

# **Sarai**

**Mike Caloud**

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[This interview first appeared on Rhizome.org:

Part 1: <http://rhizome.org/object.rhiz?3460>

Part 2: <http://rhizome.org/object.rhiz?3465>]

[Sarai is an alternative, non-profit organization in Delhi, India. They describe themselves as “a space for research, practice and conversation about the contemporary media and urban constellations.” Sarai publishes an annual “Reader” covering many issues relevant to new media art. In a recent email exchange, Mike Caloud had the chance to interview Sarai’s “Raqs Media Collective” on their unique institution (<http://www.sarai.net>).]

Mike Caloud: Let’s begin with a little background history. How and when did Sarai begin? What were the interests and motivations?

Sarai: To understand how Sarai began, it may be necessary for us to take a brief step back to the summer of 1998, when five of us, (Ravi Vasudevan & Ravi Sundaram from CSDS, and Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula & Shuddhabrata Sengupta from the Raqs Media Collective) began to conceive of Sarai.

The summer of ‘98 was a time for many new beginnings in the city of Delhi. The nineties had been a decade marked by doubt and rethinking on many fronts, all of which seemed to have come to a head for some of us during that summer. There was a sense of disquiet with increasing urban violence and strife, dissatisfaction with restrictive modes of thinking and practice within mainstream academia, the universities & the media, and a general unease at the stagnation that underlay the absence of a critical public culture.

At the same time, Delhi witnessed a quiet rebirth of an independent arts and media scene. This became evident in exhibitions and screenings that began taking place modestly in alternative venues, outside galleries and institutional spaces, and in archival initiatives that began to be active. Spaces for dissent and debate were kept alive by clusters of teachers and students in the universities. New ideas, modes of communication and forms of protest were being tried out and tested on the streets. The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in the summer of 1998 had brought many people out on to the streets of Delhi in spontaneous protest. There was a vibrant energy evident in street level improvisations with new technologies. Public phone booths were transforming themselves into street corner cybercaf  s, independent filmmakers were beginning to organize themselves in forums, and a new open source and free software community made its mark in the city’s BBSs

(Electronic Bulletin Boards). The city itself, as a space and as an idea, was becoming a focus for enquiry and reflection, and a provocation for a series of creative experiments.

It was from within this ferment of ideas, rough & ready plans, and fragments of proposals that a series of conversations on film history, new media theory, media practice and urban culture was able to mature into the conceptual foundation of Sarai. Sarai (the space and the programme) takes its name from the caravan-serais for which medieval Delhi was well known. These were places where travelers could find shelter, sustenance, and companionship; they were taverns, public houses, meeting places; destinations and points of departure; places to rest in the middle of a journey. Even today, the map of Delhi carries on it twelve place names that include the word Sarai. The Sarai Initiative interprets this sense of the word "sarai" to mean a very public space, where different intellectual, creative, and activist energies can intersect in an open and dynamic manner to give rise to an imaginative reconstitution of urban public culture, new/old media practice, research, and critical cultural intervention. The challenge before the founding group was to cohere a philosophy marrying this range of concerns to the vision of creating a lively public space where research, media practice, and activism could flow into each other. It took two years (1998-2000) to translate this conception into a plan for a real space and to design a workable interdisciplinary programme of activities.

The third Next Five Minutes conference in Amsterdam was a turning point in some ways. The discussions between those of us who were planning (or rather dreaming) Sarai, those in the Waag, and those who were to become part of Sarai's international partners began taking a more concrete shape at that event. The next several months were spent in detailing what we wanted to do at Sarai and on the hammering out a concrete proposal that focused Sarai's interests and objectives.

Today, the Sarai Initiative embraces interests that include cinema history, urban cultures and politics, new media theory, computers, the Internet and software cultures, documentary filmmaking, digital arts and critical cultural practice. Sarai opened its doors to the public of Delhi in February 2001 and the first year has been very hectic for all of us, especially as all our projects and public interventions have begun to take concrete shape. As we draw towards the completion of our first year we realize that our strength lies in the collaborative vision that has been the founding principle of Sarai, and that the space can grow only by continuing to include and engage with new people and ideas from across the world.

Mike Caloud: The beginnings of an institution like Sarai involve gathering resources, raising funds, and setting up a space to work. What was that initial experience like?

Sarai: We had to spend a fair amount of time and energy to garner the resources and the funding that made Sarai possible. In fact it took roughly two years (with some of us concentrating full time on the task of writing and following up on proposals) for Sarai to become a reality in terms of funding. The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, our parent institution, contributed the space, which has been a major asset. Additional funding was raised, through the Waag, from the

Dutch government for a collaboration and exchange programme. And, over time, we have raised further resources for our other projects.

Having got the funding, we had to spend a lot of time on actually converting the space that we had (an empty basement) into what it is today. This meant designing the space, supervising construction, buying furniture and appliances, and working a lot with our own hands to create a well-equipped, convivial, and comfortable space. As we had no precedents to follow, we obviously made a few mistakes and errors of judgment, and had to learn to deal with realities like power surges, leaking basement floors, complicated insurance contracts, and purchase invoices. We think that these mundane aspects of setting up spaces such as Sarai often get overlooked in the hype about culture and creativity, but without them, and without people working really hard to ensure that everything in a building is working and in its place in conditions that are far less than ideal, none of the culture and creativity and new media can flourish. We have enjoyed dealing with all this as much as we have enjoyed designing our website or creating new media work, or doing research.

Mike Caloud: Do you have sufficient computer hardware and software for you projects? Also, how much does Free Software play a part?

Sarai: We are reasonably well equipped. We have a Media Lab that has five multimedia computer workstations, including 3 Mac G4s, and two Linux PCs. One of these is equipped with Final Cut Pro, and so doubles as a video-editing suite. The Media Lab is the production hub of Sarai, all our creative work in various media, Internet projects, print and design projects are located here. The Media Lab has a scanner, a printer, a digital video camera, a digital still camera and audio mini-disc recorders. Five people work at the media lab. The Interface Zone - the public access area that is also used for residencies, workshops, and exhibitions is equipped with five PCs. The Interface Zone is looked after by an animator who designs and curates events, and facilitates public interaction. Apart from this, the research projects have five computers, which are used by research assistants and fellows at Sarai. The free software project has two PCs.

Sarai's experimental outreach programme - the Cybermohalla Project - a digital culture lab in a slum settlement in Central Delhi is also equipped with three Linux PCs, a scanner, analog audio recorders and a digital still camera.

Sarai has a core team of eighteen people from different backgrounds and disciplines (filmmakers, academics, software programmers, lawyers, social workers, activists, designers, writers, researchers, and media practitioners) who work on a regular basis on different collaborative and individual projects. Apart from this, eighteen seed grants and fellowships have been given out this year for different research and media projects on themes that resonate with Sarai's interests with city spaces, urban cultures, and media forms. These include architects, theorists, sound artists, student groups, and a graphic novelist. Sarai has also embarked on a modest residency programme for visiting artists, practitioners, and scholars to work and interact with Sarai fellows.

In terms of connectivity, we have recently acquired a 64K lease line connection. This means that we have now enough bandwidth to begin thinking concretely about streaming audio, and hopefully eventually video from Sarai.

To answer your question about the usage of free software at Sarai: The entire network at Sarai runs on Linux. The PCs are all Linux machines, and run free software applications, and one of the Macs at the media lab has been configured to run Linux. Everyone at Sarai is encouraged to work as much as possible with free software, and most of us use Free Software (we experiment/use many distributions).

This is certainly a conscious choice on our part. We are interested in Free Software not only because it makes economic sense in an Indian context not to spend a lot of money on expensive proprietary software, but also because we believe there are crucial issues of cultural freedom and creativity that are at stake here. A mono-cultural domination of Microsoft, or any form of proprietary software, is as lethal for the sustenance of the dynamism and diversity of software culture(s) as the domination of Monsanto seeds is to farming. We want to contribute to autonomous, collaborative energies in the field of software culture, which are conducive to conditions of diversity. Many of these collaborative energies challenge, or at least are skeptical about the commodification of digital culture across the globe. That is a characteristic we would like to see fore-grounded in a lot of the work that we do.

We are lucky to have on board a team of young, talented, and enthusiastic free software activists, who also run and administer the network at Sarai. They have been able to put in place an array of machines and applications across platforms, which we think is unique in terms of the variety and number of sometimes conflicting demands that it effectively addresses.

Mike Caloud: [waag.sarai.net](http://waag.sarai.net) is evidence of the partnership between the Waag and Sarai. How have the Waag and Sarai benefited from collaboration?

Sarai: The relationship with the Waag has been one of collaboration at a very practical, concrete level, as well as one of the sharing of intellectual and creative energies. There has been a lot of two-way traffic, with exchanges of residencies, and visits. This has certainly lent dynamism to the creative processes at Sarai. The programmers and media lab people at Sarai have benefited enormously from their visits, for instance, to HAL and to tech\_2, both of which took place with support from the Waag-Sarai Exchange programme. We have also had workshops in design, networking and system administration, as well as video and audio streaming. The partnership has also facilitated visits and talks at Sarai by media theorists from Europe, and starting from this summer, it will be theorists and practitioners from Delhi who will be spending time in Amsterdam, doing talks and conducting workshops that will be organized by the Waag.

The publication of the Sarai Readers 01 and 02 is another instance of the Sarai Waag collaboration. The readers have been jointly published, and Geert Lovink from the Waag has been a part of the editorial team for both Readers.

The level of exchange and collaboration is poised to enter a qualitatively new phase as both Sarai and Waag as content producers can envisage the possibility of entering into new collaborative possibilities, this time with third parties located elsewhere. This is particularly because the experience gained by both Sarai and Waag in developing digital cultural interventions in cities like Delhi may have relevance in many other cities of the South.

Mike Caloud: Do you have other collaborations planned in the Asian/South Asian regions, and internationally?

Sarai: Sarai has active ties with other international institutions, organizations and bodies, and these are growing as we get many requests for collaborations, exchanges, and visits from overseas. We have especially good relationships with the new media scene in Australia (through ANAT, the Australian Network for Art and Technology), the UK, and Germany. We do feel that we should have a more active relationship with practitioners in North America, especially in the free software movement. We are developing partnerships with similar bodies in Eastern Europe and Japan, (through ISEA) and are actively pursuing a more dynamic network in the South Asian Region, especially with practitioners and artists in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. The political realities of South Asia, particularly the strained relationships between the Indian and Pakistani governments makes the need for collaborative energies in the region more urgent and all the more difficult, but this is certainly an area that we hope we will be able to forge more meaningful relationships in the future.

Another area of building interesting alliances with artists, practitioners, and public intellectuals is with similar cultural and academic initiatives in other Indian cities, particularly with Mumbai, Bangalore, and Kolkata - where we are now beginning to be known.

Mike Caloud: The Opus Project seems especially compelling as a model of collective creation. How far has the collaboration software progressed? What are your hopes for Opus? Also, if participants can easily modify nodes within Opus, how do you determine authorship for nodes? Will authorship even matter?

Sarai: Opus is an acronym; it stands for Open Platform for Unlimited Signification! In a simple sense, it will be an online space for people, machines, and codes to play and work together - to share, create, and transform images, sounds, moving pictures, and texts.

Once you have published your work, other members of the Opus community will be able to give their comments and reflections on your work through the attached discussion boards. You can also inspire others and allow them to take your work as a starting point for a new (art)work. Opus follows the same rules as those that operate in all free software communities. The source(code), in this case the video, image, sound or text, is free to use, to edit, and to redistribute.

Needless to say these freedoms also apply to the code, i.e. the software itself that lies behind Opus.

We are quite excited by the possibilities that we envisage in the Opus Project. I think it exemplifies for us the opportunity to evolve a new ethic of creativity, of making work that is collaborative, playful and involves a series of interactions between practitioners, technicians, coders, and artists. This involves a necessary re-imagination of the character of cultural praxis. Opus is less about individual artists or practitioners, but of laboratories and virtual ateliers where practitioners develop creative processes, and those cultural artifacts are available to all those who seek it. This is related to an idea that we have been working on for some time now, which is to lay the ground for a “digital commons” which is predicated not on the dissolution of authorship, but on its dispersal and elaboration over time.

We are not saying that authors do not matter, but what we are saying is that a “line” of works may be the result of many authors who enter the process of creation at different points of time, or who are located in different spaces. This is analogous to the way a population grows. Authors (or the traces of them in different works) act in the same way as parents act in a given generation of human beings. Their children (the works) may attract other materials and further processes of reproduction will involve the exchange of the genetic code of different works. The process of survival and growth of the population of works over time is dependent on their ability to attract partners (other authors, other materials) and reproduce. Since each work, at each stage of its presence - as a “rescension” in Opus will embody the signature, or code of its parentage, it will be possible to construct genealogies of works, making it possible to identify quite precisely the distributed authorship of a work and its rescensions over time.

A word about the term “rescension” - a “rescension” is a narrative which can give rise to another narrative (which is neither a clone nor a copy of the “original”) without being a replacement of the first. We see this as being vital to the development of a collaborative space for creation. Each rescension stands in relational autonomy to every other rescension, the presence of one modifies the reading of another without calling for its replacement.

Curiously, this is the process by which epic narratives have multiplied. A good example is the way in which the narrative of the “Mahabharata” in South Asia has formed and reformed - as rescensions - allowing for an extensible multiplicity of meanings and authorial agencies. These new “rescensions” and/or threads will not replace the older ones. They will together form a series of interlinked interpretations.

So authors will matter, but they will matter in a dynamic, rather than in a static sense of their contribution to a work or works. We are actually quite pleased with the obvious parallels between the process of continued creation in an online environment and the ordinary business of making babies, or ensuring that life continues in the real world.

At the moment we are working (at a relatively furious pace) the front end of the Opus Interface and on the code on which Opus will move. The media lab is quite busy with Opus; we are a fairly motley crew, with programmers from Delhi, Zurich, and Amsterdam poring over long sheets of code, while designers and media practitioners debate the look, the feel, and interactivity of the interface.

Mike Caloud: Sarai does not seem to indulge strictly in new media. What meaning and importance do old media forms, especially cinema, have for you?

Sarai: For us, the term new media is not so much about the novelty of computers, multimedia and the Internet, as it is about new forms and strategies of practice. It's about innovative re-combinations between "Old" and "New" media, between and across print, film, video, television, radio, computers and the internet.

The cinema in India has always operated on an industrial, and global scale (Cinema from Mumbai, Chennai or Hyderabad, like Hollywood and the Hong Kong cinema, is not a local media form; it has always had large audiences in Africa, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, North America and Britain). The sheer size and scale of the cinema industry in India does challenge the possibilities of independent creative practice in all media forms. That makes it all the more necessary for us to think of ways in which new media forms can both speak to as well as assert their autonomy in relation to the cinema.

We are interested in this dialogue between the old and the new media, not only between cinema and the new media, but also between print, radio and the new media. We are keen to effect crossovers and transgressions that displace both old and new hierarchies, which privilege neither tradition, nor novelty for their own sake, and give rise to a more layered and agile form of media practice that is more reflective of the contemporary in our spaces. This means being as invested in the making of print objects, visual works and soundscapes, as we are in the creation of web content, and looking for ways in which practices and objects can straddle off-line and online trajectories.

Mike Caloud: Are there unique Indian qualities to the media projects at Sarai? Or do you consider yourself part of a more global aesthetic?

Sarai: For us, the idea of a "uniquely Indian quality" is not really meaningful or expressive of anything at all. India is the name of a nation state, and "Indian" the term denoting nationality that happens to be entered in our passports, but it does not really suggest anything real or concrete in terms of culture to us, nor do the words French, or Italian or Australian or American, for that matter. Those who use the term "Indian Culture" usually mean a complex of values, attitudes, and tendencies that have been processed to mark out a space that is "uniquely" theirs, and which mirrors an obsession with territoriality. We are puzzled as to what (in cultural terms) can "uniquely" be the possession of any sets of people, in exclusivity. Culture is something that never respects borders and territories. It is infectious, nomadic, and volatile. We see culture and cultural intervention as an agile constellation of people, practices, connections, and objects that come into being when different disciplines, histories and attitudes encounter each other in a global cultural space. This does not mean that we subscribe to the view that there are no cultural differences, but that cultural affinities and differences are not reducible to the mere notations of current political cartography.

A group of cultural workers (in say, a city like Delhi) trying out new vocabularies with images, text and data like us may have a lot in common, in terms of concerns and practices, with their counterparts in Mexico City or Adelaide or Lagos, and very little in common with dominant aesthetic forms in their immediate

geographical vicinity (or elsewhere). Location has ceased to be of paramount importance, although located-ness hasn't. We are strongly located in the city in which we work, in our "here and now," but we do not define ourselves in terms of our location, rather we define ourselves in terms of the practices that we are engaged in.

The internet in fact allows us to build everyday and concrete bridges and collaborative contexts where the origins (or locations) of the people collaborating together matter less than the destinations (and the vectors) that they are going towards, or traveling on.

The work that we do reflects the very specific conditions of a large, chaotic, industrial, cosmopolitan city which is connected through flows of information, finance, and industrial processes to the whole world. While we may hesitate to use the term "Indian" to describe our work, we are certain that our work speaks to the specific, simultaneously global and local realities of working and living in a city like Delhi, and of engaging with the diverse and complex histories of modernity in South Asia, as reflected in media cultures and practices.

This means that our work does in fact reflect the popular print, narrative, visual or cinematic histories of urban spaces in this part of the world. These are very specific histories, and the addition of the word "Indian" detracts from their concreteness and specificity. These histories emerged out of the global encounters that people in South Asian urban spaces had with the world throughout history and particularly from the nineteenth century onwards. These included interactions of those engaged in forging a new public culture in cities like Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay, Lahore, and Pune with lithographers in Hamburg, writers in London, typesetters in Zurich, photographic pioneers in Paris, engineers in Boston, miniature painters in Tabriz and Florence, weavers in Sumatra, storytellers in Zanzibar and ceramic artists in Beijing and Kyoto. The fabric of contemporaneity in South Asia is a result of an array of cross-cultural encounters like these, and it would be unrealistic to see what is happening today (say in the digital domain) as disconnected from this history.

It is because we are strongly located in a city like Delhi that we also know that we are part of, and contribute to, a global domain of aesthetic and cultural practice.

Mike Caloud: English dominates computer culture, and is also a large part of Indian life. Do you think the languages of India will be cast aside, in favor of English, within India's computer culture? Is an exclusive use of English a possible future for Indian computer culture?

Sarai: (answered by Ravikant, [ravikant@sarai.net](mailto:ravikant@sarai.net)) The proposal embedded in the query is not entirely new. A suggestion to this effect was made in the colonial period as well. The marginal success of that legacy can still be traced in the post-colonial army pedagogical practices. The instructors use Roman English to conduct their classes held in Hindi. So, we are talking about a change in the script only, not language per se. There are quite a few mailing lists running in Hindi today that use roman to communicate in Hindi. I deploy the same method in writing my mails to people who have become comfortable with reading/writing theirs in Hindi. I



also believe that Hindi speakers should take up English in a big way, if they really wish to help the cause of Hindi.

Your question however, suggests a radical language shift, which is different from the above case, which is actually a contingent, strategic measure, a stopgap arrangement waiting to be abandoned as soon as computers become Hindi-literate. The suggestion is based on an erroneous assumption that English is a very common language in India. Contrary to the conclusion we might reach based on the proliferation of English- medium schools, even in small towns and villages, the fact is that Hindi- medium students would outnumber those reading in English even in a metropolitan city like Delhi. Also note that the newspaper with the highest circulation in the country is a Hindi one (Dainika Bhaskar) to be followed by the Malayalam Manorama. So I do not see a future exclusively with English as either bright or immediate or preferable.

It is not a question of cultural identity only that makes people prefer their own languages to others. It is also a question of comfort, the sense of feeling at home in their own languages. It is also a faith in the individual geniuses of languages: you must have heard this oft-made comment among bi-lingual speakers, for example: "it can't be said as beautifully in Hindi" (or Urdu or English), depending on what is being referred to. A whole *tehzib* (manner) cannot be translated instantaneously. And every translation, while enabling portability also entails loss.

The idea of exclusive dependence on one language or the other is unacceptable. People in India are natural at practicing bi- or multi- lingualism and they have had to add English to their list of linguistic skills. This is indeed happening. In fact with the computer and the internet there is a chance that certain languages that lost out in the print-race of 18th-19th-20th centuries may now skip the whole intermediary stage and jump straight from the oral to the digital. So, English (because you can't do without it) in the company of local/regional languages would constitute a healthy public domain in India.

Mike Caloud: What are some of the new and future projects coming out of Sarai, including media projects, social activism, and community outreach? Where do you want to see your organization go?

Sarai: At the moment, Sarai is very busy. People at Sarai are working on a number of different areas and projects. We are gearing up to produce (at the end of February [2002], to coincide with our first anniversary) the second Sarai Reader - The Cities of Everyday Life - which will contain original writing, image-text essays, and discussions on city spaces and urban culture. There are plans to publish a Sarai Reader in Hindi in the summer.

Today, Sarai includes under its ambit a media lab which is a focus of creative and experimental work in various media (video, audio, print, internet), a programme for the development of Hindi language resources in cyberspace, a free software development programme, a public access space (the Interface Zone) which is a platform for the exhibition of new media projects - and an active Outreach Programme (The Cyber Mohalla Project - or - Cyber Neighbourhood Project) which works in a working- class squatter settlement in central Delhi to create resources of digital creativity for young people.

Additionally, two inter-disciplinary research & practice projects - Mapping the City, and Publics & Practices in the History of the Present - act as catalysts for a variety of intellectual and creative interventions at Sarai.

Sarai places a great deal of emphasis on developing new and critical interdisciplinary theoretical work. The research agenda of Sarai is organized towards two complementary themes - understanding the place of the media in urban public practice and consciousness, and reflections on the city as constituted through representations and technologies. The research on media is directed towards understanding the rhythms and routines of daily life in the city as mediated through words, images, and sounds. Our particular concern is with the possibilities involved in people's relationship to the media, the domain of "needs," "desires," work and leisure, creativity and communication practices that the media world opens up.

The analysis of urban life attends to the varied dimensions of everyday life. These range from planning and housing to geographies of the city, mediated through work, leisure, transport, and communication. Technological forms that underwrite contemporary urban experience as well as the social practices through which the city is imagined and acted upon will be addressed in our research.

The Cyber Mohalla project at Sarai continues to be active, and a Cyber Mohalla Diaries will be published in February, which will render the work of the project and the way in which the young people who are engaged with the project look at the city, and use tools of digital creativity to reflect on their lives.

We (the Raqs Media Collective, at the Sarai Media Lab) are also working on a number of new media projects which examine questions related to claims and contests around issues of space and access in the urban environment, and explore the idea of a "digital commons." We hope to realize at least three to four major new media projects around these themes this year on a variety of platforms, on the Internet, as installations, and in the form of publications.

We will also be working on a hypertext project on surveillance titled the Global Village Health Manual Version 2, which takes off from where an earlier work, Global Village Health Manual Version 1, left off in terms of its examination of how our bodies inscribe and are inscribed upon in cyberspace.

The Sarai calendar is full each month with screenings, talks, workshops, seminars, and exhibitions. We have had seminars and workshops with students on cyberculture, with artists on digital art and new media technologies, seminars on cinema and the city, a number of curated film screenings (including Iranian Cinema, Hong Kong Action Films, Science Fiction and the Urban Imaginary), and exhibitions of new media art works arising out of collaborative artists residency programmes.

This year began with a photographic hypertextual work - "The Street is My Country" - by a photographer from Dhaka, Bangladesh, Syeda Farhana Zaman, who looked at the marginalization of migrants in the city. Recently, we have undertaken our first experiments with streaming audio - members of the Sarai

community participated in an internet radio programme for four days in February to coincide with the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre.

We are organizing a conference on Information and Politics in March [2002], which will include discussions and presentations by activists, artists, and researchers on surveillance, censorship, free speech, cyber laws, and the right to information campaign in India. Apart from these, this year will see more international collaboration events at Sarai, and a renewed focus on free software culture related projects.

As part of its public initiative, Sarai is interested in media cultures that lie in the shadow of technological and social elites. We are interested in speaking to critical voices that produce and live the new media, which may exist in the street, the software factory, the worlds of the local videowalla, the neighbourhood Public Call Office/cyber café, the street photographer, and the gray markets in music, computers, and other media-ware. This is the electronic everyday, which resides in the shadows of the spectacular media space conjured by the media empires in South Asia, will be very much an area where Sarai's work is slated to grow in the near future.

The Sarai website and the digital interface located in the Interface Zone at Sarai render all of Sarai's work public. This includes an emerging archive of urban culture, an online gallery of new media works, and an active discussion list - the Reader-List which began in February 2001 and has more than three hundred subscribers at present. The Reader List is archived online at <http://mail.sarai.net/pipermail/reader-list/>. We host a number of other discussion lists as well, including [solaris@sarai.net](mailto:solaris@sarai.net) (on IT and Development) and [cr-india@sarai.net](mailto:cr-india@sarai.net) (on the campaign for community radio). The monthly Sarai newsletter goes out to more than 1300 people.

Sarai is becoming recognized as an important alternative venue in Delhi for discussions and workshops on the politics of media culture and urban space, and as a space where many young people can feel comfortable in an increasingly constricted cultural milieu. In laying open the possibilities of a new communicative ethic, and a space for connectivity between different strands of intellectual work, cultural intervention, technological innovation and a commitment to free speech and open culture Sarai hopes to create a modest autonomous space for creativity in Delhi.

All this should give you a fair idea of what goes on at Sarai.

<http://www.sarai.net/>  
<http://mail.sarai.net/pipermail/reader-list/>