

PBS move seen as boon  
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# Current

## Multipart series repel some top PBS prospects

By Karen Everhart

**T**here are many viewers out there in TV Land who say they love PBS but find it hard to fit its multi-hour programs into their busy lives.

Analysts working on CPB's primetime research project see this audience segment, labeled Innovating & Inclined, as the best candidates to help build PBS audience and support. These viewers appreciate the diversity and respectfulness of public TV programs and are adept at using technology to aid their viewing, but they don't have time for the multipart programs that PBS producers love to make. They represent 14 percent of the TV audience.

"It's important to understand what is going on in their households," says Andy Russell, CPB senior v.p. of media. "They are supporters and are loyal to public TV, but their use of it is not what we would like."

To bring these viewers into its core audience, PBS could add new science and nature programs formatted in short, meaty segments, strengthen favorite PBS signature series, and scale back limited series, according to researchers.

CPB analysts and research consultants are discussing these moves with pubTV leaders in regional round-robin meetings this month. They propose to develop a set of principles to guide producers similar to the core values defined in pubradio (page A3).

Researchers for CPB used a statistical method called latent class modeling to discern audience segments based on their TV usage, degree of interest in public TV and views of its qualities.

They defined three groups that make up public TV's core audience and three others that watch less often and hold views of PBS that range from very positive to ambivalent. The two largest groups don't find much of interest on public TV and turn instead to commercial nets or cable (chart at right).

Among the eight audience segments, Innovating & Inclined viewers are the "prime targets of opportunity" to invigorate public TV's primetime, said Chris Schiavone, president of City Square Associates, a Boston research firm that helped interpret the segmentation and present findings.

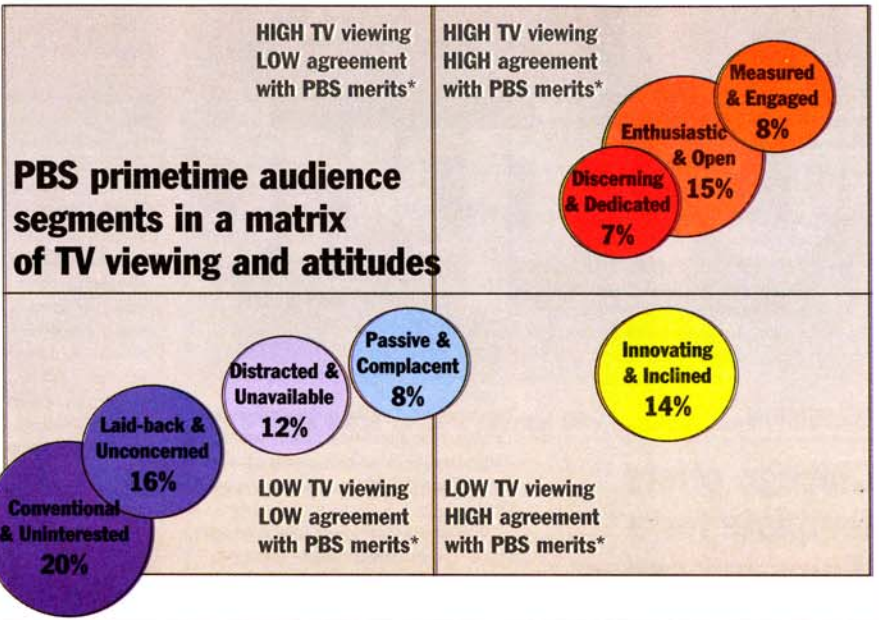
Innovating & Inclined viewers describe *Nova*, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Nature* and *Masterpiece Theatre* as their favorite PBS programs, as do viewers throughout the PBS core audience. Schiavone calls them the "brand-defining" programs for PBS.

In talks with public TV leaders, "all the stakeholders see this group as extremely promising and want to apply some resources in that direction," Schiavone says. Science and nature programming is the "first and most obvious

Source: Primestime Audience Segmentation for Public Television, CPB.

Division of the audience based on phone interviews with 1,481 adults in February.

\*Attitudes reflect views on six statements, such as "Public TV shows the types of programs I can't find anywhere else" and "Compared with programs on other types of stations, I really pay attention to PBS programs."



place to go" because Innovating & Inclined viewers are generally interested in science, and PBS's science producers have a strong track record.

"Format issues are very, very important to this group," Schiavone says. "The whole notion of time-strapped Americans—these are the most time-strapped." The I&I folks—busy, curious, high-income NPR-listeners, often with kids—rarely watch two consecutive hours of TV and "depend on programs that are segmented into eight-minute segments versus a whole hour."

Innovating & Inclined viewers are proficient in TV technology, Schiavone adds, so public TV should make sure its shows can be found easily through TiVo recorders and interactive program guides. "They like PBS," he says, "but they have loads of other options and they know how to access them."

Strategies to target this group may also attract people from another audience segment, the Distracted & Unavailable, who resemble the I&I demographically, he adds.

To address another major finding from the audience research—that viewers are confused by inconsistent scheduling of their favorite PBS shows—CPB and Schiavone recommend that public TV leaders reconsider their emphasis on limited series.

Schiavone acknowledges that multipart, limited series play a very important role in public TV. "They are a canvas for talented producers to work on," he says, but they confound viewers looking for their favorite regular series.

PBS should air fewer limited series "so there's room for new episodes of brand-defining series and new series that get at the format issues," Schiavone says. He knows his advice isn't the pubTV "party line."

CPB is discussing the role of limited series and other implications of the research during its round-robins, Russell says, and wants feedback from station managers on new priorities for primetime.

## TV's audience resliced

For the eight adult viewer groups, based on awareness, attitudes and usage of public TV, the first word in each segment's name describes attitudes towards TV and the second word, attitudes toward public TV.

**Discerning & Dedicated:** PubTV's core audience. Favored genres include history, biography, drama. They check print listings. Also watch CNN, ESPN, A&E. Oldest audience segment, high income, highest education levels.

**Measured & Engaged:** No cable. They watch a lot of pubTV and rate it very highly. Channel surfers. Prefer science/nature, history/bio, sitcoms, sports. Favorite net programs: *CSI*, *Friends*, *Simpsons*. Middle-aged parents, medium income and education. Low use of technology. Moderate complaints about having no free time.

**Enthusiastic & Open:** Very positive toward TV, including pubTV. Watch more PBS primetime and PBS Kids than other segments, but also more network and cable TV. Often chose shows spontaneously, aided by guides. Older, low income and education, less likely to have children at home.

**Innovating & Inclined:** Wish they had more time for PBS. Light primetime viewers. Watch Discovery and HBO. Use electronic program guides. Young parents, high income and education. Highest use of technology. No free time.

**Distracted & Unavailable:** Endorse PBS merits at average levels. Light primetime viewers. Prefer movies, cable news, science/nature, drama. Not familiar with PBS schedule. Plan their viewing and often tape shows to time-shift. Youngest segment, medium income and education, many with kids at home. High use of technology. No free time.

**Passive & Complacent:** Watch pubTV more often than their disposition toward it would suggest, including PBS Kids. Prefer sports, movies, history/biography. Oldest segment, lowest income and education levels. Unlikely to have children at home. Low use of technology. Plenty of free time.

**Laid-Back & Unconcerned:** Not interested in PBS. Prefer movies, sports, sitcoms. Above-average Fox viewing. Middle-aged segment, low income and lowest education levels, some with kids at home. Medium complaints about free time.

**Conventional & Uninterested:** Least involved with pubTV. Youngest segment, high income and medium education levels, highly likely to have kids at home. High use of technology. No free time.