Public Abstract

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The micro-documentary is a digital subgenre emerging from the overlap of long-form documentary film, broadcast news, home video, advertising, and photojournalism. Despite technological advancements that have made video production and publication tools more accessible and less expensive, a wide spectrum of gatekeeping forces affect micro-documentaries in a variety of production contexts, including broadcast, web journalism, agency-driven commercial work, direct-to-client commercial work, self-publishing and film festivals. Through semi-structured interviews with six micro-documentary theorists and fifteen micro-documentary producers, this study uncovered an extensive (but by no means exhaustive) catalogue of gatekeeping forces affecting micro-documentary production at five levels of analysis: individual, routine, organizational, social institutional and social systems. After the analysis of twenty-one interviews, five phenomena emerged as primary findings: the existence of unacknowledged gatekeeping forces, the erosion of the auteur mentality, the value of qualitative returns, "share-ability" as a guiding production principle, and the decorporealization of gatekeeping online. This study offers practical and theoretical value by mapping gatekeeping forces reported by micro-documentarians and examining the relevance of an established journalistic theory to an emerging subgenre. In addition, this study could also establish a foundation for future study of micro-documentaries.