On 5 August 2006 an elderly English man posted his first video to his online video channel ‘geriatric1927’ on YouTube.1 By December 2007 he had posted over ninety videos, the channel had been viewed over two million times, and over forty-five thousand other YouTube users were subscribed to it.2 His first video production begins with the title ‘geriatric gripes and grumbles’, and moves on to show him sitting in front of his webcam while some music plays briefly (and distortedly) in the background. In his first foray into the production of a YouTube video, which has since been viewed over two and a half million times, he says:

I got addicted to YouTube, and what a fascinating place to go to see all the wonderful videos that young people have produced. So I thought I’d have a go at doing one myself… Oh, yes, and incidentally the picture, I really am as old as I look, and therefore I think I’m in a unique position. What I hope I’ll be able to do is just bitch and grumble about life in general from the perspective of an old person who’s been there and done that, and hopefully you will respond in some way by your comments. And then I might be able to do other videos to follow up your comments.

This user’s channel was immediately popular on YouTube, but also received a large amount of attention from traditional media outlets.3 Peter Oakley, the real

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2 In comparison, the Computer History Museum’s channel has had just over forty thousand views with about fifteen hundred subscribers. The Computer History Museum’s channel was launched on 2 November 2007 and these figures were recorded in mid-June 2008. See ‘ComputerHistory’, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/user/ComputerHistory> (accessed 22 June 2008).
name of user ‘geriatric1927’, has since gained celebrity status on the internet, an article about him on *Wikipedia* attesting to his fame and influence.⁴ Although ‘geriatric1927’ is an extraordinary case, even for *YouTube*, it represents one of the many new ways in which web users have begun to produce and share history over the last few years. It also represents a range of challenges and opportunities that public historians now face when considering using the web for their work.⁵ Since its introduction in the early 1990s most historians have understood the web as a medium for the public presentation of history, a source of information and an educational tool.⁶ However, the popularity and widespread use of new web services and applications reveal how the medium has rapidly matured. Many new web services no longer focus on just providing content to users, but also on enabling users to participate and be involved in the production of content. Yet, Australian public history institutions have largely struggled to use *YouTube* effectively for anything more than the public presentation of history. Existing initiatives such as the Australian War Memorial’s channel on which they display archival footage, and the State Library of Victoria’s channel which features filmed interviews among other content, are more focused on defining the institution in this participatory space than experimenting with the potential benefits of the media.⁷ These initiatives both use the new media in an old way, highlighting a serious gap between the knowledge and practices of Australian public historians and public history institutions and the new ways in which many Australians are engaging with the past.

This article is an exploration of *YouTube* as a new medium through which Australians gain a sense of the past.⁸ Using new media theory to situate *YouTube*

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⁵ I use the term ‘public history’ in this article to refer to history produced by professional historians for a public audience. I consider public historians to be historians who have been academically trained to work in the public sphere. This corresponds to the definition given by the [Australian Centre for Public History](http://www.hss.uts.edu.au/centres/public-history/index.html) (accessed 12 March 2008).
⁸ Robert Rosenstone has argued that ‘our sense of the past is shaped and limited by the possibilities and practices of the medium in which that past is conveyed, be it the printed page, the spoken word, the painting, the photograph, or the moving image’. See Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*
in an appropriate historical context, it examines how the website functions as a complex site of historical discourse that includes the voices of amateurs and enthusiasts alongside professionals, and oral history alongside comedy. I argue that engaging with *YouTube* for the practice of public history requires an understanding of the new web environment and the shift in information production, distribution and consumption it has brought with it. This article relies upon *YouTube* and user-generated content as primary sources, drawing on a range of examples to explain how Australians are gaining a sense of the past by sharing and discussing short videos online. The first section of the article gives a brief overview of *YouTube* as new media, followed by a discussion of the kinds of historical content uploaded to the site in the second section. In the third section I explore how the social networking aspects of the site promote informal historical discourse and use a number of examples to illustrate how *YouTube* is being used to share personal histories, recollections and local history as well as creative works about the past. By understanding the ways in which history-related user-generated content is shared through this new media, public historians will gain a greater understanding of the possibilities of *YouTube* for the interpretation of the past to a public audience.

**YO**

*YO* is representative of a number of websites that emerged after the dot-com boom and bust of the late 1990s to ride a new wave of web investment and development. The term ‘Web 2.0’ was adopted as a driving force for this new surge on the web, and was catapulted into the vocabulary of IT workers and web users between 2004 and 2006. Considered in an appropriate historical context,
Web 2.0 is related to a broad range of social, political, economic, technological and cultural trends. Many aspects of everyday life are being reshaped as a result of the changing nature of our information environment. News is now read through RSS feeds, goods are purchased online from anywhere in the world, music is downloaded and listened to through podcasts, friendships are made and maintained through social networking sites and the first thing to do to find information is to ‘Google it’. Unsurprisingly, the ways in which we learn about and share history have also begun to change.

New media theory explains the development of this new web environment as part of a phase of identity crisis through which all new media pass when they first emerge in a society. Lisa Gitelman has explored, through an analysis of historical precedents, how this crisis is caused by the uncertain status of the new media in relation to old or existing media and their functions. According to Gitelman, it is during this stage that perceptions of the web and its practical uses are adapted to existing understandings of what different media do for whom and why. Given the pivotal nature of this phase it may seem alarming that within Australian historiography there are few studies of the impact of the web on the discipline of history. The reason for this is perhaps quite simple, as Charlie Gere wisely observed, it is ‘hard, if not impossible, to grasp the effects of a technology at the time they are taking place’. The dot-com boom and bust, the emergence of Web 2.0 and recent inclinations toward the idea of Web 3.0 indicate that the web is still passing through this stage of identity crisis.

So how are public historians to respond to the rise of YouTube and the popularity of amateur, homemade, history-related videos? The answer lies in the tension between old and new media, and in understanding what YouTube does for whom and why. To date, most literature addressing YouTube and Web 2.0 has come from the fields of media and new media studies.

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15 Ibid.
television and film and the professions associated with them. There is, however, an increasing amount of scholarship focused around institutional responses to Web 2.0, particularly from collecting institutions such as museums, archives and libraries. Reflecting upon notions like ‘the wisdom of the crowd’ and ‘the cult of the amateur’ that have emerged with the new web environment, this scholarship reveals changing understandings about the relationship between cultural institutions and their audiences. This new relationship stems from a narrowing of the distance between producers and consumers in culture, and the rise of a new kind of web user that Axel Bruns calls ‘prod-users’ — a hybrid of producers and users of the web. The ways that Australians access, share and engage with historical information are, like other aspects of everyday life, being influenced by this new web environment. YouTube, as a Web 2.0-based service that was begun to facilitate the sharing of personal videos over the web, has become a prominent service for the sharing of audiovisual historical material, and for the sharing of personal and local histories.

**HISTORICAL CONTENT ON **YouTube

Historical content on YouTube ranges from news footage, old cartoons and television commercials, oral history and digital storytelling, to photographic slideshows, historical re-enactments, recordings of history lectures, video blogs (vlogs) and creative combinations of a number of these forms. All of this content has been made public since the official launch of the site in December 2005, and some of it is already being used by historians as source material.

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18 The notion of the wisdom of the crowd is explored in James Surowiecki, The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many are Smarter than the Few (New York: Random House, 2004); and criticised in Andrew Keen, The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet is Killing our Culture and Assaulting our Economy (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2007).


20 Jonathon Rees published an article in the American Historical Association Journal describing his use of YouTube and other online video sites to teach history through access to primary source audiovisual material. See Jonathon Rees, ‘Teaching History with YouTube (and Other Primary Source Video Sites on the Internet)’, Perspectives on History (May
But even a brief glance at YouTube shows that entertainment and comedy are far more common than any professional histories or authentic historical sources. A study published in July 2007 found that out of the twelve categories under which users can upload videos to the site, the most popular category is music at 22.9 per cent, the second is entertainment at 17.8 per cent and the third is comedy at 12.1 per cent.21

Scouring YouTube for historical content can be a lengthy and unproductive process. Searching for five common Australian historical subjects, two people and three events, the top results provided an interesting mix of videos (see Table 1). Two of the results could be considered audiovisual historical source material, three were marketing for products related to the historical subject and nine were not directly related to the historical subject. An interesting range of amateur history productions were found, including two short films, one based on a statue and the other on an oral history, a school assignment, a tribute and the performance of a song about an historical subject (with an explanation preceding it). Of these results, it is interesting to note that none of the content was uploaded by cultural institutions.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>First result</th>
<th>Second result</th>
<th>Third result</th>
<th>Fourth result</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ned Kelly</td>
<td>Movie trailer</td>
<td>Movie clip</td>
<td>Clip of 1978 TV show of someone singing a song called ‘Ned Kelly’</td>
<td>Comedy TV clip of The Micallef Show doing a skit about Ned Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain Cook</td>
<td>Historical short film based around Captain Cook</td>
<td>Music clip</td>
<td>Clip of video explaining the construction of the Captain Cook Bridge, Brisbane</td>
<td>Swimming with dolphins at Captain Cook (place) in Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 Referendum</td>
<td>Special promo for an ‘old mogo’ related to anniversary of 1967 referendum</td>
<td>Historical short film based on an oral history</td>
<td>Another special promo related to anniversary of 1967 referendum</td>
<td>Musical group from Chile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 There is no history category on YouTube. Most of the personal histories identified were found under the ‘people and blogs’ category which accounted for 7.4 per cent of videos. Xu Cheng, Cameron Dale and Jiangchuan Liu, Understanding the Characteristics of Internet Short Video Sharing: YouTube as a Case Study, <http://arxiv.org/PS_cache/arxiv/pdf/0707/0707.3670v1.pdf> (accessed 22 October 2007), 3.

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<th>Fourth result</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Eureka Stockade School</td>
<td>School assignment, re-enactment of the Eureka Stockade</td>
<td>Amateur history tribute to the heroes of the Eureka Stockade</td>
<td>Song by Buddy Williams</td>
<td>Local history in the form of a song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collapse of West Gate Bridge</td>
<td>ABC 7pm news report</td>
<td>Driving across Golden Gate Bridge</td>
<td>Queen Mary 2 passing under the Golden Gate Bridge</td>
<td>Free Tibet Banners, Golden Gate Bridge</td>
</tr>
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Table 1: Results from YouTube searches of five historical subjects. Search undertaken on 30 July 2008.

In this brief survey, two forms of commonly found historical content on YouTube are not represented. Firstly, no vlogs appeared in the search results. This may be explained by the search terms used, as vlogs are not usually focused around a single historical subject. Those with an historical angle, like ‘geriatric1927’s’, are based around personal recollections that may span a number of years and an array of themes. Another kind of historical content not represented in these search results is amateur local history videos with strong connections to place, rather than people or events. The channel ‘Johnswackyworld’ (see Figure 1) is a particularly good example of this kind of historical content. It contains many examples of the use of historic photographs to create basic audiovisual histories about Massena, New York.²³ Produced by a thirty-year-old man from Massena, who describes himself as ‘a writer, author, local historian, collector, lawn mowing landscaper, pack rat’, the channel has twenty-four videos, which are mainly short loops of historic photographs with captions and music.²⁴ One of them, titled ‘A 1940s World War Two Photo Album, Massena, New York’ has had over twenty-four thousand views since it was uploaded on 23 February 2007.²⁵ In the description of this video, the user reveals that it contains forty pictures from his collection.

²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ ‘A 1940s World War Two Photo Album Massena New York’, ibid.
By making his personal photographs and interpretation of Massena into short videos publicly available on YouTube this gentleman has produced a valuable local historical source. Notably, he maintains ownership of his photograph collection (though not the distribution of the digitised versions on YouTube) and control over how the history of Massena is represented to a global community. Just as importantly, however, this video is also a reflection of how the practical uses of YouTube are being determined in relation to old media. The video content of ‘A 1940s World War Two Photo Album’ is a short clip of a local history video produced by the user. Adapting the old media of film to the new media of a YouTube video has caused alterations to the length, content, title and audience of the production. From a ninety minute movie covering the history of Massena from 1897–2007, this clip is only four minutes and forty-six seconds, covering only the 1940s. In this case, the communicative potential of YouTube as a social networking site has been utilised to try to find a niche market for this user’s local history productions among a global audience.

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26 YouTube’s terms of use specify that while users retain ownership rights to the content they upload, by submitting it they are granting YouTube a: ‘worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free, sublicensable and transferable license to use, reproduce, distribute, prepare derivative works of, display, and perform the User Submissions… in any media formats and through any media channels’. See ‘Terms of Use’, YouTube, <https://au.youtube.com/t/terms> (accessed 3 December 2007).

27 A major part of the success of Web 2.0-based services is the economic concept of ‘leveraging the long tail’. This
The intriguing mix of history, marketing and unrelated content produced through this history-related search on YouTube raises two important points about the nature of the website. Firstly, the success of the site is dependent upon mass user participation, rather than on any measure of the accuracy or quality of historical content. The site is not promoted for its educational value, instead it is a way to ‘broadcast yourself’ to the world, as the site’s tagline suggests. YouTube’s dependence on mass user participation has shaped it as a unique media space, catering for audiovisual user-generated content that is distinct from the content produced, distributed and consumed through other outlets for audiovisual content, such as television or cinema. Secondly, videos are to be used as live streaming content on the web or through web-enabled devices such as mobile phones. YouTube does not enable videos to be saved or preserved in any kind of audiovisual archive, making it a difficult medium to understand in relation to conventions of the historical discipline. It ensures, however, that the priorities of the site are based around access, speed and the quantity of content. The site was intended to add ‘a little bit of video’ to the web users text, image and sound based experience. These two characteristics indicate that users of the site might expect a certain experience from YouTube, one that is quick, easy, participatory, personally meaningful and socially networked.

**YouTube as a site of historical discourse**

In the quote from ‘geriatric1927’ at the beginning of this article, he describes his interest in people responding to his videos through comments, so that he may make more videos to follow up those comments. Essentially, this user wants to start an open conversation, through short videos and typed comments, with a younger generation of web users around the world. On YouTube, conversation through videos is commonplace, as users respond to videos with their own, or debates ensue in the comments section below popular or controversial videos.
this way, **YouTube** can function as a site of informal historical discourse, with users commenting and producing video responses based around historical subjects. As Lawrence Lessig observed in 2004, the trend toward digital ‘capturing and sharing’ gives us the opportunity to ‘do something with culture that has only ever been possible for individuals in small groups, isolated from others’.\(^{31}\) **YouTube** provides an opportunity for individuals to share their historical knowledge, or opinions, with other web users. This enables the creation of new social networks and new forms of personal audiovisual history-making, by a generation who have the capacity to record, edit and share their lives in digital formats.

The social networks created on **YouTube** have the potential to reach across the globe, and across the amateur/professional divide to bring people together to discuss, debate and interpret historical subjects. As a social networking site, interaction between users on **YouTube** is not restricted by age, geographical location or expertise. There are communities and groups in **YouTube**, there are statistics and awards for videos, personal channels and messaging between users. As Cheng, Dale and Liu neatly put it, ‘videos are no longer independent from each other, and neither are the users’.\(^{32}\) It is this aspect of the site that links the personal user-generated videos to a public audience and that enables the simultaneous existence of multiple interpretations and conflicting perspectives on the past. These conflicting perspectives, often imbued with personal meaning, memory and even the creative use of historical sources, can influence the ways that Australians gain a sense of the past. The most common way that this occurs on **YouTube** is through comedy and the production of short ‘spoof’ histories that are an individual’s take on a dominant historical narrative. For example, there is a series of three videos titled ‘An Occasionally Accurate History of Australia’ that are amateur videos put together as a comedic version of the history of Australia (see Figure 2).\(^{33}\) Although stable genres of historical content have not yet emerged on **YouTube**, these videos reflect a new kind of semi-accurate, amateur, entertaining history that is a form of self-expression, social commentary and historical interpretation.


From this screen shot, the view of the user is clear. He has placed a picture of a group of Aboriginal Australians, with the text ‘Indigenous uninhabitants of Australia’ over the top. In a Monty Python-esque, comedic manner the video plays with matters of Australian history, producing a deliberately tongue-in-cheek, idiosyncratic version of events. Placing this video in a global network of viewers produced some interesting comments from other users, such as ‘that was great :D but i think i’m not australian enough to understand everything *lol* still working on my comprehension skills’, and ‘how is the british going to discover new worlds that already have people in it, don’t you people mean, new discoveries for european people?’

YouTube is a distinct media space because anyone can participate; anyone can make a video and upload it to share it with other users. As with the videos described above, this has led to new creative forms of personal history-making in the public sphere and promotes conversation about historical subjects. For public historians wanting to engage with YouTube, it is important to understand that the site is successful because it operates on a many-to-many communication model. Whereas most existing genres of public history are based on a one-to-many communication model using media such as books, television, radio, movies,
exhibitions and conference presentations, the many-to-many communication model encourages simultaneous communication between and among many people, over any distance, and recognises the audience as active participants in an ongoing historical conversation (see Figure 3). This model values the participation of the web user, but is a complex environment in which not all users participate or engage on the same level.\footnote{A range of scholars have recently researched different levels of engagement with web-based social media. The two most prominent include Charlene Li, \textit{Social Technographics: Mapping Participation in Activities Forms the Foundation of a Social Strategy} (Forrester, 2008); Nina Simon, ‘Hierarchy of Social Participation’, \textit{Museum 2.0}, 20 March 2007, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2007/03/hierarchy-of-social-participation.html> (accessed 10 June 2008).}

Understanding the many-to-many communication model can assist public historians to use \textit{YouTube} more effectively for their work, by helping to determine the status of the new media in relation to old or existing media. Rather than leading the historical conversation, as they once might have through older media, public historians and public history institutions are part of a broader network of people who are producing and consuming historical content. This does not necessarily mean that individuals and institutions lose their cultural authority to amateurs and enthusiasts posting content on \textit{YouTube}. In 2006, Angelina Russo, Lynda Kelly, Jerry Watkins and Sebastian Chan used the example of the Sydney Observatory blog site to argue that cultural institutions can maintain and perhaps even strengthen authority through social media.\footnote{A. Russo, J. Watkins, L. Kelly and S. Chan, ‘How Will Social Media Affect Museum Communication?’, 7.} It does, however, suggest that new or reshaped genres of public history need to be developed in response to the new forms of history-making found on \textit{YouTube}.\footnote{A range of scholars have recently researched different levels of engagement with web-based social media. The two most prominent include Charlene Li, \textit{Social Technographics: Mapping Participation in Activities Forms the Foundation of a Social Strategy} (Forrester, 2008); Nina Simon, ‘Hierarchy of Social Participation’, \textit{Museum 2.0}, 20 March 2007, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2007/03/hierarchy-of-social-participation.html> (accessed 10 June 2008).}
Responding to the challenges and opportunities of the new web environment must become a priority for public historians and public history institutions. The new ways that many Australians are sharing history through YouTube have the potential to influence our historical consciousness, the ‘individual and collective understandings of the past, the cognitive and cultural factors that shape those understandings, as well as the relations of historical understandings to those of the present and the future’.

In particular, the new forms of history-making that are a mix of self-expression, social commentary and historical interpretation have the potential to challenge dominant historical narratives and to encourage web users to think critically about how they understand the past. Unfortunately, however, these same forms of history-making can inhibit historical understanding by presenting inaccurate or insufficient information. Public historians are now faced with the new challenge of producing accurate and appropriate public history projects while trying to promote critical thinking about the past and about the various interpretations of the past in the public sphere. While enabling the participation of web users, new genres of public history must both make use of the historical content already on the web, and encourage the use and discussion of content in a way that enhances historical understanding.

For cultural institutions, posting historic content such as the archival footage posted by the Australian War Memorial, can be a valuable public history initiative. At the Museums and the Web 2008 conference, a number of such institutional initiatives using YouTube were seen to have positive results: ‘In the end it appears that posting video content on YouTube benefits the institution, and that the potential risk of lost direct Web traffic has not necessarily dissuaded the participants’.

I propose, however, that from looking at the way that personal, local and new forms of history are shared on YouTube, the site presents an opportunity to engage users’ creativity to enhance informal historical discourse through the sharing of short videos in the public realm. Some of the most effective uses of YouTube have been new ways of encouraging web users to produce content in response to specific themes. Creating a YouTube contest is just one way that users are encouraged to produce short videos in response to a certain subject. At the moment it is mostly corporations using the site in this way, asking YouTube users to create short videos about cars, doughnuts, banking and mobile phones. But it is not inconceivable to think that museums, heritage

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sites or even local history initiatives might create a contest based around an object, place, theme or the sharing of personal stories.

This is a particularly effective technique for helping young people to understand history. Recent research has shown that ‘digital natives’, those who have grown up using digital technology, learn in different ways from ‘digital immigrants’, those who have learnt to use it later in life. In line with constructivist learning theory that values informal learning for the construction of knowledge, YouTube can be used as a tool by teachers and public historians to assist young people to learn about and share history in media that they are familiar with. Examples can be found on YouTube where students are leading the way, using their creative and technological skills to create innovative school history projects. A fourteen year old schoolboy in America uploaded a video to YouTube that he made for a school project about Jesse James and the Westward Movement (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4: ‘Halo 3 History Special (Jesse James — Westward Movement)’ video from user ‘MadMike1122’ on YouTube.](image)

This video uses the editable platform of the video game Halo 3, combined with the voice over narration of the school student to tell an informative story about Jesse James and the Westward Movement. The preparation and writing of a script and the consideration of physical and visual elements in this history

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project are valuable because the student would have had to consider more than dates and facts to produce the video. Creating a project of this sort would have required the student to think about the physical, spatial and environmental elements of the history. Asking students to engage with YouTube, perhaps even setting assignments to make and upload videos, can be an effective way to teach students about the past and to help make young peoples’ experiences of history meaningful and enjoyable. By acknowledging new media like YouTube, teachers and public historians are also helping students to learn about the differences between old and new media, about historical sources and about the issues surrounding the representation and communication of the past through networked digital media.

**Conclusion**

As Daniel Cohen has observed, there is no denying that many historians will always like their text linear and coherent, and in crisp black fonts on a white page. Yet it is increasingly recognised that now and in the future a vast amount of our cultural heritage will be either encoded in digital forms or ‘born digital’, having never existed on paper. This shift is encouraging increasing numbers of historians to engage with new media, though as Sebastian Chan commented about the cultural sector, they are ‘careful, cautious and meticulous’. This article has sought to examine YouTube as a new site through which web users are not only gaining a sense of the past, but also actively sharing historical knowledge, material and opinions. Although its function remains uncertain in relation to old or existing media, YouTube undoubtedly has greater implications for history than simply adding a bit of video to the web user’s experience. It appears that YouTube is related to increased levels of participation in the interpretation of the past, to increased use of non-written sources and interpretive media and to an emphasis on the value of creative production.

Specific genres of historical YouTube content have not yet been fully defined. However, this article has outlined a number of new forms of

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42 The field of digital preservation deals with the management and preservation of digital content. The term ‘born digital’ refers to material that was created in digital form, such as emails, online journal entries and blog entries, as opposed to ‘turned-digital’ materials, which are items existing in analog media formats that have been digitised. These phrases are in common usage by collecting institutions, see for example State Library of Victoria, ‘Digital Preservation Policy’, <http://www.slvic.gov.au/about/information/policies/digitalpreservation.html> (accessed 8 April 2008).

personal history-making that can be found on YouTube and that appear to be exclusive to short video-sharing sites of the Web 2.0 environment. These include autobiographical vlogs, amateur short films with strong connections to people, places and events, photographic slideshows utilising personal archives and idiosyncratic entertaining responses to historical narratives, myths and generalisations. All of these forms of content are user-generated and show new ways that audiences are producing, distributing and sharing historical information beyond the traditional realm of the historian, curator or documentary filmmaker. While these ways of interpreting and sharing the past are not yet well understood, they are likely to have an impact on how the past is understood both by the public, and also by professional historians.

YouTube is a complex medium through which to interpret the past to a public audience. As a site of informal historical discourse, it appears to offer large audiences a platform for audiovisual content and a new way for audiences to engage creatively with public history. But the uploading of authentic historical material and professionally produced videos as public history initiatives is not making full use of the opportunities presented by the site. YouTube is a unique media space that caters for content not normally found through other media. Users are experimenting and creatively mashing up historical content to produce new forms of personal and local history. These histories are uploaded and viewed by users from all over the world, helping place personal histories in global networks of meaning. It is the sharing of emerging new forms of history and self-expression that make YouTube and the Web 2.0 environment exciting platforms for the practice of public history. By understanding the new methods of history-making emerging on YouTube, fresh perspectives, both local and global, can be brought to Australians’ sense of the past and to the ways it is interpreted in the public sphere.

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