

Copyright dramas no happy birthday to YouTube

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The internet's most successful video-sharing website, YouTube, which celebrates its fifth birthday this month, faces a far less vibrant future if copyright squabbles put an end to creative re-uses of media content, says a Queensland University of Technology (QUT) researcher.

Dr Jean Burgess, from QUT's Creative Industries Faculty, said her research had found increasing copyright conflicts were threatening the diversity of innovative videos available on the popular website, such as movie parodies and video "remixes".

"YouTube is now arguably the biggest online museum of popular culture in the world, but conflicts over copyright are casting doubt over its future," Dr Burgess said.

"YouTube has to answer to advertisers, governments and traditional media businesses, as well as the highly invested YouTube community, who quite rightly believe that they helped to make YouTube a success."

The website's parent company [Google](#) is currently fighting a \$1 billion lawsuit over [copyright](#) infringement alleged by broadcast giant Viacom.

Dr Burgess, who is the co-author of the world's first academic book about the video-sharing website *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, said YouTube continued to have an astounding cultural impact which was largely due to the chaotic and mostly

unfiltered nature of the website.

"YouTube didn't really tell us what its website was for," she said.

"Instead, the community found its own uses for it - from bedroom dance routines and cat videos to film parodies and a huge amount of archival TV footage."

Burgess's research also found that people regularly used the site to share copyrighted clips and quotes from television, whether to mark natural disasters like earthquakes and bushfires, to comment on major news events like Barack Obama's campaign for the US presidency or to save "golden moments" in popular culture or sport.

"Using YouTube like a media scrapbook might seem reasonable to us as audiences, but it might just as easily look like 'piracy' to traditional media companies like Viacom," she said.

Dr Burgess said constant pressure on YouTube to police [copyright infringement](#) led the website to introduce automatic detection and removal measures, resulting in a large number of the most popular YouTube videos disappearing from the site, including many of the wildly popular "Hitler's Downfall" parodies.

"The larger and more complex YouTube becomes, the more difficult it will become to contain and manage all these competing uses and expectations within one platform," she said.

"The danger is that we will lose the messy mix of amateur, remixed and popular media content which has made YouTube the rich and vibrant but largely unregulated site it is today."

[YouTube](#) has reported it now receives two billion views a day and more

than 24 hours worth of footage uploaded every minute.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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