

## **JONATHAN D. LEVY**

Jonathan D. Levy, an advisory panel member for the Arts Industry Policy Forum, serves as the Deputy Chief Economist at the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, DC. The FCC regulates interstate and international communications by U.S. radio, television, wire, satellite and cable companies. Prior to joining the FCC in 1980, he taught economics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from Yale University. In 1993, Dr. Levy was a Fulbright Senior Scholar in the School of Humanities at the University of Technology Sydney studying U.S.-Australian trade in television programming and film. He has written several papers on Australian media policy.

### **Jonathan, what do you from 9 to 5, or should I say from 9 to 9, to advance the FCC's mission?**

I wear somewhere between 1.5 and two hats at the FCC. As Deputy Chief Economist, I have some administrative responsibilities, but what I enjoy most is my work on media policy. This ranges from media ownership issues to localism to helping to advance the transition from analog to digital television. I am also happy to have an international component to my work. For comparative purposes, I track media developments in a variety of countries, and I frequently meet with visiting foreign media regulators.

### **Bill Ivey talks about mapping America's arts policy system to reveal the multiple contributors and the extent of their influence. If there were such a map how do you see the FCC's role: a major thoroughfare, spiny back roads that lace the country, or the land upon which all else is built?**

The FCC falls somewhere between the land and the roads. Our impact on the arts and the arts industries is indirect. We regulate some of the major distribution platforms for arts content, whether it is radio, broadcast television, cable television, or satellite television. And FCC regulations impact the transmission networks that support the Internet, a growing highway for the delivery of cultural content.

Our goal has always been to increase competition among distribution platforms and to encourage entry. The FCC does virtually no direct content regulation (the limit on transmission of "indecent" programming is an exception), and we are certainly not in the business of picking winners and losers in the new technology derby. But we do believe that expanded choice is good for citizen/consumers and also for artists and other producers/creators of content.

Competition and expanded distribution capacity tends to drive down the price of access to distribution and provide new ways for creative folks to place their work before the public. The FCC does have media ownership regulations, and of course media ownership structure does have an impact on the content transmitted. The nature of this relationship is under almost continual study at the FCC, including the currently open proceeding on localism. It is also at issue in the remand of our 2003 Biennial Ownership Order.

**Jonathan, has there been anyone who significantly influenced you in shaping your career path?**

My career path has been embarrassingly random, but I am delighted that I ended up at the FCC and in the Washington area. Corny as it may sound, I derive great satisfaction from having the public interest as my objective. And to my mind, media policy has a human interest dimension that telecom generally lacks. My family is from Maryland, as is that of my wife, which is another reason why the FCC is a good fit for me. And last but not least, my dissertation focused in part on the television manufacturing industry, and this obscure piece of work has actually helped me in my work on the DTV transition.

**When you post that "gone fishing" sign over your doorway, what are you really up to?**

Since I don't work from 9 to 9, at least not every day, I have a bit of energy left over for my personal interests. They include, not necessarily in priority order, bluegrass music, Australian and Israeli fiction, and nagging my children.

*--Paula Cleggett, associate director for policy*