

A Brief History of the Video Blog
Proposal, Creative or Aesthetic Presentation

Richard H. Hall
Professor, Information Science and Technology
University of Missouri - Rolla

Rationale

Wikipedia defines video blog as a “blog that includes video”¹. It also notes that the Yahoo! Video Blogging group², created in 2004, was “once seen as the center of the vlogging community”. The membership of the group grew dramatically during the first three years to several thousand members, with as many as several hundred messages a day via the group’s list serve. During this same time period, video on the web in general, grew exponentially, exemplified by the Youtube phenomenon.

Though I have no background or experience in cinematography or videography, I began video blogging³, posting videos regularly, and became a part of the Yahoo group in May of 2005. I quickly became, and remain, passionate about vlogging, largely driven by the strong community connections enabled by the combination of this virtual group, internet-enabled distribution, and user-created rich media.

I gained some degree of notoriety, within the videoblogging world, maintaining one to two hundred subscribers and average video downloads of 1000 or more per post. I was also featured on the popular web show, Rocketboom⁴, and, in an article on video blogs in Wired Magazine⁵.

In my professional life I am a Professor of Information Science and Technology. My research and teaching focuses on human-computer interaction, in particular web-based learning technologies. My training is in experimental psychology, with a focus on quantitative methods. I have a record of publications and research funding in this area consistent with expectations of a full professor at research universities in the United States⁶.

There was, and still largely remains, a clear division between my video blogging and my professional work. My videos are playful, comedic, and often personal, while academia is, well, academia. This division causes me some frustration for a number of reasons. While I certainly recognize that my “notoriety” in video blogging does not qualify me as a celebrity, I am relatively certain that many more people have experienced and appreciated my work as a video blogger than was ever true of even my most cited scholarly work. Further, it would seem that research aimed at exploring web-based user-generated grass-roots media, such as video blogging could easily fit within the area of Information Science and Technology, particularly for someone whose work has focused on the World Wide Web and Human-Computer Interaction. However, I have been unable to make such a connection, in a fulfilling way, in my efforts to conduct research on video blogging, using my traditional research skills.

In my efforts to combine my research with my passion, I have found that the main frustration is that video blogging is very much a creative and participatory experience, in a way that differs from my academic research. This, then, brings me to the proposed creative project for the Annual Conference of the Association for Internet Researchers, which I believe fits well with the “Let’s Play” theme, in that I am, in a sense, allowing myself to pursue my research in a non-orthodox (for me) and playful way. Which brings us to my proposed project:

A Brief History of the Video Blog

The purpose of this project is to document video-blogging on the Internet from 2004 through interviews/stories/videos of those who created media and otherwise participated, and facilitate the process. Besides myself, these players would include prolific vloggers, organizers/facilitators associated with the vlogging community, and researchers/scholars whose work is related.

A major theme of the project will be to capture the evolution of the vlogging community of practice, as represented via the Yahoo! video blogging group.

The ultimate goal of the project is a creative work of research, which is ultimately about people, community, and creation.

The deliverables of this project will be:

- a) A text/video blog that documents the project as it progresses
- b) A mini-documentary
- c) A fifteen-minute condensed video presentation to be shown at the annual meeting of the Association for Internet Researchers.

References/Links

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_blog

² <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/videoblogging/>

³ <http://richardshow.org>

⁴ http://www.rocketboom.com/vlog/archives/2005/12/rb_05_dec_15.html

⁵ <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.05/vlogs.html>

⁶ <http://richardshow.org/vita.pdf>