Gnu MediaGoblin 0.7

Ben Everard investigates Gnu's ambitious project to conquer the world of web-based media sharing.

DATA

Web
www.mediagoblin.org
Developer
Gnu
Price
AGPL

MediaGoblin aims to provide a free software alternative to media hosting sites like YouTube, Flickr and SoundCloud. Instead of focussing on a single media type, it allows users to upload and share many different types of media through a plugin system. To achieve this, the project launched a crowdfunding campaign that's raised over $60,000 to fund development (the campaign is ongoing – visit **http://mediagoblin.org/pages/campaign.html** to see the current status).
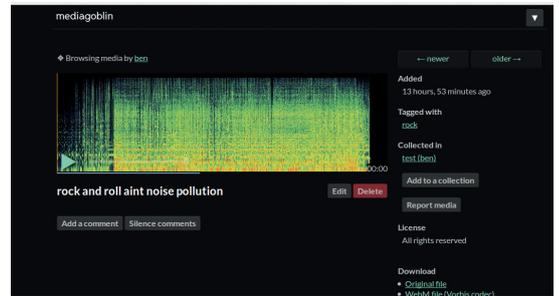
The team have come a long way towards realising their goal. You can now upload images, videos, sound files, documents and 3D models, which that should be enough to cover most people's media needs. *MediaGoblin* will re-encode them to the appropriate format, and make them available on the web page. You can also group them together into collections of various types, and viewers can add comments.

Blogs are now supported as an additional media type, but it's currently considered experimental, so use it at your own risk. Throughout the application, markdown is supported for adding formatting to comments and descriptions.

The Pump API allows users to share their content with (and upload content from) other applications. This means that *MediaGoblin* doesn't have to live in isolation, but can become part of an ecosystem. This feature is new in 0.7, so as yet, not much supports it, but hopefully that will start to change soon. In future releases, the developers hope to include full federation, which will enable users to seamlessly move across different *MediaGoblin* sites.

> ## "For now, Mediagoblin is a strong foundation for a useful project."

There are a few public *MediaGoblin*, servers like this one provided by the Roaming Initiative (**www.roaming-initiative. com/mediagoblin**).
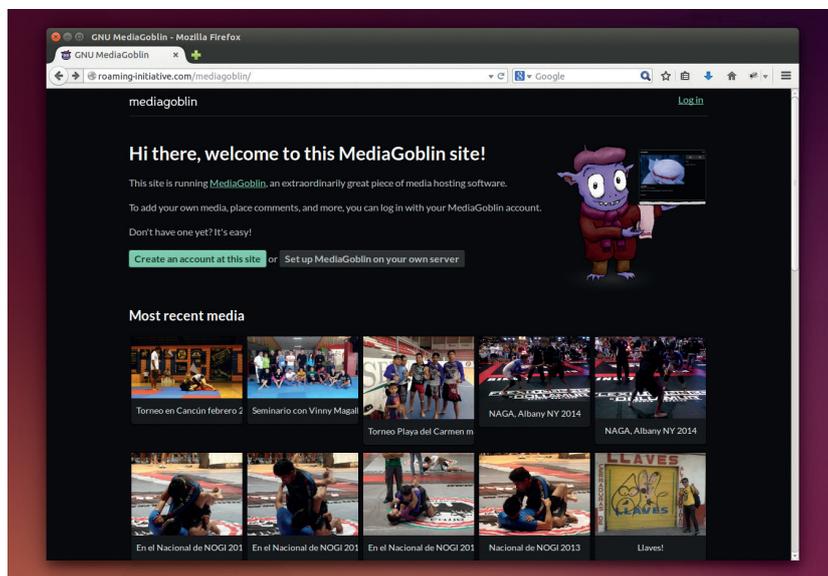

MediaGoblin enables you to tag media with a licence from all rights reserved to public domain.

To us, the biggest problem with the current version is the layout. The web pages look good, but they don't always show what you might want them to. For example, the home page shows a feed of what's been uploaded, but not popular collections, or particular users, and there's no way to search or browse by tag. Once you've found the particular user you're interested in, you can look through their collections, but you can't just click through from the front page unless they've recently uploaded media. It makes it quite hard to find things when you know where they are, and almost impossible to browse for media. Discoverability is absolutely critical to media servers, and for *MediaGoblin* to become a viable alternative to commercial services, it needs to get a lot better.

Limited wardrobe

MediaGoblin is themeable, but it's new and theme developers haven't yet caught up. Other than the two themes that come pre-installed, we couldn't find another one that worked with the latest version. Hopefully this will start to change as *MediaGoblin* gets more popular. Another important feature that's not yet available is the ability to embed media in other web pages. The popularity of YouTube videos around the web is a testament to just how effective this can be in spreading content. This is currently being worked on, so should be available soon.

For now, *MediaGoblin* is a strong foundation for a useful project. However, there is still quite a bit of work to do before the project offers a real alternative to closed-source media hosting. Given the current pace of development, we don't expect it to take too long. LV

LINUX VOICE VERDICT

A good basis, but there's a long way to go before it starts to worry the incumbents.

★★★☆☆