

BeebCamp2: what value does UGC add?

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BeeB Camp is a one day conference for BBC geeks where a few outsiders are thrown in as intellectual red meat to sate their voracious digital appetites. I led a session asking 'what value does user generated content add?' The answers were complex and thoughtful and reveal a whole set of dilemmas at the heart of public participation in the media.




The BBC famously got 60 000 people sending in pictures and video during last month's snowstorms but, as I asked, why not just stick it all on *Flickr*? Why bother with all this stuff?

The answer from the technologists was various. Firstly, it must add value. There is enough content on the Internet already, the BBC shouldn't add to it just for the sake of it.

But who gets the value? Is it the participating public (they are still a small minority)? Is it the BBC? Or is it the non-contributing public who end up enjoying it all?

What about journalists? Should they be creating public communities of 20,000 or 20? Is there more value in small networks of participation than mass involvement?

 And should the flow be one-way? What value does the BBC offer to those people who do contribute? Why does the BBC still insist on stopping people using its material? Why shouldn't people make their own Dr Who knitting patterns?

There seemed to be two approaches at BeebCamp. The Publisher approach which saw the process very much as part of content creation, adding value to the end product, such as a news story.

Then there is the Enabling approach which sees the very process of participation as an educational end in itself.

In the end it is a dialogue and it has costs.

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