*What if mission-driven, independent news organizations could get high-quality video to accompany their in-depth feature stories?*

*What if mission-driven, independent documentary filmmakers could get free placement of their best work in front of targeted audiences for their film?*

The rise of social media networks and the democratization of media production technologies have resulted in three shifts in the landscape of media production: 1) Increasing interest in – and positive results from – cross-disciplinary collaboration for shared impact; 2) Audience expectations for strong video content online; 3) and perhaps as an antidote to the second trend, a glut of video content.: several videos covering the same story and each garnering a handful of views from a fragmented audience.

*NY Times* has been characteristically innovative in leading the way in conceptualizing new ways of approaching video online. Their first intervention in this regard was with the launch of their popular and laudable *Op Docs* series, which commissions short, smart, and high-production-quality documentaries from established filmmakers.

More recently, the *Times* announced a refreshing partnership with PBS’s POV series in which the two outlets share content: POV and the *Times* release a documentary on their websites on the same day, and they both provide textual content to guide audiences in delving deeper into the relevant issues. This partnership allows both these outlets to retain their constituents on their own sites with their own branding and messaging, while also doubling the reach of the featured story.

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

In this milieu, the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture and The Media Consortium propose to introduce VideoMatch.org, a service that is also responsive to these field-wide trends and that can provide a solution that is cross-disciplinary, forward-thinking, and focused on amplifying the impact of public interest storytelling through the sharing of strong video content.

VideoMatch.org will provide filmmakers and journalists an online portal for the sharing and discovering of social issue content. Think OkCupid for the independent media sector.

On VideoMatch.org, filmmakers will be able to upload footage from their works-in-progress or recently completed films, and journalists will be able to search this extensive database for video content that can support their reporting. The filmmakers and journalists will connect with one another through the platform and develop a relationship that provides visibility to the filmmaker’s story and strong video content for the journalist’s story.

Together, we at NAMAC and TMC have already begun piloting this program through curating and nurturing relationships offline. In December 2013, for example, we brokered our first deal. High Country News, the leading news outlet covering the West, was seeking rich video content to illustrate a complex story around tar sands drilling. NAMAC and TMC introduced High Country News to filmmaker Christian Jensen, whose film *White Earth* had just made the rounds at film festivals but had not yet gone into distribution.

Jensen and HCN worked together to determine the scope of their relationship. Jensen agreed to edit a 4 minute cut for High Country News, which the outlet then ran. HCN shared the article featuring Jensen’s video on their Facebook page. That Facebook post received 90+ shares and several people reached out to Jensen asking him to host a screening in their communities.  *White Earth* was recently nominated for a Student Academy Award. The attention this garners for Jensen will also mean that the short piece on HCN’s website will have a longer shelf life.

[Second example]

**The Match**

Through matchmaking experiences like these, NAMAC and TMC have identified the following features of an ideal match:

The filmmaker:

* wants or needs the audience that the particular news outlet reaches
* is willing to produce a never-before seen 3-4 minute video piece for the news outlet
* is willing to work with the outlet on tone, content, within limits
* is not involved in distribution deals that prohibit the filmmaker from displaying any content pre-broadcast or pre-premiere

The news outlet:

* recognizes the filmmaker as an independent creator/producer
* is very clear about their specifications for the short video--preferably creating a RFP or similar document that lays out their preferred length, the focus of the content, etc.
* is willing to work with the filmmaker’s timetable
* is willing to promote the filmmaker’s actual film via social media

The biggest takeaway from our experiments so far is that each filmmaker-journalist collaboration is going to be unique, and the two parties need an opportunity, however brief, to develop the contours of their relationship. Outlets will have different needs, not only around content, but also around tone and technique. Outlets like The Nation, AlterNet or Grist will prefer content that has a strong point of view, while outlets like the Chicago Reporter or Orion will prefer a more neutral focus. Similarly, filmmakers needs will vary. For example, they may want to create content that will be freestanding, as a piece in itself on an outlet’s site, or they may be comfortable if their video is integrated into a story. And of course, there are many kinds of collaborations that will naturally evolve based on the news outlet’s and filmmaker’s synergy.

**The Platform**

~~In an ideal world, the best matchmaking is made by a matchmaker, a person with expertise about the outlets and the filmmakers, who can suggest “dates” for potential pairs. But such matchmaking is too resource intensive to be sustainable.~~

NAMAC and TCM propose the creation of a platform for matchmaking. This platform, much like Match.com or OK Cupid, will request that filmmakers and outlets fill out basic information about themselves, and then specific information about what they seek. The platform would then suggest matches. An administrator would be available to vet these matches. This administrator would serve the role that NAMAC and TMC staff have been filling thus far in our pilot phases. The administrator has knowledge of the independent media sector and can help shepherd relationships along, help conduct outreach about the platform, and respond to inquiries.

We have identified a pre-existing platform that can modified for the development of VideoMatch.org. This platform, created by The Video Project, a distributor of social change environmental documentaries, was designed to provide educators a way to conduct robust searches of the Video Project media library to find films that can work in their classrooms. Working in collaboration with The Video Project and their development partners,  and with your support, NAMAC and TCM will be able to begin prototyping videomatch.org based on that pre-existing architecture.

**The Pilot**

With X Foundation’s support, we will create the prototype for Video Match.org. This entails identifying up to 10 news outlets and X of filmmakers to develop the taxotomy for the search protocols. With this information, we will create the website and launch it at a major film or journalism event such as Independent Film Week in New York or the Online News Association annual conference.

*Needs more fleshing out, but thought I’d start. I know you both have thought about this more deeply. – from Jack*

**BACKGROUND / CONTEXT**

Due to the rise of social media networks, journalism has expanded as a discipline to conceive of reporting and audience in new ways. As part of the effort to tell complex, multi-faceted stories that draw audience attention, journalists are increasingly feeling the need for video content. But as Dunkley Giamah recently noted at The International Journalism Festival in Perugia, despite changes to audience expectations and the entire storytelling landscape, “For video and broadcast journalism, especially for news, the standard 'package' has remained the same since the 1950s.”

Giamah advocated for journalists to adopt an “artistic” approach to video content, aim “to shoot truly cinematic footage, which can then tell stories in a fuller, more affecting manner.”

Giamah’s theory is valuable and insightful, but it does neglect one consideration which is simply that of a glut of content online. If journalists are making cinematic stories on an issue and filmmakers are doing the same, will the splitting of audiences between these two videos lead to as much as impact as if one video represented the issue and the journalists and filmmakers shared in getting the word out about it?

Some outfits are opting for such an approach. At The Media Consortium conference in February 2014, Colorlines showcased some of the videos they’ve been able to produce in-house. Many of The Media Consortium members in the audience, however, did not have access to a video production team that could \