YouTube.com

In February 2005 three friends—Chad Hurley, Steve Chan and Jawed Karim, who were searching for a fast and easy way for people to share videos with each other—founded YouTube.com. In a very short time, the technology of the Web site made it easy for nearly anyone to use. The almost instant popularity of YouTube prompted one of the most viral explosions of video file-sharing in history.

Since its founding, YouTube has become not just a Web site for entertainment, but also a platform by which professional and citizen journalists can instantly upload and share important videos. A large percentage of the videos on *YouTube.com* are humorous. However, anyone in search of different versions of the news also can find somber and thought-provoking videos there.

The "YouTube effect" describes the phenomenon by which video clips are instantly uploaded and quickly shared with millions of potential viewers via Adobe Flash technology on YouTube. This quick and open dissemination of video clips has allowed videos to be posted that expose serious incidents such as political corruption and violations of human rights by governments. Some videos clearly conflict with those shown by mainstream news organizations. YouTube also is used in the spread of propaganda by terrorist organizations, governments and individuals.

Various governments around the world are reacting to YouTube journalists by jailing them. The U.S. government halted the use of YouTube by soldiers in Iraq.

It is important to note that the "YouTube effect" has encouraged both professional and citizen journalists to use technology to get the information contained in videos published so anyone can view them. It also is important to remember that, just as with evaluating printed information, when watching videos you must be alert, check facts and look for other sources of the same information.

THINK *Critically*

1. Is seeing always believing? Why or why not?
2. How can the videos on YouTube change the way mainstream media journalists report the news?