



# How YouTube Matters

Notes from Chapter 1

“YouTube: Digital Media and Society Series”

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# The Book's Purpose

- “Love it or loath it, YouTube is now part of the mainstream media landscape, and a force to be reckoned with in contemporary popular culture”
- Book's purpose is to work through some of the often competing ideas about just what YouTube is, and what it might or might not turn out to be for

# YouTube's Origins

- YouTube was officially launched with little public fanfare in June 2005 in San Mateo, California (Silicon Valley)- HQ today-San Bruno, Cal.
- Was not the first video sharing site: Vimeo started a short time earlier
- Both websites provided a very simple interface within which users could upload, publish, and view streaming videos without high levels of technical knowledge, and within the technological constraints of standard browser software and relatively modest bandwidth

# Rise to Popularity

- October 2006- Google buys YouTube for \$1.65 billion
- By end of 2007, was Britain's most popular entertainment website ahead of No. 2 BBC
- By early 2008 was already among the Top 10 most visited website globally, hosting 85 million videos (10 times more than a year before)
- Sheer size and mainstream popularity were unprecedented

# FOUR KEYS TO SUCCESS

- VIDEO RECOMMENDATION VIA THE "RELATED VIDEOS" LIST
- AN EMAIL LINK TO ENABLE VIDEO SHARING
- COMMENTS (AND OTHER SOCIAL NETWORKING FUNCTIONALITY)
- AN EMBEDDABLE VIDEO PLAYER (Adobe Flash Player plug-in and more recently HTML5)
- Early failed attempt to gain popularity: offering \$100 to attractive young women who posted 10 or more videos- not one reply after posting this offer on Craigslist in 2006)

# Early Viral Hit-and Litigation

- In Dec. 2005 YouTube ran a 2 ½ minute clip of a “Saturday Night Live” skit about the “Chronicles of Narnia”
- Video was viewed 1.2 million times in 10 days and more than 5 million times by Feb. 2006 when NBC demanded YouTube remove it, along with 500 other clips, or face legal action under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act
- Story gained big media coverage of YouTube as something other than technological advance
- YouTube would start to become a regular subject of mainstream
- YouTube was showing it could reach the hard-to-reach and desirable young people audience

# Defining YouTube

- In the early days, YouTube called itself “Your Digital Video Repository” (pre-“Broadcast Yourself”)
- “Show off your favorite videos to the world. Take videos of your dogs, cats, and other pets. Blog the videos you take with your digital camera or cell phone. Securely and privately show videos to your friends and family around the world...and much, much more.”

# Something Different

- As a media business, YouTube is a platform for, and an aggregator of, content, but is not a content producer itself
- Similarly, it's not actually a video business but rather as a provider of a convenient and usable platform for online video "sharing"
- YouTube, it can be said, is in the "reach" business- has a high volume of visitors and a range of different audiences, offering participants a way to garner wide exposure



# Traditional Media Reaction

- YouTube has had a disruptive influence on established media business models
- Hard adjustment for “Big Media” as participants in a space where they really have no control over distribution and circulation of their products
- By now, most have signed revenue sharing deals with YouTube- but there have been many legal issues and fights over copyright infringement
- At same time, many regular (and alert) YouTube users are wary of corporate players in their community-generated video world

# “Participatory culture”

- YouTube has helped coin this new term as a way to categorize what exactly it seems to be that makes it distinctive from older media
- The term implies many things including some kind of shift in the power relations between media industries and their consumers
- With YouTube, “fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content
- Turned on its ear notions of who gets to speak, who gets the attention, what compensations or rewards there are for creativity and work; and the uncertainties around various forms of expertise and authority
- The value and legitimacy of popular culture is, generally, at the heart of the matter