychology class, he has 30 classroom students to worry about.

Since his University of Michigan-Dearborn class is being taped for airing on cable television, he also must consider those viewing from their living rooms.

"I have to balance the chemistry between the student here and the TV viewer," said the professor, who sets one of four television cameras aside to represent the viewing public. "It's important not to leave either one behind."

Educating by television is a challenge, as those involved in U of M-Dearborn's Reach program are finding out. But they believe the opportunity to take courses right into viewers' homes is worth the extra effort.

"By the beginning of next year, tens of thousands of Detroit area homes will have cable TV," said associate dean Emanuel C. Hertzler. "We'll have a door into the home that never existed before."

For three years, the Dearborn university has offered videotaped and audiotaped courses to students unable to attend class. Last week, the home study was extended through Omnicon to cable subscribers in Canton Township, Northville, Plymouth and Plymouth Township.

SEVERAL AREA higher educational institutions see cable TV as a way of drawing more students and serving those whose work schedules or family pressures keep them from campus.

As a group, the schools have formed

the Educational Telecommunications Consortium to explore ways to use cable TV.

Wayne State University, which has offered televised instruction since the mid-1950s, is not yet involved in cable television. But it is being considered by the Detroit institution, which has 800 students enrolled in its Weekend College aired by WDIV-TV and WTVS/58.

"The opportunity is so good and there are all those hours to be filled with something," said information officer Leonine Cadieux. "It could be an economical way to reach students."

"One of the beauties of cable is that we don't have to worry about meeting the needs of as many people as possible," said Hugh Jencks, Omnicon's programming director.

"With multiple channels, we can serve a lot of different small groups with interests in every conceivable area."

MetroVision of Redford is also considering college courses for its Channel 6, which is reserved for educational access.

"The concept of use of TV for education is not new," said general manager Tom Bjorklund, who grew up in Connecticut with the televised "Sunrise Semester."

"But, through cable, that concept can be spread out. We can give inexpensive deliver courses to the community."

No technical problems hamper airing educational programs, he said. "The question is whether people in the community want it. But it's definitely something we're looking into."

U OF M-DEARBORN is offering

three courses via Omni 8 this semester. Each lecture is shown three times, with subscribers offered repeat sessions on request if airtime is available.

"Lots of people have scheduling problems and they're not able to attend class. We've removed almost every possible excuse for someone not to go back to school," said Jencks. Questionnaires were sent to find out if subscribers would be interested. Jencks said, Of 1,300 surveyed, 193 responded, with 179 interested.

The former educator believes educational TV programming is a "way to improve the quality of life."

"Locking a dynamite instructor into a classroom with 20-25 students is not terribly efficient. We can share that expertise with the community."

Although some colleges use TV to make better use of limited classroom space, the Reach program was set up to help fit courses into busy lives.

Registration is flexible, students receive special study guides and take tests when they are ready to do so. But the U of M Board of Regents is absolutely inflexible on course standards.

"We don't want this to be a second-class program, so we've probably made it tougher as a result," said Hertzler.

"These are just as academically difficult as any courses in the university," Hertzler believes most students prefer contact with professors and students in the classroom.

"It's a little harder to work from a tape, but they have job commitments or family responsibilities," he said. "But he also sees home study as a way of easing into college."

"It's kind of a quantum leap for many people to go from wherever they



Cameras record John Kotre's Introduction to Psychology class at the University of Michigan-Dearborn for showing next semester on cable television by Omnicon.

are into the classroom competing with 18-year-olds. They can take a course privately and don't have to worry about the competition."

THE UNIVERSITY has found courses must be more carefully prepared for TV, with the professor answering many questions he would usually rely on students to answer.

"The traditional classroom is two-

way communication. TV can't do that as well. Students have to be a little more organized and keep track of questions to ask later," said Jencks.

Hertzler also found a professor sitting at a desk just doesn't go over well. So the films show a professor interacting with students in a classroom. "That interaction is what makes it inviting to the person at home," he said.

Schoolcraft College, which has rights

to Omnicon's Channel 20, is looking into ways to air credit and noncredit courses as well as community service activities like lectures and concerts. By fall 1982, the two-year college hopes to be providing television shows.

"It's a way of bringing the college closer to the community," said Ronald Griffith, acting vice president for instruction. "There are so many possibilities."

## Teen wins plum role in musical 'Fantasticks'

Teen actress Michaela Stock has won the coveted role of Luisa in "The Fantasticks," the Tom Jones, Harvey Schmidt musical opening Oct. 2 at Will-O-Way Theatre, 775 W. Long Lake Road in Bloomfield Township.

Born in Dearborn, Michaela moved with her family to London, England, at age 3, where she studied dance for nine years. Four years ago she moved to Birmingham where she is a student at Marian High.

Marian and Rice Players featured her as Mrs. Pearce in "My Fair Lady." Michaela has studied at Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre for three years.

She has been featured in "Music Man," "Fiddler on the Roof," "Sound of Music," "Stop the World," "Miracle Worker," "Cabaret" and this summer's "Damn Yankees."

Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre's production of "The Fantasticks" is directed by Celia Merrill Turner. David Wil-

son is the musical director. Performances will be Fridays-Saturdays through Oct. 24. For reservations phone 644-4418.

WILL-O-WAY's vocal coach, Melvyn Hardman is cast as the Narrator, El Gallo, in "The Fantasticks." Hardman is also remembered for creating the

role of Don Quixote in "Man of La Mancha" last season and the "Honeyman" in Michigan Opera Theatre's "Porgy and Bess."

Matt, the boy next door, is played by Larry Bate of Holly. Two years with Clarkson Village Players led to his performing with Michigan Opera The-

atre last season.

Todd Curless, Oak Park writer-producer of industrial films, plays Hucklebee, the boy's father.

Steve Cole of Birmingham Village Players and Will-O-Way toured with choirs in Latin America and Europe. He plays Bellomy, the girl's father.

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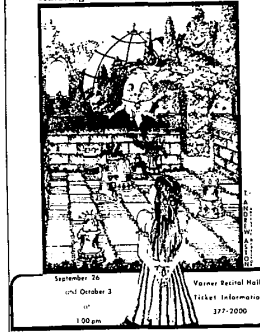
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