

> *How long have you been involved with Encyclopedia Dramatica? How did*

> *you get involved?*

I first signed up around late-2011 (only on Zaiger-led ED, I was never involved as a user with Girlvinyl/Sherrod-led ED but was a fan/reader during that era and was saddened when the original news of its closure occurred.) but that wasn't really when I began fully/regularly involving myself regarding ED. I was quite on/off in terms of my participation regarding being a user on the wiki and the forums until 2014 going onto 2015. Some point around July 2015 once I was deemed by a few wiki users (inc. Zaiger) that I had been a some-what long-term user they could trust that was also contributing, I was promoted on the wiki from a normal user to Editor (a middle rank between normal users with editing privileges to Admin, that I was for a few weeks) to then becoming one of the wiki Administrators. There is a higher rank known as Bureaucrat that I have not been at any point (this role allows you to change other users' rights, along some other more technical stuff).

To clarify excessively, being an admin in this case does not mean you can control essential elements like domain names and server space like a normal site administrator, we use the MediaWiki software (used in Wikipedia and others) that the admin means something different and relates solely to the management of that software and the wiki content itself. Tasks relating to my role means I can block vandals, protect certain pages that are being vandalised often and edit those pages once protected, amongst other abilities which can be linked to you if necessary.

> *Have the rules changed over the years, and the people using the site?*

> *Have many hung around since the beginning?*

To my knowledge we don't really keep a history of when a rule change occurs, but I am aware of various times when such a change did occur. We've become somewhat more-strict regarding dox than we used to be, we now generally don't put the likes of addresses and phone numbers on site than we used to years ago, even if we still have kept this reputation of being a telephone directory and links to our site banned from places as a result. If somewhere else has it we can link it from our site and say that the dox is there. We don't consider a full name (also known as a powerword) to be dox by the way. We also don't host revenge porn since it became such a legal issue, if people posted nudes themselves on the internet we don't give a shit and host it because that's their fault. You could also argue ED is both anti-deletionistic while also softening up in certain cases when it

comes to the deletion of articles per requests. I was responsible however for a case where a delete-consensus template got removed because it was deemed I was using it too much to get rid of what I deemed to be shitty abandoned stub articles. I am however quite adamant to keep certain articles when there is pressure including on editors' families to get certain shit removed. A mixed success, naturally. We also archive a lot more articles via archive.is and the like than we used to do beforehand, due to the general nature of sites and materials getting taken down/edited. Also, another factor was/is general opposition to certain outlets.

People-retention is a mixed bag, there are people that have been here since the beginning, there are also a lot who have just come for a few months and then move on. The nature of things can lead to burn out, which has occurred for quite a few people including me. Heads can often mash against each other regarding how to deal with certain things and the nature of the wiki means there really isn't a "break". You're dealing with an environment where there is both the application of rather dictatorial fiat power from the top and where you are often left to your own devices. ED has its own culture of doing things it's developed over 13 odd years. This naturally means people have to adapt or die and can be energy-expensive to deal with. Certain parts of the whole ED sphere can be pure toxic at times though, but that's more my own personal gripes.

*> I'm interested about ED's place in culture, now that the ideas and*

*> activities it caters to—trolling, flame wars, in-jokes and awful*

*> things on the internet—have kind of gone mainstream now.. In terms*

*> of the mainstream influencing on ED, has the become more political*

*> lately? (I feel like everything online is political now, possibly*

*> boringly so, but maybe ED cares about other stuff more?!)*

ED is approaching its teen years now, and has basically become a (unprofitable) brand of its own, people who have more than a casual normie knowledge of the internet tend to have a general idea what ED is and it is associated with the old-school at this point, like Something Awful or 4chan, it is simply from that era. This has natural positives and downsides. Certain parts of internet culture are more mainstream and others, and just because they are well known does not mean they are well understood. We also have a different role to play than Know Your Meme for example, which only specialises in a very certain kind of internet content. ED has generally expanded from being just about internet drama and being about the larger world in general too, but that was the case for some time, even back when Girlvinyl ran things, that's evident in our articles about 9/11 and Virginia Tech, written long before our current political situation was created. We always

satirised politics in some way manner, ED is a user-generated site, and therefore people will naturally create articles on what they want to write about, like how certain topics on Wikipedia get a lot more attention to those that you might consider more deserving. Just because staff or people request they get written does not mean they will be written.

ED has often been accused of being either complete SJWs or literally Hitler. One thing ED is designed to not be displaying a supposed neutral view on the specific subject, but that does not mean we don't go equal opportunity, it's more that the way our content is, it's designed to satirise/roast/destroy everything. People therefore will look to get offended in that sense, we had to separate our Trump article in two different articles; one to essentially mock both those who want him impeached instantly, and another to those who think that he's going to be the next face on Mount Rushmore. This false notion that I have been seeing increasingly that ED is somehow becoming more conservative or even alt-right is absolute bollocks, quite a lot of our staff have left-leaning views, smaller amount also homosexual (being serious).

I think the last few years in general has seen this en-masse polarisation when it comes to political discourse and the way politics is carried out in the public sphere, which is a result of many different factors outside of our control and to constrain it to single factors (journalist outfits have blamed gamergate, Trump, anonymity) is reductive at the most generous, and I'm not feeling generous.

Comedy in general, (late night American television is an egregious case) has also become in general pandering to certain political views/audiences, often shoehorning the comedy after the serious political point they want to make. The whole idea of celebrity culture weighing in on political subjects has become gratuitous and vacant in its egotism. I fully agree with you that it can become incredibly monotone in that respect, and this is from someone who likes personally engaging in politics and the like. You are becoming increasingly forced to have an opinion and that opinion being the same one they have, failing that you're fucked.

I could talk more about the way the political system has evolved in general over the last few years and fill several pages worth but I've probably over-answered this question to you already.

> *It also feels like in the mainstream, people aren't as easily*

> *shocked anymore. Has ED become more extreme in response? Or has it*

> *stayed the same?*

I think to answer your question we should separate being shocked to being outraged. There is a lot more outrage on the internet and on social media/the

mainstream then there was before. The last few months alone (e.g. Felix Kjellburg, James Damore, Daily Stormer to name only the most popular examples) to witness the surface level of what is still an extremely sensitive society that deliberately seeks offence and outrage for the benefit of their own self-image as moral arbiters. This general trend (especially the trend of domain-snatching) has been more a danger to ED than ever before and is becoming more a risk to our general existence. Fuck it, the existence of the web as it currently exists for the past 25 years, you could argue it's more a danger than the whole debate regarding net neutrality. There is the actual possibility that for the web to survive as it is that you're going to have to decentralise DNS.

We also don't consider ourselves a "shock site" in general. It's nowhere near our primary focus and we generally only use it actively against blocked users as a "fuck you" and keeping renowned articles like "Offended". I don't think ED has gotten more extreme, or as some people have claimed, moved further to the right, as most of our users have generally seemed to fit into the centre-left based on community tests of such.

ED is essentially its users, and therefore our content reflects the users who put it in there, and therefore it merely evolves over time, some articles don't get edited much and are therefore a product of the time in which they were produced.

> *Which were your favourite conflicts/personalities/communities you*

> *remember over the years? Are they still well-known?*

I could write pages alone about my own experiences with ED and how we dealt with certain situations and people, for sake of brevity, I'll post one case that ED deals with, and one case where I was personally very involved.

One community that seems to usually be constantly connected with ED at large is DeviantART, because that's where people often request the most articles about users from there, a lot of new users who never get seen afterwards proceed to make very shitty attack articles on the people they have a feud with on the site that we can't just delete immediately because of policy. Occasionally you get the diamond in the rough with one of that type of articles, I know because me and an admin of that time did make a solid featured article out of a relatively piss-poor stub thanks to how that person then responded to the article. There is actually a solid reason why this is the case more than any other site, DA has a specific rule that generally prohibits the on-site drama that once used to infest it, of course people like to circumvent it via us, which is rather annoying and is essentially tacitly accepted by the people over at DA.

A situation I was involved in was quite cross-site in general; a guy called Oliver Smith. He got mad after an article got written about him after a long time where

he could use ED to attack people on his own ideological wars. He was also quite hypocritical (especially when he would call others racist and then talk about nappy hair roots and was a noted holocaust denier) and would often attempt to use SEO via Wordpress and other sites to basically defame you with deranged interpretations and wild accusations that if you read you would instantly doubt its validity. It got to the point where he was threatening me with a lot of things, assault, death, castration. He partially doxed me and then tried to report me to my local police department without success. Also tried targeting who he thought was my family. He went insane at a few communities and not just ours, he also teamed up with a few others (one was someone who got mad I banned him for basically carrying out unfunny attack articles that were copies of material he wrote on his own created news source) to try to take sites like ours down, it's hard to describe this briefly with words but I can go into more detail if you want but I'll leave that for you to ask.

> *What's the current state of the site? It seems to have been through*

> *a lot of lawsuits and threats to its existence over the years. Is this*

> *current lawsuit any different, or is the site likely to be taken down?*

> *(If you're able to comment on it... if not it's no problem)*

In terms of legal documentation regarding that situation, Kiwi Farms of all sites happened to buy some of the PACER documents in that lawsuit, and allow you to freely download that at no cost, unlike PACER. URL here:

<https://kiwifarms.net/threads/monsarrat-v-zaiger.32334/>

I'm not a participant in that legal battle so I otherwise am not in the situation where I even know all the deep details, but the case is frivolous and hopefully we'll be able to get through it.

I won't lie and say that our finances are great, they're shit. I'm not even involved in that side but I know we currently have an issue trying to get funds to merely exist this month (sysadmin apparently let the payment for the servers' lapse, ask Zaiger).

> *This might sound weird, but I used to dislike Encyclopaedia Dramatica*

> *because it's not the friendliest place (!), but over time I saw a*

> *bigger purpose in it. It's pretty much the only place online life is*

> *archived. We can't trust other more mainstream sites to preserve*

> *this stuff, and in that sense ED is important. So, my question is, are*

> *there many ED users who'd agree, who view their role as archiving*

> *social media? Do you? And do you get many writers or academic or*

> *similar looking at it that way?!*

> --

I appreciate the honesty. I when I first came into this and started regularly contributing and becoming a staff member did also have a very high view and ambition of what I wanted to do with ED and where I could see it going. The reality of doing this for several years naturally dulls that sort of projection future-wise.

I do of course see the tremendous value in the ED archive and the fact that it should be kept up and maintained and not censored. I also fully agree with you that the general mainstream simply do not care or are even hostile to the notion of allowing that point of refutation that ED provides. You get challenged on ED, you can challenge on ED. That's something you often don't get on other platforms. That's something that gets you banned on other platforms, particularly social media.

You get people that tell us to keep up the good work and that we're this and all that (academia not reached out to us in terms of that last question); but that doesn't really change the fact that quite a lot of people in general do not value the perspective of the likes of ED and that the old-school internet is slowly being blocked out. Even some of our own long-time users don't truly value the place ED really has, that's my subjective opinion of course.

Yes, you could argue that we're not the only ones who archive a lot online (Kiwi Farms being one major example, but they care more about individuals and have their own moral code regarding why they do it). I should also point out we're technically not doing just online life. I'm noticing myself that a perception is beginning to see ED more as a relic than anything else, and it's saddening.