

Community Media Archive - Community Media Day 2026: A Love Letter, and an Invitation

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TL;DR

For the last four months I've been working with AI to document how the [Community Media Archive](#) actually works (the systems, the processes, the things that lived only in my head) and my vision for where it goes next.

Doing that gave me room to start on ideas I've carried around for ten years and never had time for. It's also the start of a shift for me, away from running operations and toward looking after the Archive as a steward. I'd like to invite you into that, as part of a distributed Archive Corps.

What we started

Alongside the regular work, a lot of new things got started:

- A census of every city, town, borough and village in the US, looking for each one's official home page, YouTube channel, and agendas and minutes page.
- A project to gather those agendas and minutes.
- A research database.
- Work to fix metadata errors I introduced over the years, and to enhance and enrich the metadata.
- A story miner that suggests themes for blog posts, and the first posts written from it.
- A look at neighboring projects and how the CMA could help them: [Community Media Voices](#), [National Summit on Local News Preservation](#), the [Civic Media Cookbook](#), and the [Community Meetings](#) project.
- A [questionnaire](#) and [automated self-test kit](#) for interested parties to inventory their network connection, proposed hardware and software, and whether network traffic should be restricted during certain hours to determine if they'd be suitable as a distributed Community Media Archive worker machine location.

Some of these won't go any further. It depends on who joins the conversation and the work.

Where this is heading

To see a picture of the bigger vision, visit [“the map room”](#), a set of mind maps.

What all this means, and what it ends up looking like, will depend on who's involved over the coming year or two. By Community Media Day 2027 I hope to have a cohort-based Archive Corps training program going. The Archive Corps idea is one of the most exciting things to emerge from this effort.

Let me be clear: we are not looking for one person who can step in and continue downloading 24,000 videos a month from 2,200 YouTube and Vimeo channels and uploading them to the Community Media Archive. Although, if you relish a challenge of that scale, let's talk!

We built the Lego blocks that snap together to make that possible and the amount of effort needed to keep it going has been greatly reduced.

We don't just need operations people, techies or stats nerds! We need communicators and storytellers: people who can write better than me, or AI, and can communicate the breadth and depth of this effort and point to the gems already gathered in the CMA collections.

What AI was good for, and what it wasn't

The second development I'm most excited about is the “Story Miner”.

All 3.2 million videos have been grouped into about 100 “themes”. Those themes became [three blog posts](#), one for each leg of [P-E-G](#), and the [first version](#) of this year's Community Media Day page, which AI wrote.

While interesting in its own way, it totally missed the tone I wanted to convey and the big changes that have been made and focused on the items added to the Archive over the past year.

But AI did do the work of sorting the videos into themes and gathering the links at scale. That leaves you free to pick the themes you find interesting and write about them; the links to the videos have already been created.

We need organizers and trainers and doers; anyone that gets fired up by the idea of preserving what we do, telling the world about it and training the next generation.

If you're coming to the ACM NE Conference in Nashua, look for a presentation and conversations on all of this. I expect to be continuing the conversation at the ACM West Conference in Pasadena and the ACM National Conference in Denver next year.

Our shared tribe

The 50th Anniversary booklet, created for the National Conference this year with members' stories, is an amazing document. It captures what makes this group different from other professional associations. Time and again, people recalled the support and strength they got from ACM conferences, as well as the friendships that reminded them they weren't alone facing local and station challenges.

Public Access is changing, shifting away from cable TV distribution and legislated funding. Yet, the booklet's memories and reflections carry a profound message of hope and support, handed down from one generation of our shared tribe to the next.

There's more of that story waiting to be told:

- [Personal reminiscences about your involvement in Access](#)
- Regional histories of the Access Movement
- A podcast series on the "Mothers of Access"

What will be yours?

Starting the Community Media Archive, running and growing it for 17 years has been my love letter to this movement.

What will be yours?



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