

Temporal Vibrancy and Disruption in Video Sharing

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YouTube initially promised unfettered video sharing. Yet, disruptions such as video deletions, technical glitches, and video remix demonstrate that direct and consistent access to personal video expression can be unreliable. Such disruptions result from and yield data friction, which refers to the difficulties in gathering large amounts of data “in one place in a form suitable for massive circulation” (Edwards 2010). Video deletions by creators or through technical glitches can render interactive video sequences unintelligible, thus leaving numerous, de-contextualized “orphaned videos” on the site. Deletions compromise the historical integrity of YouTube as a reliable archive and invite reflection on identifying productive scales of artifactual analysis. Is the appropriate analytical locus an individual video, a video maker’s entire oeuvre, an interactive video thread, or the unstable archive of YouTube? In addition, remix genres in which participants’ videos are manipulated in violative ways challenge participatory enthusiasm, especially when video search algorithms rank mean-spirited, parodic videos highly to attract audiences and spur advertising revenue. This paper explores how self-presentation and interactivity are complicated by technical and interactive factors that lie beyond individual video makers’ control. The findings suggest that although the dominant lens of studying online media sharing has often presupposed a certainty of self-presentational control in the videos one creates, a more productive lens involves exploring videos’ temporal vibrancy. Specifically, the paper explores the processes and consequences of attempts to retain interpretive fidelity to the original media maker’s work and message in the face of unexpected, temporally variant sources of circulatory friction.