Perhaps no other cable network has ever arrived on the scene with a brand as powerful and distinctive as National Geographic Channel did in 2001.

In 15 years on the air, now reaching 90 million homes in the U.S. and more than 440 million around the world, National Geographic Channel has both reflected and expanded on the heritage of the 128-year-old National Geographic Society. It’s reflected that heritage with classic science and adventure series and documentaries—as well as spinoff channels Nat Geo WILD and Nat Geo MUNDO—while expanding the brand with new nonfiction offerings such as “Breakthrough,” “Brain Games” and “StarTalk,” and scripted events, including “Saints & Strangers” and the Emmy-nominated “Killing Jesus.”

Now the network is preparing to raise the ante with a major commitment to top-flight programming to draw in even more viewers while opening the door to expanded tie-in opportunities for marketers looking to partner with the well-respected brand.

This newest stage coincides with the expanded role of 21st Century Fox. Fox and National Geographic Society have been partners for 18 years in owning and operating National Geographic Channels around the globe. But the creation of National Geographic Partners, a joint venture 73% owned by Fox and 27% owned by the National Geographic Society, will allow the TV networks to capitalize on the combined National Geographic and Fox portfolio of assets.

Says National Geographic Global Networks CEO Courteney Monroe, “We’re the only network on television that is not only associated with this 128-year-old scientific institution, the National Geographic Society, but now part of one company with us are the National Geographic magazine, books, a massive digital footprint, consumer products, a travel business and an incredibly diverse portfolio that enables us to connect with consumers in so many different ways, and across so many different verticals.”

“Over the past 15 years, the channel has been a tremendous benefit to the Society,” says Declan Moore, a 20-year company veteran named CEO of National Geographic Partners last fall. “It’s provided a way for us to tell our stories and allow our consumers to interact with us on a daily basis. Now with the creation of National Geographic Partners, we will be able to, with greater frequency, deliver that storytelling and bring our content to life across all our platforms”—not just television or the magazine but, for instance, the 41 million people who follow National Geographic on Instagram, or the network’s 56 million fans on Facebook.

“Our goal is to be the world leader in delivering these cross-platform stories.”

For advertisers, Mr. Moore says, “in addition to the long-form narrative

![From top: “Inside Combat Rescue,” “Chasing Ice,” “Life Below Zero,” “In the Womb: Animals,” “Great Migrations,” “Brain Games” and “Hubble’s Cosmic Journey”](image-url)
storytelling, we can add social outreach, supplements that involve partner messaging. We can offer opportunities to be involved in experiences and create lots of additional custom content. We are one of the few brands that can offer full 360-degree communications and custom content creation to clients. That is a real plus.

High-profile series such as "MARS," originally introduced as "Red Planet," the part feature-quality scripted drama, part unscripted documentary series on man's epic quest to colonize Mars being produced by Brian Grazer and Ron Howard and RadicalMedia, will be leveraged across all those unified platforms.

Of course, the original platform was the iconic National Geographic magazine. Susan Goldberg, the magazine's editor in chief, added the position of editorial director of National Geographic Partners in November. Says Ms. Goldberg, "I am very excited about the partnership we have with the channel and with Nat Geo WILD as well—our ability to connect with audiences across platforms. You will see more and more synergy between what we are doing in print and digital and what we are doing on TV."

For instance, in conjunction with "MARS," she says the company is planning a cover story in the magazine about what it really takes to get to Mars, a book about Mars and editorial in National Geographic Kids magazine as well. "The strength in these blockbuster shows will be leveraged," she says.

Premiering later this year, "MARS" serves "as a signal not just to our audience, but also to the marketing community that National Geographic Channel is taking a bold step forward in raising the bar," says Tim Pastore, president of original programming and production for the network.

Brad Dancer, EVP-programming planning & research and one of the network's original employees, agrees that series such as "MARS" and "Deep Freeze"—the working title for the channel's three-year, cross-platform partnership with the New Zealand Antarctic Research Institute and Antarctica New Zealand—are examples of upcoming programming that "best exemplify the new mix of drama, science, nature and exploration, and our new ways of storytelling."

He says the enhanced commitment to high-level programming, as well as the new National Geographic Partners setup, has reinvigorated the National Geographic Channel team. "You can feel the energy in the building; everyone is circling around the franchise," he says.

The network, bolstered by the Fox global footprint, remains committed to content that can travel not only across platforms in the U.S., but also can excite audiences around the world. "We have always been a global family, always had an eye and a lens on the world," Mr. Pastore says. "But now that we are all unified under National Geographic Partners, global is pivotal. It's the highest priority."

The network's "Cosmos" was a huge success story and a template for what's to come. Launched simultaneously to a global audience of 135 million viewers in 2014, the series also benefited from a roadblocked premiere across Fox's U.S. networks. Mr. Pastore calls it the largest global launch for a TV series, and a pivotal moment that demonstrated the strength of National Geographic's global reach.

In addition, he says, it was one of the largest social media campaigns for a global brand. "It demonstrated our capacity to create a global conversation," he says.

Says Ms. Monroe, "Our goal is to become the world's leading premium science, adventure and exploration network. Although I shouldn't use the word 'network,' because if you look to the future, we see a vibrant, relevant, resonant brand and a landscape where we are leaders across all platforms—not just the television channels, but across social, and mobile and digital. We have very big ambitions, and I believe we're going to achieve them."
Q: As you mark the 15th anniversary of National Geographic Channel, what do you believe the National Geographic brand stands for? How do the TV networks connect with that National Geographic parent brand and the history that we’ve all grown up with?

Ms. Monroe: National Geographic is one of the most preeminent and iconic brands in the world. It has universal awareness, universal positive perceptions. It's bold, it's unique and distinctive. It is awe-inspiring, it's meaningful and it's special. I am a brand person at heart and, in this era of ever-increasing disruption and fragmentation, brands are more important than ever. We at National Geographic are in an enviable position to be associated with a brand that has real meaning—positive meaning—in people’s minds around the world. Our brand is our greatest asset, but also something that’s really important for us to live up to across all platforms—particularly television, which has such tremendous reach around the world.

Q: Fox has been a really important partner in the development of the network and getting National Geographic Channel to the 15-year mark. Talk a little bit about the expanded role and ownership of Fox, and whether that changes anything at the network.

Ms. Monroe: The increased investment in National Geographic is going to enable us to occupy an incredibly unique place in the market because there really aren’t any other television networks that have at their disposal what we have in terms of diversity of platforms.

First, that’s meaningful from a content and editorial perspective because, when we are launching big, new programming, we will be able to extend the storytelling across all these platforms. When we launch a big, new, audacious science program, for example, there can also be a cover story in the magazine, a massive social and digital campaign, a companion book, kids’ media, a large format film, etc.

All of that provides tremendous opportunities for potential advertisers and sponsors. The way in which they can now align themselves with us is very, very unique. It’s no longer just about the 30-second spot or inclusion in our marketing campaign. It’s about aligning themselves with this incredible brand, and with this massive cross-platform ecosystem which will enable them to reach consumers in the hundreds of millions.

Q: People use the term “reinventing” when they talk about you and your role now at the network. Is that too strong a word? Is it fair to say that you are working on reinventing the network? As you look at the network’s history, where do you want National Geographic Channel to go?

Ms. Monroe: I think it’s fair to say I’m not simply striving for incremental change. We are striving for transformational change, and I believe 21st Century Fox’s investment in National Geographic is a testament to that. We have really big, ambitious plans for this brand.

And even though perhaps most recently our network hasn’t been emblematic of where we’re headed, we do have an incredibly storied history in terms of the programming we’ve launched over the course of the past 15 years.

Q: So many big scientific topics are going to determine our future, whether it’s climate change or colonizing Mars. That’s a focal point for the network now. Why are those serious science areas so important? Beyond just offering interesting programming, do you feel that you still have that mission to cover science topics and science education in the programming that you do?

Ms. Monroe: So many of the biggest challenges and issues facing our planet have a scientific foundation to them. So it’s incredibly important that we tackle those. For me, “Cosmos” was really the tipping point as we started to crystalize our new direction, because “Cosmos,” which was watched by 135 million people around the world, really demonstrated that there is genuine interest in science programming. The key for us in any programming we develop, particularly science programming, is that it has to be entertaining. The way we accomplished that with “Cosmos” was that we hired an incredible creative team with real Hollywood pedigrees. We employed Hollywood production techniques and Hollywood storytelling devices, because people consume content, first and foremost, because it’s entertaining. So the second that we start making our content earnest, or academic, or too good for you, people are not going to watch it.

Q: Is there a series or two that you think define National Geographic Channel today and where you want the network to go?

Ms. Monroe: Yes, and I’m so excited about them. They’re not on the network now, but one of them is “MARS,” which we are producing with Imagine Entertainment and RadicalMedia. The other program I would highlight is “One Strange Rock,” which we are producing in conjunction with Nutopia with Darren Aronofsky and his team at Protozoa Pictures. Both of these programs are truly emblematic of the scale, and scope and creative ambition that you can expect from us going forward. If you want to use the word “reinvention,” I would use it not to describe me or the channel. I would use it to describe the storytellers we are partnering with because I think by partnering with creative visionaries like Ron Howard and Bryan Grazer—by partnering with people like [Mr.] Aronofsky—we’re going to be able to reinvent the way we do this type of programming.

Courtene Monroe’s pedigree is in quality TV. Ms. Monroe joined National Geographic Channels in 2012 after spending more than a dozen years at HBO, where she led marketing for groundbreaking series including “The Sopranos” and “Game of Thrones.” After 21st Century Fox’s expanded investment led to the creation of National Geographic Partners last fall, Ms. Monroe’s role also grew. She now serves as CEO of National Geographic Global Networks and oversees National Geographic Studios, the channels’ in-house production unit. Ms. Monroe recently spoke with writer Julie Liesse about her vision for National Geographic Channel.

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I’ve been quoted as saying I’m not interested in simply remaking “Planet Earth” from 10 years ago, as amazing and groundbreaking as that series was. The magic will come when we partner with narrative storytellers like Ron Howard, like Darren Aronofsky, who are going to flip all these genres on their heads and take you on a completely unprecedented ride.

**Q:** Why are they interested? Whether it’s Ron and Brian or Darren, why do they want to work with National Geographic Channel?

**Ms. Monroe:** I think there are two reasons. The first is the power of our yellow border; it’s the power of our brand. Because the brand has such strong equity and because at its heart it stands for quality, it has not been hard to attract A-level talent to want to work with us. That, in combination with the fact that our ambition now is to create premium, distinctive, creativity excellent, groundbreaking programming—that’s the type of programming that these big-name storytellers are in the business of creating.

It has been amazing, the overwhelmingly positive response that we’ve gotten in the creative community—not just in Hollywood, but in London and around the world—to come create with us. And truth be told, we’re investing heavily in the new vision. We’re significantly increasing our budgets in development and production, and we’re significantly increasing our investment in marketing so we can finally afford to work with this caliber of talent. They also know that we’re going to “eventize” their programming across the entire National Geographic portfolio.

**Q:** How much of your HBO background have you brought to your role at National Geographic Channels? Has it helped you think about developing a nonfiction network from a different perspective?

**Ms. Monroe:** Quality is the north star at HBO; it courses through everybody’s veins at HBO to be pioneering and visionary in everything that they do. And they’re the best; they really are. So I think having spent so long there, growing up there really, and understanding the importance of quality—and the importance of striving to be the very best and the most distinctive—I can’t help but assume that that has influenced my thinking here.

I went from working at one incredibly strong brand to another, and am so fortunate. At HBO the tagline was, “It’s not TV. It’s HBO.” I used to always say that it was more than just a tagline, it was a compass for the organization to always strive to be distinctive. I really feel the same way about National Geographic’s yellow border. I believe it not only gives us permission, but actually requires us to live up to the legacy of the National Geographic brand. I have not been afraid to say that, over the past four or five years, we have not, at the channel, lived up to the promise of that brand—and that’s what we want to recapture.

**Q:** We all know it’s a great time to be working in television, or video entertainment, because there’s so much going on. But it’s also challenging because so often, as soon as a network launches a new concept, someone else does the same. In that kind of competitive environment, what’s the secret to making your series stand out?

**Ms. Monroe:** I think you just have to strive to be the very best in terms of the content. And you have to be the very best version of your own brand. You have to resist the temptation to pay too close attention to what everybody else is doing. I’m often reminded of this Oscar Wilde quote: “Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.” Over the past few years, we were way too focused on what everybody else was doing; now we’re focused on running our own race.

“Once we start baking content ideas, from the very, very beginning we’re conceiving of the expression of that content across all our platforms. ... For advertisers, this is incredibly powerful. It means we’ve already thought about all the different ways in which they can connect their brand with ours across platforms.”

It also goes back to all of the storytelling assets that we have across National Geographic Partners and finding those stories that we can see coming to life across all those platforms. If you can see how all of the different platforms across National Geographic could plug in and amplify a story, then that’s probably the right story for us.

**Q:** As parents, we know that the next generation is probably not going to watch television in the same way that we grew up watching television, for a lot of different reasons. As you look at the places and opportunities for people to consume video content, how do all those other platforms factor into developing the network, both for your viewers as well as your advertisers?

**Ms. Monroe:** You’re right, it’s going to look very different. It’s looking more and more different every single day. But the one thing that will never change is that quality content will prevail. It will be consumed differently, but you don’t have a prayer of breaking through across any platform—be it traditional linear television or any new platform—if you’re anything other than exceptional.

And now, once we start baking content ideas, from the very, very beginning we’re conceiving of the expression of that content across all our platforms. So with “MARS,” for instance, what is the large format film version that we want to distribute through our specialty films division in science museums around the world? What is the Snapchat expression of “MARS”? What is the Instagram campaign of “MARS”? And what’s the cover story for the magazine? What’s the companion book? We’re thinking about these elements from the very earliest of stages of development; it’s not an afterthought. It’s not like, “OK, here we’ve developed a show and now, down the road when we’re thinking about marketing it, let’s figure out how all these platforms plug in.” It is literally at inception; we’re thinking this through in a very 360-degree way.

There’ll be people who only consume “MARS” via what we put up on the Discover platform on Snapchat, and so we need to be thinking about that. For advertisers, this is incredibly powerful. It means we’ve already thought about all the different ways in which they can connect their brand with ours across platforms. We can certainly customize that thinking based on what a particular sponsor may be looking for, but we’re going to have already done a lot of the heavy lifting.

**Q:** Series such as “MARS” will premiere to a global audience. How much does that factor into how you’re thinking about the network? Why is that global reach important for your advertisers?

**Ms. Monroe:** It may not be important to every advertiser. Not every brand is a global brand, not every brand markets on a global basis. But for many brands it is important. It was certainly important to GE when they wanted to do “Breakthrough” with us. The power and reach of National Geographic globally is unparalleled.

As we think about the content that we want to develop, we’re very much from the very beginning thinking about whether it will resonate with our audiences around the world. The good news is that how people feel about National Geographic around the world is pretty similar and uniform. The brand doesn’t stand for something different in Asia than it stands for in the U.S. because it’s been around so long. So we’re just looking for really big, audacious programming that audiences will connect with around the world. “Cosmos” certainly did. The power of our global reach combined with our global brand is tremendously exciting.

**Q:** It’s going to be exciting as a viewer and for the marketplace to watch.

**Ms. Monroe:** It’s a very energizing time to be here. It was exciting even before the creation of National Geographic Partners; and now, the opportunities to pursue this new programming vision with this incredible arsenal at our disposal means we will be able to take this brand to really unprecedented new heights.
There is too much TV out there for people to be conscious of all of it. That means it’s no longer good enough to just be good enough; we have to be best-in-class,” says Mr. Dancer, EVP-programming planning & research for National Geographic Channel. “That means giving viewers awe-inspiring moments that no one else can deliver.”

“The world is evolving; walls are being broken down. Channels are no longer defined by specific genres—or even in terms of how you distribute your content,” says Tim Pastore, National Geographic Channel’s president, original programming & production.

Those of us who have lived in the core nonfiction space are evolving, too. Our strategy moving forward is not just to exist within one specific genre, and it’s not just about airing a television show anymore,” Mr. Pastore says. “The beauty of the new National Geographic Partners is that our cross-platform and distribution models have grown exponentially—giving us the ability to create new touch points that go beyond linear programming.”

Make no mistake about it, though: Unscripted series and documentaries will remain at the heart of the network’s programming lineup. “Unscripted is the core of who we are, the DNA of our brand,” Mr. Pastore says. Another thing viewers expect from National Geographic, he says, is strong visual storytelling. “Our cinematic past in the magazine and on television is paramount to our success in our nonfiction programming,” he says. “We’ll continue to bolster that cinematic vision in our upcoming series.”

Bruce Lefkowitz, EVP-ad sales for the Fox Networks Group, says the refreshed vision for the network’s programming remains consistent with viewer expectations for the National Geographic brand as a whole. “If it’s something like environmental issues, viewers know that Nat Geo has been there for years and years. The Antarctic? Nat Geo could have been there all along. And Mars? When we go the next time, Nat Geo will be there,” Mr. Lefkowitz says. “If you apply those elements, it gives our programming context: Nat Geo was there, could have been there or will be there.”

Marking the network’s commitment to adventure, science and exploration, last summer National Geographic announced a three-year partnership with the New Zealand Antarctic Research Institute and Antarctica New Zealand that will document the work of scientists at Scott Base in Antarctica. The project will yield a global television series as well as other original content for digital platforms and National Geographic magazine (see story, Page C12).

Another headline project is “The Story of God With Morgan Freeman,” a series combining science, history and personal experience as it explores man’s quest to understand the divine. The series is set to premiere in April. Each episode will center on one big question, with Mr. Freeman visiting some of the world’s most cherished religious sites, traveling with archaeologists and observing scientists in action as they search for observable effects of the divine.

National Geographic Channel will also continue to bring top theatrical documentaries to TV screens, including “He Named Me Malala,” the story of Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, and “Parched,” a feature about the looming worldwide fresh water crisis from acclaimed documentarian Alex Gibney. Rather than run as a one-time offering, “Parched” will be a feature documentary as well as an additional three hours programmed as a miniseries on National Geographic Channel outlets around the world.

But alongside the network’s classic nonfiction fare will be a growing number of scripted projects. National Geographic already has experienced success with scripted programming: the “Killing” franchise—“Killing Lincoln,” “Killing Kennedy” and “Killing Jesus”—has not only garnered two Emmy Award nominations for best TV movie but has also yielded the three most-watched programs in the network’s history. The fourth installment in the series, “Killing Reagan,” based on the just-published book by Bill O’Reilly, is scheduled to premiere on National Geographic Channel later this year.
In addition to its success with the “Killing” franchise, in November the channel ran “Saints & Strangers,” a two-night movie event telling the dramatized story of the Pilgrims and Plymouth Colony following the Mayflower landing.

Reinforcing the new commitment to scripted content, the network just hired Carolyn Bernstein, a veteran TV executive and producer, as its first EVP-head of global scripted development & production. Ms. Bernstein comes to National Geographic Channel from Endemol Shine Studios and the WB Network.

“The network is headed in a bold new direction, and I’m thrilled to help craft their scripted content strategy, a key priority going forward,” Ms. Bernstein says. “Aside from being creatively excellent, of course, Nat Geo scripted programming for us needs to have a blend of authenticity and brand relevance for it to make sense.”

Most recently, the network announced two development deals for potential new scripted series, “Blood Ivory” and “Barkskins.” “Blood Ivory” is being conceived as a crime thriller tracing the massive global web of contraband animals and ivory, and its connection to the trafficking of narcotics, people and weapons, and the funding of multiple terrorist regimes. DNA Films and FX Productions are producing the series, with television writer Joshua Brand (“The Americans”) writing the pilot script.

As part of Fox Network Groups’ overall first look deal with Scott Rudin Productions, National Geographic Channel optioned the rights to Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning author Annie Proulx’s forthcoming novel, “Barkskins.” The novel, set to be published in June by Scribner Publishing, tells the stories of two families and their descendants over 300 years, and their travels across the world under stunningly brutal conditions as they confront the possibility of global ecological collapse.

In addition to straightforward scripted and unscripted series, National Geographic’s reboot includes more unexpected programming initiatives that cross boundaries. One project already running is “StarTalk,” the Emmy-nominated late-night talk show featuring astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. Currently in its second season, “StarTalk” features the pop-culture icon chatting with such guests as science and technology experts, to former President Bill Clinton and celebrities Susan Sarandon and Seth MacFarlane.

The network’s highest-profile upcoming project is “MARS” from executive producers Brian Grazer and Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment and RadicalMedia. “MARS” will tell the dramatic scripted story of the first colonization of Mars in the year 2032, intercut with documentary verite and interviews with the scientists and technologists who are currently working to make that mission happen. Its six episodes are set to premiere globally later this year (see story, Page C10).

Carolyn Bernstein

Rentrak is proud to be your long-time audience measurement partner, and we look forward to working together for many more years to come.

“I think ‘MARS’ is a seminal moment in a certain respect that serves as a compass for the direction our programming is moving,” Mr. Pastore says. “It will help define how our unscripted and scripted programming evolves.”

“MARS” will also be one of the first examples of programming fully developed under the new National Geographic Partners, bringing all the resources of National Geographic to the table—“allowing us to utilize the entire global platform from broadcast to digital, the magazine to the family at large,” Mr. Dancer says. “It’s a first-case example as we build our new programming and distribution strategy.”

Five years ago, digital platforms were “more of an afterthought,” Mr. Pastore says. Today, he says, the network “starts strategizing content across platforms at the start of all programming choices.

“Our philosophy is ‘no viewer left behind,’ so we’ll make our content available and appropriate for linear broadcast, print, digital or wherever viewers want it.”

Within the new programming strategy are additional, richer opportunities for marketers.

“The ad opportunities that we will bring to market will be more holistic and cross-platform than ever,” Mr. Lefkowitz says. He points to the megaseries “Cosmos” as an early example of a cross-platform global opportunity: The Neil deGrasse Tyson-hosted series debuted in March 2014 not just on National Geographic Channel but roadblocked on eight other Fox TV networks, with digital support around the world as well.

Mr. Lefkowitz sees these big programming events as key opportunities. “The idea is for these five, or eight or 12 big, premium science and adventure events to come to market with things that are on-channel and off-channel, using all the tentacles of National Geographic Partners—whether that’s tours, experiential events, publishing, digital or global,” he says. “The goal is to immerse people who have a passion for these topics.”

Within these top programming events, he says National Geographic Partners will offer advertiser partners opportunities, including sponsorship with limited commercial interruptions, additional branded content outside the main programming and unique ad formats.

The recent partnership with GE and Imagine Entertainment to create the series “Breakthrough” (see story, Page C18) also “broke molds,” Mr. Lefkowitz says. “It created a new model for us to reach out to the advertising community. These sorts of strategic partnerships are something that we are looking at how to explore again—because ‘Breakthrough’ was a big success from our perspective.”

He says the move into more scripted programming is also likely to create opportunities for product placements—a marketer opportunity that has been minimal at the network until now.

But as it expands opportunities for marketer integration, the network will remain conscious of viewer expectations. “We can’t be for everyone,” Mr. Lefkowitz says. “The remit of National Geographic is that we are going to be in the favorite-channel selection for a lot of people. But that comes with a promise and expectation of the brand, and that means premium content consistent with our heritage.”
As it expands its powerhouse programming footprint, National Geographic is also taking advantage of its position as the No. 1 social media brand in the U.S.

“With our social media presence right now and with the recent expansion of the [National Geographic Partners] joint venture, we have an incredible opportunity to drive engagement and exposure for both our channels and our partners,” says Rajiv Mody, VP-social media for National Geographic Partners. “With the expanded partnership, we now have more than 250 million social media fans globally across all of our platforms.”

Combining its vast content with cutting-edge innovation gives the channel the ability to drive incredible exposure and a “deeper level of engagement for both our channel and also for our partners and sponsors,” Mr. Mody says.

The reason the National Geographic brand is so alluring to social partners is its deep well of content, which lends itself to being shared online, says Liz Dolan, global CMO for both National Geographic Channels and Fox International Channels. “I think in an era where people live on their phones, obviously National Geographic has been very forward-thinking about getting their content out there in all of these ways,” Ms. Dolan says. “What is so fascinating is that Facebook, Instagram, Apple and Snapchat come to National Geographic for these partnerships because they know that they will get the kind of fascinating, high-quality content that really drives their platforms.”

Corporations are also reaping the benefits of National Geographic’s significant social reach. GE recently reached millions of people and generated tens of millions of impressions via social media for “Breakthrough,” a program co-developed by GE with National Geographic (see story, Page C18).

While big events lure viewers, National Geographic’s social campaigns are just as effective, Mr. Mody says. For instance, cat lovers in November got a chance to share photos of their favorite felines in support of big cats around the world as part of Nat Geo WILD’s sixth annual Big Cat Week. The channel took advantage of its wide social reach as well as special programming to rally viewers behind its cause. It also provided sponsors with a unique opportunity to connect with those viewers on a deeper level, Mr. Mody says.

“We worked with TOMS [Shoes] on a partnership during Big Cat Week . . . where essentially we created a PSA with [actress] Kate Walsh; and we also did a product giveaway in conjunction with TOMS where those who shared pictures of their little cats in support of big cats on Facebook could get a product from TOMS,” he says.

Going forward, National Geographic expects to keep pushing the envelope on social as well as other marketing avenues. For example, its “MARS” project will take social strategy and turn it on its ear, Ms. Dolan says.

At the same time, she points to opportunities in short-form digital content that would live on National Geographic’s websites and social platforms.

“So if you, as a sponsor, wanted to be part of a whole extra short-form series that is about living on Mars, or getting to Mars or that’s just about who’s inventing rockets these days . . . that all exists,” Ms. Dolan says. “That all will be part of the whole digital ecosystem that is the ‘MARS’ property, so we will be looking for partners who will want to co-create material with us.”
CONGRATULATIONS
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL ON 15 ILLUMINATING YEARS
When it premieres later this year, "MARS" will expand the yellow border of National Geographic Channel programming into new territory. Combining a unique blend of feature-quality scripted drama with unscripted documentary sequences, the series will reveal what the greatest minds in space exploration are creating today to get us to Mars, as well as dramatize the world they are envisioning when we get there. (Think “Interstellar” meets "Cosmos.") "MARS," originally introduced as “Red Planet,” is being produced by RadicalMedia and Imagine Entertainment, the Academy Award- and Emmy-winning production company run by Brian Grazer and Ron Howard.

Mr. Howard: [to the scientists, I know it’s not really as habitable as people just seem to be the most interesting. And I guess when you start learning about the planets—and it's the red planet—you learn that as a kid Mars. It's the red planet—do more things on Earth, whether it's Newt Gingrich, or Matt Damon or National Geographic Channel? Why Mars? Mr. Grazer: There's just a basic iconography to Mars. It's the red planet—you learn that as a kid when you start learning about the planets—and it just seems to be the most interesting. And I guess it's the most habitable. (However, now that I've spoken to some very interesting experts and scientists, I know it's not really as habitable as people might think it is. It's going to be very challenging.)

Mr. Howard: For my generation, it was a subject of so much sci-fi treatment: the aliens, "The War of the Worlds," were always Martians, right? Then, when the first real images started appearing, going to Mars suddenly seemed somewhat attainable. That, combined with men walking on the moon, suddenly piqued everyone's curiosity, and going to Mars seemed like our next logical step purely on a kind of poetic, historic level. One of the things that is very interesting to me is the plausibility of actually terraforming it and creating bona fide colonies—self-sustaining colonies.

Q: Where did the idea for "MARS" come from? Mr. Grazer: I'll give you the short and fun, super-Hollywood version of how this came about. We were already making "Breakthrough" with National Geographic and GE. I've fallen in love with National Geographic. I started to think that [it] is an enormous platform that is very distinct-ive and cool. Why don't I do more things on that? So all of a sudden I hear from someone who works for me named Michael Rosenberg; he's talking with Justin Wilkes at RadicalMedia. Michael says, "They have this project called "MARS" that could be a six-hour miniseries. It's going to be everything that everybody wants to know about in terms of space travel and the destination of Mars. This could blow your mind."

The very next day I'm having lunch with Peter Rice, who's head of all of the Fox channels. We talk about "Breakthrough," we talk about [the Fox/Imagine megahit] "Empire" and then, as I'm leaving, I say, "Would you have any interest in doing a really sort of high-concept project on space focusing on Mars? And maybe put in some of these experts that are on their way to trying to go to Mars?" And he goes, "Yes, I would love to." And I said, "Are you sure?" He said, "I'm so sure." And I said, "OK." And that's how it went down.

Mr. Howard: The story operates from the assumption that it's happened—that we have set up the first colony on Mars. And so it's a way to look at it—not just as a journey but as a remarkable event and turning point, and a sustainable achievement. … Suddenly, it becomes a little less exotic and a little more like a logical extension of what we human beings seem to be inclined to do. We need these question marks and we need to try to get to those questions, and in the most unusual ways.

Q: A hallmark of your filmmaking has been the ability to take the real stuff of history and turn it into compelling content that people can relate to. When I heard about "MARS" the first thing I thought of was “From the Earth to the Moon,” your HBO series. People loved that because it was history, but it was storytelling, too. Do you think we'll see the same kind of feeling in the Mars series?

Mr. Grazer: Yes, absolutely. And I'll tell you why: because most of the successful movies that Ron and I have made, or television shows, depend on the “what if.” Like, "What if I could meet a mermaid? What would that be like?" Or, "What if I was sitting on the launchpad, just like [Apollo 13 astronaut] Jim Lovell? What would that feel like?" We are constantly transporting our sensibility into characters and then charging that with the “what ifs.” What if this were to happen? What would that feel like? Would I be scared? Why would I not be scared? How would I find the resources inside of me to handle the situation? By doing that, it has the best possibility of igniting emotion in viewers because you make it really personal.

In the case of "MARS," if we're going to create six hours of compelling drama, how do we get the 440 million viewers [worldwide] who watch National Geographic Channel to put themselves in the place of understanding why is that important to me? How is that going to relate to my life, or my children's or [descendants] beyond that? That is the primary thing you have to do in doing a show like this.

Mr. Howard: Brian is real psyched for this; he was pumped on leading it before it was even introduced to me as a possibility. I think it's a way for National Geographic to explore this blend between documentaries and very realistic, staged dramatizations of how it could work. So structurally we're exploring a lot of different things. And stylistically, we're still in the writing phase. So it's far too early to make any claims or share any specifics, other than to say that we want it to be incredibly informative, entirely authentic based on what we understand today, using the science that we can apply today—as dramatically compelling as it can be and still honor those other scientific aspects of the project.

For us, we're just being creativity-opportunis-tic. It's a fascinating subject. I'm not a scientist; I'm not even a science geek. But I recognize the importance, the excitement and the drama. I'm going to be learning and meeting people I probably wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to, and I'm already delving into this subject in a far deeper way than I ever would have.
ABOUT “MARS”

WHAT: “MARS” is an epic six-part series following the thrilling quest to colonize Mars.

WHO: “MARS” is being produced by Imagine Entertainment and RadicalMedia for National Geographic Channel.

WHEN: The series will premiere on National Geographic Channel later this year.

WHERE: National Geographic Channel will run the series simultaneously in 171 countries and 45 languages.

Q: One of your passion projects has been “Breakthrough.” It’s exciting to see science programming being really interesting. It’s not the old filmstrips we watched as kids. You are bringing top talent and great production quality and, again, storytelling to science programming.

Mr. Grazer: Creatively, you can only hope to have the spark of inspiration if you’re curious, and open-minded and interested. I wrote a book on curiosity where I interviewed a person every two weeks. I interviewed [GE Vice Chairwoman] Beth Comstock. We created a little intellectual work frenzy, and we started to talk about working together. When we had our second conversation, it included GE people, myself, Ron and Michael Rosenberg.

The thing which it turned out we all had in common, which is essential in storytelling, is to have a romance in your heart. I said I have a very romantic idea of what it was like when Thomas Edison gave life to General Electric. That was a time on the planet when people were making a difference, a really meaningful difference. And here’s someone who said, “Hey, by the way, we might need electricity.” We all kind of galvanized on that sort of romantic feeling and idea. We said, “Why don’t we find problems on the planet, orient people to those problems, but be very hopeful and find those individuals—scientists for the most part, or doctors in medicine or technology—who are solving or on their way to solving those problems?” And that’s essentially how “Breakthrough” happened.

Q: In your opinion as content producers, what does the National Geographic brand bring to the table?

Mr. Grazer: It brings tremendous reach in terms of distribution power. But really it’s sort of that same spark that we all remember from those beautiful magazines—reading them, storing them away—which led later to content programming that gave us the ability to get beyond or outside of ourselves. I think Nat Geo is all that, the beauty of all that.

Mr. Howard: At Nat Geo, their ambitions are exciting; it’s exciting to lock arms with them. And yet their executives are also trained to look at the world and storytelling in a slightly different way.

Q: One final question: If you had a chance, would you sign up for that trip to Mars yourself?

Mr. Howard: No, I wouldn’t. I’m not that adventurous of a person in reality. That’s one of the things about making movies like “Apollo 13” or “Rush”; it draws you into these adventurous situations but surrounded by the apparatus of a movie, which is a lot different from really being there. You get a little taste, a little sense of it.

For me, just the excitement of being around this program—and feeding off the energy of the people who are dedicating themselves and their careers to this goal of going to Mars—is incredibly inspiring, and very, very stimulating. And I know that it’s going to be one of those creative highlights in the making.

Mr. Grazer: OK, me, too, then. I’m not going.

Congratulations to our friends at the National Geographic Channel.

After 15 super successful years of programming on Earth, we’re all looking forward to our amazing journey to Mars.
As scientists stationed at New Zealand's Scott Base in Antarctica headed out on an expedition from the research facility to the Ross Ice Shelf, a snowstorm hit. With zero visibility, it became impossible to continue; storms in this harsh environment can’t be taken lightly, so the team of scientists and support staff hunkered down in tents for more than 16 hours until the threat passed.

But documentary photographer/producers from National Geographic don’t get to stay safe and sound—they have to venture into the white-out conditions. “What’s the use of having a storm if you can’t see it? That’s the tough job our team of filmmakers had to face every day,” says Brian Lovett, VP-production & development, National Geographic Studios, the in-house television production unit of National Geographic Channels, overseen by Tim Pastore, president, original programming & production. “You have to leave your tent to shoot the story.”

So J.J. Kelley, a National Geographic photographer/producer, set out to film the storm. In these circumstances, any decision is a matter of life and death. “You’re drifting farther and farther away from the tents. If you get disoriented, you’re done,” Mr. Lovett says.

Mr. Kelley is part of a National Geographic team assigned to cover the scientists and support staff working in Antarctica for a cross-platform media project in partnership with the New Zealand Antarctic Research Institute (NZARI) and Antarctica New Zealand. The partnership will fund scientific research and showcase the work of the researchers and staff through a six-hour global television series for National Geographic Channel, articles in National Geographic magazine and multimedia content on the National Geographic Web and social media platforms.
“We wanted to find a way to create the first documentary series about Antarctica,” says Mr. Pastore. “Logistically, it was a tall order.”

In the local summer season, which is North America’s winter, Scott Base houses only about 80 people—a revolving door of approximately 50 scientists, who stay from a few days up to three months, and 30 “permanent” staff members. The National Geographic project focuses on both groups. “We are following these intrepid scientists, the hurdles they face every day in a challenging environment,” Mr. Pastore says. “We are also following the support staff, the unsung heroes who help science happen. It’s a character- and science-driven story.”

The National Geographic Channel crew, who started filming in early November, is stationed at Scott Base. It is also filming on the U.S. Coast Guard’s Polar Star, a heavy icebreaker designed to cut a path to enable other ships carrying supplies to get through; in the McMurdo Dry Valleys, Antarctica’s snow-free valleys, for a dry valley research project; and aboard a vessel off the Antarctic Peninsula and on the ice edge for a whale research project.

“It’s not just science,” Mr. Lovett says. “It’s the first science series of its kind, where the adventure of the crew enabling the scientific research is equally as dramatic and important.”

The remote location for this series, which will begin running in October, ties in with National Geographic’s goal to bring the farthest reaches of the earth to 440 million homes in 171 countries. When it comes to science programming for the National Geographic Channel, the Antarctic location truly embodies the fundamental pillars of adventure, exploration and science, Mr. Pastore says. “We strive to create content never seen before. With this, we are bringing viewers to Antarctica.”

The goal is to get people engaged, not just with the Antarctica narrative, but with the stories of corporate sponsors as well. The series—about pushing boundaries, working as a team and establishing new frontiers of innovation and new ideas—lends a strong platform for creative custom storytelling to corporate partners, says Claudia Malley, chief marketing brand officer, National Geographic Partners. “We can do vignettes on the channel, native content digitally or content in the magazine. ... Antarctica is such a wide canvas, you can go in a lot of directions.”
By Stephanie Thompson

Amid the unruly landscape of cable TV, Nat Geo WILD has risen over the last six years to become a roaring predator in the U.S. market, increasing viewership consistently year over year with focused programming that caters to consumers’ passion for animals—from pets on the couch to those in the wild in need of preservation.

Now, with its expanded ability to extend to new and immersive platforms under National Geographic Partners, the channel is expected to claw its way even higher.

“We’ve proven that we can do great TV but also that we can do real-world good with our big conservation efforts, and that means something special to consumers and to our partners,” says Geoffrey Daniels, EVP-general manager of Nat Geo WILD, which has risen on the success of animals and the people who love them with shows such as “The Incredible Dr. Pol,” “Cesar 911” and “Dr. Oakley, Yukon Vet.”

The channel’s enormously popular Big Cat Week is one of its highest-rated weeks, in large part because of Nat Geo WILD’s avowed mission to help save the lions, tigers, cheetahs, leopards and other big cats it features. But the programming has also become must-see due to the multiplatform approach Nat Geo WILD uses to connect consumers with the story of big cats in all its HD glory.

“Big Cat Week offers a glimpse into how we create real-time immersive experiences that allow consumers to engage with content in ways they never have been able to before, something that will grow even more as we leverage the new platforms that Nat Geo Partners brings,” Mr. Daniels says.

Mr. Daniels, who annually commissions more than 170 hours of original series, specials and events for Nat Geo WILD globally, is committed to seeking out and green-lighting work from innovative production partners that use the latest camera technologies and filming techniques to engage people in amazing stories about the animal world.

“Our creative mandate is to push the boundaries, experiment and have fun in ways that we don’t see other broadcasters doing while staying true to our brand—also seemingly a unique concept in television the past few years,” Mr. Daniels says.

One example, he says, is the upcoming event series “Savage Kingdom” that Nat Geo WILD will premiere next fall. An unscripted drama, the six-part miniseries will feature Africa’s dominant ani-

ITV Entertainment warmly congratulates National Geographic Channel on 15 wonderful years!

Thank you for all the support over the years. We wish you continued success.
mal rival clans, the predators pitted against the prey, as they fight to preserve their bloodlines, told in a narrative style not seen before with epic, multiyear-in-the-making natural history films.

In addition, the program will be expanded through National Geographic’s many platforms, including connecting to the magazine group for profiles of the animals the series features; tying in through its online footprint to allow audiences to engage with the series’ characters; and offering opportunities for real-life engagement with animals through National Geographic Expeditions.

“Books, magazines, travel—even large-format film ... ‘Savage Kingdom’ stands to be much larger than just a TV show but rather an opportunity to engage consumers on a truly global basis, all revolving around one theme,” Mr. Daniels says.

Nat Geo WILD is also getting creative about reaching its family demographic with the spring launch of Nat Geo WILD KiDS, a Saturday morning programming block for kids. Experimenting with format and medium, the block will likely feature new personalities in short-form programming that will connect to National Geographic’s websites and digital magazines to provide additional family-friendly content.

Courteney Monroe, CEO of National Geographic Global Networks, which includes Nat Geo WILD, says she is excited about the content and program extensions Mr. Daniels plans for Nat Geo WILD, a network she boasts “never wavers from who it is as a brand: Nat Geo WILD is about animals and the people who love them, period, and we’re very proud of the programming we develop around that.”

Programming for Nat Geo WILD has been built around people who dedicate their lives to animals, such as best-selling author, public speaker and popular dog behaviorist Cesar Millan, who helps people with their unruly dogs on “Cesar 911.” “The Incredible Dr. Pol” is the No. 1-rated veterinarian show on TV, and viewers are also entranced with “Dr. K’s Exotic Animal ER” and “Dr. Oakley, Yukon Vet.”

In addition to its programming, Nat Geo WILD reaches extensively into new technology platforms, offering ways for viewers to join the conversation with their favorite animal lovers via Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

The extensive social media imprint of Nat Geo WILD—7 million Facebook followers, 500,000 Twitter followers and close to 600,000 Instagram followers—will be heavily bolstered by the new National Geographic Partners’ combination of National Geographic properties’ social media under a single umbrella.

“What’s exciting is that the new joint venture allows us to create far more for Nat Geo WILD advertisers than just a linear TV impression, a 30-second spot,” Ms. Monroe says. “Now, we can create things for Nat Geo WILD’s blue-chip shows like ‘Destination WILD’ [the only 52-week natural history series, which airs Sunday nights] that go across magazines, books and all of our combined 21st Century/Nat Geo platforms, which presents tremendous opportunities for the people who want to partner with us.”

Liz Dolan, EVP-CMO of Fox International Channels and National Geographic Channels, sees Nat Geo WILD as a highly extendable brand under the new joint venture, especially because of the channel’s crystal clear brand positioning that offers great opportunities for Nat Geo WILD and its partners across travel, licensed products, kids and magazines.

Says Ms. Dolan, “It’s very easy to see what Nat Geo WILD stands for: wild animals and wild places, and the people who love wild animals and wild places.”
By J. Daniel Janzen

With the formation of National Geographic Partners last fall, one of the world's most venerated media brands is being launched into a cross-platform future. The National Geographic Society's mission of research and education remains unchanged as it gains new resources to fuel its work—but the commercial side of its business will now be handled by a separate organization with an eye on transformation.

As National Geographic storytelling expands its reach across channels and around the globe, the new structure offers opportunities for brands and audiences alike to connect with and through the unique, high-quality content they've known for well over a century.

Formed in November, National Geographic Partners is the expansion of a partnership between the National Geographic Society and 21st Century Fox that dates to 1999. At that time, Fox invested in the new National Geographic Channel together with NBC; the premise was that the Society would provide the content, while the networks would lead operations, advertising and global distribution.

Fox quickly bought out NBC and began developing its own programming slate for the channel while initiating a rapid overseas expansion that has today made National Geographic Channel the world's most widely distributed premium channel—a potent illustration of the synergy between the National Geographic brand and the media acumen of Fox.

The $725 million deal that formed National Geographic Partners, which is 73% owned by Fox and 27% by the Society, builds on the success of this earlier partnership while clarifying the separation of its content and commercial aspects. The Society will now focus on its work as a leading funder of exploration and scientific research, continuing to operate as a nonprofit as it has since 1888 while newly unencumbered by commercial interests—and obviously benefiting greatly from the funds provided by the deal.

Meanwhile, the media outlets and other consumer-oriented assets formerly operated by the Society have now been bundled with National Geographic TV channels under the purview of National Geographic Partners.

"It provides an opportunity for advertisers and sponsors to partner with one of the world's truly iconic brands: a trusted source of visual storytelling around the themes of science, discovery and wonder with a legacy that dates back more than a century," says Peter Rice, chairman-CEO of National Geographic Partners.

NEW VISION

Peter Rice  Toby Byrne

CONGRATULATIONS TO COURTENEY MONROE AND TEAM ON THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL

HERE'S TO THE JOURNEY!

YOUR FRIENDS AT CIVIC
of Fox Networks Group. “There’s a reason that Apple Computers recently chose to feature National Geographic’s signature yellow border with the image of a giraffe so prominently in its subway ads and billboards for Apple TV. In today’s highly saturated, multiscreen media environment, National Geographic delivers content that stands out, is instantly recognizable and commands attention on a worldwide scale.”

The National Geographic brand is already ubiquitous across both online and offline platforms. Beyond its long-established magazine, the global footprint of National Geographic also encompasses 250 million fans across social media platforms. National Geographic Kids magazine is now the largest circulation children’s title in the U.S., boasting more than 4 million readers. National Geographic Books publishes 150 books per year, with a backlist of 2,000 titles. National Geographic Traveler Magazine has the highest newsstand sales, the highest percentage of paying subscribers and largest digital circulation of any travel publication in the U.S., as well as 16 international editions in 13 languages in 28 countries reaching a readership of more than 13.5 million worldwide. National Geographic Expeditions is one of the industry’s fastest-growing travel programs, with unique travel experiences ranging from small-ship voyages aboard the National Geographic fleet to active adventures and private jet trips to more than 80 destinations on all seven continents.

Together with National Geographic’s TV properties, these divisions produce content that reaches more than 730 million homes around the world every month. By combining them with the National Geographic channels operated under a single National Geographic Partners brand, the new entity will create opportunities for cross-pollination, cross-platform delivery connected with an even larger and more avidly engaged audience. “We’re giving brands new ways to align with a respected and revered brand that’s known for quality programming and safe environments,” says Toby Byrne, president, advertising sales, Fox Networks Group.

Under the new organization, the character of the ad base will not change significantly, though it will likely broaden its mix of categories and advertisers. “We’ll still see brands that want to associate themselves with storytelling, science, adventure, exploration and the outdoors,” Mr. Byrne says. “But National Geographic Partners will make it easier for these brands to add value as they expand across platforms.”

Brands will also have new ways to be part of high-quality National Geographic programming, such as in the deal that brought together GE with Imagine Entertainment’s Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and Asylum Entertainment to create “Breakthrough,” a six-part anthology series on National Geographic Channel (see story, Page C18). For the show, GE went beyond the role of an advertiser or sponsor to share in both the funding and the direction of programs about leading scientists and innovations and directed by top-tier Hollywood talent. Although it represents a new approach to developing content, “Breakthrough” also underscores the commitment of National Geographic Partners to maintaining the integrity at the core of its brand. “We are not changing the content so much as we are doubling down on the dynamic storytelling and creative excellence for which National Geographic has always been known,” Mr. Rice says. “At the same time, we will be ambitious about delivering this content across all consumer channels in a platform-agnostic manner. The National Geographic Channel will continue to be a destination for high-caliber, high-quality TV programming—both factual and scripted—from the industry’s top content creators. But we’ll also look to the Web, social media and mobile platforms to leverage this terrific storytelling for consumers around the world, wherever they choose to view it.”

Early reaction to the formation of National Geographic Partners has been very positive. “We’ve seen a lot of encouraging interest from the traditional National Geographic ad base as well as new brands,” Mr. Byrne says. “As we go forward and announce additional investments in programming and storytelling across our asset base, we’ll continue to grow these relationships and unlock new forms of value for our partners.”
In a world where new forms of media are continually taking hold, the battle for attention grows fiercer every day. This means that brands need to be increasingly creative and thoughtful when it comes to how they connect with their audiences.

For nearly 125 years, GE has told stories about science and technology through an innovative lens. From “General Electric Theater” in the 1950s to our recently launched science fiction podcast “The Message,” we have been among the first to use many different types of platforms to tell our story.

Innovation and invention are deeply rooted in GE’s DNA, and we’ve carried that forward as an integral element of our marketing and communications strategy, guiding how, where and when we choose to appear. But one thing always remains the same: We focus on connecting with an audience who shares our passion for science, technology and what’s next.

One simple rule of innovation is that it is rarely achieved alone—which is why GE has a long history of partnering with some of the world’s best storytellers, who can translate the wonder and imagination of science into great stories.

In 2012, we embarked on a new type of partnership with the National Geographic Channel with the development of “Breakthrough,” a six-part TV series produced by Brian Grazer and Ron Howard of Imagine Entertainment and Asylum Entertainment, exploring how curiosity is leading scientists to solve some of the world’s biggest challenges across vital areas such as water, energy, aging, brain science, pandemics and cyborg technology.

Each episode was directed (and, in some cases, narrated) by a group of Hollywood heavyweights—Angela Bassett, Peter Berg, Paul Giamatti, Akiva Goldsman, Ron Howard and Brett Ratner. Casting their lens on such a diversity of complex topics gave each story a fresh and unique take.

GE’s partnership with National Geographic Channel, Imagine Entertainment and Asylum Entertainment was a breakthrough in its own right. Moving beyond just a sponsorship or advertiser role, GE entered into the relationship as a true production, content and creative partner, serving as an executive producer of the series and sharing production costs.

The key to success here is all about relevance. The mission of the series—exploring how scientists are solving some of the world’s toughest challenges—is also GE’s mission. We have 3,000 scientists, engineers and researchers around the world who spend every day thinking about and working toward this. And while some of our scientists are featured in the series, it isn’t about GE. The spotlight is shared with many other notable people and companies that are changing our lives today and leading us to a better tomorrow.

Another important element that helped drive the success of the series and the partnership was the ability to work on a global scale. Both GE and National Geographic Channel are in more than 170 countries, so we were able to combine resources to make the series a success worldwide.

This partnership exemplifies a move beyond “branded entertainment.” Instead of just putting our name on a piece of content, we are focused on partnering with the best people to create and tell the best stories—not just great stories about GE, but great stories the world needs to know.
For decades, National Geographic has wielded the power of science, exploration and storytelling to change the world and has brought its global partners along for the ride. Now, in National Geographic Partners, its new affiliation with 21st Century Fox, National Geographic Channel’s global partners will gain an even deeper connection to consumers and the critical concerns they have about the planet across an incredible array of platforms, from narrative TV and print media to experiential opportunities in travel and education.

“What is so exciting about National Geographic Partners going forward is that we have the opportunity to align companies across multiple touch points and through our innovative, purpose-based storytelling that speaks to what matters to today’s consumers,” says Claudia Malley, chief marketing brand officer of the joint venture.

Ms. Malley, formerly EVP-global corporate partnerships for National Geographic Society, is charged with bringing an even greater level of engagement and integration for National Geographic’s partners, working to strengthen the link between the purpose-driven messages and the innovative stories National Geographic has to tell.

Subaru, for example, will use the extensive reach of National Geographic’s National Park Service platform in 2016 across TV, magazine, digital and education properties to shine a light on its own dynamic conservation mission.

From interactive “Find Your Park, Love Your Park” in-school educational activities for fourth graders to short-form stories about Subaru’s National Park Zero Landfill Initiative in National Geographic magazine ads, Subaru will take advantage of National Geographic’s incredible consumer arc.

“What’s great is that our content has no age or demographic boundaries—we are as compelling and engaging to kids on the playground as we are to CEOs in the boardroom,” Ms. Malley says.

Canon USA is also using National Geographic’s extensive reach and its socially conscious content to support what Canon Chairman-CEO Joe Adachi calls the company’s commitment to “building a better world for future generations,” according to the company’s website.

Canon sponsors National Geographic Live’s student matinees in the U.S., which engage thousands of K-through-12 students every year with dynamic presentations by National Geographic’s award-winning photographers about the work they do addressing issues through visual storytelling. Canon is also working with National Geographic to reach consumers globally, tying in, for example, with Canon Australia to create a six-part TV series called “Tales by Light” that follows world-class photogra-
phers into extreme and fascinating environments to find the images that tell important stories.

“We want to give consumers and partners stories that are actionable, and to offer a look at how people are working together to solve the problems of the world,” says Susan Goldberg, editor in chief of National Geographic and the new editorial director of National Geographic Partners, where she is responsible for publishing across digital, magazines, books, maps, kids and family, and travel and adventure.

“We are living in an age of incredible breakthrough and discovery, and Nat Geo Partners has a real role to play offering popular audiences a way to understand science and innovation,” Ms. Goldberg says. Partners’ own missions can play alongside as National Geographic unveils groundbreaking stories in the coming year, including health coverage focused around the near-term hopes for ending blindness, HIV and malaria. Online content will supplement TV programming, and extensive themed tie-ins are possible across all its platforms.

National Geographic has the ability, now more than ever, to create multiyear, multidimensional programs around crucial issues that fit its partners’ direct business focus and help them engage virtually as well as in real time with consumers and thought leaders.

For the last six years, National Geographic has partnered with Shell for the Great Energy Challenge, engaging influential citizens and key energy stakeholders in solution-based thinking and dialogues about the future of energy. The program has included the development of energy-based editorial content among the National Geographic digital properties. It includes four events a year in countries such as South Africa and Brazil, where experts convene to discuss solutions to energy issues.

“National Geographic often plays a role as convener, moderator and organizer around crucial issues,” Ms. Malley says. “A successful partnership starts with marketing, but it brings business value back to the partner.”

Focusing on ecology and the importance of conservation is an area of opportunity for many brands these days, and National Geographic’s content leadership in the arena has helped it forge partnerships from Oracle’s development of teachers in marine ecology to Davidoff Cool Water’s initiative to protect oceans with National Geographic’s Pristine Seas expeditions.

Travel and adventure are also arenas where National Geographic excels in creating opportunities for partnerships, as it has in the past with specific destination partners such as Montana, Florida, Botswana and Brand USA, which National Geographic helps promote in international markets by leveraging guidebooks, maps and expert content to passionate travelers.

Species preservation has been a major thrust of National Geographic’s animal coverage, such as its ongoing Photo Ark initiative. This centers on photographer Joel Sartore’s ambitious project to depict 12,000 animal species over the next 25 years, half of which are expected to be extinct by 2100 if conditions don’t change. Opportunities for tie-ins abound, as the project exemplifies National Geographic’s ability to extend a story across magazines, digital, books, museum exhibits and special advertising, in this case outdoor video placement on the side of St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City and on the U.N. building in New York.

It is an exciting time for National Geographic, a longtime leader in storytelling, to be able to tell stories in a vast number of new ways and bring in partners whose own stories will be greatly served by the connection with the important messages underlying all of National Geographic’s programming.

“As we look into 2016, we have inspiring programming to get people to stop and engage with issues and ideas that are critical to our world today,” Ms. Malley says. “And we can take our global partners along with us for the ride.”

Courteney and Tim,

In recognition of National Geographic Channel’s 15th anniversary, Original Productions salutes your fearless leadership as you explore the future of such a valued brand.

Cheers!

Philip Segal
CEO & Executive Producer

Original Productions
A FremantleMedia Company