



Citizen Journalism



It's all fun and games until
somebody wants to sue you...

The link to open source...

"Open source software development and citizen journalism have a lot in common: both rely on people working for free, motivated by a sense of collective accomplishment and personal recognition."

(Ground Report)



The good...



- access to the internet and free publishing tools
 - Blogging: WordPress.com, etc
 - Photoblogging: Flickr
 - Video: YouTube
 - Live video: Ustream
- The Pro-Am Revolution - people with the skills, passion and time to produce independent citizen journalism to a professional standard.

The bad...

- *Companies claiming copyright on media uploaded to their site (ie Facebook)
- *Companies making it difficult to get your data *back* from their site if you want to leave (proprietary file formats, difficult migration process)
- *Companies soliciting and copyrighting material submitted by citizen journalisms (Fairfax - SMH/The Age)

The ugly...

*Reporters without Borders- Press Freedom roundup 2008:

"Predatory activity is increasingly focused on the internet."

1 blogger killed

59 bloggers arrested

1,740 websites bocked, shut down or suspended

*more online journalists incarcerated than other journalists for the first time

In 2008, someone was for the first time killed while acting as a "Citizen Journalist"- Chinese businessman Wei Wenhua - was beaten to death by chenguan (municipal police) while filming a clash with Tianmen demonstrators on 7 January 2008.

Here, have a puppy.



It couldn't happen here!

*Anti-terrorism laws being used against citizen journalists in Australia and the UK.

*NSW government encouraging citizens to submit photos and video of crimes

March 2008 - Project View- Video Image Evidence on the Web

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*Abuse of open access to publishing -death threat against newspaper columnist Andrew Bolt published on IndyMedia - an illegal action by an individual which impacted on a grassroots publication

*Current government proposal to begin ISP level internet filtering, which you wouldn't have the option to opt out of. Family First senator Steve Fielding and Independent Nick Xenophon talking about adding material in addition to the ACMA black list.



Tools for Citizen Journos

- The Center for Media & Democracy - Sourcewatch
- Wiki article of tools for Citizen Journalism
- including the Reporters without Borders handbook for bloggers and cyberdissidents
- It includes advice on how to start a blog, get it picked up by search engines, ethical guidelines and recommendations for the best tool to use-as well as information on how to blog anonymously and technical ways to get around censorship

Pitfalls

- Beware: Terms of service, copyright and censorship. Do you want to control your own media and copyright?
- September 2007 - a Flickr user sued Virgin Mobile for using a Creative Commons licensed photo from Flickr in an ad. No model release used.
- If you Google "YouTube censorship"- consider that as a private company, Google doesn't need to announce when it removes material or why.

Legal risks

- I AM NOT A LAWYER!
- In Australia, professional journalists go to jail while trying to maintain the professional standard of protecting their sources.
- Non-professional citizen journos or bloggers are likely to have even less legal protections.
- The US was considering laws to protect bloggers in 2006, I'm not sure if it was passed.
- Educate yourself on the laws around copyright, defamation.

Resources

- Arts Law Centre of Australia Online - Legal issues for bloggers: <http://www.artslaw.com.au/legalinformation/LegalIssuesForBloggers.asp>
- EFF guide for bloggers hasn't been updated since 2006 - <http://w2.eff.org/bloggers/lg/>
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Contact me!

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