Media Consortium Call 1/30/14
Interview with Tracy van Slyke

Notes from Eric Galatas

What is the unique value of the MC?

What was the charge, what you tried to do, and looking back, where possibilities are and aren't.

Jessica and she had been talking about the structure of the progressive network, why it wasn't working, Facebook and Youtube was brand new, scaring people.  Big picture structural questions.

People at first were intrigued but feared by working together, journalistic integrity, right would freak out about conspiracy.

Business work, combining direct mail, ad network, first round of collaboration was around event, Greenwald's movie, write about it at the same time.

Second year the business projects, while gave good data, were expensive, hard to follow through, or didn't produce results.

Relationship development, people knew each other cursory, competitors, across business or editorial, was a qualifyable development.  Experimenting with editorial collaboration.

With new tech there were new opportunities to connect, to raise voice and impact.

With changes in landscape, needed to understand what that landscape was, and even leading the effort, increase audience and impact.  The Big Thaw became a bigger project.  This launched the incubation lab.

Collaborations: Live from Mainstreet - point was to lift up voices and expertise and put them deeper into communities.  One, didn't have resources or time, didn't know what to do with it.  Didn't have the creative juices to plug in and how collaboration could benefit individual and whole.

Labs provided resources for , accountability, new resources and info, spaces to innovate (like hackathon).

Consortium helped meet goals.  No silver bullet revenue solution.  Helped learn about field.  Relationships helped develop projects down the line.  Showed how progressive independent media was leader, innovating.

On Funding:

What did they see as the unique value?  People like Vince, subversively went into their foundation, into the progressive stuff but into building independent brand, ARCA was like that too, Donna Edwards was funding media, when Anna came they switched to economy (hated Don Hazen).  OSF officers loved progressive media and networks, but foundation was focused on public and local media and transparency.  They gave money for the leadership and innovation of journalism, but really individual program officers and relationships.

Hard to crack individual donors, because members have those relationships, not going to share those.

Building a structure and innovation, and happened to be independent progressive media.  INN ran with it and since they were friends with old white dudes in Knight, they were able to access more money more quickly because they were less political.

JE: Building impact, progressive network, so that people could better tell story.  But when you went to funders, you had to leave off what the structure was for.

TVS: Framed it differently, Haas knows, Vince knows, OSF less emphasis on progressive impact.  Some you can be more progressive.  What is the structure that supports all these media outfits trying to weed through tech and business.

INN isn't upending new models, they're accessing more money to distribute to more groups.  You're paying for work, but there's accountability.

Important reason for MC to exist?

TVS: On one hand, if MC disappeared tomorrow, would people get upset, and miss it?  Tomorrow, maybe not.  In 2 years, will there be another version?  Probably.  But it would look different.  Started by larger media outlets, don't need consortium, but like the relationships, community, and occasional info is nice.  Smaller orgs like it more, get more out of it, those resources are more valuable to them.  We need innovation fund to experiment, or miss meeting.

JE: Is this need being met by INN?

TVS: Not sure.  MC had debates about editorial collaboration, but with Twitter some needs have been filled.  Ran New Bottom Line, sunsetting it now, it fulfilled its role, learned a lot about what it means to work together, but we don't need structure to keep talking.  Maybe a new structure will come up with different needs.

Sees value in the impact stuff and the labs.  If they really want something, there needs to be more buy in.  When you feel like you're pulling teeth, they don't take ownership.  They need to get back to the point where they have pride of accountability.

JE: Thinktank as advocate for Independent media, two faces, one toward policy and one toward members.

TVS: Is that needed?  If space is crowded, could be land mines