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Thank you, and good afternoon. It's good to be here. And it is particularly good to be here with my friends John Lawson and Sharon Rockefeller.

As John shared with you, I've been with PBS for a little more than a month now. In fact, today marks the beginning of my sixth week.

And since the PBS Board of Directors announced my appointment in January, I've spent a lot of time talking with friends and colleagues and the press about this job and why I sought it.

One of my favorite moments came during an interview on public radio's "On the Media" program.

The host – Bob Garfield – began by congratulating me on my new position, then likened it to the devil greeting a newcomer at the gates of Hell.

I must be crazy to take this job, Bob said. I suspect some of you may have had the same thought.

Well – as I assured Bob – I am in full possession of my faculties.

I recognize that running PBS isn't the easiest task in the world, but I'm not here because I'm a glutton for punishment.

I'm here because I believe in the power of public television. It has touched my life, just as it has touched the lives of millions of Americans.

This afternoon, I'd like to spend a few moments sharing my thoughts on why I believe the PBS board chose me for this job, what I hope to accomplish in the years ahead and why I think PBS will thrive in the new on-demand media world we live in.

And then I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

I'll begin by sharing a little bit more about me.

I like to say that public television – or public television-slash-public media, as I often describe it – is part of who I am. It's in my DNA.

My grandfather helped found a public radio station in Baltimore and my entire career has been devoted to public service.

I grew up with shows like "Great Performances," "Upstairs, Downstairs," and "I, Claudius." My grandfather's classical radio station – with its mix of orchestras, operas and chamber ensembles – were part of my childhood. I've always had a deep appreciation for public media and the valuable role it plays in our culture.

Of course, passion and appreciation alone didn't get me this job.

My experience at WNET in New York was key, as was my work with industry groups such as John's organization – the Association of Public Television Stations, which represents public broadcasters on Capitol Hill.

Like my colleagues at PBS stations across the nation – whether it's Los Angeles and Chicago or Mississippi and Montana – I understand the daily challenges of life at the local level in public broadcasting.

I know what it's like to cobble the funds together to balance a budget. I know what it's like to strive to design an effective community outreach campaign. I know how daunting it is to face the conversion to digital television.

I know because I've lived and breathed these same concerns for the past 13 years.

And so I think all of this experience helped open this extraordinary opportunity for me. And now that I have this position, I feel very honored and very eager to put my experience to work for PBS as we move forward.

And when we talk about PBS, it's important to keep in mind that we're not talking about a traditional TV network. We are not like ABC, CBS, Fox or NBC. We are a modern media organization, but we also are a membership organization comprised of 348 independent public television stations – each one an autonomous media outlet in the community it serves.

Some see this as a weakness. I believe it's our greatest strength.

In many markets, the PBS station is the last locally-owned-and-operated media operation. This comes with a great responsibility, and we take it seriously.

Tonight – no matter where in America you may live – you can watch “Deal or No Deal” and “Celebrity Cooking Showdown” on NBC, “Wife Swap” and “Supernanny” on ABC, CBS’s sitcom lineup or “Prison Break” and “24” on Fox.

And – if you have cable – you can choose “Honey, We’re Killing the Kids” on the Learning Channel, “American Hot Rod” on Discovery or a whole range of shows on the other networks.

But if you live in Los Angeles, your choices also include a documentary on the local PBS station about how climate change is affecting California’s water supply.

And if you live in Boston, you can watch an hour-long special reviewing the successes and failures of the city’s schools superintendent, who is retiring this spring after more than 10 years on the job.

And right here in our area, Maryland Public Television’s weekly “Direct Connection” series will present a half-hour documentary on Baltimore area Holocaust survivors, a program that has been more than a year in the making.

This is public television. This is what we do. This is why we exist – to deliver quality content to the communities we serve.

Localism makes us unique.

But when we talk about localism, please keep in mind that we’re not just talking about local productions.

We’re also talking about the ability of PBS stations to choose the national programming that best fits the needs of the viewers they serve.

There are many great examples of this throughout the country.

In Tucson, for example – where the University of Arizona is the city’s major employer – KUAT airs two episodes of “Nova” each Tuesday to help quench that community’s thirst for science and nature programming.

And in the Bluegrass State, Kentucky Educational Television – as its name implies – emphasizes educational programming, so its lineup is heavy on children’s shows and video instruction programs.

And here in the Washington area, you can see how WETA strives to serve the politically-minded citizens of our area with a Friday evening lineup that includes “Washington Week,” “Inside Washington” and “Now.”

And as local broadcasters, our responsibility to the public doesn’t end when the closing credits roll on the programs we air. We strive to connect the ideals behind our programming – both national and local – to the citizens we serve.

One of my favorite examples of this was the broadcast of the national program “The Forgetting” – a two-hour documentary about Alzheimer’s disease.

In cities across America, PBS stations organized outreach campaigns built around the show. The Alzheimer’s Association even organized house parties around the country on the night the program aired.

We see this same sense of community spirit in every market served by a PBS station. And what we do is clearly resonating as in most communities we are the largest membership organizations.

I was in New York last month for the Celebration of Teaching and Learning – a two-day event sponsored by WNET and WLIW that brought 6,000 educators together to explore the role of technology in the classroom.

It featured some of the nation’s pre-eminent education leaders and policy makers along with public television stations from the New York tri-state area and beyond. It was a tremendous experience, and it helped reinforce the important role public television plays in both K-through-12 education and lifelong learning.

You attend events like this and it becomes apparent: Public television is more than TV.

We may live in a 500-channel universe, but no channel is like your local PBS station – both in terms of the programming it airs and the connection it has formed with your friends and neighbors.

And this is why I am so optimistic about the future of PBS – even though the industry we share is changing at the speed of life.

Think back to October, when Apple announced it would sell episodes of “Lost” and “Desperate Housewives” on iTunes for \$1.99 apiece.

The enormity of that development almost seems quaint in light of Disney's announcement last week that it would stream those same shows – and many more – for free on its Web site, beginning April 30.

Like our colleagues in commercial media, we at PBS are no longer in the television business. The TV set in the living room – or the one in the bedroom or kitchen – is now just one method we have to deliver content to our viewers.

It would be easy to look at these changes and see them as threats to what we do in public media. After all, how can nonprofit broadcasters possibly compete in a world where consumers are demanding content on their own terms?

And how can we compete when the distributors of that content are spending untold amounts of money to secure the digital rights needed to provide programs across multiple platforms?

Well, I am not threatened by the explosion of technology and the changes it has sparked within our industry. I really believe we will flourish in the digital age.

Think about it: When technology renders the traditional television schedule virtually meaningless – when “what's on” becomes “whatever you want, whenever you want” – when technology frees viewers from the shackles of their traditional television habits – I believe content quality will become the key factor in choosing what you watch.

And for PBS, quality is paramount.

Our brand carries unparalleled value, as evidenced by a recent Roper poll that identified us as the nation's most trusted institution for the third consecutive year, above even courts of law and the government.

My goal is to ensure we remain a choice for consumers in the digital age, no matter how they choose to access our content – via television, the Web, cell phones, MP3 players or some device that has yet to be invented.

We recognize the need to make our content available across multiple platforms, and we are moving in that direction.

The conversion to digital television holds particular promise for us.

Many of our member stations have introduced digital channels devoted to children's programming, public affairs and the arts.

Last year, PBS, the Association of Public Television Stations and the National Cable Television Association reached an historic agreement that guarantees every major cable system in the country will carry both the analog channel and as many as four digital programming streams from at least one public television station.

PBS and APTS are also negotiating with the American Cable Association to get digital carriage for our stations on their cable systems throughout the country, and we are negotiating with the satellite and telecommunications providers for the same purpose. I am hopeful we will succeed.

In fact, it is important for public service that we do succeed.

When we signed the carriage agreement with NCTA, we predicted that this unprecedented distribution guarantee would stimulate the creation of a new generation of content and services from public television.

I'm delighted to see that vision is being fulfilled.

For example, WNET in New York and WGBH – our station in Boston – recently joined forces to launch two digital channels: World, which features public affairs, history, science and nature content; and Create, which carries series and specials on cooking, renovating, traveling and other do-it-yourself topics.

And this fall, PBS will introduce PBS Kids Go!, a digital channel aimed at 5-to-8-year-olds. And later this year we will see the launch of VIVA – a 24 hour Spanish language channel.

We also envision taking the enormous library of PBS programming – great titles such as “Nova,” “Nature,” “Frontline” and the Ken Burns documentaries – and making them available to educators, students and lifelong learners through a digital archive that could be accessed anytime and anywhere.

As David Liroff at WGBH likes to say: Technology has finally caught up with the mission of public broadcasting.

And so the future I see for PBS is one in which we are stronger and more relevant than ever to the citizens we serve – but especially to the children who depend upon us as a source of education and entertainment.

Children's television is the birth right of PBS, and we want to build upon our heritage as a safe haven for kids and their parents amidst an increasingly-crowded media landscape.

For years, PBS was the only game in town when it came to serving the preschool audience. Until recently, advertisers didn't see 2-year-olds as consumers. Now, of course, they do.

At PBS, we come at this from a different angle. We see children as citizens-in-the-making, and we want to remain a valued part of their lives.

For us, this requires thinking about children's media in new ways.

As I mentioned earlier, our afternoon programming block – including "Maya & Miguel," and "Arthur" – will become the foundation for a separate digital channel aimed at 5-to-8-year-olds.

We also are exploring children's video gaming, and we are strengthening our online presence with new resources and activities.

And so – as TVs move into the bedroom of 5- and 6-year-olds, as kindergarteners begin carrying iPods with them to school, as kids of all ages gain greater access to cell phones – we must ensure PBS is there to serve them with content that is reliable, wholesome and fun.

All of this, of course, requires resources – and that's why I am such a champion of the PBS Foundation.

I served as one of the founding directors of the foundation, which was created two years ago to identify new funding sources for PBS.

We have raised \$13 million so far. It isn't much, but it's a start.

I am confident there are many other sources of funding available to us, and that we will succeed in tapping them.

And so all of this makes me extremely optimistic for the future. I really believe PBS's brightest days are yet to come. I wouldn't be here if I felt otherwise.

I believe our commitment to local programming and to the communities we serve will continue to make us one of America's most trusted institutions.

I believe the quality of the content we deliver ensures we will remain a valuable part of the lives of the citizens we serve – especially as new technology changes traditional television habits.

And I believe we will continue to play a special role in the lives of American children, as we continue to adapt to meet their changing needs.

None of this is easy, of course. But for me, this job is about more than running PBS.

This is about continuing to unite this country around the mission of public media. And – go ahead and call me crazy – but I firmly believe that’s a job worth doing.

I hope you do, too.

Thank you.

And now if anyone has any questions, I’ll be happy to answer them.