



Due to media consolidation and disintegrating business models, traditional local journalism is on the decline. As a result, mainstream media is failing the needs of American towns and cities for a local discourse that articulates common identities and informs the democratic process. Citizen journalism could fill this void, but citizen journalists constantly struggle for audience, reach, and relevance.

The rapidly growing online video medium can help, but critical infrastructure is missing. Local journalism can reach more people by embracing online video, and citizen video journalists can engage a larger audience by going local. But no infrastructure exists to connect local video producers to a local audience. Large corporate video hosts aren't interested in meeting the needs of specific local communities, creating a chicken and egg problem: creators lack the motivation a potential audience provides, and would-be viewers cannot find enough interesting video to make it worth looking. The need is clear: try searching for videos from your local community and you will quickly be drowned in false results and dead ends.

Miro Community (MC) is a series of community-based video hubs connecting local creators, public access stations, and the community of viewers. With these new hubs and the relationships that they form, vibrant local communities of video can flourish. Quite simply, we can create an active, citizen-driven, online television world for individual cities and towns. The Knight Foundation has generously provided a two year grant for Miro Community to build this local network of sites. Current partners include the Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco, WNYC in New York, Quote-Unquote Community Media in Albuquerque, and several other community media groups throughout the country.

When local newspapers flourished, many citizens got in the habit of responding to the news of the day in the form of letters to the editor. With the flowering of citizen media in

the form of blogs and online video, however, local residents have become increasingly empowered to not only respond to the news, but participate in its production. Many citizens want to be involved in this endeavor, but few know where to begin. Miro Community sites inspire local viewers to become video creators by showing them the work their neighbors are doing. With multiple levels of participation available (submitting videos, finding relevant content, commenting and viewing), users are empowered to participate at whatever level they are ready for.

While newspapers have been limited to the written word in their main offerings, a video site is able to encapsulate video, audio, images and text. Citizen voices can be placed in a context with editor's notes and participant comments. And in opposition to the top-down format of many traditional media sources, a curated video site can be a crowd-sourced project, with users searching for and submitting videos and providing useful links and comments, and sharing information with their friends.

A curated video site provides a unique opportunity for a local community to deepen its engagement with citizen storytelling without relinquishing quality control. Online video has changed the media landscape and beyond, offering new possibilities in education, entertainment, and cultural awareness. Yet this revolution in content has sometimes been inaccessible or inconvenient for professional and noncommercial uses because of the inability to control what material appears alongside designated content on outside sites. A foundation might put great videos up, only to have users bombarded with ads, inappropriate "relevant videos" and other hassles that take away from the user's ability to be immersed in a cultural and educational experience.

Another benefit of such a site is the ability to connect otherwise disparate populations. While commercial video sites detract from a cultural experience with irrelevant and offensive material alongside valuable educational fodder, a curated local video site has a chance to introduce members of a community to a new perspective on their local environment. Featured videos on the local front page might include several distinct cultural perspectives or represent a variety of geographic districts, digitally creating a space where residents can begin to expand their frame of reference about what their city looks like. This initial diversity of viewpoints can lead to "real world" conversations

and actions by introducing residents to programs and places and piquing their curiosity about life around town.

Miro Community Features:

- Gather existing online videos onto a site you control.
- Let users submit videos from Youtube and other video sites for consideration.
- Highlight excellent videos by featuring them on the front page.
- Choose from four pre-made templates with robust features and customize your site through CSS.
- Use our “blue theme” layout to add editorial comments to video pages, combining the power of a video site with that of a blog.
- Sites can be hosted by us but can appear on www.yourDomain.com
- Automatically import meta-data for videos including descriptions, titles, images, tags, categories and others. Editors can then edit this data.
- See which videos are most popular as users influence the “most watched” video area.
- Automatically generate RSS feeds for each category and for the newest videos, popular videos, and featured videos, making the hard work you put into organizing your site portable. Easily place these feeds in other sites and podcasting applications such as iTunes and Miro.
- Open Source software, written in Python on Django framework.