



Communications Policy and Practice - In the Public Interest

2007 Annual Report

The Benton Foundation works to ensure that media and telecommunications serve the public interest and enhance our democracy. We pursue this mission by seeking policy solutions that support the values of access, diversity and equity, and by demonstrating the value of media and telecommunications to improve the quality of life for all Americans.

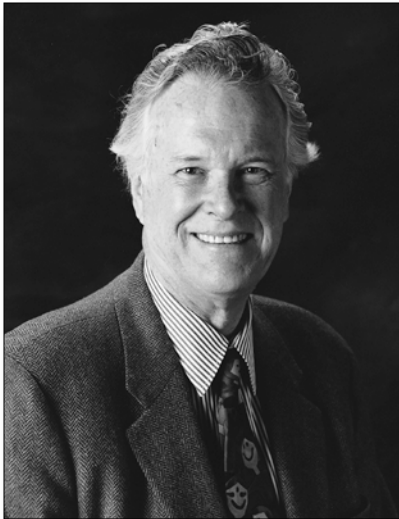
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# Message from Charles Benton, Chairman and CEO



For 27 years since our beginnings in 1981, the Benton Foundation has been committed to the values of access, diversity, and equity. We see the relationship between policy and practice as circular, not linear. Policy often drives practices, but best practices can influence, even create policy. The core ideas are openness and fairness, essential American ideals. 2007 has been a productive year for the Benton Foundation, both in our accomplishments and in planning for the future. I'd like to share with you some highlights.

## Policy

By law analog television will disappear by February 17, 2009 and be replaced by digital television (DTV). As a member of the FCC's Consumer Advisory Committee, Benton took the lead in drafting their proposals for how the Commission could craft rules to help inform all consumers about their future

viewing options -- especially those who rely most on broadcast TV: the low income, rural, disabled, and other underserved communities using analog TV. Benton has also continued the push on defining the public interest obligations of DTV broadcasters, and there are some hopeful recent FCC initiatives on this front.

Regardless of the outcome of this November's elections, the new President will want to strengthen our national information infrastructure. Another major transition that is occurring is from mostly analog "Plain Old Telephone Service" (POTS) to digital broadband. Benton has been active in filings with the Federal -State Joint Board on Universal Service pushing for the move toward Universal Broadband. In December 2007 we published a major report on Universal Affordable Broadband for All Americans, and are now engaged in research that links these new technologies to meeting the grand challenges facing our country in healthcare, education, jobs and the economy, public safety and security, and energy and the environment.

## Practice

The digital revolution is having a major impact on Community Media. In preparation for a June 2007 Community Media Summit in Chicago, Benton commissioned a scan entitled What's Going On in Community Media, that many practitioners consider the

definitive contemporary snapshot of the field. The Chicago Summit inspired a similar event in Austin, Texas on March 1, 2008, the Texas Community Media Summit, and other communities have expressed interest in following suit. The main goal is to better define what community media are locally and how by working together they can more effectively meet basic human and community needs.

Along with our operating partner, MasComm Associates, Benton is grateful to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation who has joined us to support "New Routes to Community Health." This initiative provides funding and technical assistance to eight projects which are building collaborative models to use community media to address health issues of their local immigrant populations.

#### People

At our Board meeting on January 18th, 2008 Cecilia Garcia was appointed Executive Director of the Benton Foundation, and two more family members will join the Board in mid-2008. We are blessed with an outstanding Board and are proud of our staff and consultants. We're open to and enjoy collaboration with others. Together, we look to the future with great expectations.

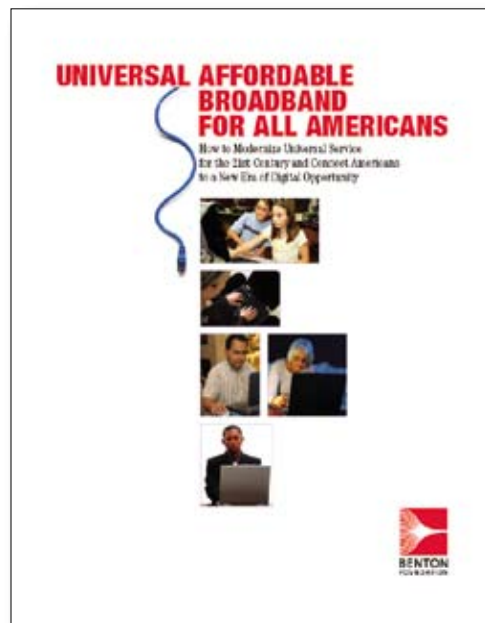


## **MEDIA & TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

Recognizing the growth of the media reform sector, Benton sharpened its focus in 2007 to concentrate on issue areas in which the Foundation has longstanding interest and expertise.

## **Universal Service/ Universal Broadband**

With the help of the Institute for Information Policy at Penn State in 2006-2007, Benton commissioned research by academicians who have studied universal service for more than a decade. Their work has helped to lay the policy foundation for an historic shift to universal access defined by broadband deployment. Key activities in 2007 included policy briefings based on Benton research with congressional staff and federal policymakers and



filing comments with the Federal Communications Commission's Joint Board on Universal Service. In September this research was presented in a filled-to-capacity session at the Telecommunications Policy Research Conference.

Benton began 2007 with a letter to President George Bush, reminding him of his promise to achieve national broadband by 2007. As the year ended, the Foundation released Universal Affordable Broadband for All Americans, a report and roadmap for making broadband access as universal as telephones are today. The report calls for an aggressive new approach, a national broadband strategy, and efforts to modernize federal universal telephone service policies to help meet the challenges of connecting all Americans to broadband.

## Public Interest Obligations

Benton organized 28 organizations, whose areas of interest range from media reform to advocacy for people with disabilities, to file comments with the Federal Communications Commission regarding the conversion from analog to digital television. The August 2007 filing made the point that over the past 12 years, the FCC has repeatedly failed to redefine broadcasters' public interest obligations in light of the nation's ongoing transition to digital



Charles Benton and  
FCC Commissioner Michael Copps

*"...Digital technology can be a huge boon for all of us--but only if we make sure this spectrum serves the public interest. The FCC has been asleep at the switch on this one, refusing to address what is really the heart-and-soul of DTV."*

*-FCC Commissioner  
Michael Copps*

television. This got the attention of FCC Commissioner Michael Copps, who said, "...Digital technology can be a huge boon for all of us--but only if we make sure this spectrum serves the public interest. The FCC has been asleep at the switch

on this one, refusing to address what is really the heart-and-soul of DTV. I welcome the comments of the 28 groups who came together to ask the Commission to get serious about defining how this transition will benefit not just broadcasters, but all the American people."

Benton is a member of the Public Interest, Public Airwaves Coalition (PIPAC), which

successfully pushed the FCC to adopt new rules aimed at improving the information local television broadcasters provide to the communities they are licensed to serve. This commendable action is an important step for local communities to evaluate whether broadcasters are adhering to U.S. law and serving the "public interest,

convenience and necessity.”  
“Broadcasters already disclose their financial statements to investors and their political contributions to voters,” noted Benton Foundation Chairman Charles Benton at a National Press Club event. “They also should fully disclose their public interest programming to viewers. This reporting is as important as food labeling.”

## **| Media Ownership**

The Federal Communications Commission held six hearings on issues related to media ownership, one of which was held in Chicago, Illinois. Armed with the Foundation’s report on the Chicago media market, entitled, “Chicago’s Media: Big, But Not Diverse,” Charles Benton testified that the ownership of Chicago’s broadcast media did not reflect the market’s diverse population. Benton urged the FCC to monitor more intently the fulfillment of its localism, diversity and competition goals before loosening media ownership rules, and allowing increased concentration of media ownership in Chicago.

## **| Consumer Advisor Committee**

In mid-2007, the FCC re-chartered and appointed members, including the Benton Foundation, to its Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC is charged with addressing consumer issues within the jurisdiction of the FCC. A primary focus for this CAC is the digital television transition,

working to help the FCC ensure that all consumers, especially the elderly, low-income, non-English speakers, and people with disabilities, are aware of the steps necessary to continue watching television after the transition is complete in February 2009. At the CAC, Benton took the lead in drafting comments responding to the FCC’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in September 2007 on the DTV Transition Education Campaign. Six months later the Foundation, along with the CAC, is following up on what was left out of the February 2008 FCC’s Report & Order on this critical NPRM.

## **| COMMUNITY & PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA**

The Benton Foundation’s longstanding commitment to “media in service of community” triggered a range of activities in 2007 – from publishing a national scan of community media, to convening community media activists in the Midwest, to seeding community media projects in eight sites that are addressing the pressing health concerns of immigrant populations.

## **| What’s Going on in Community Media?**

Too often community media have been dismissed as marginal and idiosyncratic, but, as this Benton report points out, community media have consistently demonstrated their potential to empower communities and individuals. This report summarizes the findings

of a national scan of effective and emerging community media practices conducted by Benton in collaboration with the Community Media and Technology Program of the University of Massachusetts, Boston. The scan includes an analysis of trends and practices based on one-on-one interviews with practitioners, funders, and policy makers and the information gleaned from a series of roundtable discussions with community media practitioners in Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Portland, Oregon.



## **| Community Media Summit**

Benton joined with the Community Media Workshop and the Chicago Community Trust in mid-June 2007 to convene a summit of more than 150 community media practitioners and activists from the Midwest. The Summit provided an opportunity to examine efforts in Chicago and beyond to harness the communications revolution to locate critical information and to tell stories

that have never really made it to the mainstream.

During the Summit, Julia Stasch, Chairman of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Closing the Digital Divide, unveiled "The City That Networks," a much anticipated report from the Council. Key among its recommendations is that Chicago take full advantage of digital technologies and opportunities for digital inclusion in support of "Digital Excellence."

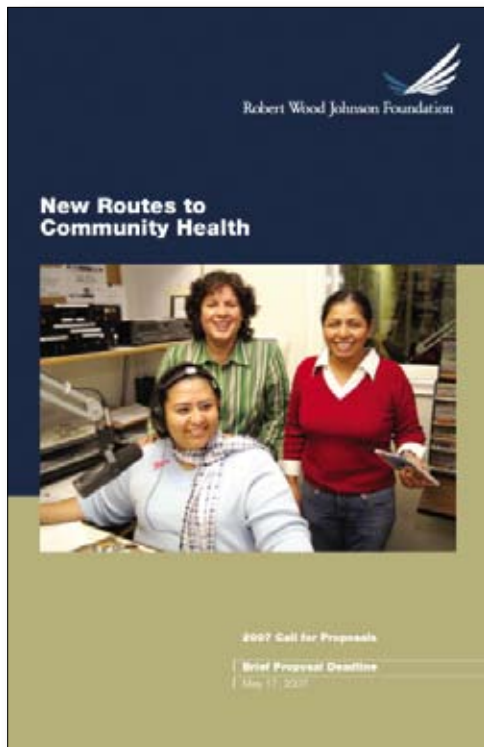
The Chicago Media Summit inspired activists and practitioners in Texas to organize a similar gathering in Austin in March 2008. There is interest in holding summits in other locales as well.

## **| What is Community Media?**

In order to document the Chicago Community Media Summit and share lessons learned, with the support of the Chicago Community Trust, Benton engaged the services of See 3 and CAN TV to produce this four-part video series.

- Part One: What role can community media play in community life?
- Part Two: Collaboration is key to effective community media.
- Part Three: Access to Broadband will critically affect community media
- Part Four: Weaving diverse voices through community media.

This video series is being used as part of presentations to funders and practitioners, and is available at no charge on the Benton website.



## **New Routes to Community Health**

The success of Sound Partners, a ten-year initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to foster and promote local collaborations around health issues, inspired the foundation to take a deeper look at collaboration opportunities and the potential for media whose mission is to serve and transform the communities within which they operate. In 2007, with help from MasComm, Benton launched a new project, with support again from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, called New Routes to Community Health. New Routes is anchored in local partnerships and poised to increase the health of new immigrants and refugees by involving a range of local media and civic institutions in tackling the complex challenges of new Americans and giving voice to these vulnerable new residents.

Eight projects have been selected for funding:

- **Abriendo las Cajas (Opening Boxes)**  
Partners: Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC), La Clínica de la Raza, ZeroDivide  
Oakland, California
- **Domestic Worker Safety & Dignity Project**  
Partners: La Raza Centro Legal, Labor Occupational Health Program, UC Berkeley, Underground Advertising  
San Francisco, California
- **Egal Shidad: Stories of Somali Health for Radio, TV and Classroom Use**  
Partners: Confederation of Somali Community, ECHO Minnesota (Emergency, Community and Health Outreach), KFAI Community Radio, Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN)  
Minneapolis/St. Paul
- **HEARMe (Health Education via Airwaves for Refugees)**  
Partners: Clarkston Community Center, Emory University, Sagal Radio  
Atlanta, Georgia
- **Media Partnerships for Community Engagement in Southeast Asian Immigrant Health**  
Partners: Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition, Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning, Thomas Jefferson University, Department of Health Policy, University of Pennsylvania  
Department of Family Medicine &

Community Health, WHYY  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- Navigating Health Care in the U.S. for Chinese American Seniors: The Basics  
Partners: Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness, Research, and Training (AANCART), Chinatown Service Center, LA 18 KSCI TV  
Los Angeles, California
- Salud: Healing through the Arts  
Partners: Latinos Progresando, National Museum of Mexican Art, Radioarte WRTE  
Chicago, Illinois
- Twa Zanmi (Three Friends)  
Partners: Haitian American Public Health Initiative. Haitian Media Network, Institute for Community Inclusion  
Boston, Massachusetts

Please visit [www.newroutes.org](http://www.newroutes.org) – a web site for collaborative work and content sharing.

## **HEADLINES AND BENTON.ORG**

The Benton Foundation supports the creation of policies and practices that provide equal access to media/ telecommunications tools and content, and that encourage Americans to use these resources to improve their quality of life. To that end, the foundation utilizes Internet-based information tools that keep readers abreast of the fast-changing telecommunications policy field.

For over a decade, Benton has delivered a daily, free, update on communications policy, known as Headlines. The service summarizes the latest articles from mainstream and trade press as well as new information sources such as blogs, linking readers to the vast source material. Headlines is delivered via e-mail and distributed via RSS. The service is also archived on our website, linking the evolution of issues over time, the coverage of various publications and the work of particular authors.

Headlines also provides automatic, running updates to particular legislation we are tracking over time as well as key issues the foundation is advocating on like universal broadband, media ownership and the public interest obligations of digital broadcasters.

In 2008, Benton's website will also become the home for pushing debate forward. In March the foundation published the first in a series of interviews on the intersection of race and telecommunications policy. The piece invited readers to post their comments on the issues raised. Moving forward, we'll soon do the same for a selection of Headlines stories that come from the collective wisdom of our readership.

## I STRATEGIC PLAN

As Benton enters its twenty-seventh year, the Foundation heads into a period marked by rapid change in the field of media policy and practice. It is a time of fiscal uncertainty, given the nation's growing economic woes. It is also a time when Charles Benton is considering the legacy he would like to leave when his service at the helm of the Foundation comes to an end. Further, the Ford Foundation is interested in strengthening Benton's capacity to serve the field of public interest communications and toward that end, is supporting this strategic planning process.

For all of these reasons, in 2007 the Benton Board of Directors decided to engage The TCC Group in planning for the future. The goal of this process is to more clearly define the Benton Foundation's programmatic goals and strategies; strengthen its internal operations so that it may achieve those goals; and outline the specific steps Benton needs to take to implement this plan.

## I Staff

**Rita Cook** is part-time chief financial officer.

**Cecilia Garcia** has rejoined Benton and now serves as executive director, based in Washington, DC.

**Brenda González** serves as deputy director for New Routes to Community Health, based in Madison, Wisconsin.

**Jeremy Isett** is Benton's web master.

**Kip Roderick** works as executive assistant to Charles Benton and as office manager for the Benton Foundation office in Evanston, Illinois.

## I Consultants

**Jim Kohlenberger**, Senior Fellow  
*Jim Kohlenberger is a technology and telecommunications policy expert with more than 15 years of Washington policymaking experience on the Hill and in the White House.*

**Karen Menichelli**, Program Liaison, New Routes to Community Health

*On staff since 1982, Karen Menichelli served for many years as executive vice president of the Benton Foundation. In 2006, she stepped down from her day-to-day executive and operational leadership to focus on programmatic activity in the area of community media.*

**Kevin Taglang**, Senior Policy Analyst and Editor, Communications-related Headlines

*Kevin Taglang is an independent communications policy researcher and writer based in Evanston, Illinois. Previously, Kevin worked full-time for the Benton Foundation on policy and strategies for educating and engaging the nonprofit sector.*

## Statement of Financial Position As of December 31, 2007

ASSETS	
Cash and investments	\$ 10,937,009
Grants receivable	3,421,248
Other receivables and prepaids	161,712
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 14,519,969</b>
Furniture, equipment and leasehold improvements	277,229
Noncurrent assets	146,832
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 14,944,030</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 235,184</b>
NET ASSETS	
Board designated	11,319,005
Temporarily restricted (program grants)	3,389,841
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>14,708,846</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$14,944,030</b>

## Statement of Activities As of December 31, 2007

REVENUE	
New Grants	\$ 4,147,469
Other income	2,029
Investment income	703,041
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 4,852,539</b>
EXPENSES	
Program expenses	\$ 733,072
Supporting services	831,979
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 1,565,051</b>
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 3,287,488</b>
NET ASSETS	
Beginning of year	\$ 11,421,358
End of year	\$ 14,708,846

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