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A Collective Documentary?

A case study of audio-visual UGC surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2013

Abstract

This thesis centres upon the study of the audio-visual user-generated content (UGC) relating to the series of earthquakes between September 2010 and January 2012 in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. The analysis of 200 user-generated videos, largely from YouTube, reveals clear distinctions between the key patterns of eyewitness footage, conversational or explanatory pieces, recombinant works, and professional content re-uploaded by users. These broad patterns include generally low quality images across all ‘types’ of UGC, the rapid upload of content after a major earthquake which results in a steady decline of uploads over time, and key pieces of what could be termed ‘raw’ footage that was easily appropriated by traditional news organisations (footage which then circulated local and global news networks). However, absent from this collection of material is any attempts made by users to recombine such raw footage into a coherent narrative, therefore the only material on YouTube that provides contextual information is that of re-recorded televised news broadcasts that have been re-uploaded to the platform by users.

Though the indexical qualities of this UGC and how they have the potential to form a type of ‘documentary narrative’ utilising YouTube as the key facilitator, is the true focus of this research. There are two main components within this thesis; the first is an exploration of the trends associated with the production and distribution of the UGC through a survey 200 user-generated videos sourced, mainly, from YouTube, discussing in particular pivotal ‘documental’ elements of the material. The second is an investigation into how YouTube and the uploaders of such content work in conjunction with one another to ultimately create a collective of material (although, this collective is of material has degraded over time due to the unstable nature of the platform). This includes an inspection of how uploaders ‘market’ their material on the platform, and how YouTube distributes and displays this content to potential audiences.

This research has found that YouTube, not only works as a ‘platform’ or an ‘archive’, but a facilitator of potential pathways through similar content. By establishing relationships between this content based on user-defined ‘tags’ and descriptions, YouTube then automatically recommends the audience to follow

hyperlinked routes through this related material. These pathways can be seen as ‘narrative possibilities’ as the system encourages users to follow a sequence of related material - a pathway that needs to be ‘performed’ by users which can, arguably, provide a kind of narrative of the events in Christchurch. The traditional definition of ‘documentary’ does not take into account these new media and new modes of distribution and reception; this thesis, however, has argued that this level of interactivity, and the ways in which YouTube and content creators present material, *has the potential* to create a type of documentary narrative.

Acknowledgements

First I would like to send my deepest sympathies to the families of those who perished during the February 22nd earthquake; my heart goes out to you.

I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Craig Hight for his guidance, advice and helpful critiques of my work. For, at times, understanding my research better than I did, and for bringing me on board the larger research project funded by The Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund. Without his brilliant supervision this thesis wouldn't have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge my family who have given me their endless love and support, for being there when I needed them most, and for believing in me. But, for what I am grateful for most, is for encouraging me and putting up with me through stressful times. Thank you all.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

During the early hours of September 4th 2010, a violent 7.1 earthquake shook the Canterbury region of New Zealand; destroying buildings in the city of Christchurch, splitting tar-sealed roads and flooding properties with liquefaction. That morning, people in the region were using social media to contact their friends and family, gain information from official sources, and post photos and videos of the damage, while local news media were communicating information to the rest of the country.

The next major earthquake on February 22nd 2011 was smaller on the Richter scale, measuring 6.3, but, as it occurred during working hours, it turned fatal; killing 185 people and injuring hundreds more. Once again, online social media was alive, yet this time expressing all-round confusion and panic. The two other earthquakes that drew the most media attention, one on the 13th June and 23rd December 2011, did not produce anywhere near as much devastation, but social media still played a vital role in communication; with the then established (and still in use) Twitter hashtag #eqnz¹ and several Facebook community pages created specifically to relay important information². In times of such a crisis, the sheer widespread prevalence of these social ‘reports’ reflects the pervasiveness of social media in communicating across an expansive (as well as centralised) populace.

Though, these four major earthquakes centred in the Canterbury region saw social media and modern mobile technology, not only being utilised for communication purposes, but a tool for these accidental eyewitnesses to visually document situation. Within 24 hours of the February 22nd earthquake, the user-generated content (UGC) website YouTube was engulfed by impromptu, unedited pieces of

¹ Soon after the Feb 22 quake, Twitter and posts using the #eqnz hashtag became the main way information was disseminated and coordinated to and from the online public (Bruns & Burgess, 2012)

² Such as the Facebook event created by citizens after the Feb quake to confirm the safety of a large number of Christchurch residents (near 40,000 Facebook users were ‘invited’ to the event, with the action of confirming to ‘attend’ being an indicator as to the invitees safety) <http://www.facebook.com/events/186497834722376/>

eyewitness footage depicting scenes of devastation and distress within the affected region.

This UGC offered a raw insight into the situation directly from those immediately affected; capturing the moment through the lens of the accidental eyewitness in the form of short, shaky cell-phone quality imagery. Along with offering the audience of YouTube with a direct audio-visual representation of the effects of the earthquake, a portion of these images were used as news sources within traditional, local news media, or at least appearing as the first images from the region to be broadcasted during televised news coverage.

Such a high profile event, and in a country such as New Zealand where new technologies are widely accessible, provides an ideal case to explore the scale of capabilities and competencies within the user population, reflecting how widespread video-capturing devices are, and the willingness for localised users to document such an event. The Christchurch earthquakes case is definitely not the first or last example of such extensive eyewitness documentation; the 2011 East Japan earthquake resulted in a similar wave of eyewitness footage on YouTube.

Much earlier, the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in the USA prompted witnesses to document the unfolding catastrophe with the use of available home-video cameras - though, due to technological limitations at the time and the lack of an established, public video-sharing site such as YouTube the majority of this footage was not publicly available until recently with the History Channel's documentary '*102 Minutes that Changed America*' (Siskel & Jacobs, 2008). As technology advances, so too do the ways in which people can document and distribute such content; the 2001 World Trade Centre attacks saw a fairly limited (in comparison) amount of witnesses with access to recording capable technology and with no efficient way to distribute their content across a larger audience. Now, video-capturing devices are commonplace in most of the developed world; these 'home video cameras' are now within our mobile phones, our MP3 players, and our tablet computers which, for the most part, have the possibility to be constantly on our person (in our pockets, in our handbags... even in our school backpacks). These devices can also, potentially, enable constant connectivity to the World Wide Web, which provides the means to distribute audio-visual content

through such sites as YouTube, essentially broadcasting material to an assumed or imagined audience directly.

Traditionally, documentary has been confined to a genre of film or television series; however, new media and new technologies call for, not necessarily a new definition, but a new *understanding* of what audio-visual ‘documentary’ can mean. Mobile technology and, in many cases, constant connectivity to the world wide web enables potentially anyone to be an amateur filmmaker; capturing, editing, broadcasting and even marketing this footage directly from their handheld device. This also means that those who bear direct witness to an event may capture their surroundings and immediately share it on the internet, essentially making it able to be viewed by millions of users.

These images in particular – those which depict surroundings, situations and often other people – captured then uploaded to such social media as YouTube, are classed here as ‘eyewitness documents’. Individually, they are small pieces of illustrative representation of a larger event, sharing few if any common traits with the traditional cinematic documentary, apart from their representation of ‘reality’. They tend to lack such characteristic codes and conventions of documentary like coherence, narrative, professionalism or explanatory commentary; they draw from the urge ‘to document’ high-scale events such as earthquakes, and even the more mundane, everyday events, holding as much documentary ‘value’ as a still photograph – *alone*, purely as fragmented, un-contextualised pieces of eyewitness footage, they cannot be classed as a ‘documentary’.

Though the assemblage of elements that bring these documents together, and therefore what constitutes ‘documentary’, is up for discussion here; the more established view of the documentary genre is that it is a coming together of information, facts and discourse to create a rounded argument and commentary set to the established conventions of the media format; “we expect more than a series of documents; we expect to learn or be moved, to discover or be persuaded of possibilities that pertain to the historical world” (Nichols, 2001. p. 39).

This theoretical framework for identifying the documentary genre is important because it imposes an established way of “seeing and speaking, which functions as a set of limits, or conventions, for the film-maker and audience alike” (Nichols,

2001. p. 23). However, going as far as to say that a ‘documentary’ must have a voice-over commentary, or show both sides to an argument would be presumptuous and simplistic; ignoring new media platforms, new modes of production and distribution, and certain participatory elements of social media. Essentially, the institutional framework for identifying the documentary genre restricts the notion to an established criterion of specifications and expectations.

So, then, what happens when we look at UGC and the aspects surrounding its production and distribution as a potential extension of the documentary genre? The first question that would need to be addressed is; what are the different types of audio-visual UGC to come from the Christchurch earthquakes and are there any indicative trends or patterns forming through the way this material is created and distributed on an online platform? Secondly, how do these individual pieces of UGC fit within a broader collective of online, audio-visual content and in what ways are they disseminated to the potential audience? Third, and most important, is how could these range of factors create possible documentary ‘narratives’ – and to what *extent* can we call these ‘narratives’? Or, more appropriately, what conditions lead to this proliferation of material becoming a possible documentary narrative?

Each chapter which follows presents a particular aspect of the UGC surrounding this particular ‘disaster event’ and the ways in which YouTube facilitates and, in some ways, encourages audiences to explore content by providing for potential pathways to be made between similar material.

Chapter Two, *Eyewitness Documents*, investigates the types of eyewitness footage to come from the Christchurch earthquakes, focussing in particular on the raw, seemingly impromptu footage captured by YouTubers at the time of, or sometime soon after, an earthquake. This will be accomplished by the use of the data gathered from 200 user-generated videos and the survey of these videos to distinguish which are ‘eyewitness documents’, and to identify any trends within this data set. From there, a handful of eyewitness documents are used in a more focussed analysis, representative of the common types of UGC encountered and also the occasional anomaly.

Chapter Three, *Eyewitness Footage within News Media*, explores how this type of UGC acts within traditional news media; from footage being used as the first images during televised news coverage, to UGC becoming sources of news on national online news websites and the extent to which both UGC and journalism rely on each other for information and contextualisation. As discussed in this chapter, this is a relationship which is becoming more deeply symbiotic.

Chapter Four, *From the Margins: the Ephemeral Material*, discusses the other side to UGC, with reference to the more purposeful, highly edited and recombinant works surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes. This material, such as ‘vlogs’ (video-logs; usually in the form of audio-visual conversational pieces directed at the imagined audience), tributes and remix pieces, parodies and videos which attempt to persuade audiences using ‘evidence’ and familiar audio-visual techniques are just as ephemeral in their nature as eyewitness footage; content that is short-lived, produced en masse through spurts of relevancy and eventually dissipating.

Chapter Five, *A Documentary Collective?*, positions these findings in perspective of a potential documentary *narrative* that may be formed through the interactions of users and uploaders with the YouTube platform. This involves paying close attention to how uploaders utilise the platform to publicise their material within the broader collective of content, the ways in which YouTube displays and distributes this content, and potential pathways audiences may take through and within this varied collective.

1.1 Method

I chose a deliberately limited scope for this research, focussing in particular on the immensely popular social video sharing site YouTube; this limitation was, originally, because of its high profile within New Zealand and lack of a relevant alternative (other such sites as Vimeo.com is more focussed on the artistic value of content, rather than amateur video). The approach taken for primary research was fundamentally qualitative as there was a need to address the nature and quality of material associated with the Christchurch earthquakes. Specifically, this

involved a survey of all of the available YouTube material relating to one of the several Christchurch earthquakes between September 2010 and January 2012, an initial coding of content to identify certain metadata information, and later a closer analysis of a select subset.

The survey of YouTube material provided 200 pieces of relevant UGC (see Appendix A and Appendix B). This material was chosen with a very loose set of criteria, specifically that the content needed to be uploaded by a user not seemingly affiliated with any large, recognisable media organisations and the videos' would need to appear to be relevant to one of (or an overview of) the applicable Christchurch earthquakes. No discrimination was taken against the type of content (raw footage, vlogs, etc.). This material was collected using a series of key search phrases, including a variation of date formats (i.e. 22/02/11, 22 February, etc.), a list of possible brief keywords outlining the content. Each file was accessed and collected until the sets of search results started to become irrelevant (after a certain amount of pages, content not related to the Christchurch earthquakes - though may share some similar keywords - would appear).

The limitations to my approach partly stemmed from the limitations of the YouTube platform itself; the site's search capabilities is surprisingly mediocre (ironically, as YouTube is owned by *Google*), which posed a number of obstacles when attempting to gather a representative data set. Often the folksonomies associated with each video would be inappropriate (this thesis will refer to these specific folksonomies as 'tags'; keywords generated by the uploaders of the content in order to 'market' their material) or irrelevant and the titling of videos did not often make the subject matter clear.

Once a relevant set of UGC was collected, the URL addresses for each video file were then used to conduct metadata retrieval (which would help identify trends within the videos' contextual information provided by the uploaders) and to download the video onto a hard drive.³ Each video was surveyed for type of content, length and upload date, then a select few were subject to closer analysis

³ This was made possible through the use of software which employed the API's (Application Programming Interface) created by YouTube to encourage developers to engage directly with their database; this includes website, software and hardware developers. <https://developers.google.com/youtube/>

due to their being a ‘typical’ example or an anomaly of sorts. As Chapter 5 will discuss, the 200 videos surveyed is merely a ‘snapshot’ of the content available at the time of data collection. As an archive, YouTube constantly degrades for a number of reasons. Even in the time in between retrieval of the URL and downloading the metadata information (which occurred in the month of May, 2012), a surprisingly large number of files had since been removed from the video hosting site, causing the data set to be fractured and only represent a portion of the original video material uploaded at the time of the Christchurch earthquakes themselves.

Although the end result still provided enough information to form an analysis of certain broader patterns within content’s metadata, the fact that, in such a short timeframe, a number of user-generated video was removed from the site posed a new dilemma; how could one accurately recreate this collective of content from a particular time? At the beginning of this research I assumed there would be a natural, stable outgrowth of content, which would still be available even after the ‘popularity’ of the event dissipated; however, it was made abundantly clear that YouTube is not a *stable* platform, therefore this collection of 200 UGC retrieved at a particular time months after the events took place cannot be a particularly fair or accurate representation.

Although this research focuses on the potential pathways audiences may take through content, no statistical representation of these pathways is included – this is because there are countless possible avenues and countless possible pathways through and within content that may be formed. There are hundreds (if not more) of pieces of UGC surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes on YouTube, and each YouTube video presents around twenty individual ‘related videos’ (these appear on the respective YouTube video’s page) and possibly a couple user-generated playlists – and even if one could count the exact number of related UGC, these hyperlinks leading out of the video are ever-changing.

Other approaches to this research could have seen a quantitative analysis of the volume of content across a number of social media sites, focussing on a particular set of dates and locations; or the exploration of the correlation between the Christchurch earthquakes’ content and that of similar events overseas; or a

compare-and-contrast method to distinguish patterns between this and unrelated, possibly ongoing, events that are not limited to a set timeframe or place.

Early in this project, several attempts were made to engage more directly with practitioners through a questionnaire (focussing on how their content was used within traditional news media). However it quickly became apparent that this would be difficult as contact information is not generally supplied on YouTube and the site's messaging system does not guarantee a form of communication.

Chapter 3 explores these eyewitness documents within the context of traditional news media; how they are used by news media for illustration and how they possibly circulate traditional news media (local and international). In order for this to be accomplished, a study of the initial broadcasts needed to be conducted in order to identify how UGC may have been used. Yet a significant difficulty arose when attempting to acquire the original televised broadcasts from the earthquakes; neither of the two main televised news stations allowed their initial broadcasts to be released to the public. It is the YouTube site which has become the default public archive of (fragmented) televised broadcasts.

Despite these numerous limitations, I believe I have gathered some useful insights into the nature of YouTube and how it is (and is not) being used within New Zealand in this particular timeframe. This unstable and fluid quality of the platform, which was at first a hindrance, has proven invaluable to attempting to answer certain questions from my hypothesis. These constraints become the key element to see how this collective of UGC surrounding a historic event may form a new type (or *types*) of documentary narrative, with potential implications on the documentary genre's definition.

Chapter 2

Eyewitness Documents

As outlined in the introduction, advancements in mobile technology and key Web 2.0 sites such as YouTube have precipitated a development in the field of amateur video. This development is manifest particularly during times of a large-scale public ‘event’, where users will capture photographs and footage on their personal devices of their surroundings and upload this content (essentially *broadcasting* it) to social media.

These constitute what is termed here as, ‘eyewitness documents’. These pieces of user generated content are mere documentations of an event; audio-visual records of an isolated situation within a large scale event. In this case, UGC in the form of these ‘documents’ surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes, generally depict the (often immediate) effects of the disaster on the creator’s surroundings through short pieces of audio-visual material. This includes footage of damage to homes and buildings, mounds of liquefaction and footage captured immediately after in the worst affected area, Christchurch’s central business district.

There are certain textual elements which, as this chapter will explore, are characteristic of this particular set of eyewitness documents (such as short length, one continuous shot, and minimal editing). The significant patterns seen in the production of such content may suggest an imitation of similar footage seen in ‘documentary’ style television and film. Certainly, news media often incorporate similar styled footage captured by on-site journalists into their news coverage – footage which depicts a certain time or place relevant to the story at hand but that can be easily trimmed to fit behind the reporter’s voice over. There is also the possibility that such eyewitness footage on YouTube is posted with the anticipation the content may be re-packaged later by commercial news or through other broadcasting production practices.

These documents on YouTube have the potential to be broadcasted in almost real-time, as they become disseminated through various online outlets, circulate through social media, and are incorporated into traditional media coverage. As

Chapter 5 will discuss, in isolation they offer no complete explanation or coherency; however through their circulation and dissemination these documents become a part of a larger, more complex ‘pseudo-narrative’ that crosses media formats and, at times, genres.

Later chapters will discuss how these may be understood as a ‘collective’ of content, however the aim of this chapter is to consider and discuss the broader patterns found within the individual eyewitness documents while providing the grounding for this argument for further chapters.

2.1 The User Generated Content

As outlined in the Method section of the first chapter, two hundred user-generated YouTube videos relating to the Christchurch earthquakes were gathered for analysis and, out of these, 142 were what I class as eyewitness documents; footage captured by those who were first-hand witnesses to one of the four major earthquakes or several minor aftershocks, depicting the effects of the earthquake on their surroundings.

The first trend from this analysis was that, surprisingly, all of these videos could be clearly categorised under just four separate topics, these being: ‘live earthquake footage’, which were audio-visual documents depicting an earthquake as it is happening; ‘liquefaction footage’ (deemed here as a separate ‘topic’, as will be discussed, due to the particular conventions seemingly unique to the subject matter); ‘damage footage’ which depicted scenes of structural and environmental damage resulting from an earthquake; and ‘immediately after footage’, which showed the effects immediately following an earthquake, particularly illustrating the effects on the immediate populace.

‘Live earthquake’

The largest portion of these audio-visual eyewitness documents was those depicting a ‘live earthquake’; this mainly consisted of a pre-meditated camera setup specifically to capture an earthquake. The majority of videos of this type were also filmed inside, specifically in the lounge or kitchen of the user’s home. There appears to be some clear trends with this form of visual documentation; for

one, the videos are fairly short – averaging less than one minute for each clip. They also tend to be uploaded to YouTube immediately and contain no editing further than titles and/or in-video captions or explanatory in-video commentary.

There is also a clear trend with which earthquake the video relates to; only 7 of the 36 live earthquake videos surveyed were captured on or before the major earthquake on 22nd February 2011. This indicates that, as the earthquakes became more consistent after the first one in September 2010, residents started actively trying to capture the immediate effects camera, possibly with the knowledge that there is a demonstrated YouTube audience for this material. There is also a possibility that, after the February earthquake, the national and international media attention that was being given to the Canterbury region prompted YouTube users to capture “news worthy” footage of another (possibly just as devastating) earthquake on film.

A typical example of this type of footage is the 37-second long clip uploaded by YouTube user Mshel2⁴ (2011, December 22), depicting the living room of the user’s home during the December 23rd, 2011 earthquake. In this short video the camera is facing the far corner of the room, showing a television in the background and a decorated Christmas tree in the foreground. It is 22 seconds into the video before the effects of the earthquake are seen, when the Christmas tree starts swaying. When the quake hits and items in the room start to move so does the camera, indicating that the device used to capture the footage does not appear to have been secured to a surface. However, near the end of the earthquake we see a person get up from behind the camera and swiftly exit the room.

Another video captured the same day shows similar camera placement and relatively short video length. The footage, captured by user Rpk2241 (2011, December 23)⁵, sees the camera, this time stabilised, recording what appears to be the user’s living room facing an outside ranch slider. At the start of the video, a woman walks past the camera and out the open ranch slider and disappears from frame, 39 seconds into the clip we hear a rumble as objects in the room start to

⁴ Mshel2 ‘Christchurch Earthquake December 23rd 6.0’ <http://youtu.be/Ivzs6mLsA3k>

⁵ Rpk2241 ‘Christchurch New Zealand 23 December 2011 Magnitude 4.1 Earthquake 4:30pm’ <http://youtu.be/HbFbsZIR0eo>

shake as the camera stays still. The interesting thing about this video is, in the background we hear talk-back radio, with a woman from Christchurch on the phone with the presenters discussing the ongoing crisis. Just after the earthquake ends, we can hear the woman say “oh shit, here we go again”, then apologises for cursing, then they briefly discuss that aftershock in particular before carrying on with the topic at hand. This adds an almost three-dimensional element to the clip, along with providing a minimal form of context.

The difference between this type of UGC from the Christchurch earthquakes and most others is that they were deliberately *planned* pieces of footage with the express intent of capturing the immediate effects of an earthquake as it was happening. However, there are degrees of premeditation; some of the content to come from Christchurch depicting a live earthquake was almost purely accidental (of course, the act of capturing and uploading footage indicates a conscious decision made on behalf of the creator). For example, YouTuber Strangentertainment (2011, June 12)⁶ was testing his camera by filming the computer screen when an aftershock hit. The user promptly picks up the camera and turns around to show his living room with the hanging ceiling lights swaying. Strangentertainment immediately uploaded the footage to YouTube where it was then picked up by 3News and broadcasted as their “first images” from the June 13th, 2011 earthquake.

‘Liquefaction’

As mentioned earlier, this type of ‘live earthquake’ footage only became frequent *after* the major February 22nd earthquake – however, the one category of videos that reoccurred over all four major earthquakes were those depicting liquefaction. The highly repetitive nature of these videos indicates an appeal based more on their novelty value; soil liquefaction is, by definition, “loosely packed soil or sediment that is transformed into a fluid mass when mixed with groundwater” (Barrow, L. 1996. p.71). In the Canterbury region this resulted in eruptions of liquid sand throughout most suburban regions. This bizarre and aberrant occurrence caused a flurry of YouTube videos, with those filming remarking on

⁶ Strangentertainment ‘Aftershock on Camera | Christchurch Earthquake | 5.5, 11 km deep, Mon, Jun 13 2011 1:00 pm’ <http://youtu.be/01NK8zrOuyQ>

the strange nature of the phenomenon and coining the result of the liquefaction as “sand volcanoes” for their resemblance.

One such video is that by user Mcbeth1888 (2011, June 12)⁷ from the June 12th earthquake where the handheld camera looks down upon a small hillock of liquefaction on the grass for the entire 25 seconds of footage. There are many pieces of footage on YouTube almost identical to this one, where the camera focusses on one area of liquefaction and cuts out in under a minute; most sharing as much visual and audial information as a static photograph.

Another similar piece of footage captured by user Boxter1977 (2011, March 5a)⁸ shows the audience a large mound of liquefaction coming up through a school field after the February 22nd earthquake. After asking his cohort if she had anything to say about the occurrence, he proceeds to relay to the imagined audience some basic information about the liquefaction; stating that the “sand volcano”, as he calls it, was not there a “couple hours ago”, that it is now about 20cm high and gives the name of the intermediate school where it is. He then goes on to inform the audience of the little information he knows about the earthquake; “We just had a 6.3 aftershock that really shook the city extraordinarily badly. We don’t know any news yet, we’re fearful of what might have happened”.

These two pieces of footage are similar in respect to the images they show, yet the verbal communication of information to the imagined audience is what sets them apart. This is a substantial difference as most footage of this type lack verbal commentary; most assuming that the informed audience is familiar with this natural, though unusual, occurrence thanks to extensive news coverage in New Zealand (although none attempted a before and after use of footage to actually explain what had changed from one day to the next).

‘Damage footage’

Another ‘category’ of footage common over all earthquakes depicts structural and landscape damage; either to the user’s home or commercial buildings, or to roads and cliff-faces. This type of video tends to be longer in length and varied in terms

⁷ Mcbeth1888 ‘Liquefaction mcbethmcbethmcbeth’ <http://youtu.be/HoktHgvOVLc>

⁸ Boxter1977 ‘Christchurch Sand Volcanoes erupting 22 February 2011 two of four.MOV’ <http://youtu.be/UbvCKzR34Ko>

of content and location. However, the majority of these clips are made to display the damaging effects of an earthquake on the uploader's home – particularly toppled furniture, ornaments and other such household belongings. A typical example of this is the video uploaded to YouTube by Rlorimer1966 (2011, February 22)⁹, where the user takes the viewers through a bedroom where some of the furniture and other small items have been knocked over. There is no in-video commentary, however the uploader states in the video description that the television which had fallen off its stand no longer works.

This footage, along with a number of similar videos, was shot the same day as the devastating February 22nd earthquake, which caused extensive damage to the city and resulted in the death of many citizens. This piece of footage, albeit trivial in comparison, shows how extensive the effects of the earthquake were and how the unexpected and spectacular will elicit people to document it. By this, I mean, everyday people may capture footage of the unusual whether they are aware of how bad the widespread situation is or not.

Another such video, more substantial than the last, is that of a resident's home that suffered severe structural damage as a result of the February earthquake. YouTube user Kickflip55 (2011, March 4)¹⁰ guides viewers through their home room by room, capturing the significant damage done to their older Victorian-style home, including a large brick oven enclosure now fractured in to two parts and disintegrated jib-board walls. It appears as if this was captured immediately following the earthquake as the creator inspects every room, occasionally pausing to address the camera.

At times, this type of footage can also carry political and social commentary that is dictated by the in-video commentary – although, it becomes apparent in these circumstances, that the one filming uses the camera to voice their frustration, rather than add “valuable” contributions to the public discourse. For example, immediately following the June 13th earthquake, YouTuber Razornathon (2011, June 13)¹¹ uploaded un-edited footage where he leads the camera through his

⁹ Rlorimer1966 ‘Christchurch Earthquake 22 Feb 2011’ http://youtu.be/U3eQzKmw_1A

¹⁰ Kickflip55 ‘Feb 22 Christchurch earthquake damage to our home’ <http://youtu.be/Fq06L2BCcG8>

¹¹ Razornathon ‘Earthquake footage 6.3’ http://youtu.be/5-oW_alRF_8

home, commenting on the damages; at one point in the clip he looks directly into the lens and asks “let’s see how fast the New Zealand government acts this time, eh?”

Those videos which do have some form of commentary tend to be just opinionated, passing comments on the overall situation; voicing concerns though not going into any detail, while using the imagery shown to reinforce their statements. They reflect a more ‘conversational’ piece directed at the assumed audience who, the creators appear to acknowledge, will have some understanding of the broader situation (either through the consumption of news media texts or similar online content). Although this commentary is neither necessarily substantial nor offers a fair and rounded argument, it does add an element of public opinion and a voice of frustration and doubt to the collective of material overall.

‘Immediately after’

However, the most interesting footage captured by the people of Christchurch was of the immediate effects of an earthquake; in this type of footage we commonly see the filmer capture their everyday surroundings immediately following an earthquake. This type of footage is the most raw, impromptu and unplanned footage to come from the earthquakes; it also happens to be the most newsworthy, with some of this footage being used by traditional news media in their breaking news coverage (as Chapter 3 explores).

Frequent YouTuber SpooceDan (2011, February 22)¹² uploaded footage he shot of the February 22nd earthquake the same day to the social media site. The footage appears to have been captured immediately following the devastating earthquake; the user rushes to the window of his third-storey inner-city office and, adjusting the lens exposure, films the street below as dust clouds rise from fallen debris and people scurry out of nearby buildings - we can hear panic in his voice as he exclaims repeatedly “oh my gosh”. He then turns and makes his way through the dishevelled workplace, still adjusting the lens exposure so that each room is

¹² SpooceDan ‘Seconds after the 22nd feb Christchurch Earthquake – Exclusive in the CBD’ <http://youtu.be/teicHEyJbf0>

visible, before making his way down the stairs and out to the street below. Adjusting the exposure for a third time, he makes his way down the street, filming distressed people around him and piles of rubble from nearby buildings. Near the end of the video, arrives at an intersection where the large dome from atop an old heritage building sits in the middle of the road, and buildings are completely destroyed on either side of him.

However, the most powerful and disturbing element to this footage is not the imagery, but the audio; in almost all videos of this type (at least those shot in the CBD) are the harrowing cries of civilians, screeching car and burglar alarms, and the tell-tale piercing sound of the civil defence siren.

Another example of this style of footage was uploaded by Clairekiwi (2011, March 10)¹³; captured within minutes of the February earthquake, the first half of the video is extremely shaky, mainly containing images of people's lower extremities as if the one filming were running. We hear commotion emanating from a large group of people assembled in a central Christchurch city street and the tell-tale siren present in other videos. The camera then steadies to focus on a collapsed building, which happens to be the CTV building where 115 people lost their lives ("CTV Building 'Collapsed in Seconds'", 2012). The distressed woman filming says, presumably to someone standing next to her, "oh look, they're getting people out".

Not all the footage of this type was filmed immediately following the major February earthquake; user Movie467 (2011, December 23a)¹⁴ uploaded a video to YouTube the same day as the December 23rd, 2011 aftershock which shows the panicked aftermath in a local Countdown supermarket within seconds after the quake struck. Inside the supermarket, the camera focuses on the low-hanging aisle signs and suspended fluorescent ceiling lamps that are swaying precariously above dozens of shoppers. The one filming then slowly evacuates the building with the rest of the shoppers to show the mass of people assembled in the parking lot.

¹³ Clairekiwi 'Christchurch Earthquake CTV building a few minutes after the quake 22 Feb 11'
<http://youtu.be/UFb75oda4hk>

¹⁴ Movie467 'Moments after the 5.8 quake in a Christchurch supermarket'
<http://youtu.be/oo1orS741Oc>

But the most prominent aspect in this video, as with the others, is the sounds of scared people and crying children. The effects on Christchurch locals from the devastating February earthquake are exemplified in this video.

2.2 Semblance of Authenticity

Here I want to argue that the most powerful attribute this type of eyewitness-generated content holds is its semblance of authenticity. Authenticity is the most important factor of fact-based storytelling, and this is particularly so with journalism media and the documentary genre. A key assumption here is that when we engage with media that claims to portray “reality”, we automatically presume that the images and information is a reflection or evaluation of this “reality”. The element of authenticity provides a truthfulness, and location within a historical space. As Nichols (2001) states; “we [as an audience] bring an assumption that the text’s sounds and images have their origin in the historical world we share” (p. 35); for this is what the genre *is*.

Immediacy

So how does UGC in the form of eyewitness documents carry a form of authenticity? There are several factors which, I believe, when combined, create the image of authenticity. The first is another major trend I encountered throughout the study of 200 UGC clips was the issue of “upload date”; the majority of footage, particularly the “immediately after” footage, was uploaded to YouTube within 24 hours of the earthquake happening.

Although a number of pieces of UGC came out of each of the four major earthquakes that struck between September 2010 and December 2011, almost half of the 200 videos surveyed were the result of the February 22nd 2011 earthquake.

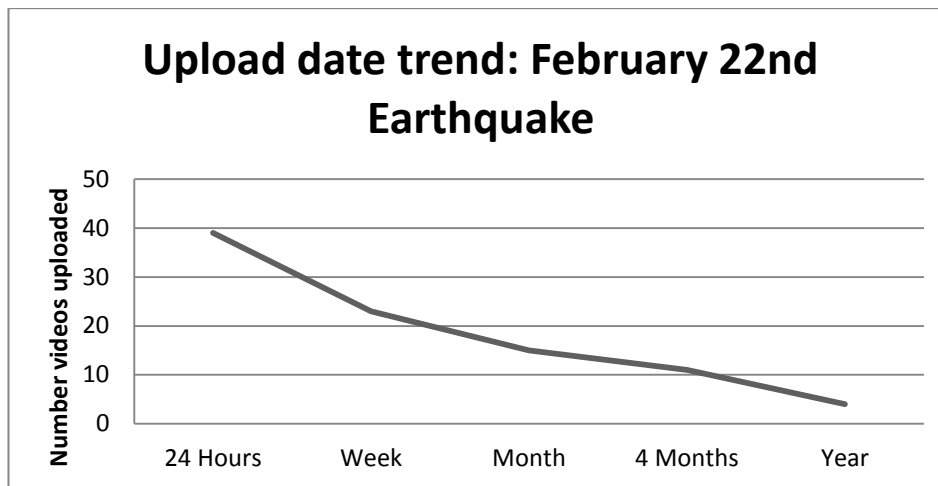


Figure 1: Timeframe of uploads of the February 22nd earthquake UGC

Of the 92 videos of the February 22nd earthquake, 39 of these were uploaded to YouTube the same day or within 24 hours. In addition, 23 were uploaded within a week, 15 within a month, 11 within four months, and 4 within a year. The pieces of UGC studied of the other major earthquakes indicate a similar trend in terms of upload date, with the vast majority of footage being uploaded to YouTube within 24 hours of being captured. It must be noted that, even though there were subsequent bursts of YouTube material relating to the earthquake in the weeks and months following, very few of these involved exploring initial material or provided more detailed information than the original wave (the very small set that *did*, however, are discussed in Chapter 4).

There are a few reasons why the upload date is important; first, the short time frame in between event and footage upload is too short for the images to be staged for that particular event. Secondly, the immediacy and scale of the event forms an umbrella over all similar pieces of footage; placing them all into the same, trusted, category of eyewitness footage. Also, this immediacy of upload is a reflection of live televised news; a real-time event that is occurring, that is being disseminated to the public (by the public) through online social media, at the same time being given context and meaning by professional news media.

The small amount of time it takes for footage to be captured and broadcasted to the public is astonishing, though because of this, certain possible quality elements may be lost. The need to share these images as quickly as possible place a

premium on immediacy above factors such as image quality, consistent editing, coherent narrative and important information dissemination.

Although this immediacy of upload is a contributing factor to its image of authenticity, it can also play as a hindrance; YouTube offers their timestamp in USA time, not New Zealand time, so it appeared as though many pieces of footage were uploaded the day *before* the earthquake. Surprisingly enough, some YouTube users had not realised the time difference which resulted in many comments on certain videos accusing the footage of being fake for this very reason.

Another important factor is the temporal quality of such eyewitness-generated content which imitates the same effect on audiences seen with live news coverage (Drakopoulou, 2011). First-hand images uploaded immediately to a public medium reflect the same qualities found in an ‘on-the-scene’ news report; the immediacy of upload and the content’s place within a current, temporal context of an event creates the sense of a live broadcast.

However, Uricchio (2009) maintains that YouTube *cannot* offer the complete experience of “liveness” that television delivers audiences; it can only *simulate* it. Unlike television, content on social media sites is not solely disseminated to audiences, but audiences must choose to interact with it by actively searching for content and participating with the medium through a series of clicks. This level of participation is necessary for the most part, and in turn sheds YouTube of its full potential for liveness.

This may be so for other, small-scale events, however my argument is that social media has become so intertwined with the average New Zealander’s daily lives that, during such a large scale event as the February 22nd earthquake, such UGC and information from news outlets were being forced upon us by our peers. This has the potential to offer live, information dissemination as-it-happens, maybe even offering a more immediate conveyance and reception of information than televised broadcasts can offer, through these more pervasive media.

The technology combined with social broadcasting outlets, such as YouTube, also house the potential for more rapid distribution. During the February 22nd

Christchurch earthquake, mobile footage depicting the chaos within the city was being uploaded before national news outlets had a chance to interrupt scheduled programming. The lack of planning involved in capturing footage on one's mobile, which can then be published to a medium which is without the enforcement of ethical and textual boundaries means such footage can be broadcasted much sooner than a professional, televised broadcast adhering to strict guidelines. And, unlike other UGC-centric sites like Wikipedia, YouTube does not restrict or moderate content solely due to quality – though this 'quality' is ultimately still evaluated by other the audiences of YouTube through video rankings and view count (Hagemann & Vossen, 2009).

Tagging

A common way that users “promote” their content on YouTube so that it will gain more of an audience is by tagging the video with, usually, appropriate keywords. For example, the metadata gathered of a portion of the 200 Christchurch earthquake videos sampled during this research generally shared several similar keywords; “Christchurch”, “Earthquake”, “Aftershock”, “New Zealand”, and the date the footage was captured. Uploaders are also prompted to “categorise” their content into a very broad category before it becomes public (for example, Christchurch earthquake videos were mainly categorised under *News*); the YouTube tagging system enables uploaders to specify their content further than these broad categories, making them more accessible in the search engine (Kessler & Schafer, 2009). Videos depicting liquefaction were usually tagged as such, and some uploaders had even gone as far as to place added information (such as specific location of where the footage was captured) in the tags.

However, this tagging system can also be used to *misinform* the audience; often, uploaders will tag their videos with irrelevant keywords, usually keywords relating to a popular topic or celebrity in order to lure potential audiences in to view the video. A tool provided by YouTube to make the viewing and categorising process much more accessible can be used by uploaders for the exact opposite purpose; “...the practice of tagging is in a way appropriated and turned into a form of deliberate misinformation” (Kessler & Schafer, 2009. p.283).

According to the metadata downloaded from a selection of the 200 videos analysed, the majority of these do not contain irrelevant tags, with most uploaders tagging their material with helpful and relevant keywords – though some did not tag their videos at all. However, some pieces of eyewitness footage did contain a number of irrelevant tags. The piece of footage uploaded by Crusaderswwe (2010, September 6)¹⁵ that depicts the extensive damage to a country road after the September 4th, 2010 earthquake contains the tags “Nigeria”, “Kenya”, “Rugby” and “Songz” in addition to the relevant tagging, even though Crusaderswwe’s footage does not relate to any of these additional keywords. It should also be noted that the video’s description states the uploader was paid by YouTube to use a particular song as the audio of the footage.

Although this particular YouTube video’s attempt to lure potential audiences is not overly apparent to the average user, there are other pieces of UGC that blatantly mislead viewers right up until the point where the YouTube video file begins to play. For example, some users will post politically motivated videos under title and tags relating to pornography in order to con audiences into viewing the video (Kessler & Schafer, 2009. p.283). Although these videos may contain noteworthy content, such blatant trickery perhaps causes the general legitimacy and any authenticity of any such footage to be eroded.

Where the content relating to the Christchurch earthquakes is concerned, this lack of irrelevant tagging, if anything, *reinforces* the legitimacy of the content; videos that try to lure viewers through misinformation may lose integrity in the eyes of the audiences, whereas material that states its true content through metadata may be seen as honest, and not made specifically to gain attention, therefore supporting the authenticity of the material.

Equipment and accessibility

As noted earlier, the majority of the pieces of eyewitness footage analysed earlier appear to be filmed using a low image quality mobile device (most likely cell phones) or handheld point-and-shoot cameras. For the most part, the footage filmed on these devices is shaky, often out of focus, and has low image resolution.

¹⁵ Crusaderswwe ‘Christchurch earthquake footage’ http://youtu.be/zbOI8j_fZcg

With the “immediately after” footage, most subjects are cut out of frame, mainly showing images of people’s feet and/or alternating between these low-angle shots and high-angle shots showing the area above subjects and scenery, rarely stopping to focus on a point of interest. Interestingly, even footage filmed using higher-quality devices, captured by more experienced users, tend to share much of these characteristics.

This shaky “amateurish” style of footage is a major contributor to the semblance of authenticity; the lack of obvious planning and premeditation behind such footage creates the sense that these images are the direct depiction of reality. And, if these uploaders do have any experience in filming, they almost completely disregard the image-quality and basic filming techniques over a demand for immediacy.

Another factor that adds to this semblance of authenticity is the actual technological equipment and services the majority of eyewitness footage seems to employ. The idea that this footage was captured on an affordable, accessible and common device adds to the perception of the creators being “one of us”. The footage is then uploaded to the free-for-all broadcast platform YouTube, through either 3G wireless networks or home-based internet connections – services which a great deal of New Zealanders have access to.

This accessibility of equipment and services that are used to publish such material is a major difference between amateur documentation and professional reportage, a difference which erodes the typical boundaries seen in professional media between creator and audience. The audience has the *potential* to be the creator, and the creators are also the possible audience.

The platform YouTube, itself, creates the sense of authenticity. The idea that anyone can publish content, and does not need to be ruled by convention and codes used by practiced, commercial-based practitioners, fosters an assumption of open-endedness. Even the act of finding footage on YouTube which has not been thrust upon viewers by professional institutions has the potential to place such footage with a sense of genuineness. This eyewitness footage “...has the air of an uncut and shocking reality, especially when we find such footage ourselves among the sea of videos on the web” (Vanderbeeken, 2011. p.40).

There is definitely an element of trust expressed here with the assumption that “anyone” can publish content, and that “anyone” could be just “like me”. Birgit Richard (2008) refers to this semblance of authenticity as an ideology created by “cultural consensus”; stating that the “misleading” semblance of complete truthfulness is created through the typical “poor quality of the recording tools with their low resolution, as well as the presentation in small windows on the computer screen, which conspire to create ‘a look of everyday life’” (p.143). In this case the author argues that the combination of ‘amateur’ video (which stems from an assumption of truthful legitimacy) and the social medium of YouTube (which preformats the content and places it within an elaborate ranking system) *cannot ever* harbour an authentic image. Through this, the author argues that any content passing off as authentic “is the result of a conscious, artistically motivated act” (p.143).

However, implying that an image cannot be authentic due to the slightest premeditation (for example: switching on one’s smartphone to capture a specific event unfolding, or even the act of uploading the footage to YouTube) is a bold claim; this would also imply that any visual, auidial or written documentation would be *inauthentic*. Judging the authenticity of a material is, in this case, up to the audience; there are a set of expectations the audience places upon YouTube footage and the need for a particular set of readings to be made, questioning the credibility and integrity of the material – such as considering who the uploader may be, their relation to the content’s subject matter and to position such material within their own media experience. There is a need for YouTube audiences to be more critical of and sceptical of the material than viewers of television or film; the sheer amount of content on the site and the fact that *anyone* can potentially create and upload material requires readers to be more apprehensive about what they can and cannot trust.

Uploaders as Eyewitnesses

Bock notes that “[e]yewitness testimony is the most ancient sources of authority for a truthful storyteller” (Bock, 2011. p.6). Within professional journalism, eyewitness testimony is often used to add credibility to a story, even at times when there is no other hard evidence to support any claims. Audio visual UGC,

such as these “eyewitness documents” can become a form of, or even replace, eyewitness testimony.

Instead of being told a first-hand account of events by those who bore direct witness, we can be shown; these eyewitness documents, in essence, are testimony *through the camera’s lens*. The credibility and authenticity of these documents is heightened by the assumption the footage was captured by someone immediately affected, someone just like us. In contrast, footage captured by professionals - those paid to capture moments on camera, and paid to do so with an experienced and skilled use of the expensive equipment provided and with polished filming techniques – can create the sense of staged unrealism. In these terms “...documentary film seems to have lost its truthfulness in the era of docusoaps, mockumentaries and reality television, amateur video often retains a nostalgic air of a truthful visual document” (Vanderbeeken, 2011. p.40).

Clean, focused shots, timed editing and perfect lighting can actually detract from the realism displayed, even though trained documentary film makers and journalism professionals encourages the perception of authority. Media professionals are often seen as ‘trustworthy’, viewers can be cynical of their underlying motives and sceptical as to whether there is any transparency to the information relayed. Whether all the facts are laid out, showing all sides to the argument, or whether they are intentionally holding back information to mislead viewers. Vanderbeeken argues that “in spite of their authority, we often distrust professionals paid by news services. Conversely, we are willing to believe amateurs because they are people just like us” (Vanderbeeken, 2011. p.40).

The perception that this footage, created by these amateurs who are ‘just like us’ – non-commercial, regular citizens who bear witness to an event, with no apparent reason to mislead audiences – creates a semblance of authenticity that, Vanderbeeken believes, has been lost by professional media organisations. The idea that this type of footage implies is that, what these eyewitnesses witnessed is captured on the digital ‘film’ - raw, unedited and impromptu - through the lens of their on-hand mobile device. This knowledge that the images they are seeing come from someone immediately affected by the disaster, and not someone who

is paid to be there, is thus perhaps the most important contributing factor to the content's authenticity.

Impact and Importance

Now, I am not proposing that every single eyewitness document is "authentic"; I am solely recognising the factors that contribute to this *semblance of authenticity*. This perception of authenticity, however, contributes to audiences in more ways than just providing an "image of truth".

Kaila Coblin, in her MediaPost column, talks about the worth of audio-visual UGC during the February earthquake from a Christchurch resident's view; she places the value of such shaky, amateur footage above that of professional, crisp-quality images. For those who were overseas when the disaster happened, UGC helped them gain perspective of what was happening, not from a media perspective, "but from the perspective of [their] neighbors [sic], the people who are living and breathing this event, who will be picking up the pieces for years after the CNN and BBC cameras have left, who will have to rely on each other when the world's attention and sympathies inevitably focus on the next disaster elsewhere" (Coblin, 2011).

A recent study of the UGC depicting the Attica fires of 2007 looked at how these eyewitness images reflect a "common experience"; depicting the scene as it was that day from the people's perspective. Through this case study and the author's own experience in Athens during the fires, the author concludes that the UGC adequately depicts this common experience, as well as representing the "general sentiment" of that day (Drakopoulou, 2011).

Wilensky (2012) performed a case study of social media's role (particularly YouTube) over the March 2011 east Japan earthquake. The author focussed this study on how particular YouTube videos can offer audiences that were directly or indirectly affected spiritual and emotional support, and his findings indicate that certain YouTube clips evoked an emotional response from audiences, with supportive comments posted by many.

2.3 Conclusion

This type of footage (particularly that footage which is captured immediately after an earthquake) captures the moment through the lens of the accidental eyewitness; delivering a raw, first-person view into an unfolding situation. This is not only exemplified by the shaky images captured through a hand-held camera of a distressed witness, or the dominant audio, but the immediacy and platform from which it is broadcasted. The extremely limited timeframe between capturing and uploading the footage that was encountered more often than not during the analysis of this UGC, reinforces the ‘authenticity’ of the content.

Eyewitness footage on YouTube appears to follow some, almost established, codes and conventions; short length, one continuous shot (often of the same space or subject), minimal editing and minimal creator interaction with the subject matter (apart from the occasional anomaly, the one filming films *to document*, rather than offer a report on the happenings). And, by no coincidence, this also fits in with traditional news media, with news broadcasts preferring simple unedited footage that provides them with visual illustration to place where they please. The next chapter investigates how these pieces of eyewitness are used by news media; how they circulate within traditional media, how they are ultimately shed of original meaning or intent to become stock images used in a repetitive montage. But also how UGC of this type relies on information provided by outside sources; eyewitness footage that often offers virtually no explanation or information surrounding its subject matter. Individually, these pieces ultimately rely on news media to provide framing and context.

Chapter 3

Eyewitness Footage within News Media

The rise of accessible, affordable and advanced mobile technology in New Zealand, and elsewhere in the world, has precipitated a new development within the institution that is news reporting. The journalist or, more appropriately, the news *reporter* is no longer solely confined to the archetype of a trained, experienced and paid professional. It is also, as McNair (2011) illustrates, “the blogger, the citizen journalist, the accidental eyewitness in possession of a digital camera and access to the internet” (p.42). Besides the technology that makes it capable for almost anyone to create, edit and distribute content through the internet, the online social media platforms, such as YouTube, are what makes it truly possible. These new media are empowering the users; according to Antony and Thomas (2010) “participatory media technologies that allow for the creation and distribution of user-generated content overturn traditional notions of all-powerful news media that define and restrict a largely passive audience.” (p. 4). However, others argue that this user generated content is created to be a *supplement* to news; images and pieces of information that contribute to and complement traditional news coverage (Boczkowski, 2010; Zhu, 2010; King, 2010; Goggin, 2011).

The news audience, in this case everyday citizens, don't just consume information through their television sets or newspapers, or just share their stories with friends and relatives; the audience can now actively contribute to the public discourse – whether this is through a 140 character Twitter post, a 40 second long piece audio-visual material or other forms of content. These contributions may not be politically or socially motivated, carry any underlying themes of activism, or even bear any noteworthy information not regurgitated from other sources. However, each piece created and contributed by users is a part of a larger, more intricate and chaotic ‘narrative’ created by an unorganised assemblage of contextualised news stories, clips of audio-visual illustration and fragments of information gained from multiple sources. Each piece, each contribution, is a snippet of a larger, much more complicated web of information.

The web of information that spanned and grew from the four major earthquakes to hit the city of Christchurch between 2010 and 2011 is a prime example. These large earthquakes sparked a media spectacle. The most destructive quake, that which occurred on the 22nd of February 2011 at 12:51pm, drew national and international media attention. Social media, particularly Twitter, was first to broadcast information; still images and video of the destruction - including a clip of a cliff collapse which made it to televised broadcasts soon after - flooded Twitter “feeds”. The hashtag #eqnz was the most popular method to label each post, following the earlier September 4th 2010 earthquake. Mobile phones with internet access enabled isolated citizens to connect to social media, sharing information and visual content, when more traditional communication networks were down.

Next to react, minutes after the magnitude 6.3 earthquake hit, the two major television news organisations in New Zealand (TVNZ; One News and TV3; 3 News) interrupted scheduled programming to bring national audiences information as it was received. A good portion of this initial information, however, was attained via Twitter. Within the hour of the earthquake, news websites started reporting, some with minute-by-minute updates of information – The NZ Herald site was the quickest, starting their coverage at 1pm with a single hasty sentence.

Phone lines are down so it's difficult to get information, but Herald reporter Jarrod Booker said in a brief phone call that they were experiencing a massive earthquake, ‘bigger than the original’. He sounded very shaken. (“Latest Updates: Christchurch Earthquake”, 2011)

As the hours rolled by, more information became available to news outlets as their own reporters in the city regained communication, feeding through updates and audio-visual imagery. Soon to follow were international televised news organisations, reporting on the disaster using video taken from local television and YouTube. National television and online news coverage of the disaster carried on until late into the afternoon.

3.1 Televised news

The term ‘eyewitness document’ that is used within this thesis to describe the type of content produced by those in the area is almost like the grey area where citizen journalism meets home video. Citizen journalism connotes that some form of pre-meditation went in to the creation of the content, or implies that the content was made with the intention to counter-point traditional journalism, bring opinions and evaluations of current events to the public discourse and less focussed on less on first-hand testimonies (Cleary & Bloom, 2011; Bruns, 2011). However, the majority of the UGC footage from the earthquakes has as much journalistic intent as a video of a child’s first steps; they appear to be made with the intent to document for themselves and to share with others if they wish to see it. The broader term “user generated content”, as Pecquerie and Kilman (2007) state, “casts off the notion of citizenry and civic engagement” that citizen journalism denotes, leaving a term that umbrellas other content not bound by the rules and ethics of the established journalism profession. Yet, as this chapter will discuss, these pieces of user generated content may hold as much journalistic value than the content produced by these paid professionals.

Some television news broadcasts were recorded by YouTube users and uploaded to the site, most being only a minute or so long and lacking in context. Many of these snippets of news broadcasts were recorded, presumably by a PVR device (“personal video recorder”; in New Zealand this would generally be a digital video recorder, or Freeview top-box with the ability to record to USB or SD card), which results in an average quality video (720p) similar to the original broadcast image quality. Other broadcasts were recorded via handheld camera recording the television set.

Contact was made with both TVNZ and TV3 requesting each broadcast in full, however TVNZ declined the request stating that they could not release the broadcast due to its use of “amateur footage” – TV3 did not reply at all. Because of this, the analysis of the use of UGC within television news broadcasts had to be made using the material found on YouTube. As the footage obtained were but mere fragments of a larger broadcast and were not labelled with the exact time of broadcast, securing an accurate and expansive representation of television coverage was unsuccessful. However, the material that was gained offered some small insight into how televised news media utilise this type of user generated

content in the coverage of an unexpected event which affected, not only locals, but people of the nation and the globe.

From the television news broadcasts attained from YouTube, televised coverage of two of the four major earthquakes appeared to go straight to professional reporters located in the city. However, coverage attained from the other two quakes suggests that pieces of eyewitness documents – footage captured by someone affected by the earthquakes who is not a “professional” journalist – were the first images from Christchurch broadcasted.

One such YouTube video is a recording of a 3News bulletin, presumably part of the initial “breaking news” coverage of the June 13th 2011 earthquake. The on-set presenter greets the audience in the traditional manner and states that another aftershock has hit Christchurch. While announcing that one of their reporters in the city will cross live to them soon, the presenter’s flow of speech is disrupted, presumably to hear the change of script being conveyed to him. The presenter then introduces the “first pictures in”; a clip uploaded by YouTube user Strangentertainment (2011, June 12). Overtop of the video the announcer describes the earthquake, saying that “...the 5.5 quake has been described as a long and very noisy shake that lasted about 30 seconds”. Near the end of the YouTube video, the presenter says that "the Christchurch resident started recording in his lounge about 4 seconds after it started". At first, this added information about the time the footage was captured seems to indicate that 3News had been sent the clip directly; however, a look at the description of the original video added by the YouTube user sees this information clearly stated.

The TV3 bulletin did not credit the creator of the content, verbally or visually, nor did they state the video was sourced from YouTube. It is highly unlikely that the video was sent to the news organisation directly, given the timeframe, or that they had contacted the YouTube user prior to the broadcast.

A questionnaire sent to Strangentertainment reveals that they were aware their footage was featured on televised broadcasts from both TVNZ and TV3 after uploading the footage immediately to YouTube. However they were not contacted for more information or permission by either station before or after its use. The user had, however, been contacted by dozens of international (particularly

Australian, American and Chinese) online news sites and television stations via email to secure permissions to use the video – one station from Hong Kong went so far as to request permission through telephone.

The most likely reason for this lack of communication between content creator and New Zealand news media organisation is due to the immediacy and locality of the situation combined. Studies have shown that live televised news now embraces speed and spectacle over depth and sophistication (Cushion, 2012), meaning hastily sourced images, such as that by Strangentertainment, or others mentioned in this chapter, is common-place during live news. Breaking news such as the Christchurch earthquakes would have been to the utmost import to these news stations; wanting to deliver to the audience information immediately – no matter how little information there was. This tendency to “strive to be live”, as Cushion (2012) puts it, results in a hindering of the channel’s ability to spend time “unpacking an issue or event in any meaningful depth” (Cushion, 2012. p.73). This urgency, as in the case of Strangentertainment’s video, also resulted in the neglect of ethical procedure.

This earthquake in June had not drawn as much media attention in comparison to the fatal earthquake of February 22nd of that year which sent news media into frenzy; as soon as television news organisations caught wind of the earthquake they went straight to live coverage, scrambling for information. Much of this information came from social media, particularly Twitter, as communications with authorities and on-site staff was restricted. Amongst the flurry of audio-visual images captured by people in the city, one particular YouTube video caught the eye of news media. This reasonable-quality footage, presumably recorded on a cell-phone, captured by user Ypud (2011, February 22)¹⁶, depicts a cliff in the Christchurch suburb of Sumner collapsing onto an RSA building. Within minutes of the footage being posted to YouTube, links to the video were being widely circulated via social media. A Twitter post by the creator with a hyperlink to the video was then reposted by other users of the social media platform, soon being picked up by local television; 3News was first to air the clip, possibly being the first imagery of the earthquake aired on television. It acted, not only as illustration

¹⁶ Ypud ‘Live earthquake in Christchurch’ <http://youtu.be/qt0iIHxFnR0>

to the devastation that had occurred, but as a news source. From there it eventually aired on TVNZ's One News, before being incorporated into several major international news networks' coverage of the disaster.

The footage sees a street in the suburb of Sumner, engulfed by a cloud of dust from the cliff face that had collapsed seconds beforehand. The footage is shaky, possibly taken with a camera phone. The one filming the incident (presumably British) is heard speaking to the imagined audience;

“This is a live earthquake. As you can see, the floors trembling, and the, and the rocks are falling down in Sumner, just outside Christchurch. This giant rock has just fallen on the RSA building and, uh, you can see it's crushed the building there, and the cars... it's terrifying”. A bystander approaches the male who is filming and says “this is fucking crazy”.

When first aired on national television this clip was not edited and still contained the swear word, indicating that the footage was hastily sourced by 3News, airing the clip before being able to fully review its contents.



Figure 2: Screenshot depicting the Ypud's viral video during news coverage. Uploaded to YouTube by Thevisitortjn2 (2011, February 22)

Within hours of the earthquake, this particular piece of eyewitness footage travelled across the globe, being re-edited, re-contextualised and re-distributed through various media. In other words, the footage went viral – through online and traditional media. A collection of national and international recorded television news coverage, taken from YouTube, shows the video cut-and-pasted

into various broadcasts. One segment of a broadcast by the CNN, uploaded by YouTube user thevisitortjn2 (2011, February 22)¹⁷ sees their news banner and logo pasted on top of the 3News banner - and the 3News logo on the top-right covered by a *Reuters* logo. The extensive re-packaging of this piece of UGC caused a deteriorating effect; context, details and credit were eventually lost as the video clip was shortened, muted, and redistributed with several logos of ‘sources’ at once. Every time the footage was ‘borrowed’ from another source, instead of having a snowball effect and collecting context, it did the opposite; the fact that it was a piece of user generated content seemed to have become lost or ignored by those the editing suites. At one point, the footage was edited down so much that a static screenshot of the YouTube video was shown in its place; and instead of being a valuable illustration to the events occurring, it eventually became a mere ‘stock’ video sourced off Reuters.

3.2 Online news

The earthquake that had caused the most devastation had, ultimately, caused the most media attention. In addition to studying television broadcasts from the several major Christchurch earthquakes, online news websites Stuff.co.nz and NZHerald.co.nz¹⁸ were examined for their use of user generated, audio-visual content. This involved using the available search options on each website to comb through the hundreds of links to articles and videos that appeared.

Although, not all the UGC used by news media was as shocking as the Sumner cliff collapse video, or as visually good quality as the video of the June earthquake by user Strangentertainment (2011, June 12). Online newspapers showed a vast range of user generated media content; varying in video quality, content, length and levels of “shocking” and “mundane”.

The two online national news sites studied contained a significantly larger number of audio-visual user generated content than the portions of television broadcasts studied. The content of the videos featured is diverse; from footage captured on cell phones during or immediately after an earthquake to images of bubbling

¹⁷ Thevisitortjn2 ‘Earthquake Christchurch New Zealand Tuesday 22nd February 2011’ <http://youtu.be/wGdEbKU6TAw>

¹⁸ Both Stuff.co.nz and NZHerald.co.nz are central to the two key online newspaper chains in New Zealand

liquefaction and destroyed buildings in the aftermath. However, it appears that footage of pools of liquefaction covering suburban streets were the most popular choice by New Zealand news websites, being featured repeatedly on both sites, for their “unusual” (or soft-news) quality.

As of April 2012, the news website Stuff.co.nz, which covers content from most major local newspapers, contained 20 eyewitness videos; the majority being sourced via YouTube. The online version of the largest selling newspaper in the country, the New Zealand Herald, contained 24 different videos – again, mainly sourced from the social media archive YouTube. Although each site encourages readers to “send in their videos or pictures”, it appears their main source of content is the popular video sharing site – possibly because the site is more accessible with applications for smartphones which allow the user to capture and upload their material directly.

Despite both news sites offering a large amount of user generated material, how this content appeared on the sites and how readers can locate the content varied. The Herald organised every eyewitness video into the “videos” section of their website, providing only a title and subtitle as added information. Stuff, on the other hand, had a portion of these videos embedded into articles within the site. The videos within articles on the Stuff news site served not only as illustration, but also as news itself. One small article centres upon a video, uploaded by YouTube user stuntdub (2011, April 5)¹⁹, of a group of local skateboarders who filmed themselves doing tricks over cracked roads and rubble around Christchurch. Although this particular piece is not eyewitness footage per se, the YouTube video *is* the centre point of the news story - however it focuses more on the actual YouTube video (amount of hits, going ‘viral’) rather than the content.

Another article, entitled “Quake hit Whitewash Head” uses the accompanying YouTube video (originally uploaded by user Aaahhgghh (2011, June 18)²⁰) partly as a news source and partly as illustration, with the news story commenting on how dangerous it was for the YouTube user to capture the footage and interviewing others who were also at Whitewash Head when an earthquake struck.

¹⁹ Stuntdub ‘Quaked – Skating in Christchurch after earthquake’ <http://youtu.be/i2bvozq-KK8>

²⁰ Aaahhgghh ‘13 June earthquake Whitewash Head’ http://youtu.be/Cixx_Td4YtM

One particular video compiled by the New Zealand Herald and published on their site, contains six different pieces of audio-visual user generated content; each video, sourced individually from YouTube, has been trimmed to fit into the 3 minute montage, and the array of content varies from footage from a camera placed poolside to capture a quake, to liquefaction, to a shot of a damaged cliff face.

There is also a clear trend with the wording of titles or subtitles of articles and videos; these news organisations seem to favour the term “amateur” when referring to user generated content. There is much debate surrounding this term, particularly given modern technology offers the opportunity for anyone to create content that is, arguably, just as substantial as that of “professionals”. However, it can be assumed that the NZ Herald and Stuff use the term to indicate the source is not of other media or news institutions, and to reinforce a dichotomy (and hierarchy) of journalistic practices.

The common connotations associated with the term “amateur” are of someone who is unskilled, inexperienced and not-for-profit, generally producing something that is not valuable or useful. Given the prominence UGC had and has in the coverage of such a disaster, from being some of the first visual representations of the earthquake’s impact to possibly a source of news, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that this type of eyewitness audio-visual material is just as, if not more, valuable than similar content created by traditional media outlets. This can appear to be the case in the coverage of international events, such as the 2011 Libyan civil war, where much of the footage used by media organisations was of ‘amateur’ origins.

This is a relationship which is increasingly complicated and deeply symbiotic. Apart from the occasional combination of article and user video, the eyewitness audio-visual material used appears to act mainly as ‘stock images’, sectioned off from the more ‘traditional’ journalism and incorporated only as a thumbnail on the ‘related videos’ sidebar. The Herald, in particular, have categorised the content into an archive-style section of their website, creating a place on their massively popular news site where readers could see relevant videos in an easily accessible and consistent format. Stuff’s content works in a similar way, housing

the Christchurch earthquake videos in its own page, although only accessible through a search using their (very basic) search engine.

A major constraint on this study, as with that of the television coverage of the Christchurch earthquakes, was obtaining accurate and complete records of the content. As this study was conducted over a year after the Christchurch earthquakes became prominent within news media, many articles, videos and sections of the sites may have since been discarded. This unpredictability and, surprisingly, mortal-like trait of digital information stored on the internet is problematic; how is one able to see the exact information being conveyed to audiences at a certain point in recent history?

Although these online news sites cover a range of UGC, delivering online content to their readers through a fairly organised, categorised and convenient format, there is disturbing lack of acknowledgement to those who filmed or originally uploaded the content. Both NZ Herald and Stuff take each video which are, for the most part, sourced off YouTube, and embeds them into their *own player* after editing and placing the respective news site's logo at the start. The Herald, for the most part, correctly cites the source in an in-video subtitle, whereas Stuff generally does not cite the creator or uploader unless the material features in an article.

The fact that both NZ Herald and Stuff add their own logos to the opening of each video seems to imply that each news organisation sourced, or even created, the material themselves. It may also indicate that they had asked permission from the content creator, granting them rights to use and, essentially, redistribute their material. However, this cannot be the case; the large amount of UGC, and the immediacy that the content was added to the site, indicates that these news organisations could not have asked for permission prior to the use of the material.

Frequent YouTube user Strangentertainment (whose footage also featured in televised news broadcasts) states that they had informed Stuff.co.nz of their approval to use their footage, but had requested that they link to or embed the video directly from YouTube instead of ripping the footage and uploading it under Stuff's own player. Shortly after, the user discovered that Stuff had gone against their request and had uploaded the footage using the website's own media player

and sent them another email asking for this to be corrected. Strangentertainment had also informed TV3 of the footage which, after being aired on television without credit, was uploaded to the station's website using TV3's own media player and the news website had superimposed their own logo to the start of the video as well as third-party advertisements.

The YouTube policy does not indicate that contact *must* be made before broadcast or that credit is compulsory, however it does say that they would like YouTube credited on-screen and verbally during the broadcast.²¹ Also, judging by YouTube's policy, there are no legal obligations that bind media organisations to giving credit to the appropriate person, or citing the YouTube as the content source. The UGC, particularly the type of eyewitness footage used by news media, appear to act as an audio-visual resource that substantiates the story at hand. The material itself is not necessarily being 'stolen' by news media and being claimed as their own (even without acknowledgment to the creators); the footage used does obviously serve to deliver visual information to anxious audiences. However, unlike live televised news, online news sources such as these New Zealand examples have the ability to correct falsely credited content or even contact the creator for permission due to the ability to 're-edit' or correct false information in an online post. The flexibility of the medium allows for mistakes to be corrected or extra content to be added, unlike television or print newspapers.

There would be no reward for news media to claim this footage as their own; it would be much more beneficial to acknowledge the UGC as 'amateur' footage. The element of authenticity comes into play here; content *not* produced by professional institutions have a potential add an 'air of authenticity' to a broadcast, and this style of eyewitness UGC is as seemingly authentic as you can get. As Bock (2011) argues: "the accidental video journalist, those direct witnesses to major news events... pure witnessing is a source of nearly total truthful authority" (p.6).

²¹ "Though YouTube has a license to distribute the video, it's the YouTube user who owns the content. We encourage you to reach out to users directly when you find video you'd like to use, and to provide attribution by displaying the username or the real name of the individual, if you've obtained it... When you show a YouTube video on television, please include on-screen and verbal attribution [to YouTube]." (YouTube, 2012)

Most eyewitness footage which captured the Christchurch earthquakes, as explained in Chapter 2, appears to be created by individuals who do not recognise themselves as filmmakers or produce content to be shared on the social platform regularly. However, for those who do class themselves as filmmakers or creators (such as Strangentertainment), the lack of credit and the embedding of videos into the news organisation's own media player without a hyperlink directly to the source, can be problematic.

There is a *semblance of authenticity* that follows amateur content, one which is created by several factors (as Chapter 2 has explored); footage quality, lack of narrative and context, shaky camerawork, bad lighting etc., but I argue that perhaps the most important factor is that the footage was uploaded to a public, widely used, social media site like YouTube. There are a few reasons why this may be; firstly, the majority of YouTube users do not get financial remuneration for their content, which implies that the content created is not for financial gain. Secondly, traditional news media may be seen as an exclusive medium, one which deliberately separates the witness from the reporter.

Eyewitness footage offers an element of authenticity (or, at least, the *semblance of authenticity*) that contemporary news media can appear to lack in comparison. Although, it is our interactions with social media, where this UGC comes from, that positions the material, and the content creator, within recognisable and familiar setting. Instead of being told by professionals we are being shown by our peers.

3.3 Discussion

In their research in the BBC News and the organisation's use of user generated content, Allan and Thorsen (2011) found a few significant reasons this valuable news source has not yet been fully integrated into traditional news reporting. These included the fact that hastily sourced information, such as Twitter posts, can be unreliable, potentially causing more damage. As Zhu (2010) states: "the quality and reliability of citizen contributions are not always satisfactory" (p. 175), meaning the information made available to the public *by the public* tends to be untrusted, as their origins and accuracy cannot always be verified. The same can be applied to the use of audio-visual material sourced via YouTube; how do

television news programmes know that the earthquake footage they are airing was taken during the same earthquake, same city or same country? This is especially so when footage, such as the Sumner cliff collapse video, is acquired so hastily, the media company does not have time to review the content or even remove the swear words, as with the case of Ypud's cliff-collapse video (2011, February 22). In fact, this happened when an Australian television news programme, while reporting on a comparatively minor aftershock in Christchurch late December 2011, misleadingly aired footage from the highly destructive February 22nd earthquake (Greenhill, 2012). Given, this particular footage was not UGC, nor did the footage imply that it was of the latest earthquake, the Australian televised news programme could only have broadcasted the footage in haste without reviewing or verifying the contents.

However, there are more problems with the use of unknown, unreliable and untrusted news sources than just incorrect information. On May 27, 2012 the BBC published a powerful photograph on their website that they believed to be related to the breaking news story about a massacre in Houla, Syria. The photograph, which was originally posted to Twitter by Syrian rebel activists, depicts dozens of shrouded bodies (believed to be those of children) lined in rows (Turner, 2012; Furness, 2012). Around an hour and a half and thousands of 're-Tweets' later, the image was taken down from the BBC news site after users alerted the news mogul that the image was actually taken by Getty photographer Marco di Lauro on March 27, 2003 in Iraq. The image actually depicts "a young Iraqi child jumping over dozens of white body bags containing skeletons found in a desert south of Baghdad" (Furness, 2012).

The image was posted to Twitter by Syrian activists with clearly propagandist intentions and the BBC was unfortunate enough to take the bait, despite their "we would rather be right than first" stance ("Leveson Inquiry", 2012)²². Although the BBC had stated underneath the illustrative picture that the source could not be independently identified and, after the image was confirmed a fake, was taken down immediately, the backlash was still tremendous. The original photographer

²² The Leveson Inquiry, held between 2011 and 2012, was a public inquiry into the practices and ethics of the British press after the News of the World journalists hacked into the phone of a murder victim deleted potential evidence.

was quoted in an interview with *The Telegraph* stating that he is astonished that “a news organization like the BBC doesn't check the sources and it's willing to publish any picture sent it by anyone: activist, citizen journalist or whatever” (Furness, 2012). Meanwhile the blogosphere and other news organisations went into a frenzy with accusations that the BBC was promoting the UK government’s anti-Syria stance (Turner, 2012) and “juggling with facts” (“Russian TV Accuses BBC”, 2012).

Of course, in such a crisis as the Christchurch earthquakes, it is understandable that information and footage is often hurriedly produced, received and broadcasted. In this case it was not simply a temptation to be the first to report the news, but there were also logistical constraints to using trusted sources. The February earthquake disabled traditional communications across a good portion of the affected area, temporarily maiming ways to contact “reliable” on-site sources. People in the city were communicating, with each other and to the world, via social media accessed on 3G devices; Facebook “status updates” informed their friends of the destruction and confusion and Twitter posts informed whoever was browsing the #eqnz hashtag of the devastation 140 characters or less. Therefore, the turn to online social media for information was justifiable, although risky.

Yet, however “unreliable” this information may have been, it still proved invaluable during television and online news coverage. Concerned friends and family could be updated, minute by minute, of the situation in Christchurch, and updates on mobile hospitals and other emergency details, could be collected and broadcasted to a large audience without much delay. As Allan and Thorsen (2011) state, “the importance of online news as a source of breaking news and ongoing story updates is particularly noticeable during times of a crisis” (p. 27); and this is particularly true for the UGC that came from the affected area. Television news, specifically, heavily rely on the audio-visual element; broadcasting images that illustrate the story at hand. Citizens – the ones who are usually the reported, not the reporters – were quicker on the mark at capturing and uploading footage of the February 22nd earthquake than the two large, heavily funded, professional news organisations of New Zealand.

These tensions play out in the overall ambivalence of news organisations demonstrate toward UGC. Online news organisations and television news do acknowledge the usefulness of UGC – but only to an extent. Both NZ Herald and Stuff request reader’s videos and pictures, particularly surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes, and the websites for TVNZ and TV3 have links to where audiences can send their own content which then may either be broadcasted or embedded into the news section of each site. Cleary and Bloom (2011) studied a number of American television news websites for their use of UGC; what they found was that most of these sites offered a way for audiences to share their opinions or upload visual content. However, the majority of content published on the sites, and broadcasted on television, was weather related; photos and videos of storms, snowfalls etc. – things not generally considered substantial or important news. Furthermore, the authors found that the majority of these requests for user generated content were more focussed on attracting audiences by offering “‘their 15 minutes of fame’, and much less concerned with seeking out truth, telling compelling stories, or adding new information to the public discourse” (p. 106). This is because, as Zhu (2010) argues, audience like to feel included and, by encouraging users to create and interact, the news organisation benefits from a larger consumer market.

However, where hard-news is concerned, user generated content is, in the eyes of professional journalism, created by “amateurs”, therefore the media which they produce may be simply seen as inferior; “professional journalists consider their output to be more valuable than that of non-professional news producers because... they provide ‘reliable’ and ‘factual’ information” (Fenton & Witschge, 2011. p.156). This may be another reason for the lack of UGC covered during televised broadcasts of the Christchurch earthquakes. However, it may also be due to a disdain of the untrained and inexperienced content creators during a time when “large corporations are carrying out historic cutbacks in newsroom resources” (Cleary & Bloom, 2011. p.94).

Yet, those key pieces of UGC that are incorporated into televised news coverage generally share common, textual traits; they are all, seemingly, impromptu footage which has not been edited and tend to be of slightly higher image quality than the majority of YouTube footage. They also tend to lack much ‘background

noise' (in both Ypud and Strangentertainment's videos the dominant sounds are the filmer's voice as he speaks to the assumed audience). This is no coincidence; news organisations prefer footage which reflects a sense of 'unfolding reality', where the footage is merely *documentation* rather than interaction with events. News organisations often call for footage that has not had any editing at all and is one continuous shot; this is mainly so they, the news organisations, can shape the footage to fit within their news segment.

The broader contexts for such patterns are the challenges faced by mass media institutions from the disruptions of new (digital) forms of distribution. Some may argue that the role of professional journalism is dying, that new technology enables the "average Joe" to become the next Fox News; "the venerable profession of journalism finds itself at a rare moment in history when, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened... by the audience it serves" (Bowman & Willis, 2005. p.6). Yes, modern technology and new social platforms have induced a 'passive-audience' uprising – not in the rebellious manner necessarily, but a transformation of news consumption and interaction. As King (2010) points out "technological development shapes and conditions both the production and consumption of online journalism" (p. 266). The average person, although still passive in their news consumption in terms of the accessible ways to interact and produce at their disposal compared to how much of this is actually used, has the *potential* to create newsworthy media that could rival professional journalism in relation to quality and authoritativeness.

It needs to be reiterated that the potential power of "citizen journalism", "user generated content", or whichever term is used to refer to non-professional, online news practices is often overestimated. Jay Rosen declared in a resentful blog post to the "big media" in 2006, when this participatory potential was still developing, that "the people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2006) overturn traditional notions of a hierarchal, vertical sender-to-receiver model of media. According to Bruns (2011), "citizen journalists" have an advantage when it comes to news reporting; their large numbers, diversity and lack of "responsibility to commercial imperatives" enables them to "engage with the news in greater breadth and depth, and over a longer time" (p. 144). This may be so for those established as 'citizen journalists' acting as amateur news reporter; however, bare

eyewitness footage *must* rely on external (and internal, as Chapter 5 discusses) infrastructures to be made sense of and contextualised.

In fact in a broader sense the role of gatekeeper is not diminishing – it is more important than ever. There is an overflow of uncategorised, unorganised and often unreliable information being gushed from online news sources and social media; so much so that it can become overwhelming to try and compose a sense of narrative. The gatekeeper of news, the ‘journalist’, is being given a larger challenge than ever; discerning through ever increasing motley of fragmented information, in order to deliver a coherent and contextualised story to a large and demanding audience. The online newspapers’ and television news coverage of the earthquakes is an example of such information coordination and dissemination. Television news were sourcing material from Twitter, as well as YouTube and several other online resources, conveying to the audience the (seemingly reliable) information they gained in a way that was understandable. Online newspapers were updating their sites every couple of minutes; *The New Zealand Herald* ran live updates, including in their coverage Facebook posts from people in the region, Twitter reports, statements from power and phone companies, Civil Defence statements... all on one page and chronologically organised (“Latest Updates: Christchurch Earthquake”, 2011).

And it is also the case, as McNair (2011) argues, that “veracity, reliability, accuracy” are just as important to UGC as it is to professional news media. The on-the-scene authenticity of UGC is not enough to have an impact, to draw in an audience; there must also be a “perception of honesty and accuracy, and of intelligibility” (p. 46). This is where professional journalists come into play. UGC, such as eyewitness documents of a large-scale event, can provide much of the imagery and give a news story or documentary its influence. However, the journalistic role is needed to make sense of the chaos and to provide a coherent and credible narrative. As Pecquerie and Kilman (2007) describe; “professional editors” are needed to turn this user-generated content into “journalism”. Yet, as Jones and Salter (2012) discuss, news organisations who gather information via this “crowdsourcing” are likely to dominate those who rely specifically on “information monopolies” due to the pervasive nature of social media.

The audience is not turning directly to third-party, “amateur” sources for the complete story, as Peter Horrocks (2008), Director of the BBC World Service, states: “I have seen no evidence that raw audience interaction or unvarnished news direct from the audience is more attractive than professional news”. It is highly doubtful that any technological or social developments, no matter how pervasive, will take away the need for context, credibility and intelligible narrative – those of which traditional news media offer. It is perhaps more accurate to suggest that traditional news media may be becoming a cog in the wheel of a larger, more complex and chaotic narrative that the audience forms through *several* information systems:

Because of the input of multiple interactive users, news texts produced are not always self-enclosed. They can gain layers and shed skins, becoming moments in larger narratives that circulate and iterate around the net, rather than the neat, linear sender-to-audience flows traditionally associated with mass media. (Meikle & Redden, 2011. p. 11)

Collaboration between news organisations and social media systems is imperative for the flow of information as the hierarchies between journalism and audiences flatten (Deuze & Fortunati, 2011; Jones & Salter, 2012; Rosen, 2006). Crucially, that information is not *controlled* by one institution; social media that connect millions of users in one space, that shares multimedia information, and loosely categorises and popularises content making it accessible, transforms information into a chaotic assemblage. The public may lead news media to information when the information comes en masse, and the media may lead people to information when the information becomes available elsewhere.

The argument that UGC needs the professional journalist to be disseminated and distributed (Nguyen, 2011; Pecquerie & Kilman, 2007; McNair, 2011; Fenton & Witschge, 2011; Boczkowski, 2010; Zhu, 2010) is still true, however it is much more complicated than any sender-to-audience *or* audience-to-distributor model. Ultimately, as noted above, this is becoming a deeply *symbiotic* relationship. The participatory nature and diverse demographic of the world wide web and various social media dictate that the discourse surrounding a topic is constantly changing – each bit of information published by users and traditional media is now part of a

larger narrative that is informative, heterogeneous and contradictory at the same time.

3.4 Conclusions

So far this chapter has shown that eyewitness footage is generally used as illustration during professional news coverage, mainly being incorporated as images to add a visual element to a news story. However, the issue of authenticity comes in to play here; pieces of UGC can act as a form of eyewitness testimony through, not only being created by ‘regular’ people, but also the poor camera quality, lack of narrative or context, and of being uploaded to online social media. These elements create a sense of authenticity that can work in the favour of traditional news media and are increasingly appropriated as a source of raw footage. However, there are many risks associated with using amateur footage during a live television broadcast; potential copyright issues involved when not crediting the source, no way of knowing whether the footage is trustworthy (was the footage really captured at this time, at this place?), hastily broadcasting such UGC can be damaging (incorrect information, swear words, graphic content etc.), and the poor quality of the majority of these pieces of UGC could make the news organisation look ‘unprofessional’ and not up to the quality standards audiences have placed upon the medium.

Although this UGC could possibly be unreliable and have bad picture quality, it is still a valuable news source that, before the time of the common camera phone and readily available access to the internet, would have been unavailable. In times of a crisis, almost any viable information that can be gained quickly is valuable information that can be communicated to the public. And, as with a couple pieces of UGC from the Christchurch earthquakes, it can be relayed to the public quicker than professional reporters. It needs to be acknowledged that traditional news sources are not dying out because of the ability for potentially anyone to create and publish ‘news’; online news sites and television news currently remain important conductors of information, collecting, organising and conveying information gained from several sources in a linear and coherent narrative.

Although, in some cases, UGC may be used as a news source itself, the ‘story’ is not complete without added information. In the case of the Christchurch

earthquakes, user-created content mainly focuses on *documenting* the event, not necessarily reporting on the catastrophe or even adding *new* information to the discourse. These types of UGC are only pieces of information that can only be made sense of with added input from other sources. Still, audio-visual UGC and information sourced through social media can be a valuable tool for television and online news to relay information to the public when their own staff are unavailable, with the creators of such content unwittingly recruited as “on-site correspondents” (Meikel & Redden, 2011. p.10).

Meikle and Redden (2011) state that “for many people, the news is no longer something they read, listen to or watch – the news is now something they *do*” (p. 10). However, it is more accurate to say that the news is now something that people can actively *contribute to* or, as Boczkowski speculates, a “complement to, rather than a replacement for” (2010, p.184), and these contributions in times of a crisis may be something that the ‘news’ relies on.

The next chapter discusses the types of UGC that goes beyond pure ‘witnessing’ to provide opinions and evaluations; from those eyewitness footage where we encounter more deliberate ‘performance pieces’, from reporter role-playing (interviewing passers-by, relaying additional information, etc.), to vlogs providing opinion and discussion, and tribute pieces that attempt to provide a collective of audio-visual content into the one video.

Chapter 4

From the Margins: The Ephemeral Material

The Christchurch earthquakes caused a flurry of eyewitness footage; short, low quality clips captured with mobile devices that, individually, offer virtually no information or explanation to the images shown. These pieces of UGC are, naturally, audio-visual fragmented documentation of a larger, reality-based event. Although the majority of content on YouTube relating to the Christchurch earthquakes were in the form of eyewitness footage, there were, also, other more ‘planned’ pieces of UGC that are, not only worth the mention, but are also key contributors to a ‘documentary collective’. This material borders on the margin of this collective, adding an element that cannot be overlooked purely for its seeming lack of ‘documentary’ value.

Recombinant work will be more and more common... Collage, montage and the quick-and-dirty efficiency of recombinant forms are driven by the romantic, Robin Hood-like efforts of the copyleft movement. Real-time, on-the-fly voiceovers will replace scripted narratives. Personal, on-site journalism and video diaries will proliferate. On-screen text will be visually dynamic, but semantically crude. Language will be altered quickly through misuse and slippage. (Sherman, 2008. p.161-162)

Sherman’s prediction of user-generated video is a simplistic overstatement of the amateur’s inability to create quality content, and ignores the possibility that certain characteristics of professional video may carry over to UGC. It does, however, represent in the most basic terms the type of ephemeral material to be produced surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes. Yet, of course, this may not be due to lack of ability or rebellion against traditional media but, as discussed in Chapter 2, the *temporal* limitations and expectations that ‘hot event’ UGC often abides by.

Here this chapter discusses the content created by YouTubers which showcases the extent of UGC beyond eyewitness documents. This material, such as vlogs (*vlogs*), tributes/music videos, parodies and conspiracy theories is, as with the eyewitness footage, *ephemeral* in its nature; content that is short-lived, produced en masse through spurts of relevancy, eventually dissipating and becoming forgotten among the digital archive or disposed of entirely.

4.1 Remixing: Tribute pieces

Remixes have long been a tradition on YouTube, where users have collected material from others or taken professional material to create ‘new’ content. These ‘remixes’ can range from the collection of material appropriated from a film dubbed or subtitled to create a different meaning than the original, or a ‘mashup’ of professional content to create a ‘best of’ highlights or aggregation and collocation of various material to show an encompassing view of an event.

In this case I’ll be discussing one type of user-created remix that is characteristic of the content surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes. These are videos which depict scenes of devastation from the region created to pay tribute to the lost lives and general hardship felt by residents. The majority of these remixes contain visuals sourced from various media, either through UGC created by their YouTube peers or professional news coverage.

An example of one of these tribute pieces was created by user Mrmacman53 (2011, September 24)²³ of the February 22nd earthquake; the video depicts scenes from Christchurch through still and moving images. The material used was presumably sourced from various YouTube videos and professional journalist photographs, which are set to an orchestral piece from the 2010 film *Inception* soundtrack (which, surprisingly, makes the images seem more surreal). On top of cutting the images to correlate to the soundtrack, this particular user had also placed visual ‘effects’ within the video (turning some sections greyscale and panning still images) - effects common in readily accessible and free-to-use video editing software.

²³ Mrmacman53 ‘Christchurch Earthquake 22 February 2011’ <http://youtu.be/imIF6solT10>

From this research, this video appears to be a very typical example of other similar remix pieces. It features visuals cut to a soundtrack (often with a song haphazardly placed above these images without an attempt to correlate the two), and the use of basic visual effects available in free-to-use software and video editing sites – effects that do not benefit the video, apart from making the images seem more ‘interesting’. This style, or extent, of ‘editing’ reflects the novice level of editing skill generally associated with YouTube content - a skill consistent with video editing freeware.

Some users have gone beyond this expected and typical appropriation and re-combination of content by creating such videos with their own material. User 87leesie (2011, February 25)²⁴ uploaded one such video only 3 days after the February 22nd quake which contains footage and photographs that, in the video’s description, the user claims as their own. This particular piece, along with many others like it, is set to an “emotional” soundtrack – in this case an extended, remixed version of Célin Dion’s “My Heart Will Go On”.

The images combined with the soundtrack of these tribute pieces tend to be an indicator; an attempt to signal an emotional response from the ‘imagined audience’. This is reflected in the comments left by others on these videos, with many responding with messages of support – as seen in Wilensky’s (2012) research into social media’s role (particularly YouTube) over the March 2011 east Japan earthquake, where the author states that “remixing videos with images and music enhances emotional meanings and provides strong messages” (p.807).

The video created by 87leesie (2011, February 25) received a handful of comments, the majority of which were messages of support such as one comment that says: “I saw this, I cried. You poor things - my heart goes out to you”. (Although one user had commented on the song choice stating that “The music really ruins the video”.) However, other such tribute videos can harbour often aggressive arguments between commenters; one such example are the responses to Nakiman99’s (2011, February 26)²⁵ tribute video, where a comment that urges citizens to repent unto Christ if they are “unbelievers” has been lashed by others,

²⁴ 87leesie ‘Christchurch Earthquake Footage February 2011’ <http://youtu.be/ISNvKcss4Pk>

²⁵ Nakiman99 ‘Christchurch Earthquake Tribute – You’ll Never Walk Alone’ <http://youtu.be/OHvYDPvObc>

with one respondent commenting that this particular video is not the place to preach and another replying with “lolz is that why your churches all fell down 0_o”. This range of commentary, including critique (sophisticated or otherwise), supportive, derogatory, etc., is a familiar feature of YouTube, as any regular user of the platform will recognise.

These remix pieces or, in this case, ‘tribute’ pieces, reflect a type of virality and the uncontrollable distribution and reception that is virtually impossible to track, as is the nature of such content. Mrmacman53’s video (2011, September 24) contains dozens of fragmented bits of footage and still photos, presumably sourced from various YouTube contributions and other sites on the web. No credit or information is given as to where these images were sourced, and there is no real way of knowing whether these images are of the particular earthquake they attest to. Some of the moving images in this particular video can be recognised as eyewitness footage that had been uploaded to YouTube. These pieces may not have had a large number of views or been shared throughout the internet via hyperlinking or embedding the video on to a site, however their use in another users compilation (or ‘montage’) video does suggest how easily even such obscure material can circulate.

To date, these tribute pieces appear to be one of the only forms of UGC seen on YouTube to collect, collate and present a range of document-style material in one video. This level of participation with the content, whether traceable to its origins or not, reflects the nature of the viral video, rather than the term being used to “refer simply to those videos which are viewed by a large number of people” (Burgess, 2008. p.101). Remixing, in this case, constitutes a more dynamic form of participation with UGC and professional media – however the true extent of participation with the individual material could be contested. Readily available cut-and-paste video editing software provides the creator (or *remixer*) with a quick, easy to use way to collaborate various multimedia content, minimising the actually creative time spent on any such project.

4.2 Re-broadcasting the News

Another form of vernacular creativity, to use Burgess’ broad definition (Burgess, 2006), are a variety of clips simply taken from television broadcasting. During the

Christchurch earthquakes, many local YouTubers had recorded national news coverage and uploaded these fragments to the platform; these were recorded either using a PVR device such as a set-top box, or with a handheld camera directed at the physical television set. Such material, surprisingly, was quite vast and representative – for example, after a number of failed attempts at recovering the original broadcasts from the two major televised news outlets in New Zealand, I turned to YouTube where I attained the news coverage surveyed in Chapter 3.

Television news in particular is ephemeral in its nature, more so than any other form of television broadcast. It adheres to the moment; providing information and visuals of a current event set in a certain temporal space representative of the ‘now’. While some televised news items are presented again during a follow-up story, in most cases these televised news items are short-lived. Once aired and presented to the public, they are put aside and replaced by new items, due to the expiration of their temporal relevancy.

Most major news networks would keep a record of and copies of each news item, though, as my research encountered, these are not made readily available to the public. There is more than one way to attain information about a news event since passed, however none so visually informing or contextualised as the televised broadcast; therein lays the difficulty of framing (individual) eyewitness documents within a broader context.

YouTube’s role as an archive has been much disputed (as it will in this research) however, in this case, YouTube happens to act as a *public* archive of such news footage when the original creators stow it away. Although, this ‘archive’ is not perfect; videos tend to often disappear (one such video I distinctly remember viewing on YouTube which showed the initial TV3 broadcast of the February earthquake was removed sometime between my initial viewing and the writing up of this research) and the broadcasts available are just un-chronologically disorganised fragments. Yet, after the temporal quality of news items has passed, there is much professionally mediated information to be gained through these YouTube videos - the professional quality of the information disseminated is still there, just in a different package.

Therefore, in saying that individual eyewitness documents rely on traditional broadcast media to provide context (especially those documents which appear *within* televised news coverage) is still true, however these broadcasts do not necessarily remain to be viewed on their respective medium or on a platform that is mediated by those professionals actually associated with the content.

What this brings to the overall ‘collective’ of materials from the Christchurch events is an element of contextual information from trusted sources, mixed in with eyewitness footage and other UGC on YouTube; the passing, ephemeral nature of the live broadcast lives on (in unstable fragments).

4.3 The Parody: Making light of a dark situation

Among all the eyewitness footage and emotional soundtracks put to such serious imagery on YouTube, there has been a number of user-generated content that attempts to shed some light hearted humour within the YouTube ‘atmosphere’ surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes. These pieces of UGC are more characteristic of the ‘classic’ YouTube video; a creation of original/remixed content to form an entertaining experience.

For example, YouTuber Mearlenz (2011, June 23)²⁶ posted a creative parody of the news coverage surrounding the February 22nd earthquake. This video sees original TV One news coverage with the ‘on-the-scene’ images replaced with the user’s own, ‘fictitious’ footage. This video was meant to be taken as facetious; meaning it was made with the intention of adding some light-hearted humour to an overall grim situation and was obviously not to be taken seriously. The video sees the TV One news presenter informing the audience of the breaking news story, however when it cuts to the on-the-scene footage, this is replaced by faked images showing someone rattling a letterbox and a cat being flung into the air. The video carries on this way, with subsequent ‘footage’ showing a boot kicking over a rubbish bin and a man in a wig falling over and rolling around on the ground. The creator had even gone as far as to dub-over a telephone interview done with a Christchurch National Member of Parliament with their own

²⁶ Mearlenz ‘Christchurch Aftershocks 2011 – Rare Footage’ <http://youtu.be/sPOAA7AFy1w>

recording – making out as if the MP was ordering a sandwich from Subway when he was meant to be doing his job.

Although the user states in the video’s description that one has “*got to have a laugh in these shakey [sic] times, so please don't take offence*”, it appears as though, judging by comments left by other users, that many *did* take offence. This may have not been because of the video’s content, but rather the misleading title of “Christchurch Aftershocks 2011 - Rare Footage” which would have caused audiences to click on the link expecting genuine footage and were possibly frustrated when they realised they had been tricked.

Created by a Christchurch resident, this parody shows how YouTube can become a vice of some sorts; to vent frustration about the government in a satirical way and create a humorous side to such a dramatic and consequential event - at the same time mocking how the national news media creates a spectacle of the earthquakes by showing partiality towards the more ‘sensational’ imagery.

Yet, not all UGC with this comedic value was made with this intention, or even appear to be staged in any way. A video uploaded by YouTube user Maxplatinum (2011, February 21a)²⁷ (the title dubbed by social media as “Don’s Driveway”) shows another side to the comedic value of UGC hidden amongst such serious imagery and themes, with the video showcasing some ‘accidental’ humour. Although it was not intentionally made to be ‘funny’, it soon became one of the most shared and remixed pieces of eyewitness footage on YouTube – made especially so after both major news networks aired the video during the 6 o’clock news.

The video is simple; the man filming focuses on a ‘river’ of liquefaction flowing down a residential driveway and, with a very thick New Zealand/Australian accent, yells “Don! Hey Donald! Have a look outside ya’ drive!”. The uploader promotes this video in the description as a “real Kiwi bloke’s response” adding that he also had cheap local beer in the other hand. The sheer simplicity of the 33 second long clip and the familiarity of the man’s accent and laid-back attitude towards such an abnormal occurrence provides not only comedic value, but evokes images of ‘Kiwi’ identity. It reinforces the New Zealand ideology of being

²⁷ Maxplatinum ‘Christchurch earthquake’ <http://youtu.be/tQTu1n89pBM>

laid-back in times of crisis; of taking everything in stride and not being phased by aberrant occurrences.

Both this type of content (although given its comedic reputation by audiences) and the intentionally crafted parodies such as Mearlenz's (2011, June 23) video, bring a 'whimsical' element to the collective. They create a break within the more dramatic content by altering the meaning of document-style footage and showcasing the more playful side of YouTubers.

4.4 Conspiracy Theorists: Making their mark within the collective

Quite the opposite in intent to the parody content of YouTube, are a small number of conspiracy theory style videos which attempt to place the blame of the earthquakes on an outside, international influence. The key conspiracy theory surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes involves the claim that the quakes were 'man-made' through chemicals dropped by commercial airplanes (resulting in thin horizontal cloud formations referred to as 'chemtrails') which caused the tectonic plates under the earth in that area to shift. This theory relates to a project based in Alaska called HAARP (High-frequency Active Aural Research Programme) which, according to conspiracy theorists, has the destructive power to cause almost any 'natural' disaster, control minds, block missiles and can apparently even be used as a "death ray" (Naiditch, 2003).

From those few conspiracy-styled YouTube videos studied, none provide a coherent and convincing argument, though they do try to substantiate their arguments by providing 'evidence' that is meant to give some sense of authority to their perspective. Frequent YouTuber and self-proclaimed 'alternative news source' MRNEWSguerillamedia (2011, September 26)²⁸ presents 'facts' that suggest the USA government may have had a hand in *creating* the earthquake on February 22nd 2011; including reports of nine US congressmen leaving Christchurch hours before the earthquake, and the head of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) visiting the city that same day. According to 'Mr News', a source states that both NZ and Japan had received threats just before

²⁸ MRNEWSguerillamedia 'John Key says: Christchurch Earthquake was man made? MR NEWS' http://youtu.be/3CZD_THg1iM

both countries had catastrophic earthquakes, however the most ‘compelling evidence’ the video provides is an audio recording of John Key, New Zealand Prime Minister at the time, during a press conference where he purportedly (and clumsily) referred to the major Christchurch quake as “man-made” more than once.

This video in particular, and others like it which collate ‘facts’ and ‘evidence’ together with an authoritative voice-over above relevant, highly edited imagery creates the verisimilitude (or semblance of truth) that attempt to convince audiences. The theory itself (though *any* legitimacy to the theory has been widely debated) may appear inviting for some of the audience of YouTube though outside the bounds of the discourse itself, these kinds of claim appear to be ridiculous. They place the blame with governmental superpower such as the USA (featuring the notion of an all-powerful force conspiring against the ‘little man’). The persistence of this conspiracy theory may be related to Niaditch’s (2003) explanation that this “gizmo” named HAARP, located in the “remote Alaskan wilderness”, that “plays around” with the Earth’s ionosphere is an attractive target and deeply mysterious to the “scientifically uninformed” (p.12).

Apart from these somewhat *eccentric* theories, what sets these videos apart from the other UGC surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes is the degree of ‘professional’ quality they exhibit. MRNEWSguerillamedia’s (2011, September 26) video deliberately mimics a professional fact-based news segment. However, one of the more interesting aspects to the conspiracy theory video is that the style can cross ‘genres’; a video posted by TheCONtraildotcom (2011, December 23)²⁹, for example, attempts to provide ‘proof’ to the conspiracy through a montage of time-lapse footage of cloud formations (apparently captured the day before or the day of the December 23rd 2011 aftershock) in Christchurch.

However the most common form of conspiracy video and, by far, the most opinionated conversational pieces, are vlogs. These tend to resemble ‘ramblings’ rather than constructed argumentative pieces. Canadian user Thetruthergirls (2011, February 24)³⁰ appears to follow natural disasters (and terrorist attacks)

²⁹ TheCONtraildotcom ‘Christchurch Sky just before earthquakes 23 December 2011’ <http://youtu.be/ZyMwiIpUqgw>

³⁰ Thetruthergirls ‘New Zealand Quake : HAARP Again?’ <http://youtu.be/AV-W3CJAkuo>

that, they argue, are part of a larger conspiracy involving the American government – they call these particular disasters “false flags”. Interestingly, in order to create the sense of unbiased and fair representation, the vlogger uses words such as ‘apparently’, ‘possibly’ and ‘*appears to be*’, rather than initially stating outright that their theory is accurate. Their vlog relating to the February 22nd earthquake incorporates reports from alternative online news sources, focussing particularly on items stating US officials were warned before the earthquake, relating this back to similar ‘reports’ of officials leaving the area where terrorists attacked the London subway in 2005 only hours beforehand.

User DougandDonna7 (2011, September 3)³¹ which, according to their ‘channel’ page, are based in the United States, uploaded a video which provides ‘proof’ through the appropriation of professional documentary content. The video appears to be a rough compilation of footage from televised documentaries surrounding the HAARP conspiracy, placed together alongside footage from that particular Christchurch earthquake. Although there is no ‘rounded’ argument per se (unlike other YouTube videos which include a voice-over from the uploader themselves) the message presented to viewers is still clear. YouTube records show that this video was uploaded to the site on the 3rd September 2010, indicating that it was uploaded that exact same day of the September 4th earthquake in Christchurch (New Zealand time). The speed with which this video was uploaded demonstrates the ease with which events such as the Christchurch earthquakes can be sutured into such ongoing conspiracy narratives.

4.5 Vlogs: The dimension of discussion

As seen with the Canadian vlog on the HAARP ‘conspiracy’, vlogs add the dimension of discussion to the overall collective. And, for most accounts, this discussion is usually informal, conversational and highly opinionated presenting arguments formed out of hearsay, personal experience, and the recitation of information disseminated through traditional and alternative news sources.

The typical YouTube vlog sees the creator sitting in front of a webcam or static camera speaking directly to the imagined audience, whereas an interesting trend

³¹ DougandDonna7 ‘New Zealand EARTHQUAKE caused by H.A.A.R.P.! <http://www.haarp.net/> <http://youtu.be/T-lr8Q0o6yw>

which developed within the Christchurch-centric vlogs saw the inclusion of the creator's own eyewitness footage and semi-detailed fact reporting. A video uploaded by user Samnudds (2010, September 3)³², for example, sees the vlogger address the audience with his handheld camera amongst the rubble that is Christchurch CBD, occasionally turning the camera away from him to show particular areas of destruction. Again, this is more of a conversational piece, discussing his own experience with the September 4th earthquake while relaying particular details such as the quake's magnitude and exact time it struck. Although this is mainly a 'vlog', the creator has also created a mashup of footage and still images against music amongst direct addresses to the camera.

YouTube records show that Samnudds' video was uploaded the same day as the earthquake, and this immediacy of creating and uploading the content provides an insight into the emotional state of a Christchurch resident following a massive quake. Although the vlogger is fairly composed in this video, the recount of his experience with the repetition of the word 'unbelievable', and the possible embellishment of certain aspects of his story, shows how shaken one can be after experiencing such an event.

Vlogs also have the potential to address issues not always covered by traditional news media, presented to us by someone who is purportedly in the affected area. Daily vlogger and Christchurch resident Cactuskiwi often discusses a variety of aspects and issues pertaining to the earthquakes, particularly local issues within the vlogger's own neighbourhood. Most of Cactuskiwi's vlogs tend to be the typical stationary camera address, however the video entitled '*Why the east of Christchurch is upset*' (Cactuskiwi, 2011, March 4)³³, shows the creator outside, within the community, discussing issues relating to the availability of porta-loos throughout Christchurch suburbs.

Without running water for most of the city after the February 22nd quake and damage to the sewage system, portable toilets became a key necessity. However, an article by Stuff.co.nz ("Portaloos Go Unused", 2011) actually stated that many of the 1800 porta-loos within Christchurch as of mid-March were not being used.

³² Samnudds 'Christchurch NZ Earthquake Update' <http://youtu.be/yvv-0svpomw>

³³ Cactuskiwi 'Part 2 - Why the east of Christchurch is upset - Chch EQ Feb '11 vLog Day 12 - Life on the East Side' <http://youtu.be/G3blMcrOPz4>

The author of this vlog addresses this issue, yet argues that these toilets have not been evenly spread out between the suburbs, leaving the east side of Christchurch (where the vlogger lives) without a sufficient amount. His particular suburb also happened to be the ‘5%’ of Christchurch at that stage still without power, leaving a large portion of residents without heating or food preparation abilities during a cold and wet autumn.

The author argues that the situation for a portion of residents is ‘unfair’; that some suburbs have gotten “special treatment” over others, while pointedly questioning whether these particular suburbs were where council members lived. This vlog appears to be made with the purpose of showing the frustration felt by many residents towards the council and resentment within the community of those more ‘privileged’ than others, with the unbalanced distribution abundant portable toilet and access to electricity.

This video, and many like it, provide added background information to the slightly less-informed viewers, while discussing the situation through a first-hand account of localised issues within the community and with a group of peers. In many ways, these vlogs are also a form of eyewitness testimony; breathing a sense of authenticity through an authoritative voice.

However, the most important aspect to these vlog pieces is the dimension of discussion that they bring to the collective and public forum; not necessarily through a purely two-way conversation, but through the limited forms of discussion facilitated by the platform. The aforementioned video by Cactuskiwi has had several ‘conversational’ comments posted by other YouTubers in the region, discussing their own experience in relation to issues raised in the vlog, often with the original uploader responding to these comments. Among Cactuskiwi’s series of vlogs relating to the earthquakes, some are direct responses to other user’s vlogs, responding to and, in a way, arguing points made within the videos.

The *Nicholsian* institutional framework of the documentary genre insists there needs to be more to the piece as a whole (in this case, the collective) than a series of documents; “...we expect to learn or be moved, to discover or be persuaded of possibilities that pertain to the historical world” (Nichols, 2001. p. 39). My

argument here is that this set of ephemeral material, especially vlogs, provides this element of persuasion and emotional connection. Many vlogs, such as the video by Cactuskiwi, are ‘politically’ and socially motivated – more so than the conversational comments made during eyewitness footage. These vlogs add another controversial element through the broader public discussion of topics associated with the Christchurch earthquakes, while bringing forth the semblance of authenticity through the authoritative voice of someone immediately affected; the eyewitness.

4.6 Conclusion

The material discussed here, although not necessarily ‘documents’ themselves like the over-common eyewitness footage, are an integral element of the overall collective. They provide a dimension of discussion within the collective (vocalising issues within local communities, bringing evaluations and opinions to the online public forum, and providing a space for discussion on YouTube itself).

It is also this material (tributes/remixes, vlogs, and conspiracy theories) that most resembles patterns of representation we associate with the traditional documentary genre. There is here a discussion and organising of ‘facts’ to provide an ‘argument’ of sorts, or the intention to persuade us emotionally. Remixes and tribute pieces provide an organisation of visual documents (although, often, these assemblages of various content appear to be placed in no particular order, and they are used to illustrate and evoke an emotional response from audiences). Conspiracy theory style videos add an element of controversy while providing ‘evidence’ carefully positioned to reflect the creators intended argument.

These are the closest the set of YouTube materials come to reflecting the more conventional patterns of the documentary genre. The following chapter will explore how these, along with eyewitness documents discussed in earlier chapters, together form on the platform of YouTube a set of possibilities for potential documentary ‘narratives’. This discussion considers the individual pieces of UGC within the broader collective, and how these materials are organised and displayed to the audience.

Chapter 5

A Documentary Collective?

“We no longer watch film or TV; we watch databases” (Lovink, 2008. p.9)

Eyewitness documents, traditional news media, and other ephemeral material do not necessarily, on their own, create a collective documentary piece. In terms of such a prominent, real event as the Christchurch earthquakes, there are a number of factors that are put into play to create this ‘factual ensemble’. This interpretation of a ‘collective documentary’ is not necessarily a literal interpretation; although there are some UGC that attempt to collate various materials into one solid ‘documentary’ style piece, the collective that is referred to here is not in such a stable or permanent state, or even created and maintained by one, or one group of, individuals. Here, the YouTube material surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes is referred to as a ‘collective’, not purely because there are mass amounts of similar content, but through the ways in which this content is presented, categorised and interconnected *upon the one platform*.

With traditional documentary, a ‘creator’ (whether an auteur or small production team) is needed to collect and collate documents (various pieces of historic material) and for these documents to be elaborated on and ‘made sense of’ within the cinematic piece, forming a coherent linear narrative that binds all evidential material to provide some form of emotional or factual persuasion. Here, this chapter discusses the continuities and departures from this classical documentary theory through the case study of content relating to the Christchurch earthquakes. YouTube houses a vast variety of material, the majority of which exhibit ‘document’ style elements (some are first-hand eyewitness footage, others discuss the experiences of local residents and the hardships that they are facing). The argument here is that these indexical qualities, as well as presentational and interactivity aspects, create an assemblage of elements that hold the possibility to form potential ‘narratives’. This, in its most basic form, is engaged by users as a sequence of documents and evaluative pieces (vlogs, news coverage, etc...) that

have the possibility to resemble a ‘narrative’. And, most importantly, this is a narrative which the platform not only facilitates but encourages users to follow.

Though, what constitutes a narrative is up for discussion with many attempts to define *narrative* in the ‘digital age’ has sparked considerable debate (Page, 2012). Manovich, for example, argues that databases are a defining characteristic of computer-based media such as the internet. For him, the term narrative is inadequate to describe the pathways through archival material such as that on YouTube (Manovich, 2001). Page (2012), in contrast, believes temporality is key in recognising narratives; whether this is through the use of timestamps on Twitter posts, or the use of a date of upload or titles that section material into ‘parts’ on YouTube. He implies that fragmented information such as that which dominates social media, can create a narrative *providing* a type of chronology is followed.

The type of content this research focuses on is not confined to an identifiable and stable ‘series’ of material created by one individual user, or even sectioned by specific timeframes. The potential narratives seen within sparse material surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes resembles what Ryan (2011) describes as a “hypertext narrative” which is “a collection of documents interconnected by digital links” (p.40).

The possibility that a narrative can be formed under such circumstances is debateable; with some stating that a narrative relies on chronology and causality - whereas a ‘hypertext narrative’ allows the audience to choose the sequence of documents in any random order (Ryan, 2011). Though Ryan also argues that a narrative meaning can be achieved, even through the audience’s incomplete exploration of content, if the database that houses these documents is properly structured and contains appropriate subject matter (Ryan, 2011).

For example, say we start at a piece of footage depicting liquefaction damage to a suburban street after the February 22nd Canterbury earthquake. From there, we could move through the YouTube database, utilising automatically generated ‘related videos’, to gather more information surrounding the earthquake. From eyewitness footage to news reports; from vlogs to conspiracy theories: the collection of documents would be ultimately presented before the audience within a series of hyperlinks on the one platform.

The lack of ‘beginning, middle and end’ to this conjunction of content goes against any understanding of a typical or archetypal narrative structure; the ‘beginning’ here is where the user chooses it to be, and the ‘end’ is where the user decides to stop or change topic. Everything in between is contingent upon the user’s interaction with the database. This narrative is erratic and transitional, relying on a number of elements to ‘come together’, and on this particular audience to interact with this collection of content. This definition of ‘narrative’ is one that is contextualised within the possibilities of the digital archive. The narrative emerges through the formation of pathways within the collective. Each pathway is unique and dependant on the engaged and persistent interactions of the users themselves, together with the way each individual content creator publishes and promotes their content. In real terms, the narrative must be actively ‘performed’ by the audience in order to cohere as an actual totality.

5.1 YouTube as the facilitator of this ‘narrative’

YouTube, as a platform video-file sharing, a social media site and an archive of digital content (though its true function as an “archive” will be problematized here) is the key facilitator of these potential sequences. The site’s recommendation system generates pathways through mass amounts of, presumably, related content and, in turn, encouraging audiences (users) to interact with the collective of content.

The first point that is needed to be made is how, as Chapter 2 explores, individual eyewitness-style UGC offer comparatively limited background information with the content – typically only providing a brief title, broad keywords (or tags) and, occasionally, a short video description. Individually, these eyewitness documents rely on information provided by outside sources to add meaning and context to the content. Traditional news media (whether viewed on its respective medium or on YouTube itself), at least during the Christchurch earthquakes, provides the most coherent construction of events, while often including eyewitness footage as an illustration or a separate news source. However, no individual video on the site is *truly solitary*; the inclusion of ‘related videos’ in the sidebar, along with direct hyperlinked-thumbnails to similar content appearing after the video has finished

playing, inevitably provides a lone piece of eyewitness footage with context *created by its surroundings*.

Admittedly, the way this material is collated into ‘related videos’ relies on the extent the uploader has gone to tag their content with appropriate keywords, including descriptions and titling. YouTube then automatically ‘ranks’ the videos in relation to relevancy of keywords and descriptors and the ‘popularity’ (or view count) of each video, displaying those with highest relevancy and popularity first.

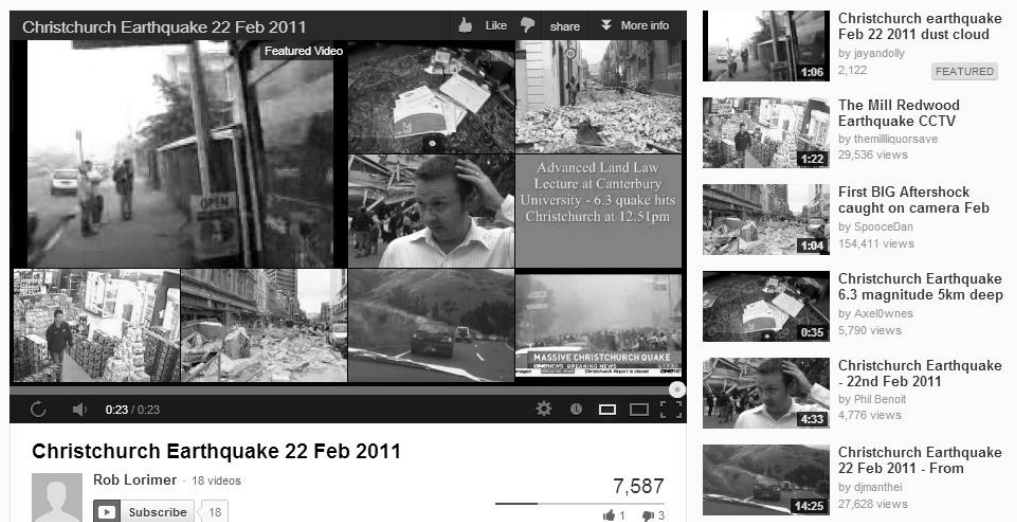


Figure 3: Rlorimer1966 ‘Christchurch Earthquake 22 Feb 2011’ http://youtu.be/U3eQzKmw_1A (Screen Capture taken on December 22, 2012)

The example given above shows a typical piece of eyewitness footage which offers only the most basic of information to potential audiences, but the featured content surrounding the video’s YouTube page offers added information in the form of titles communicating extra information (earthquake size, time, effects); through thumbnails that depict scenes from various locations and settings, providing a brief insight into the reach of the effects, and through the *types* of content. These ‘recommended videos’ featured here are not solely further pieces of eyewitness footage, or even UGC – they vary between quality, coherency and intent. In just the image included here, we see more eyewitness footage, CCTV footage, damage footage and traditional news coverage offered as related videos. While encouraging audiences to consume more YouTube content, the site is also providing a more fluid and varied type of contextualisation.

Crucially, this element of contextualisation happens even before a user selects material to view. Vast and varied amounts of content are presented to users upon entering a simple search phrase into the site's search bar, such as "Christchurch earthquake". We are given eyewitness footage, vlogs, recorded televised news broadcasts... even (misleading) parody videos. Studies indicate that internet users tend to only view the first page of search results (Jansen & Spink, 2006; Jansen et al., 2000) and, in this case, a simple keyword search will return results providing enough information and variation to provide a basic 'overview' of the topic. For example, at the time of this research, the "Christchurch earthquake" search results showed recorded television news footage, professional journalism interviews with residents, eyewitness footage, official reports and a user-generated video explaining how liquefaction occurs.

Although, thanks to active YouTubers, there is plenty of diverse material surrounding the subject, it is YouTube's ability to collect, categorise and present this content by putting certain algorithms into practice that creates the potential for narratives to be performed. The main way this is achieved is through uploaders input into the site; apart from the actual content users publish on the site, it is the extent to which the uploaders look to market their material through the addition of relevant (or sometimes irrelevant, as Chapter 2 discusses) information that dictates in which context the content will be placed. As YouTube does not mediate or moderate every single piece of UGC, or survey such content to determine its topic or aim, the platform relies on uploaders to 'tag' and title their material appropriately in order for it to be found within search phrases and within the context of 'related videos'.

Defining video content by using keywords and titles is important, not just to inform the potential audience of some basic context, but to determine the relevancy of 'similar' content. For example, if one were to view a piece of footage of the February 22nd earthquake that is entitled solely "Christchurch earthquake", the related videos sidebar may present content from all types of UGC and from any of the numerous earthquakes to happen in the region. Though, if this video included the specific date of the quake within the title, it is likely that the 'related videos' will also be of or about the same exact earthquake. With the example video above by Rlorimer1966 (2011, February 22) the date of the earthquake is

included in the title and, as we can see, the “related videos” are also of the same quake.

As discussed in the previous chapter, this ability for uploaders to tag their material can sometimes mislead audiences by irrelevant tags that market the material as something it is not. Uploaders can even change the thumbnail that appears to the audience within search results, misleading audiences by a false visual representation of the content. Tags are invisible in search results, meaning a video that is ambiguously entitled “Christchurch earthquake” may contain keywords that help define the search results. For example, the video could be tagged ‘vlog’ or ‘raw footage’, meaning when conducting a search for vlogs relating to the Christchurch earthquakes this video is more likely to appear. But often we see these ‘invisible’ tags as completely unrelated to the subject matter, tagged in order to potentially attract more viewers from more different search phrases. This deception has the potential to be disruptive of any type of narrative possibility to be generated via the offered ‘related videos’.

The point here is that seemingly inconsequential functions YouTube offers its users (tagging videos with searchable keywords, flagging a video inappropriate, ‘replying’ to a video with your own, or even commenting on a file). These are all necessary for YouTube to function as it does (Kessler & Schaffer, 2009). YouTube organises its content, not only through keywords but through ‘popularity’ rankings. Videos with more views and relevant keywords will be displayed first in the search results – so by accidentally clicking on a ‘related video’, the user is inadvertently rearranging where and how the content is displayed to potential audiences.

5.2 To what extent can we call YouTube an “archive”?

Many refer to YouTube as a digital archive – so too has this research – however, the *extent* of YouTube’s ability to archive material is in question. Typically, a digital archive is assumed to store content virtually indefinitely making it accessible to certain people or processes. Yet not one piece of material on YouTube is stored *on the site permanently*. The unpredictable and unstable nature of YouTube and its content determines that such content can invariably disappear

(there have been many occurrences during this research where, when upon attempting regain access to material, the content has since been removed).

Content creators or, more appropriately, the uploaders have control over how long their content stays on the site, being able to remove said content at any time. However, the YouTube policy states (in short) that by uploading content to the site you give consent for YouTube to store, reproduce commercially, create derivative works of, and transmit content through various channels (including offline) without royalties – meaning that almost any ‘rights’ you may have to your content, once published on the site, are revoked. Although uploaders still hold copyright, ultimately the content now becomes the property of YouTube and its fate is held in the site’s hands.

It isn’t solely up to the content creators to say whether their content stays on YouTube or not. How long content is publicly available on the site depends upon several parties who, with YouTube’s consent, can force certain videos, and even the uploader’s account, to be removed. There are no set guidelines on what one can and cannot publish on the site, however the YouTube’s ‘Terms of Service’³⁴ state that the site “reserves the right to remove Content without prior notice” (Section 6; Article F). Although YouTube explains in detail that any form of copyright infringement will be met with the removal of content and, for repeat offences, the deactivation of user accounts, other ‘infringing’ acts are not specifically detailed. The ‘Terms’ state that pornography and obscenity are among some of the reasons why content is removed, however to what extent obscenities may be used, or what constitutes ‘pornography’ is up to the public’s, and YouTube’s, discretion.

A file may be flagged by the community (or organisations who feel their copyright has been breached) for many *ambiguous* reasons; when one goes to flag a video a number of options appear where users can ‘tick’ which category of ‘infringements’ most apply, this includes ‘sexual content’, ‘violent or repulsive content’ and ‘harmful dangerous acts’. Though, once one is selected, a drop-down box will appear with a small amount of further options to help ‘specify’ the infringement; ‘harmful dangerous acts’ include ‘drug abuse’, ‘abuse of fire and

³⁴ Terms of Service; Retrieved December 21, 2012 from <http://www.youtube.com/t/terms>

explosives' and 'other dangerous acts'. YouTube staff then review videos which have been flagged by users '24 hours a day, seven days a week' to determine whether they violate YouTube's terms. The sheer ambiguity of potential violations means that this moderation rests ultimately on personal judgements, such as users 'flagging' a video simply because the content does not appeal to them and may, in any way (as many YouTube videos do), apply to one of the listed infringements. Though, it could be argued that, due to the size and variation of content on YouTube, it is necessary for some form of personal judgement to come into play when deeming a video inappropriate.

This reliance on the YouTube community to deem a video inappropriate has benefits as well as pitfalls but, in terms of this 'collective' seen here with UGC surrounding the Christchurch earthquakes, it is not as much of an issue due to the nature of the UGC. Out of the 200 videos surveyed for this research, none contained any nudity and the obscenities which do appear could be classed as warranted due to the imagery and circumstances.

However, what has become most apparent in this research is the issue of content being removed by their respective uploaders. This particular issue emphasizes the unstableness of the 'collective', deeming a reconstruction of content from a particular time impossible. Since the start of this research, many pieces of UGC have been removed, with the only evidence of its removal is through the memory of viewing particular material and returning to retrieve it at a later date, only to find it no longer exists. The content that 'disappeared' was not of only one type of UGC, but varied between eyewitness footage, recorded news footage and parodies, with no indication as to why the content would be removed.

Although, it is unlikely that a casual, everyday YouTube user would actively view the sheer amount of content on the same topic as was required for this research, the fact remains that an online collective of content is not stable or continuous. This volatility within online content is not solely confined to YouTube, or even just other forms of social media, but reflected across all internet-based material. News websites also have a habit of 'losing' content – whether this is due to it simply being deleted to allow more space on the servers, a site's inefficient search engine not being able to retrieve material from a particular time in the past, or an

updating of a site's coding or media players causing past content to be lost or made inaccessible.

As with the UGC studied in Chapter 4, all YouTube content shares an ephemeral quality; masses of similar content comes in waves during a 'hot event' such as a natural disaster or election, slowly dissipating along with the popular status of the event. This temporal quality carries through to the platform itself and how content on a particular subject matter is presented to the potential audience – and every pathway through this content, and every potential narrative, will be unique to the user's interaction with YouTube's material which remains available *at the time*.

An extension (albeit important) of this ephemeral nature is how users treat the content surrounding such a 'hot event' after the wave of popularity has passed. What was an interesting and unexpected discovery during the course of this research was what *could not* be found on YouTube. I have mentioned several times that YouTube houses a vast variety of diverse material, yet there are some key *types* of material that is missing from this immeasurably large vat of content.

Although many refer to eyewitness documents as a form of 'citizen journalism', from these findings, no UGC has actually gone as far as to provide a comprehensive journalistic report on the events. Some eyewitness footage sees the filmer attempt to 'interview' passers-by; asking them where they're going, if they know any more information, or simply asking them if they're OK. But none really show a thorough reportage style commonly associated with journalism practice. These documents may be used *by* journalists, but they typically do not constitute a form of journalism outside of their raw representations of an actual event.

Yet, what users do with the immense amount of YouTube material or, more appropriately, what they do *not* do is as curious as the YouTube content itself. Even though there is wide variety of material at the disposal of users, it appears as though none have gone as far as to collate this content in a coherent, structured piece. Tributes and music videos, as discussed in the last chapter, often cut-together several bits of media – ranging from UGC to televised news broadcasts – but there is no coherency in narrative. They provide only short snippets of visual documentation of the earthquakes – not unlike the way eyewitness documents are naturally presented on YouTube.

There are more literal, rounded pieces of UGC that attempt to provide a type of coherent narrative within the one video. Chapter 4 explores the material which falls outside the bounds of pure documentation to try and compose a structured piece (although more ‘conversational’, vlogs construct a story based on relevant events and issues, while including factual information). Yet these are not a collaboration of content, uploaded and created by a number of individuals, but content created by the one user. This includes examples such as the video by RivenMade (2011, February 23)³⁵ entitled *Christchurch earthquake – 22 Feb – View on the street* which is a compilation of the user’s own footage, created in a timeline-like sequence and narrated with in-video commentary.

None of the material covered in chapter 4 is ambitious in a documentary way, in the sense of attempting to collate audio-visual material into forms we recognise from film and television documentary. It is surprising that those users who have created a more organised and coherent ‘documentary’ have chosen to use only their own footage. The sheer amount and raw, unedited style of content available creates the possibility for something more dynamic to be formed, with the possibility to appropriate and reproduce such fragmented content in a way that forms an understandable and persuasive structure. For example, with understanding of how the events occurred and local knowledge, one could piece together a number of eyewitness clips to form a time-line sequence (much like the 2008 documentary by the History Channel called *‘102 Minutes that Changed America’*, where mainly eyewitness footage is used to recreate the timeline of events during the 9/11 attacks) or to recombine footage that is based in one particular geographical place or suburb.

The material is there, accessible to the public, on YouTube. YouTube’s policy even states that UGC may be appropriated by other users without having breached any ‘rights’; in fact, YouTube state that by uploading content to the site you grant permission for other users to “...access your Content through the Service, and to use, reproduce, distribute, display, publish, make available online or electronically transmit, and perform such Content...”. Apparently, however, any further

³⁵ RivenMade ‘Christchurch earthquake – 22 Feb – View on the street’
http://youtu.be/wVlrwQa8_jg

appropriation of other's content, bar the occasional tribute piece, even though it does not violate any terms of use, is in this case rare.

The lack of users' initiative in appropriating other user's content to potentially form a more literal documentary sequencing is not the only pitfall to the recreation of this collective. This narrative 'premise', of course, is based on the assumption that audiences would follow the chain of hyperlinked related videos; navigating from one to another until *possibly* covering all types of material. This is obviously heavily presumptuous and it is perhaps unlikely that audiences will view more than one or a small set of material relating to the Christchurch earthquakes.

Also, when navigating hyperlinked content on such sites as YouTube or Wikipedia a type of 'hyperlink free-fall' can happen³⁶. This is when, following the chain of hyperlinks (in this case, the 'related videos' sidebar on the YouTube video's page) the level of relevancy can drop dramatically, and eventually lead to content that shares absolutely no relation to the original piece. For example, when navigating away from Ypud's (2011, February 22) February 22nd Christchurch earthquake video through the 'related videos' sidebar, I was led to footage of a domestic pool after an earthquake in Mexico, from there a clip of the *Mythbusters'* television show creating a waterslide, then a video of an inflatable Godzilla, and on the fourth hyperlink it was an advertisement for 'Barbie's Gourmet Kitchen' toy.

5.3 The qualities of the 'documentary collective'

In order to provide some basis for comparison to conventional documentary narrative, I make reference here to Nichols' 2001 work *Introduction to Documentary*. Though Nichols' work is almost exclusively based on the examinations of cinematic documentary, basic core components of the genre can

³⁶ Cracked.com's infograph on the 'Wikipedia Free-fall' depicts the gradual degradation of relevancy when researching a particular topic when following hyperlinks within Wikipedia articles (<http://www.cracked.com/funny-6646-wikipedia-freefall/>). Although this is not an academic study, it is still a fairly accurate depiction of how such an exhaustive amount of interlinked information can become problematic for any emerging 'narrative', potentially leading users *away* from the original topic.

serve as a useful reference to this 'collective'. In particular, certain elements such as authenticity, visual and audial representation of the 'real world' and the inclusion of witness are key generic aspects reflected within the UGC studied.

YouTube and its diverse audio-visual content alone is a reflection of the culture, people and places at the time. As Nichols puts it: "Every film is a documentary. Even the most whimsical of fictions gives evidence of the culture that produced it and reproduces the likeness of the people who perform within it" (2001, p.1). It is, to some extent, only this broadest of definitions which adheres to the collective of YouTube material related to the Christchurch earthquakes.

A first question here is does a documentary really have to be a film? By film I mean a coherent, audio-visual piece that includes a beginning, middle and end. This research offers the possibility that a large number of short, audio-visual representations uploaded to YouTube, that are *seemingly not* inter-textually related, may actually become a documentary of itself. And, if we were to see documentary in this *Nicholsian* way, that "every film is a documentary", then the content of YouTube is, in itself, a form of "documentary". Though, for clarity, the 'documentary' discussed here solely focuses on those pieces of UGC that reflect the image of reality; a non-fictional audio-visual account of events past.

Documentaries provide a visual and audial depiction of the real world: footage of events, places and people, and diegetic sounds that relate directly to this visual depiction. This 'indexical' quality shared by all documentary film is, as Nichols states, potentially enough for the audience to believe in its truthfulness; "...we see what was there before the camera; it must be true" (Nichols 2001, p.3). Of course there are many other factors that contribute to its authenticity - though the main point here is that a documentary *must* contain the semblance of truthfulness; a seemingly non-fictional depiction/discussion of a time or place based in the historical world.

Visual representations of reality are often the main persuasive component of a film-based documentary, although the true authenticity of these images can be argued. With the ability for filmmakers to alter footage and the inability of images to capture an entire story. Eyewitness documents are no exception. UGC has long held the stigma of being 'untruthful' or 'fake', mainly due to the conditions under

which it is created, and by whom. Basically, this means UGC is created by, in most cases, those without any professional experience or education in film practice and, perhaps most crucially, any education concerning ethical guidelines.

Though just because professional documentaries are made by professionals who, we assume, must follow some code of ethics, this does not mean that amateur footage harbours any less authority. In some cases, professional documentaries can perhaps cast more doubt in the minds of the audience. Professional documentarians tend to have concise knowledge of film practices and harbour the skills to alter the meaning of a film through common documentary techniques (post-production editing, the arrangement of documents, allowing only one side to be argued or posing these arguments in an unfavourable light and, of course, the ‘voice of god’ commentary that can frame visual representations and steer audience’s perceptions). Eyewitness documents, on the other hand, tend to be more raw and impromptu, made generally without consideration of such cinematic techniques that may unduly lead audiences. In the case of the Christchurch earthquakes, the documents that arose from YouTubers (particularly those captured immediately after the event) tended to display images of pure unpremeditated spontaneity; more like a photographic image without any thorough explanation.

Of course, the nature of the event dictates that such imagery will be spontaneous. No one could foresee such, at times, catastrophic earthquakes and, due to the high quantity of such footage being uploaded to YouTube almost immediately, this means that any doubt to their authenticity that may be shed upon these videos is minimal. It must be stressed that, generally, any type of editing done to these documents is minimal; editing in such respect as to shorten clips, or piece together several bits of footage into the one video. In this case, this type of ‘editing’ appears to be for the sake of the viewers and the platform itself. YouTube does not allow videos of extreme length (usually only allowing videos of ten minutes or less), and the short duration caters to the imagined audience of YouTube who, for the most part, expect short videos (Cheng, Dale & Liu, 2008).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the temporal quality of eyewitness footage which imitates the ‘liveness’ of televised news also adds to this semblance of

authenticity. Here, it is the partial imitation of an established, fact-based story telling form that reinforces this sense of legitimacy; often we see short clips of real-life footage strewn in between reports, interviews and sound bites during coverage of a major event. Many of these pieces of UGC are unedited, concise footage capturing ‘the moment’ – a perfect fit for televised news reporting. As seen with the adaption of Ypud’s (2011, February 22) video depicting the effects of a cliff collapse moments after one of the earthquakes, the footage itself (apart from being an original source of information) fitted in with similar professional footage – so much so that it eventually became a stock image used amongst an array of professional content. The familiarity audiences hold with such professional practices could be carried over to user-generated content that bear resemblance to traditional news media items.

What traditional documentary styles often lack, however, is the element of the ‘eyewitness’: we, as an audience, believe YouTube footage comes from people directly affected; ‘real people’ (so to speak) who are not necessarily paid, or are not *contractually obliged* to capture these images. Professional documentary, even if the creator was there at the time of the event, tends to take a more detached and impersonal role, invariably as observer to the event. Televised news media use the ‘on the scene’ approach to validate their stories by placing a ‘trustworthy’ reporter in the foreground of the screen while the backdrop acts as a visual document; to confirm a presence *where* the event is taking place (Nichols 2001. p.54). Though, again, the reporter is personally detached from their surroundings, delivering information to the audience as one who is merely observing the goings-on from afar, distant from any true involvement. The eyewitness, however, has always been key to reproducing a historic event on screen – whether this is in journalism where the ‘eyewitness testimony’ is used to bring a voice of authority to the item (one of which claims to be personally involved) or in film-based documentary for a first-hand account of events or to add human interest to an otherwise formulaic piece.

Yet thanks to certain technological advancements, the eyewitness is no longer solely confined to the role of oral story-teller, but can now produce a more dynamic account through their own recording of the event. We are able to visually show our audience what we saw and, to some extent, portray our own raw

emotions at the time without embellishment. This form of eyewitness testimony provides a more sensory-dynamic account of events.

Although, not all user-generated eyewitness testimony is so transparent as raw footage depicting the filmer's surroundings; other UGC, like vlogs, are more direct forms of this attestation which see a witness recount their personal experiences and the experiences of those closest to them in front of the omnipresent digital camera. Though these vlogs, or 'witness accounts', are naturally premeditated and deliberately delivered in order to convey opinions, experiences and, at times, evaluations of the subject matter. Nichols argues that the documentary and its creators represent 'social actors' (or the people involved in the subject matter of the film) in a particular way – but can this be applied to content created *by* these 'social actors'?

A traditional documentary film aims to capture these actors in their 'natural habitat' - so to speak - during their day-to-day lives. Filmmakers who interfere with these 'social actors' jeopardise the film's integrity (Nichols, 2001); in all possibility causing them to actually *act* in a certain way, rather than being 'themselves'. Arguably, the same can be applied to eyewitness documents; in terms of UGC, a filmmaker is not representing the people, but the people are representing themselves.

In a more literal sense, vlogs act as the 'voice of the people'; disseminating information and opinions from an 'eyewitness' to the imagined audience of YouTube, and posing a one-to-many discussion of particular social and political topics. An example used in Chapter 4, by user Cactuskiwi (2011, March 4), discusses a particular aspect of the earthquake aftermath on the creator and his community. This vlog is socially as well as politically motivated, judging the government's actions (or lack thereof) and posing accusations of discrimination and inequality. The vlogger does not simply face the camera and address the audience, as most vlogs do (Burgess & Green, 2009), but shows the audience evidence for his claims, including relaying background information gathered via news outlets and hearsay within the community.

If we were to take YouTube, and its facilitation of potential pathways through content as a form of 'documentary', then we would see a wider array of opinions

and 'sides' openly offered to audiences than a conventional film-based documentary. From eyewitness accounts, politically motivated video logs and even controversial conspiracy theories. Of course, this all depends on the audience and how far and for how long they follow the trail of related videos through each and every possible argument - but the *potential* for greater diversity of opinions through fragmented material than tends to appear within mainstream broadcasting.

This is not to say that YouTube is more comprehensive than traditional documentary solely because more diverse material is offered, but that there are seemingly endless possibilities as to what these 'narratives' may become. Again, this is where the presentation of content on the platform comes into play; which videos appear next on the list of 'related videos', and which appear on the first page or so of search results can greatly determine any potential narrative that may form. And, because these related results change inconsistently over time, (not to mention that occasionally the first couple 'related videos' that appear are now 'recommended for you' based on your previous, likely unrelated, interactions with YouTube content), the different pathways and potentialities are plausibly infinite.

Nichols (2001) asserts that the arrangement of documents, information and other auidial and visual material within the documentary is important in order to construct a narrative; a traditional documentary film conveys meaning and persuasive messages through the arrangement of documents and narration. YouTube, on the other hand, does not offer any purposefully constructed arrangement of documents. As discussed earlier, where UGC is placed within the context of other, similar content on YouTube can determine the pathways users may take to gain a possible narrative of the subject matter. However, any seemingly *purposeful arrangement* of material on YouTube appears solely to promote 'featured' commercial content, and not for the sake of a persuasive or compelling story.

In comparison to the collective of documents seen on YouTube, a more specialised collection of documents pertaining to the Christchurch earthquakes has been collated on a NZ based website designed specifically to archive such material. Although still in its infancy, the UC CEISMIC programme is an online

archive of digital items relating specifically to the Christchurch earthquakes.³⁷ The site was created by and is maintained by the University of Canterbury's Digital Humanities team, and includes contributions from the public and a number of stakeholders. However, there are some fundamental differences between the UC CEISMIC programme and YouTube that set them apart; first and foremost, the UC website is curated by a number of individuals, who monitor and review content for quality and accuracy. The site is also designed so that content is easily navigable and search results can be filtered – although not all content held by the programme is publicly available. The content on the site is solely focussed on the Christchurch earthquakes and the site claims all content is stored indefinitely in order to “ensure it is safeguarded for future generations”. YouTube, on the other hand, lacks this type of consistency within material, relying solely on uploaders to categorise their content within the broader collective. It is also, as has been discussed here, not stored permanently or for a specific timeframe; the unstable nature of the platform and content defies any apparent ‘archival’ quality. Ultimately, YouTube does not provide the same set of materials that characterise such, more focussed, online documentary sites; consistency of content, curatorial elements, a singular perspective and the conveyance of a coherent purpose. Although online documentary sites consist of such characteristic elements, there are still arguments over whether they can actually constitute a ‘narrative’ (Nash, 2012).

Purpose and structure here are what YouTube clearly lacks. Although, arguably, a type of structure could be created through the pathways taken within material, YouTube offers no set structure of documents and arguments to create a coherent, solid narrative. There is also no set purpose, or clear perspective that YouTube can harbour within these potential pathways – both of which are narrative patterns that are characteristically familiar of the conventional documentary genre.

5.4 Conclusion

“Editing assembles sounds and images, organising them into a text of some kind so that particular lines of meaning can be followed” (Ellis, 2012. P.72); in the loosest of interpretations, YouTube as a platform and an archive could also be

³⁷ The UC CEISMIC programme: <http://www.ceismic.org.nz/>

referred to as an ‘editor’ of sorts. Providing and encouraging pathways through fragmented content, enabled by the information each uploader inputs into their material; YouTube and the content creators work in conjunction with one another through a ‘mutually accepted’ set of expectations and limitations.

Bits and pieces of information and audio-visual material may be provided to the audience, but whether these fragments constitute a documentary is, as Nichols argues, is up to the evaluation of the audience; “the sense that a film is a documentary lies in the mind of the beholder as much as it lies in the film’s context or structure” (Nichols, 2001. p.35). To what extent viewers deem such a collection of reality based material a ‘documentary’ is unknown - however there comes certain expectations when viewing such material on YouTube; just as content creators upload such material to YouTube knowing the way the site will present and categorise the content, audiences understand and expect a certain type of experience when viewing YouTube content.

First, the aforementioned ‘semblance of authenticity’ which may arise from eyewitness documents is a key contributor to any type of fact-based narrative. Secondly, we *expect* these documents to be short, microscopic ‘snippets’ pertaining to a larger real-life event (which, more often than not, transcends geographical boundaries into an ‘online event’ – creating a fluid, yet substantial, online phenomenon); we, as an audience, know the time constraints, technological constraints and lack of video-editing skills most YouTubers would face when broadcasting such content; we know (whether consciously or not) that these documents are to coexist with external (or internal) information sources; we understand that, in such a situation as the Christchurch earthquakes, immediacy takes precedent over any other aesthetic issue.

Ultimately, the YouTube platform places great responsibility upon the uploaders of content to ‘contextualise’ their material through descriptions, titling and keyword tags, and heavily relies on audiences to interpret such material based on their skills and assumptions based on previous experience with the platform. YouTube does not, alone, offer any type of narrative to audiences; the platform only offers any potential ‘narrative’ when the user supplies the data.

Though it is the indexical quality of the documents that reinforces any appearance of a documentary. What we see in Ypud's cliff collapse footage, for example, appears to the audience as a direct, harmonised representation of that particular real-world situation. When we can (assume to) relate these images with a sense that it really happened, the notion of a true document becomes a reality. Whether the audience see this collective and the way it is presented before users as a form of documentary or not cannot be ascertained – yet the 'documental' quality of eyewitness footage and the like is indisputable.

Conclusion

This project has contributed to the understanding of how a collective of content, both as individual ‘documents’ and more structured user-generated video, can arguably become a type of documentary through the ways in which YouTube provides and encourages related material to be viewed. To reiterate Lovink’s quote: “We no longer watch film or TV; we watch databases” (2008. p.9), although it is important to reiterate that ‘watching’ in this sense is not a passive act. It is an act of ‘performing’ the narrative possibilities laid out before audiences, it is the act of employing a set of assumptions pertaining to how users create material, how this material is ‘co-curated’ (by users and the platform), and how YouTube presents and distributes such related material.

From the analysis of 200 user-generated video, we can see some clear patterns within the production and distribution of such content – patterns which resemble a set of established ‘codes and conventions’ of UGC. Eyewitness documents in particular, for the majority, share specific textual patterns; they are typically of short video length, low image quality, constitute one continuous shot, exhibit minimal to no further visual or audio editing, and include little interaction between filmer and subject. There are also key patterns within the circulation of this content; for example, the ‘immediacy of uploads’ (the majority of eyewitness footage was uploaded to YouTube within 24 hours of the particular earthquake) and the lack of detailed video descriptions (an indicator of how the immediacy of broadcast undermines the need to provide information to audiences). These are patterns which, ultimately, reinforce a semblance of authenticity.

Such material, which reflects a pure ‘document’ style of image, appears to be the reason behind this (and similar) UGC being frequently incorporated into traditional news journalism, with some key pieces of eyewitness footage appropriated as the ‘first images’ during televised national news coverage of the Christchurch earthquakes. Generally, however, eyewitness footage that is incorporated in traditional news tends to act only as illustration of the event, while contributing a more sensory-dynamic form of ‘eyewitness testimony’. While some argue this form of audio-visual documentation of an event has the potential to ‘overturn’ traditional journalism, it is clear in the case of the Christchurch

earthquakes that this content (as individual pieces, taken out of the context of the YouTube platform offers) is a complement to, rather than replacement for, conventional journalism.

The majority of content sourced from YouTube relating to the earthquakes are purely items of audio-visual documentation; they, more often than not, lack any contextual information (either in-video or on the respective video's YouTube page), and do not offer any evaluations or persuasive arguments within the content. However, there are a select few UGC which go beyond pure witnessing: tribute pieces, parodies, conspiracy theories and vlogs. Each type, although textually and subjectively dissimilar, provide another dimension within the collective. Some (such a vlogs) provide the element of discussion (vocalising issues within local communities, bringing evaluations and opinions to the online public forum, and providing a space for discussion on YouTube itself). Remix and tribute pieces offer a variety of individual material within the one video, while 'conspiracy theory' style material offers a set of opinions that are grounded upon apparently 'factual' evidence. These more purposefully made UGC are the closest the set of YouTube materials collected for this research come to reflecting the more conventional patterns of the documentary genre.

Again, it needs to be noted that the selection of content studied here is but a snapshot of what may have been closer to the time of the earthquake(s). As discussed throughout this thesis, the limitations on YouTube's search capabilities and its inadequate function as an archive rendered an accurate and fair representation of content impossible. However, it is evident that there is, was and will be (for an undetermined time) a diverse collective of UGC on the Christchurch earthquakes available within the platform.

The argument posed here, that a type of documentary narrative has the potential to be formed through the pathways the audience takes within the collective of content, includes both eyewitness documents (as a 'raw', first hand depiction of events), re-uploaded television news broadcasts (that contextualise the events and provide crucial information) and material clearly made with an express intent (vlogs, for example). There is a potential for such 'narratives' (generated by and contingent on the performance of the user) to become wildly diverse and

representative of many angles to the events. However, it is this exact inconsistency within the content and the unstable nature of the platform that makes it difficult to *define*.

The *Nicholsian* documentary definition, which has been referred to here repeatedly, in some ways fits within this collective and the individual pieces (particularly in regards to the ‘authenticity’ arguments), though it also conflicts with this notion of contingent narrative. It is commonly agreed upon that documentary must follow a cause-and-effect trajectory and that individual documents must be arranged to cohere toward a specific purpose and structure. These *potential* narratives, on the other hand, distinctly lack a predictable coherency and focussed structure.

A significant amount of literature focuses on the individual types of audio-visual UGC, however there is a clear lack of research covering how UGC pertaining to a historical event can form a ‘collective’, and how this collective on a public platform such as YouTube is transmitted and received by the audience. The aim of this research has been to stress the limitations of the more familiar narrative definition, proposing that user interaction with somewhat categorised documents can (eventually) lead to a sequential understanding of events. The sense of narrative I am proposing, then, is very much centred on the user as much as the text. Although this has been an approach with many limitations (a great deal of which became key arguments within the chapters above), this is nevertheless a framework which offers an insight into how online content creators work in conjunction with the platform they use and how audience performance in relation to available pathways within online materials is at the centre of the meanings which can be associated with such material.

There are obviously a wealth of research possibilities which could build upon such a framework. Possible future research could include an investigation into the video production and distribution practices of YouTube practitioners who have uploaded material relating to a similar event. This could be useful to see how they view YouTube (as a platform, archive, repository, etc.) and what may have prompted them to visually document the event. Another approach would be practice-led research exploring how a collective of such indexical content has the

potential to create a structured, conventional documentary with a coherent narrative. This could involve collating various eyewitness documents and other YouTube content that borders on the margins of 'documentary' into a linear, cause-and-effect based sequence. These are only a few possible future avenues of research which could shed light on the practices and motivations of those 'accidental eyewitnesses' who participate in documenting an event, and the implications of the user-generated documents which are increasingly collated and curated through platforms such as YouTube.

Filmography

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Appendices

Appendix A

Data from the survey of 200 UGC relating to the Christchurch earthquakes, from September 2010 to January 2012

Username + Date Upload	Length (mins)	Topic	Quake	Upload (USA Time)
14degrees. (2011, December 22)	1:40	Immediately after	23/12/11	22/12/11
202ToranaMan. (2010, September 4)	1:14	Live quake	4/09/10	4/09/10
202ToranaMan. (2010, September 9)	0:20	Live quake	9/09/10	9/09/10
202ToranaMan. (2011, February 21)	3:27	Immediately after	22/02/11	21/02/11
41millsy. (2011, March 25)	7:50	Damage footage	22/02/11	25/03/11
4wdjunkynz. (2011, December 22)	0:28	Live quake	23/12/11	22/12/11
4wdjunkynz. (2011, June 12)	1:31	Live quake	13/06/11	12/06/11
87leesie. (2011, February 25)	8:52	Tribute	22/02/11	25/02/11
962bex. (2011, December 22)	0:34	Vlog	22/12/11	22/12/11
Aaahhgghh. (2011, June 18)	2:53	Damage footage	13/06/11	18/06/11
Absfam10. (2011, December 23a)	2:41	Live quake	23/12/11	23/12/11
Absfam10. (2011, December 23b)	0:36	Live quake	23/12/11	23/12/11
Accountingfortaste. (2011, December 22a)	1:10	Tribute	23/12/11	22/12/11
Accountingfortaste. (2011, December 22b)	0:58	Damage footage	23/12/11	22/12/11
Adxnz. (2011, February 21)	0:21	Live quake	22/02/11	21/02/11
Alanf21. (2011, September 9)	0:59	Immediately after	22/02/11	9/09/11
ALTERNATIVESEER. (2011, March 7)	6:05	Damage footage	22/02/11	7/03/11
Amnlobo. (2011, February 21)	9:08	Immediately after	22/02/11	21/02/11
AotearoaForever. (2011, February 22)	4:44	Tribute	22/02/11	22/02/11
ArgentumNZ. (2011, February 26)	1:23	Other	22/02/11	26/02/11
Aridium2. (2011, June 17)	2:41	Tribute	13/06/11	17/06/11
Azzonie. (2011, February 23)	11:49	Recorded news	TV 22/02/11	23/02/11
Benandcarly. (2011, December 23a)	1:02	Immediately after	23/12/11	23/12/11
Benandcarly. (2011, December 23b)	4:00	Immediately after	23/12/11	23/12/11
Bikechch. (2011, June 16)	0:44	Live quake	13/06/11	16/06/11
Biplaneflights. (2011, June 13)	2:14	Live quake	13/06/11	13/06/11
BooBearNZ. (2010, September 7)	2:17	Liquefaction	4/09/10	7/09/10

Boxter1977. (2011, March 4)	9:01	Immediately after		22/02/11	4/03/11
Boxter1977. (2011, March 5a)	0:58	Liquefaction		22/02/11	5/03/11
Boxter1977. (2011, March 5b)	1:35	Damage footage		22/02/11	5/03/11
Brucflett. (2010, September 3)	0:25	Immediately after		4/09/10	3/09/10
Bugsandal. (2010, December 26)	0:13	Live quake		26/12/10	26/12/10
Cactuskiwi. (2011, June 25)	24:43	Vlog	Unspecified		25/06/11
Cactuskiwi. (2011, March 4)	7:38	Vlog		22/02/11	4/03/11
Clairekiwi. (2011, March 10)	0:48	Immediately after		22/02/11	10/03/11
Come2drum. (2011, February 24)	0:46	Liquefaction		22/02/11	24/02/11
Craftnation. (2010, September 3)	1:23	Vlog		4/09/10	3/09/10
Crusaderswwe. (2010, September 6)	1:01	Damage footage		4/09/10	6/09/10
DAILYNEWSANDNATURE. (2011, February 21)	2:21	Recorded news	TV	22/02/11	21/02/11
DevilsT0wer. (2011, February 22)	1:00	Recorded news	TV	22/02/11	22/02/11
Dingram17. (2010, September 5)	0:47	Live quake		4/09/10	5/09/10
Djmanthei. (2011, February 22)	14:42	Damage footage		22/02/11	22/02/11
Dty2dty2. (2011, June 13)	0:52	Live quake		13/06/11	13/06/11
Dutchsinse. (2011, December 26)	1:09	Live quake		23/12/11	26/12/11
Duvetqueen1. (2010, September 9)	4:57	Tribute		4/09/10	9/09/10
DVM. (2011, 16 April)	0:47	Live quake		16/04/11	16/04/11
DylanBateArchive. (2012, January 12)	0:23	Live quake		12/01/12	12/01/12
DylanBateArchive. (2012, January 5)	0:50	Live quake		6/01/12	5/01/12
DylanBateArchive. (2012, January 6)	0:16	Live quake		7/01/12	6/01/12
Editmonkey. (2011, February 21)	0:41	immediately after		22/02/11	21/02/11
ExpectoKiwiland. (2011, February 21)	13:31	Recorded news	TV	22/02/11	21/02/11
FeloniousVendetta. (2011, December 22)	1:08	Recorded news	TV	23/12/11	22/12/11
Funnybunnys12311. (2011, December 22)	0:41	Live quake		23/12/11	22/12/11
Gabehash. (2011, June 13)	2:05	Other	Unspecified		13/06/11
Gate0r. (2011, February 22)	1:09	Vlog		22/02/11	22/02/11
Gemfab. (2011, December 23a)	0:54	Immediately after		23/12/11	23/12/11
Gemfab. (2011, December 23b)	2:05	Immediately after		23/12/11	23/12/11
Georgewoofbates. (2010, September 9)	2:28	Parody		4/09/10	9/09/10
Georgiakelsey. (2010, September 3)	0:34	Immediately after		4/09/10	3/09/10
Glen799. (2011, December 22)	0:29	Immediately after		23/12/11	22/12/11
Goatracing610. (2011, August 19)	6:08	Damage footage	Unspecified		19/08/11
GracieJonesx. (2011, June 13)	0:19	Live quake		13/06/11	13/06/11
Grad1122. (2010, December 19)	3:02	Recorded	TV	4/09/10	19/12/10

news

Greenfruit. (2010, September 4)	0:52	Damage footage	4/09/10	4/09/10
GreenlaserNZ. (2010, December 25)	0:24	Live quake	23/12/10	25/12/10
Hexagonview. (2011, February 21)	2:04	Recorded news	TV 22/02/11	21/02/11
Iamvanillabear. (2011, May 25)	2:06	Damage footage	22/02/11	25/05/11
Jackofnz. (2010, September 4)	0:50	Live quake	4/09/10	4/09/10
Jayandolly. (2011, December 23)	0:48	Live quake	23/12/11	23/12/11
Jeremyandloren. (2011, March 3)	0:48	Immediately after	22/02/11	3/03/11
Jeremyandloren. (2011, March 3)	2:44	Immediately after	22/02/11	3/03/11
Jeremyandloren. (2011, March 3)	1:29	Liquefaction	22/02/11	3/03/11
Jompyshy. (2010, September 3)	2:47	Vlog	4/09/10	3/09/10
Jtaxfn. (2011, April 2)	1:11	Immediately after	22/02/11	2/04/11
Kalewala1. (2011, February 28)	4:19	Immediately after	22/02/11	23/02/11
Kickflip55. (2011, March 4)	2:29	Damage footage	22/02/11	4/03/11
Kiwiana334. (2010, October 23)	1:02	Live quake	Unspecified	23/10/10
Kiwiana344. (2011, December 25)	0:27	Live quake	23/12/11	25/12/11
Kiwibeachbelle. (2011, December 22)	0:14	Liquefaction	23/12/11	22/12/11
Knapp720. (2011, February 22)	0:10	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
Leow626569. (2011, December 22)	0:17	Live quake	23/12/11	22/12/11
LizKasmierczak. (2011, March 1)	3:46	Tribute	22/02/11	1/03/11
LoganGorilla. (2011, February 22)	4:27	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
LordRancorist. (2011, February 22)	1:20	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
Lordspyrox. (2011, February 22)	1:24	Liquefaction	22/02/11	22/02/11
Lowerlowerlower33. (2011, June 12)	0:26	Liquefaction	13/06/11	12/06/11
Maccagoog. (2011, December 23)	0:21	Live quake	23/12/11	23/12/11
Mackstra1. (2011, March 1)	11:22	Immediately after	22/02/11	1/03/11
MadamGeeky. (2011, February 21)	3:22	Recorded news	TV 22/02/11	21/02/11
Martinchapple1. (2011, December 22)	1:01	Immediately after	23/12/11	22/12/11
Maxplatinum. (2011, February 21a)	0:33	Liquefaction	22/02/11	21/02/11
Maxplatinum. (2011, February 21b)	0:35	Liquefaction	22/02/11	21/02/11
Maxplatinum. (2011, June 12)	0:18	Liquefaction	13/06/11	12/06/11
Mcbeth1888. (2011, June 12)	0:25	Liquefaction	13/06/11	12/06/11
Mearlenz. (2011, June 23)	2:31	Parody	Unspecified	23/06/11
Mikeandmel21. (2010, September 4)	1:52	Liquefaction	4/09/10	4/09/10
Mikecrudge. (2011, March 4)	5:31	Damage footage	22/02/11	4/03/11
Missliz1960. (2011, March 1)	7:04	Immediately after	22/02/11	1/03/11

Movie467. (2011, December 23a)	1:13	Immediately after		23/12/11	23/12/11
Movie467. (2011, December 23b)	2:11	Immediately after		23/12/11	23/12/11
Movie467. (2011, March 2)	9:14	Immediately after		22/02/11	2/03/11
Mrbond98765. (2011, December 23)	3:17	Taken from other user		23/12/11	23/12/11
MrFLASHBOY007. (2011, June 12)	0:17	Other		13/06/11	12/06/11
MrGlasgowTruther4U. (2011, February 21)	2:58	Recorded news	TV	22/02/11	21/02/11
MrJake111222. (2011, March 25)	0:22	Immediately after		22/02/11	25/03/11
MrJake111222. (2011, March 26a)	0:11	Immediately after		22/02/11	26/03/11
MrJake111222. (2011, March 26b)	0:08	Immediately after		22/02/11	26/03/11
MrJake111222. (2011, March 26c)	3:07	Damage footage		22/02/11	26/03/11
MrKashko. (2011, February 22)	1:15	Immediately after		22/02/11	22/02/11
MrKenringweatherman. (2010, September 17)	5:35	Vlog		4/09/11	17/09/10
Mrmacman53. (2011, September 24)	2:03	Tribute		22/02/11	24/09/11
MRNEWSguerillamedia. (2011, September 26)	3:23	Conspiracy Theory	Unspecified		26/09/11
Mshel2. (2011, December 22)	0:38	Live quake		23/12/11	22/12/11
MultiNeiNei. (2011, December 22)	0:14	Other		23/12/11	22/12/11
Mwdarbyshire. (2011, February 22)	9:55	Immediately after		22/02/11	22/02/11
Nakiman99. (2011, February 26)	2:43	Tribute		22/02/11	26/02/11
Neavus8. (2011, December 24)	0:28	Liquefaction		23/12/11	24/12/11
Netspanner. (2011, February 21)	0:50	Immediately after		22/02/11	21/02/11
Newslink2011. (2011, February 21)	3:29	Recorded news	TV	22/02/11	21/02/11
Nzartist. (2011, December 27)	1:13	Live quake		23/12/11	27/12/11
Nzartist. (2011, October 10)	1:23	Live quake		9/10/11	10/10/11
Nzartist. (2011, September 11)	0:59	Live quake	Unspecified		11/09/11
Nzchris7. (2011, June 12a)	0:33	Liquefaction		13/06/11	13/06/11
Nzchris7. (2011, June 12b)	0:12	Liquefaction		13/06/11	13/06/11
Nzchris7. (2011, June 12c)	0:08	Liquefaction		13/06/11	13/06/11
Nzchris7. (2011, June 12d)	0:42	Liquefaction		13/06/11	13/06/11
Nzchris7. (2011, June 12e)	0:21	Liquefaction		13/06/11	13/06/11
Nzheraldtv. (2011, March 9)	1:20	Immediately after		22/02/11	9/03/11
NZRRawFootage. (2011, December 22)	1:05	Liquefaction		23/12/11	22/12/11
NZRlover. (2011, September 9)	2:23	Damage footage		22/02/11	9/09/11
Organchurchmouse. (2010, October 12)	0:25	Other	Unspecified		12/10/10
Parachuteband. (2011, April 21)	3:28	Tribute		22/02/11	21/04/11
Pegasusgiraffe. (2011, February 22)	8:18	Recorded	TV	22/02/11	22/02/11

news

Pjp578. (2010, December 19)	6:33	Reportage	4/09/10	19/12/10
Pknightglue. (2011, February 26)	0:26	Liquefaction	22/02/11	26/02/11
Plantermanz1. (2011, June 15)	1:34	Liquefaction	13/06/11	15/06/11
Pointandshootproduct. (2010, September 5)	3:10	Tribute	4/09/10	5/09/10
ProjectAmmonite. (2011, December 22)	0:50	Live quake	23/12/11	22/12/11
Rangiorian. (2011, February 24)	0:57	Liquefaction	22/02/11	24/02/11
Raptuready. (2011, February 21)	0:49	Taken from other user	22/02/11	21/02/11
Rayt20. (2011, April 18)	0:51	Damage footage	22/02/11	18/04/11
Razornathon. (2011, June 13)	6:06	Immediately after	13/06/11	13/06/11
Redgoat87. (2011, February 22)	4:55	Damage footage	22/02/11	22/02/11
Reesdog1. (2011, February 22)	0:46	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
RestoBoys. (2011, September 8)	4:51	Tribute	Unspecified	8/09/11
Retrophile1980. (2011, September 22)	3:42	Tribute	Unspecified	22/09/11
RivenMade. (2011, February 23)	9:09	Damage footage	22/02/11	23/02/11
Rlorimer1966. (2011, February 22)	0:23	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
Roarke. (2011, December 23)	0:43	Immediately after	23/12/11	23/12/11
RoyalW1979. (2011, December 22)	2:39	Recorded news	TV 23/12/11	22/12/11
RoyalW1979. (2011, December 23)	1:45	Recorded news	TV 23/12/11	23/12/11
Rpk2241. (2011, December 22)	0:36	Live quake	23/12/11	22/12/11
Rpk2241. (2011, December 23)	1:12	Live quake	23/12/11	23/12/11
Rrrrreubs. (2011, February 22)	0:34	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
RTVCHD. (2010, September 3)	9:37	Recorded news	TV 4/09/10	3/09/10
Samcamnz. (2011, December 1)	13:56	Reportage	22/02/11	1/12/11
Samnudds. (2010, September 3)	5:45	Vlog	4/09/10	3/09/10
Satwinder5005. (2011, December 25)	1:09	Taken from other user	23/12/11	25/12/11
Scottkemp. (2011, February 27a)	0:16	Immediately after	22/02/11	27/02/11
Scottkemp. (2011, February 27b)	0:25	Other	22/02/11	27/02/11
Scottkemp. (2011, February 27c)	1:21	Liquefaction	22/02/11	27/02/11
Sevenmarbles. (2011, February 23)	9:01	Immediately after	22/02/11	23/02/11
SpooceDan. (2011, February 22)	2:35	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
Sprok333. (2011, February 23)	10:37	Vlog	22/02/11	23/02/11
Starpad1. (2012, January 11)	0:34	Live quake	23/12/11	11/01/12
Strangentertainment. (2011, June 13)	0:27	Live quake	13/06/11	13/06/11
StuffAboutTheWorld. (2011, February 22)	2:48	Recorded news	TV 22/02/11	22/02/11

StuntDub. (2011, April 5)	4:45	Other	Unspecified	5/04/11
SuperTajy. (2011, June 12)	1:38	Damage footage	13/06/11	12/06/11
TheApprenticeCHEF1. (2011, February 21)	6:13	Recorded news	TV 22/02/11	21/02/11
Theboybiggles. (2010, September 5)	10:58	Vlog	4/09/10	5/09/10
Theboybiggles. (2010, September 8)	4:07	Vlog	4/09/10	8/09/10
Theboybiggles. (2011, February 21)	4:09	Immediately after	22/02/11	21/02/11
Thechanranch. (2011, June 21)	0:31	Other	13/06/11	21/06/11
TheCONtraildotcom. (2011, December 23)	3:11	Conspiracy Theory	23/12/11	23/12/11
Theharrymclean. (2011, December 22)	0:34	Live quake	23/12/11	22/12/11
TheRookieSam. (2011, February 26)	4:57	Tribute	22/02/11	26/02/11
Thetruthegirls. (2011, February 24)	6:49	Conspiracy Theory	22/02/11	24/02/11
Thevisitortjn2. (2011, February 22)	5:56	Recorded news	TV 22/02/11	22/02/11
Timwea. (2011, June 12a)	0:43	Immediately after	13/06/11	12/06/11
Timwea. (2011, June 12b)	1:01	Immediately after	22/02/11	21/02/11
Timwea. (2011, June 12c)	0:30	Immediately after	13/06/11	12/06/11
Timwea. (2011, June 12d)	0:33	Immediately after	13/06/11	12/06/11
Toddcouper. (2011, February 22)	10:07	Damage footage	22/02/11	22/02/11
Toddcouper. (2011, February 23)	8:17	Immediately after	22/02/11	23/02/11
Troysta8002. (2011, February 23)	0:15	Immediately after	22/02/11	23/02/11
TVOnline99. (2011, December 23)	3:20	Immediately after	23/12/11	23/12/11
Ukusanz. (2011, June 12)	1:57	Liquefaction	13/06/11	12/06/11
Ukusanz. (2011, March 5)	3:18	Immediately after	22/02/11	5/03/11
ValentSKY. (2011, march 13)	3:20	Other	22/02/11	13/03/11
Vidhost. (2011, February 22)	4:32	Reportage	22/02/11	22/02/11
Vjmort. (2011, June 14)	3:43	Damage footage	13/06/11	13/06/11
WhoCann. (2011, June 15)	2:36	Vlog	13/06/11	15/06/11
Wildblossomsband. (2011, March 1)	1:32	Tribute	22/02/11	1/03/11
WorldNewsAustralia. (2011, June 13)	1:19	Recorded news	TV 13/06/11	13/06/11
Xxwifeys4evaxx. (2011, May 1)	14:05	Damage footage	22/02/11	1/05/11
Xxwifeys4evaxx. (2011, May 1)	2:29	Damage footage	22/02/11	1/05/11
Yards16. (2011, February 23)	0:22	Immediately after	22/02/11	23/02/11
Ypud. (2011, February 22)	0:49	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11
Zanhah. (2011, February 22)	0:14	Immediately after	22/02/11	22/02/11

Appendix B

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