

ASIA AND THE COMMONS

ENGAGEMEDIA

EngageMedia is a video-sharing website focused on social justice and environment issues in Australia, South East Asia and the Pacific.

<http://engagemedia.org>

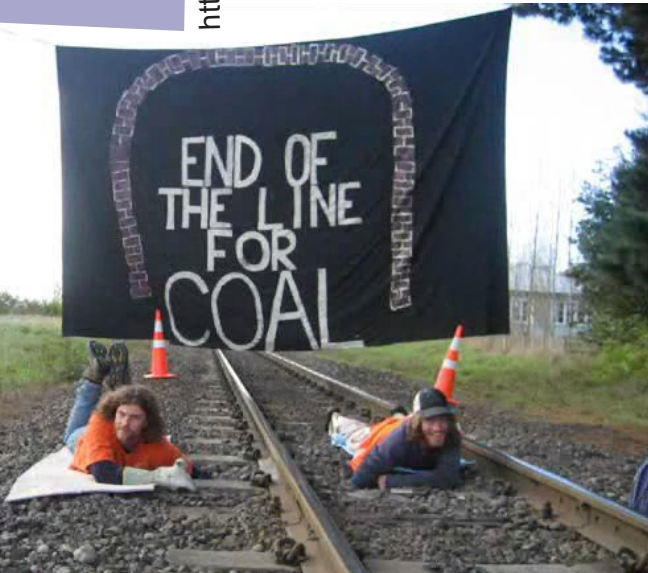
Licence: Various Creative Commons 3.0 Unported licences

Media: Video, Text

Location: Australia, South East Asia, Pacific

OVERVIEW

EngageMedia is an exemplary 'Web 2.0' video-sharing site focused on social justice and environmental issues in South East Asia, Australia, and the Pacific. As a platform for the production and distribution of documentaries, artistic, and experimental video works, EngageMedia seeks to create a community of film makers, artists, and activists who inform readers of local and global actions for social change. Emphasising open access and collaborative frameworks, the site supports the collection and dissemination of independent perspectives to challenge the enduring corporate dominance of traditional media. EngageMedia's philosophy is one of providing tools and training for marginalised communities, thereby establishing a



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mutually supportive network of peers (video makers, educators, and screening organisations) working towards sustainable development.

EngageMedia is contemplating the future implementation of a donations-based micro-payment system, allowing members to contribute financially or on a voluntary basis to emergent projects. In the interim, material is indirectly exposed to revenue opportunities via festivals, competitions and broadcasts.

Based on peer-to-peer technologies, the EngageMedia site offers a comprehensive Guide to Digital Video Distribution (<http://engagemedia.org/guide-to-digital-video-distro>). Underlining contributors' ability to expose environmental destruction and human rights abuses through well-researched submissions, the EngageMedia collective states simply, 'We want to build media that questions how the world works.'

EngageMedia was launched at the Earthling National Environmental Activist Forum at the annual This Is Not Art (TINA) Festival in Newcastle, on 30th September 2006. The forum explored broad ideas about the way in which individuals can be more effective activists through the tools they use. EngageMedia's offices are based in Melbourne, Australia, and their collective currently comprises five new media specialists.



LICENCE USAGE

EngageMedia seeks to create a digital archive of independent video productions employing open content licences. The Editorial Policy of the site states:

'We want visitors to this site to be able to freely copy and redistribute the works here as long as it is for non-profit purposes, unless you choose to let others use your work for commercial purposes also. Work should preferably be share-alike, which means "I share if you share", allowing others to re-edit or use part of your work in theirs, so long as they allow others to do the same with their work. Apart from the ethics of such a policy, we believe it is practically impossible to stop people reproducing your work once it is in digital form. This is also a positive, however, as people will help you distribute your work around the globe if they enjoy it.'
(<http://engagemedia.org/editorial-policy>)

The site allows users to select among the most recent unported versions of the Creative Commons licences. The workings of the licences are outlined in detail at <http://www.engagemedia.org/creative-commons>, where distinctions are drawn between commercial and non-commercial uses, and the options for derivative works. EngageMedia integrates a Creative Commons licence generator into the video upload process, thereby facilitating the distribution of films across the network. The site provides tools to enable videos to be embedded into other web pages, as well as an easily downloadable high-resolution version of each film. To encourage further development and distribution of freely available content, this video software is also available in an open source format.

'The EngageMedia website encourages users to download and share video, rather than simply streaming the video. We want people to be able to save the videos and re-distribute them. The need to open up other channels of distributing this kind of work is clear and encouraging the sharking of work on the internet by removing restrictive copyright will open up these channels.' - Anna Helme, EngageMedia
(<http://creativecommons.org.au/commoners/engagemedia>)

“We’re interested in open content licensing at EngageMedia because we’re interested in collaborative storytelling, and in moving away from restrictive copyright laws that enforce rigid ideas of individual intellectual property”
– <http://engagemedia.org/creative-commons>

MOTIVATIONS

Based on the philosophies of open access and sharing, the EngageMedia site embraces Creative Commons as offering a practical framework for compliance with copyright laws in many nations. In an interview conducted by CC Australia project officer Elliott Bledsoe with Anna Helme from EngageMedia (<http://creativecommons.org.au/commoners/engagemedia>), the site’s motivations to license under Creative Commons are clearly explained:

‘For us we found that Creative Commons provides a very usable framework for filmmakers wishing to use open content licences. They can allow reproduction and distribution while preserving some rights that leaves open the potential to recoup funds through commercial distribution of their work.’ - Anna Helme, EngageMedia

The growing popularity of Creative Commons licences has been a key incentive to implementing them on the site. Anna Helme believes that the commons have now reached a critical mass, with the licences proving themselves to be a very effective social tool for emphasising open distribution of materials. When asked about filmmakers’ motivations to upload their video on EngageMedia, Anna Helme opines:

‘The message rather than the profit tends to be the primary motive in this kind of independent production, but filmmakers are often interested in attaining mainstream distribution to reach mainstream audiences, in recouping funds and in building a reputation to further their career in film in video production. Video activists are also often interested in having some control over the context in which their video is distributed. This means that producers are less likely to wish to release their work into the public domain. They would prefer to make choices about which rights they wish to reserve, which is where Creative Commons is especially useful.’
(<http://creativecommons.org.au/commoners/engagemedia>)