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### User Generated Content



#### News organisations' relationships with their audiences have changed utterly over the past decade.

The one-way, 'one to many lecture' of a few years ago has been replaced by news as conversation.

Audiences can answer back; criticise, ask questions journalists didn't think of; add their knowledge and expertise to an evolving story.

For some, it's become a two-way relationship of equals; and even more traditional news organisations recognise that their former silent audiences are now a source of news and comment.

'User generated content' (UGC) is part of this new relationship.

Most news organisations now invite their listeners to submit their own news, images and video whether on a breaking story or on a developing one.

But this new relationship raises many questions. Questions of trust and verification. New questions of impartiality, independence and the public interest.

In this video, BBC correspondent Torin Douglas examines the recent history of UGC and how it's come to be an established part of news production.

You can also watch this film from the Multiplatform Festival.

#### BBC UGC Hub

##### User Generated Content

- Using UGC
- Getting UGC on Air
- Avoiding Hoax UGC Images
- Hoax UGC Image Checks
- Authenticating UGC Emails

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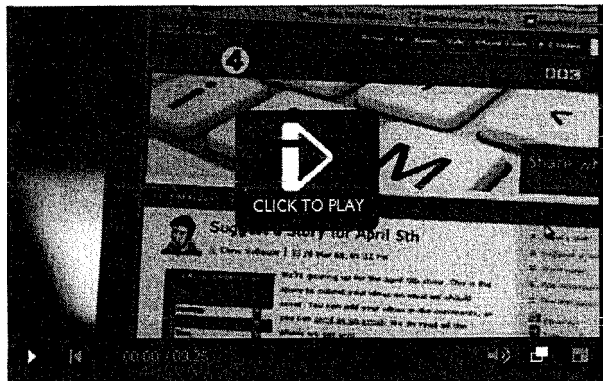
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## Using UGC



### How is the use of user generated content evolving?

In this video, used to illustrate a BBC College of Journalism face to face course, presenter Jane Hill looks at some of the issues around the use of UGC and how that use is evolving.

There are many difficult questions for news organisations committed to making the most of user content. To what extent should they actively solicit material from people involved in an event? How should they approach people who are posting accounts of events to their own Facebook site, or Twittering?

To what extent do such interventions shape events?

Can UGC ever replace 'traditional' journalism in areas that are difficult or expensive to cover?

And what about tapping into the audience's expertise in a systematic way? Or using techniques like 'crowdsourcing'?

Watch a masterclass in how to use UGC.

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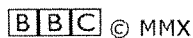
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## Getting UGC on Air



**When a news story breaks, how can journalists make the most of the pictures, emails and texts that the public submit?**

In this video, used in a BBC College of Journalism face-to-face course, correspondent Nick Higham introduces 'UGC Hub' producer Steven George.

Steven walks through the step-by-step process that's used across the BBC.

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One tip is to be aware from the off that there may be copyright and payment issues - these are easily overlooked in the heat of the moment and can come back to bite you later.

So what to do when a news story breaks:

- Establish that the story is real - even with a story that's running initially on a social networking site only, you should do all you can to be across as many sources as possible to get the clearest possible initial picture of what's happening.
- Liaise closely with the UGC Hub - let it know a story's breaking and that it needs to prepare for incoming material. The Hub is place where traffic will be monitored, authenticated and cleared for use.
- If appropriate, ask newsgathering teams on the scene or close by to invite submissions from eyewitnesses, particularly video clips or still images ... WITH names, numbers and email addresses.
- Publicise the code texters can use to contact 'Have Your Say'. It's 61124 in the UK and +44 7725 100 100 abroad. Also publicise the yourpics@bbc.co.uk email address on your programmes and websites. These are where your audiences should send all their UGC submissions.

Remember, cleared content can be used anywhere across TV, radio and online.

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## Avoiding Hoax UGC Images



### Is this picture real or fake?

It was sent to the BBC and purported to be an image of the aftermath of the cyclone in Myanmar (Burma) in May 2008. It was used in an introduction to a package on *The Ten O'Clock News*.

Actually, it was taken during the Tsunami in Sumatra, Indonesia, in 2004. Its use led to an on-air apology the next evening and is perhaps the clearest, most recent example of the BBC being hoaxed.

Hoaxing looms large in the new UGC world and 'merking' - hoaxing large media organisations - is something of an internet sport.

Matthew Eltringham of BBC UGC Hub says:

*"Authentication of UGC is fundamental. Without it, you have nothing."*

When a user sends a picture or video that is suitable for use, there are a few simple steps you can take to authenticate the image and ensure the sender is who they say they are.

Click here for the checklist created by the BBC's UGC Hub for doing this.

Click here for advice on how to authenticate emails.

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## Hoax UGC Image Checks



This image was used to hoax Sky News and *The Guardian* in March 2006.

The sender claimed it was a forest fire in Dorset. Both the TV channel and the newspaper used it.

The picture was actually taken in August 2006 in Montana, US, and the animals in the river are elk - not common in Dorset.

Use the following checklist to avoid falling for a similar trick:

### 1. Email user

Email the user back. Get their phone number and, if possible, talk to him/her.

- Can they describe the image? (Does the answer square with what the wires are saying happened)
- Ask them where were you/are you now? (If they say they are in an Internet café then Google it to check)
- Ask them who took the pictures
- Ask what they were taken with.

### 2. Cross-check photo wires

Are the photos too good to be from a member of the public? If suspicious, check the photo wires on Elvis, Yahoo or Google news photos - you may find a match. TinEye is a new website that can do this for you!

### 3. Could they have shot ALL the pics?

This photographer gets about a bit. If you receive multiple photos, could the person have really got to all the locations?

### 4. PowerPoint? Be wary

If the pictures are sent as a PowerPoint slide show, or more than once, be suspicious. Someone has probably grabbed them from various sources and packaged them up.

### 5. No text. Be wary

Anyone who takes the trouble to send in stills usually backs them up with some sort of a description. Avoid those with no text. Anything with 'these are great pictures' is usually grabbed them from the net.

Technically speaking, there are some tell-tale signs, too:

### 6. Check pixels

Image size: check the dimensions of the photos in pixels. The original files as shot in the camera will always be around 2,000 x 1,200 and

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above. Anything smaller has been re-sized.

Watch out for odd numbers - they have probably been lifted from the photo wires. For example, Yahoo news photos are usually 380 wide or 345 high.

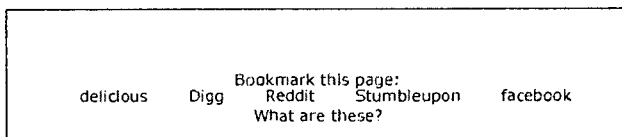
You can also check the EXIF data from the photos, which can tell when the pictures were taken and offer clues.

#### 7. Too good to be true?

Sometimes the pictures may be too good to be true but not on the wires. They could have been manipulated by the likes of Photoshop software. Ask someone with Photoshop on their PC to load the image and zoom in. Look at where tones meet and see if there is any obvious manipulation of multiple layers. This can be hard to spot as jpeg compression will affect the picture.

Clearly, you do not have to go through the whole of this checklist every time; you need to get things on air after all. But if in doubt, check!

Speed is clearly essential. Often, UGC material is the first you get on a story and you want to put it on air before the rest of the media arrive. You do not have much time. If the authentication checklist is second nature, UGC material gets on air quicker.



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## Authenticating UGC Emails



**This image of a tornado hitting North Island in New Zealand, was used by two local TV stations in July 2007.**

Actually, it was a hoax and the 'tornado' had been photoshopped in.

Hoax emails can be just as problematic.

To authenticate emails, most of the steps are exactly the same as checking out photos. And for that matter the same steps apply when dealing with people who phone the BBC claiming to have witnessed a news story.

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#### 1. Email person back

If you want the person who sent the email or text to go on air, or to use them as part of a written piece online, it is **ESSENTIAL** to call them back to check they **ACTUALLY** witnessed the event.

#### 2. Ask for picture

Ask them for a picture of themselves. If they agree to send a picture, it is far more likely they are the real thing. This is unlikely to be possible in breaking news instances, obviously.

#### 3. Search for their name on the internet

Search for their name on Google (or another search engine of choice), especially to check if they may have an agenda. They could be part of a campaign - watch out for the same stock phrases in similar emails.

#### 4. Check area codes

Check the area code they are calling from and their email address. Do they exist?

#### 5. Probe detail

Probe them for more details if you want to use the content in their email.

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