

# Leeds Independent Media Centre

## What are Independent Media Centres?

Independent DIY media projects are spreading around the planet at unprecedented speed. They have reported large scale events like the global anti-capitalism protests on June 18th 1999 which saw the first co-ordinated attempt by DIY media groups to provide rapid reporting of large scale events both in London and across the globe. Indymedia then grew as a concept during the large-scale mobilizations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in November 1999. During the demonstrations, the Seattle IMC site had received over 1.5 million 'hits' from around the world. By December 2003, 3 years after the anti-WTO actions in Seattle, there are more than 100 IMCs on all continents.

The screenshot shows the Leeds Indymedia website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Skip Navigation, HOME, UK Indymedia, Editorial Guidelines, Mission Statement, About Us, Contact, Help, Support Us. Below this is a banner for 'LEEDS INDYMEDIA' with a stylized figure. The main content area features a 'Countdown to A-spire' section with the date '29-11-2003 16:50'. The text describes the 'A-spire' event as Leeds' very own squatted social centre taking place on December 5-14. It lists various activities like 'open mic', 'workshops', and 'healing'. A sidebar on the left lists 'Regions' (Cambridge, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Oxford, Scotland, Sheffield, West Country, World) and 'Other UK IMCs' (Bristol, Wales). On the right, there are sections for 'Publish' (PUBLISH YOUR NEWS), 'Calendar - Announce an Event', and 'Leeds Newswire'.

## From IMC UK to IMC United Kollektives

On May 1st 2000 the name Indymedia moved across the Atlantic to London when it covered the MayDay events across the country. After meetings in Manchester and Lancaster, IMC UK became IMC United Kollektives, based on a network of local imc groups. Now, in July 2003, Leeds IMC joins new regional IMCs across the country in sharing in MIR - a collaboratively-developed open-source software creating the first indymedia project where several regional groups run their own autonomous site based on a shared database. Leeds IMC is one of them!

## Who is Leeds Indymedia?

Leeds Indymedia is part of a global network of locally based websites offering independent, non-corporate news coverage. It serves as a space in which people are free to present their own stories and versions of events. It allows the reader to become the writer – providing locally-based, grassroots coverage as well as perspectives that you wouldn't be able to find elsewhere. Leeds Indymedia can do this because in contrast to the traditional mainstream corporate media, it has no advertisers or investors to please. It operates according to an open publishing principle which simply means that nobody decides what is or isn't news, and everybody can contribute. The reader is allowed to make up his or her own mind and participate in making news, as opposed to the mainstream media with its lack of openness and participation, its timid reporting, sound-bites and spin.

## Leeds Indymedia:

- provides a forum for all those in Leeds and West Yorkshire who are struggling for another world, one without exploitation, oppression, domination, militarism and environmental destruction.
- rejects the manipulation of "public opinion" to suit the agendas of corporate and state power, and instead aims to amplify the voices of all people and allow them to speak for themselves.
- aims to open up access to media technology so all groups and individuals can speak for themselves, making it easier for people to participate in the growing global movement for social justice, human rights, peace and ecological balance.

- intends to help break down barriers between activists and people who would not generally see themselves in that light, providing an interactive medium for the local community through which anyone can post anything – a news story, a report, a picture, a video, an audio file, or just a comment.
- seeks to link global issues such as war, debt, poverty, AIDS, militarism, climate change, water resources, GM foods, people flows and globalisation, to everyday local issues like racism, education cuts, unemployment, landlordism, lack of social housing, privatisation, poor transport, pollution and the erosion of local democracy.
- provides a forum for the promotion and discussion of local events and culture - such as art exhibitions, music gigs, film festivals, sporting occasions and community meetings - promoting a more socially cohesive community.



Indymedia feels that censoring these views would put us in a similar position to the corporate and government-owned media, providing a filtered view of the world. We also feel that these views – to which we would never subscribe – provide a useful starting point for opening up debate and debunking misconceptions that have been spread within the local community. We reserve the right to take down posts which incite violence or are deemed libellous, or which potentially jeopardise provision of this service and space.

### **Our features policy**

Leeds Indymedia has two main news elements: the open publishing newswire and calendar, and the features column. The newswire and calendar are open for anyone to post to in line with the editorial policy. The features in the middle column of the Leeds Indymedia site reflect postings to the newswire. Features highlight specific issues to make them more accessible to people visiting the site. Leeds IMC volunteers moderate the site and collaborate in the production of features on the Leeds Features email discussion list. Any individual can join the features list and propose a new feature. This can take the form of an idea or a completed feature (between 50-80 words with at least one link to the newswire and background info).

If no-one on the features list objects within 24 hours to the proposed feature, and if it is in completed form, then it will be uploaded to the middle column. The 24-hour rule ensures that everybody can contribute to the middle column and allows time for collaborative improvements and considerations.

### **Contacting Leeds IMC**

If you have any questions about Leeds Indymedia, or if you'd like to join the volunteer group who keep it running, or to contribute in any way, you can send an email to us at: [imc-leeds-contact@lists.indymedia.org](mailto:imc-leeds-contact@lists.indymedia.org)

### **Our editorial policy**

Leeds Independent Media Centre (IMC) is run by an open editorial collective that anyone can join and take part in as long as they agree to the principles contained within this mission statement. The site is operated on an open publishing basis: anything can be posted up by anyone.

We request that users respect each other and engage in debates in a positive way: arguing is fine, abuse is not. However, even posts that are sexist, racist, homophobic, or oppressive in some other way, will be left up so long as they do not threaten violence. Leeds

leeds.indymedia.org.uk