

March 15, 1974

MEMORANDUM

To: Friends and Advisors
Fr: Michael J. Ambrosino
Re: Occasional Memo #2

NOVA is on the air!

We premiered on PBS last week and will continue with the following schedule.

1	March	3	The Making of a Natural History Film	BBC
2	March	10	Where did the Colorado Go?	WGBH/BBC
3	March	17	Whales, Dolphins and Men	BBC
4	March	24	The Search for Life	WGBH
5	March	31	The Last of the Cuiva	GRANADA
6	April	7	Strange Sleep	WGBH
7	April	14	The Crab Nebula	BBC
8	April	21	Bird Brain-The Mystery of Bird Navigation	BBC
9	April	28	Are you doing this for me, doctor,...	BBC
10	May	5	The First Signs of Washoe	WGBH
11	May	12	The Case of the Mid-Wife Toad	BBC
12	May	19	Fusion - The Energy of Promise	BBC/WGBH
13	May	26	The Mystery of the Anasazi	WGBH

PBS has requested an immediate repeat and the first five programs will be rebroadcast during June.

The premiere was accompanied by a Boston press party, a Washington affair and several meetings and a showing at the AAAS annual meeting in San Francisco. The science and television press in New York and Washington have been attending special viewings scheduled at their convenience by using cassettes of NOVA programs.

A special advertising campaign prepared by and funded by Polaroid, accompanied the NOVA premiere with ads in the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune. That ad has been modified to run in magazines and plates are being made available to weekly news and science magazines.

The initial response from viewers, critics and peers, has been truly heartwarming. We have included some reports and reviews with this memo and expect more coverage in major newspapers and magazines soon. The Sunday New York Times for March 18th will report on NOVA and the next issue of TV Guide will include one of the two articles which will deal with NOVA topics.

Carl Sagan was commissioned to do a piece on life in space ("The Search for Life" - March 24th) and Issac Azimov is writing a story on Washoe ("The First Signs of Washoe" - May 5th.) With a circulation of 19 million, TV Guide should help viewers learn about NOVA. Getting a TV Guide piece is a rarity. Having them commission two articles for a 13 week series is unheard of.

The expected viewer response is joined by the unexpected. Students in elementary school want more information about sticklebacks. The Head of Denver Water Commission wants a cassette of "Colorado" to show his legislative committee. Over twenty requests for AV showings of "Colorado" have come in in three days and we expect the rest of the programs to spur a similar interest.

The Boston Public Library prepared the enclosed reading lists to help public libraries in Massachusetts deal with the expected increase in requests for books on NOVA topics. Public libraries in all PBS cities have received copies and we've suggested that the local stations work out special announcements urging viewers to drop in to their libraries to find interesting books on the NOVA topics.

Since all local stations have options on when they can run NOVA, we have surveyed the top 50 markets in the U.S. and were delighted to see that 40 were running NOVA, either at the PBS feed time of 7:30pm or an hour earlier at 6:30pm. In those cases where stations have decided that a different evening would be more useful in their cities, we've been gratified to find their slots are smack in the prime time hour with most running NOVA Mondays at 8:00pm.

In addition to American viewers, we've heard that "Colorado" was well received in London. (It was a WGBH/BBC co-production) Phil Daley, Head, BBC Science & Features Department, will be in Boston next week to view our other NOVA original productions with a view to purchasing them. We have had similar inquiries from networks in Germany and Venezuela.

We've learned a great deal with this first 13 week series. Complex issues take time to develop into understandable and exciting films! I am pleased that our productions match the quality and significance of BBC acquisitions. That quality takes its toll in time and money. We've not produced as many original productions in the first 13 as I had intended, but as I view the final versions of the films which will be seen in the next months, I am sure that we have made the right decision.

As we plan our productions for this fall, we have extended our research to six weeks, lengthened the editing to ten weeks, added staff in research and development of ideas, as well as program assembly.

We are now prepared for the fall and have our first two productions underway. I will be in London in May, choosing acquisitions and developing co-productions. We plan a 24 week NOVA series, and I'm still trying to tie down the last sums of our fall \$1.5 million budget.

It has been a challenging and exciting year. We all very much appreciate the continuing help of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the support of The Carnegie Corporation, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Science Foundation and Polaroid.

Michael
