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# A MUSIC LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE TO ONLINE VIDEO AND PODCASTING

by

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## **PART ONE**

### **ONLINE VIDEO**

In 2005, online video streaming service YouTube launched, offering anyone the opportunity to upload and share video content for free. YouTube, like many social media tools, has matured over the last ten years into a platform that now mixes commercial enterprise with amateur creation. Competitors, like Vimeo and DailyMotion, have active online communities of their own and have helped to grow different aspects of the online video market. However, YouTube remains a formidable force, and is often cited as one of the Internet's top search engines as more and more people go directly to video for the information that they seek. Video is no longer an expensive, fringe medium produced in hard copy by trained professionals alone; it is now a core method of delivering content used by pros and amateurs alike in a fluid, fast-paced online environment. Music libraries can use online video as a tool for delivering instruction, communicating information about services and events, archiving local culture, or telling the stories of the communities they serve. In essence, video provides music librarians the opportunity to both show and tell their patrons the information they wish to share.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE VIDEO

### 1.1 EXPLORING THE WORLD OF ONLINE VIDEO

Before making online videos, it is a good idea to spend a substantial amount of time watching online videos. Select videos to watch which exemplify a range of methodologies or styles in presenting content. For example, if planning to produce teaching videos, find teaching videos to watch on diverse topics that use a variety of approaches. Do not restrict selections to only library-produced teaching videos or music teaching videos. A broad review will result in a greater diversity of ideas that can be adopted or mimicked. When viewing the selected videos, do not be a passive observer; take notes, and use them to inform the creative process. Focus on two things:

1. What works, and why it works. If the opening credits for an archived concert are particularly effective, try to articulate why they are effective. This analysis may be basic, but will prove instructive. For example, the credits may be effective because they are legible and brief.
2. What could change and how that change would improve the video. This is not the same as listing all the weak points about the video. By listing what could change and how it could change, the focus shifts from aesthetic judgment to practical methodology. A video may seem terrible, but unless the needed changes and processes to make those changes can be explained, there is little to glean that will inform the creative process.

Do not focus on the technical specifications of how the video is made. While cameras and microphones are important to creating successful videos, good content presented in a clear and engaging manner is the hallmark of any successful video. Therefore, focus any evaluation of a video's success or failure on content first and production value second. Below are some suggestions of successful video channels or sites to review in the three primary video categories that are discussed in this technical report.

#### 1.1.1 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

- <http://lynda.com>. Use for creating tutorials, especially long-form, step-by-step content. <http://lynda.com> is a great place to see different teaching voices using the same basic

presentation format. A paid subscription is necessary in order to view full-length tutorials, but clips and trailers are free to watch.

- **Crash Course.** From John and Hank Green, these videos teach history, literature, science, psychology, and any number of other subjects using narration, animation, and illustrations. Focus less on the outstanding production value (which is well out of reach for the average public or academic library) and more on content presentation and structure.
- **Alton Brown.** Brown's approach to teaching via video is a great place to get ideas if plans include putting a personality in front of the camera. His instructions are clear, his demeanor practiced but engaging, and his scripting flawless.

### 1.1.2 ADVERTISEMENTS

- "Study like a scholar, scholar," Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library. Probably the most famous library video ever made. There are many takeaways from the how and why the video was created. Watch the making-of video to get the fuller picture of what went into making this spoof of Old Spice's ad campaign.
- "Live Better Today!" Des Moines Metro Opera. This video is exemplary for two reasons. It is a simply shot parody of prescription medication infomercials, showing that fancy sets, animations, or gimmicks are not necessary in order to make a good ad. This video is almost surgical in targeting opera lovers in its execution of the parody (e.g., "you'll probably get consumption"), but modeling the content on a familiar trope can also pique the curiosity of viewers new to the genre.
- "Surprise Yourself at The Tech," The Tech Museum of Innovation, San Jose. These short ads (just under thirty seconds each) show students interacting with the exhibits at The Tech. There is no narration and no music, just the sound of children puzzling out the different building challenges or reacting to demonstrations. These videos are simple, but powerful.

### 1.1.3 DOCUMENTARIES, EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS, INTERVIEWS, LIVE EVENTS

- **Birth of an Idea, University of Houston Libraries.** This video combines images from the University of Houston's 1955 yearbook with the audio yearbook the editorial staff created to accompany each copy in the form of a 45 rpm. This mashup of digital photographs and transferred sound file helped bring the narrative of that academic year to life in a way that the two resources existing on their own could not.
- **Indianapolis Museum of Art.** This museum has been producing online video since 2006. It has also published and presented on the Museum's experiences using YouTube, iTunesU, and a homegrown, award-winning video platform called ArtBabble.<sup>1</sup> Its YouTube channel contains mainly collection highlights and interviews, while its ArtBabble channel contains longer, more-specialized content, including archives of lectures.



- UISpecColl, University of Iowa Special Collections. This channel has one short- and one long-form program that explore books and book history. The first program, *Staxpeditions*, uses audience requested call numbers to explore the contents of the University's Special Collections book holdings. The second program, *If Books Could Talk*, is a partnership with the department of history. It asks a question of a manuscript and uses a series of clues to explore answering the question through research. Both programs are hosted by special collections librarian Colleen Theisen.
- Guitars from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. What better way to showcase a collection of guitars than to record them being played? Other libraries may not possess the splendor of this museum's setting, but recording short works using a simple two-camera setup is a replicable model.
- The Brain Scoop. This science channel from the Field Museum in Chicago is hosted by Emilie Graslie and includes everything from onsite expeditions videos to dissections in the Museum's labs and even the occasional editorial. The Brain Scoop shows how energizing online videos can be when those making the videos get in front of the camera, too. Graslie is a great host and writer, but many of the Museum's scientists are also on camera with her, allowing for great scientific conversation to spark.
- The Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia. This channel does an exemplary job of producing good content in short formats. There is much in common with the Brain Scoop in that the Mütter Museum investigates scientific curiosities in its collections. There is less gloss to these videos and a much lighter touch in the editing, but the content and structure is solid and replicable. Check out the Curator's Desk series, which has a nice interactive device for generating audience participation.

## 1.2 BEING A PARTICIPANT IN THE WORLD OF ONLINE VIDEO

While the focus of this text is on the tools and methods for creating video content, there is more than one way to work with online video. Here are three roles that are important to the creation and distribution of video content:

### 1.2.1 CURATOR

With billions of hours of content watched each month, the sheer quantity of what YouTube contains has prompted patrons of all kinds to use online video services as a primary location for accessing music. This led music librarian Kirstin Dougan to explore the ways in which faculty and students use YouTube and perceive its uses. Her conclusion asks the following question: "In an era of flat or shrinking budgets, can librarians' carefully curated collections compete with the accessibility, immediacy, variety, and vastness of YouTube?"<sup>2</sup>

Even so, perhaps the role of music librarians will not be a split between local and global collections. YouTube is considered a social media platform because it is designed to be an interactive space for content sharing, consideration, and evaluation. A music librarian's presence

in gathering videos into channels and playlists across this constantly growing swath of content can direct patrons to better performances, forge connections across content that online video platform metadata is unlikely to make, or can help patrons discover videos online they might not find on their own. Serving as a curator does not require the actual creation of video content. It does require signing up for an online account and channel and perhaps pairing that account and channel with other social networks in order to promote the selections to target audiences. A great example of this principle in action is the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum's Library and Archives Tumblr, <http://rockhalllibrary.tumblr.com>. This feed shares videos and posts from second and third parties and reposts it to Tumblr.

### **1.2.2 CREATOR**

Content creators are responsible for actually making videos. Different creator roles include writer, animator, editor, director, and others. Because of the many talents needed to create video content, recruit a team of people in the library that can serve in various creator roles. Video work is time consuming, complex, and works best when cultivated from diverse creative strengths.

### **1.2.3 PRODUCER**

Music librarians are most likely to serve as content producers than as creators. Library users will be making videos for which the music librarian may need to serve in an advisory or supporting role. From community users to tenured faculty, library patrons are making more and more video content and often without any sense of where to start or how to finish what they have started. Librarians get into the mix because they are charged with connecting patrons with much needed resources, including the music, images, and research resources, along with those on copyright that users struggle to locate on their own. Producers can connect a student with current information on YouTube copyright practices or resources on how to script. More important, producers have the opportunity to recruit interested filmmakers in their user community to create content from local music collections. This could be done in partnership with local arts organizations, as part of a conference or festival, as an embedded activity in a music appreciation class, and in many other ways. Libraries also serve as video archives for community events, and in music, there is no shortage of events to archive. From guest or class lectures to recitals and concerts, more and more music organizations have some sort of online video presence. Helping organizations to form archival and access plans for their video content is a role that librarians can and should occupy.

## **1.3 EVALUATING ONLINE VIDEO CONCEPTS**

“Let's make a video!” This bewitching phrase has captivated librarians since the moment it became possible to share video content online. However, a great idea also needs a practical plan of action that converts the idea into a working reality. And while videos are increasingly cheaper to create and distribute, a good video is the product of significant time investment, hard work,

and methodical planning. The first step is to decide whether or not video is the best medium suited to the library's desired objective. While video is a powerful medium, it is not the appropriate medium for each and every situation. The good news is that it only takes a little research and reflection to determine the viability of a video project. Here are a few questions to consider before launching into a video project:

- Does this video already exist? Before spending the time and energy to produce a video at the local level, it is worth it to take some time and confirm that a video does not already exist that serves the same purpose. In addition to checking YouTube and Vimeo, check vendor websites to see what instructional or promotional videos they provide for librarians. A video may exist on the same topic, but it may be worthwhile for another on the topic to be made. The way the existing video's content is presented may not achieve the desired ends, the style of the video may be distracting, or the production value is noticeably poor, or any number of other reasons. However, do not rely strictly on personal judgment. Ask other people to watch the videos and give additional feedback that can be used to decide whether or not to use a preexisting video.
- Is a video the only option? Is it the best option? Before determining whether video is the best option, it, or any number of other reasons. However, librarians have a robust arsenal of outreach and instructional tools at their disposal for communicating with patrons, such as brochures, bookmarks, posters, digital signage, in-person instruction, and social media blasts. Sometimes, video is clearly the best option or even the only option; for example, working with distance education students via a learning management system often requires instructors to video record class content. But more often, video is part of a larger outreach or marketing effort that employs several different methods or tools. When determining whether or not a video is the best option, consult with members of the library's target audience. They may agree that a video is best medium for one's message, or they may select another method altogether. Be sure to offer multiple options to users and to allow for them to make free-form comments.
- What is the cost-benefit? Videos are far more costly in terms of time than money. It is therefore wise to consider whether the time spent on scripting, shooting, editing, and maintaining a video is a sound investment. Hardware requires maintenance and it takes significant time and effort to learn how to use editing software and then keep pace with updates. Consider the human resources needed to maintain an online video presence first and foremost before launching into the production process. If the library does not have the personnel or the time to commit, consider other options.

#### **1.4 SEVEN TIPS FOR MAKING GREAT ONLINE VIDEOS**

1. Learn the vocabulary. Like any other industry, film has its own set of terms. It is much easier to locate video resources and troubleshoot when conversant in the language of the trade.

2. Consult the experts. Find an expert and learn from that person. Working with an expert, even for just a short time, is more instructive than reading five books on video production because experts can answer simple and complex questions. If there is not an expert in the immediate vicinity, seek help online. There are countless online resources, from blogs to videos, which are produced by video pros that cover the basics and eventually, advanced techniques.
3. Watch Videos Online about How to Make Online Videos. One of the best places to learn about making online videos is online. There are YouTube videos on pretty much every aspect of basic movie making and editing for iMovie, Movie Maker, Adobe products, and beyond. Use this time to examine the techniques and tools used to make effective help videos. Start with Hank Green's videos on vlogging, which are designed to help new video creators tackle different parts of the video-making process, including scripting and editing.
4. Recruit a team. Do not attempt to make videos alone. Recruit a team that can work on completing videos together. Look to traditional production roles and seek people who can serve as writers, editors, producers, on-screen talent, focus groups, and the like. Video creation is a time-consuming process that works best when it draws upon a wide range of creativity and talent.
5. Get in front of the camera. Library videos (with the exception of parody videos) feature very few librarians. Whether creating a tutorial video or advertising a library event, consider jumping in front of the camera and being the face of the topic at hand. The creator's passion may be what draws someone to watch the video from beginning to end, and, if nothing else, colleagues and family will be sure to watch it and provide varying levels of useful feedback.
6. Be ready to fail, repeat processes, and take criticism. Creating videos is a grueling process of trial and error, which sometimes produces the desired and successful result. That being said, even amazing videos can be unwatched, and any video—excellent or poor—will produce criticism. Be willing to listen to constructive feedback, ignore trollish comments, try a new process or technique and have it fail, create a second, third, fourth, fifth draft in pursuit of the version that best communicates the content. Learn from mistakes, examine failures, and use them to create something better the next time around.
7. Be prepared to be amazed and have expectations surpassed . . . because making online video, despite the hard work involved, is a rewarding creative endeavor.

## 1.5 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Incandela and Rob Stein, "Seeking Balance in the On-line Video Landscape," in *Museums and the Web 2009: Proceedings*, ed. Jennifer Trant and David Bearman (Toronto: Archives & Museum Informatics, 2009), accessed 15 May 2015, <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2009/papers/incandela/incandela.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Dougan, Kirstin, " 'YouTube Has Changed Everything'? Music Faculty, Librarians, and Their Use and Perceptions of YouTube" *College and Research Libraries* 75, no. 4 (2014): 588. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.75.4.575>