Developing and launching effective and engaging videos without breaking the bank

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Abstract:

We have leveraged a number of free or cheap resources (and the occasional not-so-cheap resource) to create, distribute, promote, and update videos to promote and educate about library resources and services. These videos can be created by almost anyone with a bit of patience and willingness to learn.

This presentation will essentially be a lesson in creating effective videos, quickly and inexpensively. It will focus on practical instructions and demonstrations, with framing information on pedagogy and the legal/moral issues we have encountered. In brief, the lesson cover six steps:

1. *Planning the video.*
2. *Creating and gathering the raw material for the video: digital photos and images, screencaps, videos, links, text-based files, etc.*
3. *Recording a screencast with voice recording.*
4. *Editing the screencast and voice recording.*
5. *Posting and promoting the finished video.*
6. *Updating videos with new or changed information.*

Our presentation offers attendees practical ways to create videos that do not require significant monetary investments, while demystifying the creation process for even rudimentary experts. All materials and links, as well as supplmentary information, is available on our session Prezi: http://bit.ly/141eQZo

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Making promotional or educational videos for your library requires expensive, state-of-the-art equipment, high-level expertise, and years of experience... or does it? This session will introduce you to the production of online videos using free or cheap tools, which many librarians can master quickly.

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Introduction

Good-looking online videos can appeal to a wide variety of library users and stakeholder groups. In the 21st-century, not only young people are interested in well-designed interactive online media (Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Margaryan, Littlejohn & Vojt, 2011; etc.). It is worth the effort for librarians to familiarize themselves with the tools and skills needed to create online videos. All you need to create a video is a computer in a quiet space, screencasting software, and a headset with a microphone. Because so many online tools are available for free, it is possible to create highly effective videos for promotion or education without worrying about diminishing budgets.

We have broken down our process for making videos into six steps.

Step 1: Plan

Planning is a very important aspect in creating effective videos. Well-planned videos cut down on editing time and make the creation process much smoother. Planning helps to keep videos brief: between three and five minutes. Shorter videos help maintain viewer attention and focus, and are more effective advertisements (Grunert, 1996).

Once you have identified the purpose of the video, and thought about the target audience, the next step is to create a script, storyboard, or mind map – see examples and links to resources on our Prezi (http://bit.ly/141eQZo). Any of these can be done on your own or in collaboration, and you can use free software or just pen and paper. These planning steps will help you make a higher quality video, and make the subsequent steps much easier to accomplish.

Step 2: Gather

Once your planning documents have been created, you are ready to gather materials for the video. Materials might include digital photos, images, screencaps, links, or text-based files. When using materials you did not create yourself, you must seek copyright information to ensure they are appropriate to use. An easier option is to seek out online resources that offer materials under a Creative Commons License. Creative Commons allows for the creator of specific items to set certain copyright terms on their product. You can find images and videos licensed by Creative Commons in online search engines like Flickr (an image database) or Vimeo (video database).

If your institution plans on creating a large number of videos, or plans on hosting them on a channel in YouTube or Vimeo, it is important to create a brand for your videos. Branding videos can be done in a number of ways. Videos can include standard opening and closing slides, common intro and outro music, common look and feel, or brand logos. Creating your own unique intro and outro music is reasonably easy to do and does not require any musical skills. Free and paid applications like Garage Band, Bloom, SoundCloud, and TonePad make it easy to create short musical clips for your videos.

For the visual elements of the video, slides are a popular choice, whether using paid applications like PowerPoint or Keynote, or shareware versions like OpenOffice or NeoOffice. Other online applications can be used to create the visual framework for your videos, including the free pan-and-zoom software from Prezi.com. When creating the visual framework of the video, be aware of the

aesthetics of what you are creating. Mixing up images, text, and animations is usually the best course, especially for beginners.

Step 3: Record

Screencasting refers to software that captures what is happening on your screen and turns it into a video file. Running slides, a Prezi, or navigating a website while speaking into a microphone is an easy way to make a professional-looking video that does not require the use of a camcorder or camera.

When narrating the video, use a friendly tone of voice, and be sure to speak clearly and a little more slowly than normal. Before you begin recording it is important to test your audio. Record a small clip and play it back. Does your voice sound clear? Is there any noticeable or distracting background noise? Does the microphone position need to be adjusted, or have foam wrapped around it to soften the sound? Figuring this all out before you record an entire script will save a lot of time and heavy amounts of editing.

If you have planned effectively, you may be able to record a video in a single take. However, it is also possible to edit videos to fix any problems. If you are planning to edit, you do not have to stop and re-record an entire video because of one mistake: just pause for a moment, and start from a slightly earlier point.

There are a variety of free tutorials and tools for recording sound and screencasting, which we have linked to in our Prezi (http://bit.ly/141eQZo). Some screencasting tools include audio recording and editing. You might also want to use Audacity, a free audio recording tool with advanced editing features.

Step 4: Edit

Editing is the most potentially time-consuming and frustrating part of the process. There is a learning curve, and even advanced users can become frustrated with imperfect software. Planning will help alleviate this, as will starting with relatively simple videos. Practice makes it all much easier. Many screencasting programs will allow you to cut and remove sections of both audio and video, as well as modify it to a certain degree.

Because every editing tool is different, we will not go into specifics now. We encourage you to look over the free tutorials and tools for editing that we have linked to in our Prezi (http://bit.ly/141eQZo).

Step 5: Share

Once you have created a finished video, you will want to make sure your users or stakeholders see it. We have used a variety of strategies for getting our videos out there:
- Hosting on the library website
- Link or embed on your blog or other social media
- Hosting online
  - o Vimeo.com can have better video quality
  - o YouTube is indexed by Google, allowing more people to find your videos

We suggest you build your videos into any online promotional spaces you already have.

It is also recommended that you take advantage of free promotion and assessment tools. Many social media sites will allow you to interact with users in ways that promote your videos and your institution. Promotion tools are also widely available, including the use of Google Analytics for videos hosting on your own websites, and YouTube analytics if your video is on YouTube. These will allow you to know how effective your promotion has been.

Step 6: Update

When planning a video, it is a good idea to consider currency and sustainability. During planning, try to avoid including information that may be time-sensitive. This increases the chances that your videos will stay current longer, and be easy to edit and update. If you suspect that a section of your video will need to be replaced in the future, try to create the video in a way that makes it easy to extract the existing clip and replace it with a new one. Replacing audio can be a little more challenging, since it is often difficult to match vocals, even if it is the same person rerecording a section. You may need to rerecord the audio entirely, but sections of video can be easily edited or changed.

We recommend incorporating a video updating schedule into your time management or scheduling tools, to ensure that videos are regularly checked for currency, and updated if needed.

Conclusion

Creating videos in this way can be highly effective and rewarding. Although it requires time and effort, videos can be made with very little financial investment. Our Prezi (http://bit.ly/141eQZo) includes links to all resources and tutorials mentioned in our presentation, as well as additional information you may find useful. Thank you, and happy screencasting!

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