

# Making Creative Use of YouTube

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

I recently discovered YouTube, this incredibly fascinating Web site that shows hundreds of thousands of video clips from all over the world, produced by ordinary people. Launched in May 2005 by two young geeks, Steven Chen and Chad Hurley, the site now pumps out over 100 million short video clips—ranging from 1 to 30 minutes or more—and takes in as many as 65,000 new ones every day. It draws more than 34 million viewers a month. I assume it must be a favorite site with homeschoolers, since many of them have produced a great variety of video clips. Take a look and add one of your own.

According to Forbes magazine (10/16/06), Steven Chen, born in Taiwan, studied at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Hurley was a design major at Indiana University of Pennsylvania at Indiana, Pennsylvania. They met at Paypal, the online payment site acquired by Ebay in 2002, and formed a partnership to launch YouTube.

They conceived of YouTube after experiencing frustration when they tried to swap, online, video clips from a party they had attended. Their aim was to keep the site simple enough so that amateurs could use it. They used their credit cards to finance the scheme, until the site grew so big that they had to seek financing from venture capitalists. They were able to raise \$3.5 million from Sequoia Capital.

The great potential for profit will not come from those who submit video clips, but from advertisers. But how do you insert advertising in YouTube? That's where the creativity of YouTube's founders have come into play.

But for homeschoolers with camcorders, YouTube provides a wonderful way to reach thousands of people—homeschoolers and others around the world at practically no cost. That's how Ron Paul reached thousands of potential contributors. YouTube is also a wonderful way to take a trip around the world. Just type in the name of any city or country on the globe and someone will have sent in a video clip about that place.

There are many video clips on Global Warming from different points of view. You can make up your own mind. Or write in Havana, Cuba, to get a glimpse of what it's like in the Communist dominated city. I got a great kick watching a wonderful half-hour interview of journalist Mark Steyn at UC Berkeley.

If you are a lover of classical music you can watch the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra play Holst's spine-tingling Jupiter led by an emotional Japanese conductor, or watch exuberant Leonard Bernstein conduct Tchaikovsky and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, or watch aging Sir Edward Elgar conduct Pomp and Circumstance. And you can actually watch the great performance of the legendary Jacqueline du Pre playing Elgar's Cello Concerto with young conductor Daniel Barenboim leading the orchestra. What an incredible treat! The musical clips alone are a tremendous source of great entertainment. Of course, don't expect high definition TV from some of these old clips.

There are also many fascinating clips on religion: Christopher Hitchens in debate with Denesh D'Souza on the existence of God; Hitchens addressing the Atheist Alliance conference; a brief interview with 84-year-old Antony Flew, atheist convert to deism; stories of Muslims converted to Christianity (Muslims4Jesus).

One can easily spend hours browsing among the thousands of video clips. The clips note their running times and the number of viewers who've seen them, plus viewers' comments. Anyone can join and start sending in clips. You can start as amateurishly as you're likely to be, and develop better technique in future endeavors.

"Video democracy is here," Chad Hurley says, "and falling costs of transmission and a growing audience eager for the offbeat have empowered anyone with a laptop to create, review or alter almost any piece of digital entertainment in competition with the big guys. Hollywood will always bring great content," he adds, "but amateurs can create something just as interesting—and do it in two minutes."

Once homeschoolers know that you are on YouTube, you'll draw more and more viewers. So make your videos interesting and relevant. Do a video of a homeschool convention in your area. Or show off the sights in your home town. Or interview an author or politician. Why not show off your favorite hobby?

YouTube is also an incomparably fascinating source of information. Take advantage of it, and get on the high-techie road to video creativity.