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## Popularity of K-State professor's YouTube video proves its point

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The Wichita Eagle

Late in the evening on Jan. 31, Kansas State University anthropology professor Michael Wesch accidentally launched himself into cyberstardom.

He had posted a video about the changing role of the Internet on YouTube and sent the link to 10 of his colleagues to critique. He was trying to get feedback, he said, so the video could be used for an academic journal's Web site.

Less than 24 hours later, his video, "Web 2.0... The Machine is Us/ing Us" had been viewed 100 times. Throughout the next week, the views soared to more than 18,000.

By 10 p.m. Thursday of this week, the count exceeded 1.37 million views.

"A lot of people have now downloaded it. It's really amazing," he said from his campus office in Manhattan. "It's sort of demonstrating its own points."

The roughly four-minute video takes a look at online interaction and how it could change society.

It starts out with Wesch's hand writing the words: "Text is linear" with a pencil. Wesch changes the phrase several times by adding and erasing words until the video flashes to a computer screen that reads: "Digital text is different." The phrase continues to morph, just as technology has.

"I just (wanted to) alert people to the idea that the Web transformed things," he said. "If you think about it, all human relationships are mediated by communication. When you change the medium, you change the relationships, and if you change your relationships, it changes society."

Wesch has been invited to speak at conventions all over the country to discuss the ethical questions the video raises, including the balance of privacy and access to public records.

"My video wasn't incredibly critical or academic or anything, but it asks the questions that 1.3 million people weren't asking before they watched it," he said. "What we're calling Web 2.0 is just the manifestation of the Web. We need to talk about how we need to adapt to it in different ways."

The video's double-entendre name, he said, best describes the video's message.

"What it means is the machine is using us, but ultimately, the machine is us. You could say the more we're ignorant about the machine, the more it's using us. But the more we know about the machine, the more we use it," he said.

"It's up to us, ultimately. If we don't understand what we're trying to make it do and what it's doing, it can change the world in ways we don't intend."

The closing images in the video send this message:

**We'll need to rethink a few things... copyright... authorship... identity... ethics... aesthetics... rhetorics... governance... privacy... commerce... love... family... ourselves.**

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