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2011 Winner
Everett M. Rogers Award for Excellence in Entertainment Education

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Whose Shoes Are These?
Understanding Entertainment Education’s Audience
The Norman Lear Center is a nonpartisan research and public policy center that studies the social, political, economic and cultural impact of entertainment on the world. The Lear Center translates its findings into action through testimony, journalism, strategic research and innovative public outreach campaigns. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research, through its conferences, public events and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.

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THE EVERETT M. ROGERS AWARD

The USC Annenberg School and the Norman Lear Center seek to recognize exceptional creativity in the practice of entertainment-education designed to benefit society, or outstanding research and scholarship that has illuminated the processes or effects of entertainment-education. We have established this award in the name of our former colleague and leader in the field of entertainment-education. Everett M. Rogers' lifetime of contributions significantly raised standards for producing appealing and effective media to enhance the quality of people's lives, and for conducting research to discover how these productions can best achieve intended outcomes.

A video of the program can be watched in its entirety online at:
http://youtu.be/EVyKR0kHiHA
Esta de Fossard is a faculty member at the Johns Hopkins University Zanvyl Krieger School of Advanced Communication in Washington, DC is the 2011 recipient of the annual Everett M. Rogers Award for Achievement in Entertainment Education. Building on her lifetime personal experience in radio, TV, theatre and teaching, Esta de Fossard has made significant contributions - often in unique ways - to the development, practice and teaching of entertainment education for nearly 40 years. Her reach has extended to more than two dozen countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, as well as the U.S. She has contributed a trilogy of groundbreaking textbooks and other practical teaching and guidance materials, previously lacking, while also teaching and mentoring upcoming practitioners, educators and scholars in the field.
Geneva Overholser: Welcome to a joint forum of the Journalism School and the Norman Lear Center. I’m Geneva Overholser, Director of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism. It’s great to have all of you with us.

We have a special treat in store today, and I am going to introduce my co-conspirator in this collaboration, my good friend and colleague, Marty Kaplan, who is the Norman Lear Chair here at USC Annenberg and the Director of the wonderful Norman Lear Center, which is part of the Annenberg family. Marty?

Marty Kaplan: Thank you. And thanks to all of you for coming. I’m thrilled, Geneva, that we, together with the Journalism School, are doing this and finding common ground on the relationship with audiences. This is a theme that connects journalism and communication for today.

For those of you who are tweeting, our hashtag is Rogers Award, or ASCJ. I know at least a couple people are live tweeting, so welcome to that.

You can learn all about the Norman Lear Center at learcenter.org. I invite you to find out about it or look at our materials, which are on the desk outside.

Today, we have the great pleasure of awarding the annual Everett Rogers Award. Ev Rogers was an Associate Dean of this school. He also held the Annenberg Chair while he was here, and when he died suddenly seven years ago, the Annenberg School wanted to do something in his honor. So the Rogers Award was born.

He did amazing things in his career. One of them was to write a book called *A Diffusion of Innovations*, which many of you may have read in class. In the mid-2000s, it became the number-two most cited book in all of social science.

He was a leader of the entertainment education movement. We’ll hear more about that movement and what entertainment education is today. The award is administered by Hollywood, Health & Society, a program of the Lear Center.

The way this will go is that Professor Doe Mayer will be introducing our guest of honor. She will speak. Then we’ll have time for questions. We know that at one o’clock some people have to slip out for class, but for those of you who can stay, if we’re still on a roll, then we’ll keep going for a bit with Q&A.

So it’s my great pleasure to introduce to you the Mary Pickford Professor at the School of Cinematic Arts and on the faculty at Annenberg, Doe Mayer.

Doe Mayer: Thank you. It’s a pleasure to be here, and it’s a pleasure to introduce my friend and my professional colleague of many years, Esta de Fossard. Her name is perfect for this, isn’t it? It has panache, and it’s really a perfect name. We won’t forget it.

She’s been working in the field of entertainment education for over 30 years in about 40 countries. She’s also been a consultant to Discovery, NPR, and the *Barney* programs. She’s the author of 50 books, including (*ital.*) Writing and Producing for TV and Film, which is probably the most substantive and used textbook about entertainment education and developing material for film and television. But she’s also written children’s books. I haven’t read *Monty the Runaway Mouse*, but I plan to do that shortly.

She currently teaches entertainment education and intercultural education at Johns Hopkins University. The award that we’re giving her today is for exceptional creativity and excellence in research,
and I don’t think there’s a better candidate than this very unique woman. Esta de Fossard has brought great creativity to this field, tremendous energy and enthusiasm about doing this work, and a real academic rigor about understanding it and transmitting it to others.

I asked her what her favorite accomplishment is and she said it was teaching a new generation of students to think about these things. It’s a great pleasure to have her with us. We’re very honored and delighted, and, Esta, please come up and talk to us.

**Esta de Fossard:** You’re not going to take your notes in case you have the same thing about somebody else.

Good afternoon, everybody.

**Audience:** Good afternoon.

**Esta de Fossard:** We’ll try it again. Good afternoon, everybody.

**Audience:** Good afternoon!

**Esta de Fossard:** Ah, that’s much better. Thank you very much. Now, I feel as though I really belong here.

Needless to say, I’m very happy to be with you, and I’m so glad that at least a few males have joined us. First, I thought we were going to have only female communicators and journalists; but welcome, gentlemen. I’m glad you have joined us.

I am happy to be here with you today and to share some thoughts and ideas and questions on this wonderful world of entertainment education. Also, let’s remember the remarkable man who, in fact, brought us all together here, Everett Rogers.

One of the things that really impressed me about Everett and that has made a difference to my work was his “diffusion of innovation” theory. His theory sounds easy, but it tells us that not everybody learns at the same speed or learns in the same manner. When we’re talking about behavior change and trying to encourage people to make quite dramatic changes in their lives, we have to remember they’re not all going to take it in at the same time, understand it at the same speed, or do anything about it.

I’m going to be talking about entertainment education serial drama, and before I go any further, I wanted to clear up one misunderstanding. We are not, my friends, not talking about soap opera, and if anybody in the entertainment education world uses the words “soap opera,” look out.

The term “soap opera” came all the way back in history when radio had started, and most radio stations put on the air these very dramatic little drama or serials, let’s say, to entertain housewives as they were doing the boring work of the daily chores. Most of them were sponsored by soap companies, usually dishwashing and floor scrubbing soap. That’s where the word soap comes from. The word opera comes from the fact that these dramas were enormously exaggerated, like an opera!

Entertainment education is not soap opera. It’s using a very powerful serial drama to attract and hold the attention of the audience and then working into that drama very important education messages.

Let me remind you before we go any further that the word entertainment comes from the Latin word, [entretenir], which means to hold the attention of. So the drama, and the serial drama, is to hold our audience’s attention.

The other word, education, comes from, again, the Latin, educare, which means to lead out of. But it’s also interesting to note that it also means to give birth to a child.

What we’re doing in entertainment education is, first of all,
holding the attention of our audience and then encouraging and inspiring a change in the audience that will lead them to be almost a new person.

Let me point out before I go any further that it’s obvious that I’m at least 124 years old – don’t you contradict me — and that I have been engaged in the world of entertainment and education most of my life. I grew up in Australia, which explains my rather strange accent, all right? At the age of seven, I started acting in radio as a radio actor. At the age of 15, I started writing educational radio programs for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. So entertainment and education have been with me for a long time.

Eventually, I moved into the field of television. I suppose you’d call it “television education.” I wrote many books, and amongst the many books – she says, showing off – were books on entertainment education. And if you don’t know anything about them, you can come and have a look later.

Most of the work I do now, or have been doing for the last several hundred years, is in developing countries. These are countries where the only education that our audience receives to encourage them to lead better lives is in the serial dramas that we put on the radio or television for them. It’s, therefore, very, very important that we know our audience. It’s one thing to know your topic. It’s one thing to be an expert in your topic. But if you cannot honestly know your audience, you might as well close down right now. Putting on entertainment education is not about you as a brilliant creator; it’s about you as a person who sincerely cares for your audience and creates something that will make them pay attention and improve their lives.

Often, the only access that they have to this information is through our programs. Several years ago, I was leading a workshop in Ghana, where they were preparing a new entertainment education drama with the glorious title, HeHaHo. It aired everyday and everybody would tune in. The main aim of the project was to teach parents in very remote poor areas of the country how to take care of their children, how to have fewer children, and how to protect themselves and their children from diseases.

At the beginning of the workshop, as I usually do, I reminded everybody of the importance of walking in the shoes of the shoes of our audience. Well, the very next morning as I was about to introduce everybody, a young man strode in, beautifully dressed in an immaculate suit. He walked right down to the very front, turned around, held up in the air a pair of the most dilapidated, shredded, horrible sandals, and said to all of us, “Who’s shoes are these?” Talk about dramatic impact. He brought home the point that the people whose lives we are hoping to improve are people who have virtually nothing; and no education and access to the type of material which we wanted to help them understand.

I’m a great believer in the design workshop as the beginning of working out an entertainment education drama serial. In the design workshop, we put together the design document. And in that document, we have the precise wording of the knowledge that must be put into every episode of the drama.

At the design workshop, we have the experts, of course. We also have writers and producers and members of our audience – not representatives of our audience but real members of our audience. Sometimes they’re very shy at first, and we have to encourage them and help them realize that we really want to hear from them.

It’s vitally important that we have the writers and the producer or producers with us because what they must understand from the very beginning, it is not their job to say when this piece of knowledge will be given, how this piece of knowledge will be given. The education side is the responsibility of the educators, the people who know two things – what the audience currently knows and understands, what the audience should know and understand, and then a third vitally important point, how to give that knowledge to the audience so that they can understand it
and will want to use it.

Typically, one of the most rewarding things of a design workshop is watching the writers become totally engaged in it.

Yesterday, I had the little exercise with some young people who were interested in writing stories. It’s a little exercise I often do, which is to get people to write a very short story about anything. And then I say to them, “Now put into your story a message about clean water.” Never once in all my 150 years of teaching has anyone said, “That’s impossible.”

It is possible to put virtually any message into any story. Once the writers realized that, they realize, “I’m not writing a story about diarrhea.” Boy, how that would run on!

[Laughter]

Sorry! They can write a story that is totally appealing to that audience and then work that message into the drama. That’s why we must have members of our audience at our meeting.

I insist that our writers go out into the field anonymously and live for about a week in the area where our audience lives. They have no right to tell anybody who they are, but they observe and they listen and they think. Many of the writers come home with photographs of people they’ve met out in the villages. They pin them on the wall and they use these people as the main characters in their story. We’re talking about the extraordinarily important business of getting to know your audience.

All right. There are two sides to this – the education and the entertainment. At the design workshop, we’re working specifically on the education. Now I’m going to ask you to look with me more carefully at the education side.

For those of you who are in the journalism world, this is as vitally important that you know and understand the audience for whom you are preparing your journalistic articles. If your audience doesn’t understand the grounding from which you are coming, they’re not going to read you very much longer. And you’re not going to have very much influence on them at all.

Using some examples from experiences that I’ve had in the developing world, I’d like to invite us to look at some of the really important parts of the entertainment education experience, starting always with walking in the shoes of your audience.

I’m going to repeat that. I don’t care how brilliant you are, how many Ph.D.s you have, how many Everett Rogers awards you have. The most important thing is to put yourself aside and walk in those shoes and get to know your audience so that the very first thing you can do is present to your audience a message that is completely correct from their perspective.

Let me tell you about a rather classic example in regards to the correct message. This took place in an Asian country. They were doing a program on encouraging parents to have smaller families. Specifically, they were encouraging women to use contraceptives because men believed that it was unmasculine for them to interrupt the flow of their – shall we say – “life” or “sperm” or whatever. It is very, very difficult to inspire men to use contraceptives. So we concentrated on women. And in this one particular set of programs, the emphasis was on using the oral pill; or. as they called it in the programs, the contraceptive pill.

One day, a woman came into the little health clinic in the village. She was very angry because she was pregnant. And she said, “I have been using the pill every night the way you told me to.” But she had not been swallowing the pill, right? She assumed that because this was to prevent her being pregnant, there was only one place to put the pill and that was at the other end of her body.

Yes, it’s a funny story, but it’s also a tragic story because the people
creating the programs did not put themselves in those shoes, listen to the language of the audience, listen to the understanding of the audience, and realize that saying “using a contraceptive pill” could be easily misunderstood. What’s vitally important is to make it correct for your audience. Get down there into those shoes and understand everything from their viewpoint.

Another problem that faces us is giving people complete information. We’re talking about a serial drama, which means that we will be doing 13 to 26 episodes. That means either three months or six months once a week. We’re dividing the knowledge among these various episodes. So how can we give complete knowledge within one episode about a fairly complicated subject?

The people who create the drama like to think, “of course, everyone’s going to listen to every episode. This is a fantastic drama. We’ve got wonderful actors. We’ve got a wonderful message. Everyone will listen.” But things happen in every life that interrupt our plans. How can we make sure that someone who misses some of our vitally important episodes can find out what to do?

For example, a man’s wife suddenly comes down with something. He doesn’t know what. She’s having terrible diarrhea. She’s bright red in the face. He’s heard a little bit about diarrhea diseases in our serial, but he hasn’t heard everything.

All right. What we need with every single episode of our program is an epilogue. At the end of the program, perhaps one of the characters – one of the believable characters – says, “If you need immediate help or need more information, please go to this place or this person. Repeat, go to this place or this person.” That information is given at the end of every program.

Sometimes it’s possible to use an actual doctor. For the past several years, in Alabama, there’s a wonderful entertainment education serial drama called BodyLove. A marvelous young lady, Connie Kohler, is the one who started this several years ago. I went down and worked with them for a while on this. This program is to help African American people avoid and/or deal with diabetes.

At the end of every program for their epilogue, an actual local African American diabetes doctor comes on, speaks directly to the audience, and reminds them that if they have a computer and can get on the Web, there are places to go to or call, or they can come to his office.

In order to make the message complete in every episode, we must make sure our audience knows where they can go to get immediate help or information.

All right. Another challenge in the modern world is keeping our information, our knowledge, our program sufficiently concise. If you’re an expert in the field and you know enough to write six or seven textbooks and I ask you to put all that into one 15-minute program, you’re going to tell me I’m a complete idiot. But experts need to stop and ask themselves what is really essential. The secret is the “KISS rule.” K-I-S-S. Keep it short and simple, or – as some people prefer to say and you can join me if you like – keep it simple, stupid.

A simple example: you’re standing on the side of a frantically busy highway, traffic going in all directions at the most incredible speed. Suddenly, a young child comes skipping down and is aiming straight towards that freeway. Are you going to say, “Excuse me, my child. Do you realize how fast those vehicles are going and how much they weigh and what would happen if one of them hit you?” No, you simply say…

**Audience:** Stop!

**Esta de Fossard:** Yes, thank you. You’re all brilliant. “Stop.” Only one word is necessary. When we’re trying to reach out to people through education, through entertainment education and
through journalism, keep it short and simple.

You can direct your audience to places where they can go for more more reading, knowledge, activity, whatever, on the topic. But when you’re out in the developing world where people aren’t particularly educated and you’re trying to make people change their behavior, it’s up to you to walk in their shoes and put the information concisely but also convincingly. They don’t have access to the Internet, they don’t have access to all the greatest libraries in the world. So this is very important.

All right. There are a few other vitally important things we have to remember. One of them is to make the message consistent. Many years ago, the glorious Coca-Cola Company insisted, “Things go better with Coke.” Well, my car ran out of gas one day, and I thought, all right, if things go better with Coke, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, no, it didn’t. Do things really go better with Coca-Cola, or is this a sales gimmick?

Now, what we have to do with our audience is tell them exactly the consistent truth. Sometimes it helps to break down your main message into a simple little – almost like a little rhyme.

For example, in one of our programs – again, we’re talking about how to protect yourself and recover from diarrhea – we had a four-part message: water, food, rest, help. We constantly say to people, “Water, food, rest, help.” Then we would expand. “Water – drink plenty of clean water, at least six cups a day. Food – eat small amounts of non-fatty foods several times a day.” And then we had to be sure that we knew what foods were available to that audience and recommend those foods to them. “Rest – rest for at least an hour a day plus sleeping comfortably at night.” “Help – go to the nearest…” – and then we would tell them again at the end of the episode where the nearest place was where they could get help.

And sometimes it was rather fun to put your little main messages into a song, (singing) “Water, food, rest, and help. Water, food, rest, and help. If you have diarrhea, water, food, rest, and help.” Now, you can all sing it, you see, right? That will stay in people’s minds, and suddenly when somebody has diarrhea, they’ll find themselves saying, “Water, food, rest and help. Oh, I know what to do.” Keep it simple. Keep it clear.

In today’s glorious world where we are torturing, slaughtering, avoiding sensible language – sorry, but that’s my opinion – we have to be very, very careful. We abbreviate everything. I don’t think anybody uses the word “telephone” anymore. If you’re lucky, it’s a “phone” or an “iPod.” And then we have all these apps? What the heck is an app? An appendage? An aperture? An appendix? Whoa.

Okay, that’s fine in our community, but if you’re talking to people from a different audience, please make sure they know what these abbreviations are. The worst one is the world is HIV and AIDS, the initials HIV and the acronym AIDS. Now, I’m not going to embarrass you by asking you all to stand up and tell me exactly what the initial means and exactly what the acronym means. You probably could. But where this becomes a serious problem is in our developing countries, where HIV and AIDS mean nothing at all. And one of the biggest problems with HIV and AIDS is that it is not visible.

So you’re saying to people out there, “Well, be careful that you don’t acquire the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or you might get the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.” Oh, yeah? Then show me what on earth you are talking about. We can’t, we don’t. It’s rather frightening to know that one of the highest rates of these two inglorious words – HIV and AIDS – is in Washington, DC, in this country, in those parts of Washington, DC, where the children are the least educated.

I teach entertainment education. I also teach intercultural communication. And one of the exercises I give my students is,
“Could you please explain to someone who doesn’t know these words what you mean by HIV and AIDS?” They all say, “I think I’m going to sign out of this class.” Of course, I go to the door and don’t let them.

Be very, very careful. I had a young assistant who worked with me, and she was constantly using initials and acronyms, and I asked her, “Why do you do that?” And she said, “Because it shows how intelligent I am.” I said, “No, darling, sorry, but it shows how thoughtless you are. Get yourself in the shoes of your audience, and please don’t use initials and acronyms with me because I’m too stupid to understand them, too.” She got the message.

Another vitally important part of successful entertainment education is walking in the shoes of our audience and making everything culturally appropriate. Don’t ask your audience to do things or make behavior changes that are totally inappropriate.

For me, one of the most powerful lessons in cultural appropriateness came when we were in Swaziland, where my wonderful husband, who’s sitting here next to the lovely lady in the yellow sweater, was the ambassador. We lived in Swaziland for some time.

We were putting a program on the air to try to encourage people to bring their children to be vaccinated against the usual childhood diseases. It was a fascinating program. We had a wonderful song. Everything was great. But they didn’t come.

One day I was out in the back locks of Swaziland, and I met a tribal doctor, and I asked him, “Can you tell me why?” And he looked at me as though I was completely stupid and ignorant – and you don’t need to comment on that – and he said, “Look, I’ll come and talk to your audience, and I think it will make a difference.”

He came at the end of our program and in Swahili he said to his audience, “I’m so and so, your tribal doctor, and yes, I have the boo-boos,” which was his word for medicines, “to cure local diseases.” But he said, “Then all these white people came charging into our country, bringing all their ridiculous, horrible diseases with them, and my boo-boos can’t deal with those. What you’re going to have to do is go to their doctors and get their boo-boos.”

Immediate change. Because he was their cultural doctor, he was their cultural leader, they trusted him, they believed him, and they came to our centers to have their children vaccinated. I will never forget that wonderful man teaching me such a very simple lesson.

Another culturally appropriate thing we have to bear in mind is that in many parts of the world, it is the man – maybe in some of your lives – who makes all the decisions about which television program we’re going to watch, which radio program we’re going to listen to. If we want to put on the air a program about pregnancy for women or about women during childbirth, you can be very sure that in many of these developing countries, nobody will listen because the men are not going to listen to a program about looking after the pregnant woman.

What do we do in that case? We had a wonderful example in Indonesia, where our aim was to encourage men to treat pregnant women correctly, to look after them correctly, and make sure that everything was right in their lives.

But we started with a mystery story. The program opened with two men talking to each other, and then the next shot was one of these two men lying dead in a riverbed. What happened? What this a murder? A suicide? An accident? It was a mystery story and immediately grabbed the attention of our male listeners.

We had a very dominant, strident, handsome policeman and he called all sorts of people into the police station to question them, and among them was a young woman who was pregnant. The police were dragging her into the police station, and this policeman let it fly, told them that they were not only doing the wrong thing but they were stupid, unmasculine idiots. Didn’t they
know that the most important way to show that you are a real man is to know how to look after a new life inside a wonderful woman?

The mystery went on for some time, and this particular woman was quite involved. The policeman would go out into the villages and see people mishandling women and their wives, and they would stand up and make themselves look like the police chief and hand over exactly the same message. And it worked extremely well.

Some of you may recall that the importance of walking in the shoes of our audience is beautifully summarized in the words of Oscar Hammerstein. “It’s a very ancient saying and a true and noble thought that when you become a teacher, by your pupils, you will be taught. (Singing) I’ve now become a teacher, and forgive me if I boast. I’ve now become an expert at the subject I love most. Getting to know you. Getting to know all about you. Haven’t you noticed, suddenly I’m free and easy because of all the wonderful and new things I’m learning about you day by day?”

Thank you.

Marty Kaplan: We’re going to have a few minutes of questions, but before we do, I wanted to let Esta know that in addition to receiving this evening at the Writers Guild the trophy for the Rogers Award at the Sentinel for Health event, there is also another part of the Rogers award, and it’s flat and it comes in an envelope, and I’m happy to present it to you.

Esta de Fossard: Thank you very much. That is very, very kind. You might also be happy to know that what’s contained in that envelope will be passed on to some of the organizations with which I work, one of them being Compassion, an organization which allows you to adopt a child in a foreign country, keep the child with her parents, but support the child. We have supported many children over the years, and if we ever have the opportunity to go to that country, they go out of their way to let you meet that person.

The other one we always support is the Smile Train, where children who are born with a cleft lip and have their faces hideously deformed, for $25, they can turn that person into a beautiful face.

So thank you very much.

Now then, let’s have a few questions or disagreements or whatever. Yes, sir?

Audience Member: You’ve done a lot of work in entertainment education as it relates to malaria. Is there a need for more production in that area? Because we see a lot on HIV/AIDS but very little lately on malaria.

Esta de Fossard: Yeah. I’m very, very glad you asked that question. Are we putting aside things like malaria because of all this that’s being done about HIV?

One of the problems that arose there, my friend, was that all the people who provide money and support for these things all turned around and said, “We have to stop the spread of AIDS,” and they stopped giving in other directions. But now they realize, first of all, we have to change the messages about AIDS but that also at the same time, we can’t walk away and let people die of malaria. So, yes, we are coming back to that.

I’d love to tell you a very brief story about mosquito nets. They were encouraging people to put nets over their beds to protect themselves and their children. Well, in one particular country, all of a sudden, there were millions of weddings going on, all these glorious brides dressed in all these beautiful white costumes.

Yeah, all of which were made out of mosquito nets. But we soon put a stop to that.
So I think your role in this is, as much as possible, to encourage that we continue in these other areas so that they don’t slip back to where they were previously.

**Audience Member:** Certainly, in a developing country, we have more of an opportunity to present a message multiple times and to work from the bottom up. Chat a bit about how you think those of us who care about causes greatly can go forward and help in that capacity.

**Esta de Fossard:** Right. Unfortunately, in this country, we’re so accustomed to watching fiction that is either hilariously funny, frightfully rude, you know, with naked people wandering all over the place, or full of crime.

A lot has to do with our schools. We need to go back and encourage people in America to think and be more creative. We now have the advantage – or is it a disadvantage – of the Web and all these cell phones and things that people carry around, and people are saying a lot, “Okay, we can do entertainment education dramas on the Web, and people may look at them whenever they choose.”

The big advantage to everybody watching or listening to an episode at exactly the same time means that they’re much more likely and much more inclined to talk about it.

I think it’s very important – you people in the journalism world, too – that we start encouraging young people to listen, to look at, and to read things that require their imagination. I bought a book for a young girl we know who’s been adopted from Ethiopia, and I wanted to get her a book that would help her learn to read English. Find a book with no pictures or very few pictures?

A Spanish friend of mine said to me one day, “Hey, he’s not reading the words. He’s reading the pictures.” She was trying to teach her five-year-old grandson to read, and he was reading the pictures.

Until we re-encourage young people to pay attention and to think about the programs they’re looking at or listening to, we’re going to have a lot of trouble. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do it. We can.

Like this one, *BodyLove*, if you don’t know the *BodyLove* program, look it up and you can hear episodes on the radio, and this is on the radio in America, not even on television. But it does go right back to training our children at an early age.

I’ve started doing a children’s program called *And Then*, where I tell a story, no pictures, and the story itself is about 500 to 600 words long and we get right down towards the very end, and then I stop and say to the children, “And then…”

They have to finish the story, which means they’ve had to listen to every word, turn on their imagination, and come up with it. They love it. It’s incredibly popular.

**Audience member:** In society as it is today, I don’t know that you get people sitting down at the same time. I think with DVRs, they sit down whenever they have time. But if you’re telling me the end result is generating discussion, okay, then we need to do things that stimulate discussion and not be as concerned about when they watch the show.

**Esta de Fossard:** Absolutely. Doe?

**Doe Mayer:** In keeping with that, I heard some wonderful news recently, which is that some of the feature entertainment education programming that was done in Africa have become so popular they’re being pirated on the streets of Tanzania. So they’re
actually being sold, along with Michael Douglas movies, by pirates who think they’re going to make a profit on the entertainment education model, which to me is a wonderful thought. I’m not in favor of pirates, but I’m delighted with the –

Esta de Fossard: Endorsement.

Doe Mayer: – endorsement, exactly, of these ideas in a more commercial frame.

I’m Wondering if there’s any way in the U.S. that we might be able to think about that connection, that it’s so popular that it actually becomes wanted by profit-makers.

Audience member: Esta, I’ve talked with you so many times and we’ve been so interested in all your visits to all these different countries. You’ve talked about women and how many babies they’re having. Not a lot of attention is being given to that problem. We have a law in this country that keeps us from doing anything in any other country about, for instance, planned parenthood, and I’m wondering how did you handle that problem?

Esta de Fossard: Thank you. I think the rule is that we’re not allowed to enforce any of this. We’re not saying you must have only X number of children. What we’re pointing out is that people who have a small family have much more comfortable their lives, have children who are doing better with their lives. The choice is yours. If you decide that you would like to have a smaller family, here’s what you can do about it to ensure it. But we’re not enforcing it at all.

Audience member: I thought they couldn’t even talk about it.

Sandra de Castro Buffington: Esta, first of all, thank you. What a wonderful presentation and discussion.

Our tendency overseas is to do campaigns of relatively shorter duration. Would you talk a little bit about sustained and systematic approaches that continue on and in relation to these?

Esta de Fossard: I think that’s a very good one. It is almost inevitable that somebody or a group from this country or some other country will go into a developing country to conduct a campaign which goes on for a certain period of time, “Thank you very much. Goodbye.”

One program I worked with that was very different from that was in Nepal, where we started a radio drama called Cut Your Coat According to Your Cloth. Going back to a previous question, was about having a small family so that you could afford to keep this family and that you’d all be happy together.

They wouldn’t let us stop. Yes, Johns Hopkins was out there for a campaign, but the audience loved the story so much, which was mostly written by a wonderful old man called who had been a storyteller for years. He was brilliant. But we went on and on and on, supported largely by the Nepali government to do this, because everybody really loved the drama.

So I think that tells you what’s going to make a difference between a campaign and an ongoing assistance is the quality of what you produce. Does that make sense?

Audience member: In terms of getting to know and understand your audience, would you find it especially helpful if you thought of that audience as one person? Maybe you get a sense of who that one person is and it is more effective relaying a narrative that way rather than trying to think of a whole group?

Esta de Fossard: Yes. As I told you, I grew up in the radio world. My mother was a radio drama writer for years, and she used to always say to me, “Tell your story to one person.”

What you’ve raised is a very, very good point. If you think that you
and I am sitting down together and I’m saying, “Oh, you know, I know this fantastic story about…” and I hold your attention and tell you that story because I’m talking to you. I think a good writer always does that. A good writer does think, “Oh, my gosh, I’ve got an audience out there, 650 million people.” No, “I have a story to tell, and I want you to listen to it.”

**Audience member:** At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we are working much more deliberately and intentionally to include intercultural communications as we think about our audiences and messaging, whether we’re talking to African Americans or Italian Americans or Jewish Americans. What recommendations can you share with us about how to introduce intercultural communications as part of that development of the message?

**Esta de Fossard:** Which one are you putting first, intercultural communication or the development of the message?

**Audience member:** I’m thinking that it all starts together at the same time.

**Esta de Fossard:** Yes. Yes, it does. Let’s go back to what the gentleman in the corner asked. Sometimes it helps to have some photographs. You stick them up on the wall. I’m talking to that man who happens to be a Jewish rabbi, and I’m talking to that woman, who’s an African America, and I’m talking to that couple, who are Spanish American.

What am I talking about? Roll it back to the emotion. What am I trying to get their hearts to feel? Not their brains, their hearts. What do I want them to feel?

And let’s move it to something positive. You might start out by saying, “I want them to feel fear,” but then we want to move them to feeling hope. Start that way because one of the extraordinary things about human beings is they may look very different, they may speak totally different languages, they may live in totally different places, but they all have the same emotions.

The approach is through the emotions. If you, my friend, were suffering the most hideous tragedy, something had happened horribly to your most adored young child, I don’t care if you’re pink and white stripes or yellow spots or whatever, it’s my heart and your heart that get together over that tragedy. Start with the emotions.

**Audience member:** You’ve done a lovely job of helping remind us journalists about the importance of audience. I want to ask it again even more specific. How would you put your good points into practice in some specific ways?

**Esta de Fossard:** I think I’d say exactly what I said to my friend over here. In almost anything we do, the most motivating part of what we’re trying to do is the emotion. As I said before, people have the same emotions. Journalism is a very challenging field, and yes, I did try it for a little while. Then I thought, “Oh, fooey, I’m supposed to put the facts here.” And that’s not good enough for a person with my imagination.

I think you also want to think about what difference do these facts make to my audience, to the life of my audience. Try to put that back into the emotional structure. Can what I’m saying make people proud, or can it make people think, “Wow, I could be more successful, more valuable, more beautiful if I didn’t do that?”

I think it’s going back on that same thing. Why am I putting this into a journalist’s story for this audience? So that I’ll get my paycheck or because it’s wonderfully scary? Or because this could make a difference in their lives? Think of it that way, and if it doesn’t work, scream at me.

**Audience member:** Back to an earlier question about campaigns, what are your thoughts on the prospects of getting developing
countries to integrate social change and behavior change messages into feature films, specifically Nigeria, which, as you know, a huge film industry. It’s now number two in terms of number of films produced behind Bollywood. And Nollywood is ahead of Hollywood now.

**Esta de Fossard:** One of the things we picked up on, and perhaps you’ve seen this in some films, but sometimes you’ll see a product. There’s a bottle of Coca-Cola there or something. Nobody says anything about the Coca-Cola, but you keep seeing this bottle of Coke all over the place, and people almost inadvertently pick up on the bottle of Coke.

What you can say to the current filmmakers is, “You know what? I think people would start paying a lot more attention to your films if you made a little comment now and again about the importance of clean water.” You don’t have to change the story, but you have this wonderful, handsome guy who is the principal actor in this story. It’s a story about murder. What if you had him say every now and again, “Hey, don’t drink that. It’s not clean. Here, have some clean water.”

That’s all. You’re not asking them to dramatically change the subject. You can pay them a little bit if you like to say something about clean water.

They will be surprised if you do some follow-up and find out that, Mr. Film Man, you are creating a fabulous film, look at the difference you’ve made: the number of people who are now drinking clean water. I’m not asking you to do a campaign on clean water, a very simple little action by one of your major characters. It works, okay?

**Marty Kaplan:** We have time for one more question.

**Esta de Fossard:** Yes, ma’am?

**Audience member:** What would you recommend for someone looking to empower and educate young girls in the sciences with science technology, engineering, and math?

**Esta de Fossard:** I think one of the most powerful things is to tell little girls stories about people like Marie Curie, some of the most extraordinary people who are beautiful women, friendly, wonderful women, but they’ve done one little thing that can make a huge difference in the lives of other people.

And I think one of the things we have to remind little girls – and I’m also saying sometimes bigger girls — the most important thing in the world is not walking around half-naked, attracting the attention of men.

The most important thing in the world is, what will you be remembered for? Or to correct my grammar, for what will you be remembered? What do you want people to remember about you? Look around you, my dear. Is there something you see in the world that isn’t working as well as it could? Why don’t you get together with a few of your friends. Sit down and think what could we do about that to make that better?

Don’t challenge them to get A-plus on an assignment. Find one little thing. “Gee, you’re an intelligent girl. Your friends are intelligent. Why don’t you sit down and tell me what you think could be done about that?” Okay?

**Audience member:** It might be interesting to target teachers and school counselors, as well, and get at their beliefs about girls in the sciences.

**Marty Kaplan:** Esta has kindly agreed to stay and keep the conversation going informally, but I wanted to say that we know what you will be remembered for by us. Thank you so much.

**Esta de Fossard:** You’re not going to tell? Thank you. Thank you.