

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF COVERING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN DOCUMENTARY FILMS (BASED ON FOREIGN MATERIALS)

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Abstract. This article examines the specific features of environmental journalism in the context of traditional and new media. In particular, it analyzes the characteristics of covering environmental problems in documentary projects on television and the Internet. Projects devoted to environmental issues are examined from the perspective of their themes and directions, functions, and methods of information gathering.

Keywords: environmental journalism, environmental problems, documentaries, traditional mass media, new media.

Journalism, as an activity based on the collection, processing, and dissemination of information, is directly connected with the life of society and its continuous development. It encompasses various fields, including political, economic, social, sports, and entertainment journalism, while environmental journalism has also become one of the increasingly relevant areas today. Recently, environmental issues have received growing public attention and have been discussed more extensively, increasing the public's need for information about the state of the environment. Materials concerning environmental problems are regularly covered across various media platforms, including television, radio, print publications, and the Internet. However, each type of media has its own specific capabilities and characteristics when covering environmental issues. In particular, documentary films provide an opportunity to explore environmental problems more comprehensively through visual materials, real events, and evidence. The practical significance of studying this area lies in the fact that environmental problems are directly related to the well-being of society, quality of life, and human health. Therefore, public interest in environmental information is high, and such materials are received by audiences with particular attention. Documentary films such as *Planet Earth* (2006), *In the World of Animals* (1968–2019), *What Do*

We Know About Planet Earth? (2026), and *Survivorman* (2004–2015) are among such projects.

In particular, the BBC television series *Planet Earth* was regarded as a new stage in the history of documentary filmmaking and significantly changed perceptions of the technological possibilities of the genre. More than four years were spent producing the 11-part project, with a budget of £16 million, which was a record amount at the time. Filming was carried out across 204 locations in 62 countries on all seven continents, involving more than 2,000 days of field production. Through the commentary of renowned naturalist David Attenborough, the series provided information about unique ecological systems ranging from icy deserts to deep-sea depressions. The distinctive characteristics of each environment, the animals and plants inhabiting them, as well as their increasing vulnerability under the influence of human activity, were presented. Each 50-minute episode concluded with a short additional segment entitled *Planet Earth Diaries*, which revealed the scientific and technical aspects of the filming process. The film was among the first documentary projects in history to be filmed in HD format, and when the project began in 2002, filming wildlife in high-definition format was considered a major technical risk. Nevertheless, the creative team developed technical solutions that made it possible to conduct filming in challenging natural environments such as tropical rainforests, the Far North, and mountainous regions. *The World of Animals* is one of the well-known domestic television projects that conveyed knowledge about wildlife to several generations of viewers. Documentary filmmaker Alexander Zguridi aimed to present scientific knowledge in a form that was accessible and engaging for a broad audience. Through the program, viewers were introduced to various natural environments, ranging from Arctic glaciers to African savannas and the taiga of the Russian Far East. The program not only presented rare birds and mammals but also provided detailed coverage of their behavior, complex ecosystems, and the interrelationship between humans and the natural environment. For nearly 40 years, one of the central aspects of the program was associated with the scientific commentary of

biogeographer Nikolai Drozdov. His simple and engaging style of presentation made it possible to communicate complex scientific information in a form that was understandable to a broad audience. The program emphasized the intrinsic value of all living organisms on Earth and promoted respect for and careful treatment of different representatives of the animal kingdom. In this respect, the project was distinguished by its environmental and educational content and contributed to the formation of environmental culture and a careful attitude toward nature in society. The program underwent a long process of development, from black-and-white studio broadcasts to modern digital formats. During the Soviet period, the production team closely cooperated with leading scientific institutes and nature reserves. This made it possible to use unique archival video materials collected by scientists during their expeditions. The new popular-science series *What Do We Know About Planet Earth?*, produced by REN TV, is aimed at covering the structure of the Earth, processes occurring within it, and unknown aspects related to life through a dynamic audiovisual format. The project combines a traditional popular-science narrative style with cinematic dynamics and visualization technologies based on artificial intelligence. Russian People's Artist Alexey Guskov participated as the presenter, helping communicate scientific topics to viewers. The project analyzed physical processes that shape the appearance of the Earth and directly affect human life. Through topics such as the formation of powerful storms, the characteristics of active volcanoes, and glaciers rapidly melting as a result of climate change, the project demonstrated the impact of natural processes on humanity and the environment. The program covered topics at the intersection of such scientific fields as geography, biology, chemistry, and physics. Detailed graphics, computer modeling, and high-resolution satellite imagery were used to explain complex geological and climatic processes, including the movement of tectonic plates and ocean-current circulation. These materials were combined with real video footage captured by camera operators working in different parts of the world. In this respect, the project was distinguished by the integration of modern visualization, digital technologies, and popular-science

narrative techniques in covering environmental and natural processes. The highly dynamic presentation of the content and the visual modeling of complex processes helped maintain audience attention. *Survivorman* is a Canadian documentary project that influenced the development of survival-themed television programs. The project's creator and survival expert, Les Stroud, focused on portraying the relationship between humans and the wilderness under real-life conditions. The program covered extreme environments in various natural regions, including the Kalahari Desert, the wetlands of Georgia, the Arctic tundra, and the Amazon rainforest. The project demonstrated the process of human survival in natural environments without food, water, or essential equipment, as well as the effects of such conditions on a person's physical and psychological state. Unlike many other television projects, Stroud did not use a professional filming crew during the production process, instead recording the events himself with a camera. This approach made it possible to directly observe the natural environment and demonstrate the relationship between humans and nature under real-world conditions.

The examples discussed above demonstrate that one of the principal characteristics of covering environmental topics in documentary films is visuality. Natural areas, ecosystems, flora and fauna, environmental changes, and the impact of human activities on the environment are presented directly through visual imagery. Visual materials enable audiences to gain a clearer understanding of the scale of environmental problems. In particular, presenting changes in nature from both temporal and spatial perspectives is of considerable importance for explaining the dynamics of environmental processes.

The second important characteristic is scientific rigor and accuracy. Since environmental problems are associated with complex natural, social, and economic processes, their coverage requires the use of scientific data, expert opinions, observation results, and other forms of evidence. In documentary films, the integration of scientific information with audiovisual materials makes it possible to

communicate complex environmental processes in a form that is comprehensible to a broad audience.

The third characteristic is the opportunity to directly observe and document reality. Documentary films are based, as far as possible, on recording environmental phenomena under natural conditions rather than presenting them through staged or hypothetical representations.

The fourth characteristic is related to the comprehensive analysis of the causes and consequences of environmental problems. Unlike short informational materials, documentary films make it possible to cover not only the current state of a particular environmental problem but also the factors contributing to its emergence, its relationship with human activities, its impact on natural systems, and its potential consequences in the future.

The fifth characteristic is the coverage of the relationship between humans and nature. In environmental documentaries, nature is interpreted not merely as an object of visual representation but as a system intrinsically connected with human life, health, and social development. The social significance of environmental problems is revealed through the impact of such processes as the use of natural resources, ecosystem changes, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution on human life.

The sixth characteristic is the comprehensive use of audiovisual tools. In addition to video footage, documentary films may employ voice-over commentary, interviews, archival materials, graphics, animations, computer modeling, maps, and satellite imagery.

The seventh characteristic is the ability to cover a broad spatial and temporal scale. Environmental problems are often not limited to a single geographical area and may develop over extended periods of time. Documentary films make it possible to cover different geographical regions, observe environmental processes over long periods, and demonstrate how these processes change over time. Another important aspect is the priority given to environmental education and awareness-raising functions. Documentary films not only inform audiences about

environmental problems but also contribute to developing a careful and responsible attitude toward nature. By demonstrating the distinctive characteristics and vulnerability of the natural environment, they can strengthen environmental awareness, environmental culture, and a sense of responsibility for nature conservation among viewers. Furthermore, the use of technological innovations in contemporary documentaries is expanding the visual capabilities of environmental journalism. High-resolution imagery, drone photography, satellite data, three-dimensional modeling, computer graphics, and artificial intelligence-based visualization make it possible to present complex environmental processes with greater clarity and impact.

In conclusion, environmental journalism is undoubtedly one of the promising areas of the contemporary media environment. Together with a number of other social institutions, it can play an important role in developing environmental education and improving the environmental literacy of the population. Issues related to the state of the environment are becoming increasingly urgent each year, while public interest and concern regarding these issues continue to grow. Audience interest in these issues is unlikely to diminish in the near future. On the contrary, the capabilities of contemporary journalism can be used to further develop and even strengthen this interest.

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