Social Video

Videoblogging & YouTube

I n the past year, viewing and creating video for the Web skyrocketed to the top of many Internet users' lists. The popularity of YouTube, Google Video, and other sharing sites, coupled with the ease of using video technology, has unleashed the hidden auteur in many people. Now, devices such as the Apple TV pull YouTube content into consumers' living rooms, "viral" videos such as "Kitten Playing Piano" move around the world at lightning speed, and practically anything one might want to view is available on thriving video-sharing sites.

Libraries are tapping into this phenomenon in a number of ways: videoblogging, creating a library presence at sites like YouTube, and offering library users the chance to contribute their own video content. It's all an example of that thread of participation we've seen with the other tools.

Videoblogging

Just as podcasting is a form of audio blogging, adding a short video to a blog post for syndication via RSS is yet another way to add content to the Web. Because it's blog-based, videoblogging affords the same useful features: comments, trackbacks and an archive of previous posts.

For more about videoblogging, including examples and links to resources, visit David Lee King's blog (listed in the Resources box at the end of this chapter).

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing community site. Like Flickr, users can "favorite" videos, subscribe to feeds of videos, comment, and make connections. The popularity of YouTube exploded in the last year or so—leading *Time* magazine

to name it "Invention of the Year."[1] Lev Grossman noted that YouTube's popularity grew at the intersection of three revolutions: the revolution of falling prices and ease of video production, the rise of Web 2.0 sites as communities, and the cultural shift away from the mainstream media. Grossman commented: "Consumers are impatient with the mainstream media. The idea of a top-down culture, in which talking heads spoon-feed passive spectators ideas about what's happening in the world, is over. People want unfiltered video from Iraq, Lebanon and Darfur—not from journalists who visit there but from soldiers who fight there and people who live and die there."[2]

Recently we've seen viral videos such as OK Go's treadmill music video, viewed by 20 million users, and the recent Democratic presidential candidates debate featuring questions from Americans via YouTube.[3] This site—or community—is a perfect example of how the nature of promotion, reporting the news, and making personal connections has changed in the last year. How are libraries involved?

YouTube in libraries

In 2003, my team at the Saint Joseph County Public Library in South Bend, Indiana, made a video set to Madonna's "Ray of Light" (see figure 15). The video followed a fast-motion day in the life of the library. Roughly 200 people saw the video at our Staff Day. In 2006, I uploaded it to YouTube when Warner Brothers Music and YouTube entered into an agreement to allow users to mash up Warner artists on YouTube. Since then, it's been viewed over 30,000 times. Librarians and others have commented on the video, including someone who wanted to work at SJCPL! Videos such as this one become marketing tools for finding not only patrons, but also potential hires. Might new graduates looking for a

Videoblogging at Arlington Heights Memorial Library

Arlington Heights Memorial Library is one of just a handful of libraries providing a videoblog, which was established in December 2006. Videos of programs, "what's new" segments, and interviews with AHML librarians discussing gift ideas, virtual reference, and ESL resources have been posted in the last few months. I interviewed Ingrid Lebolt, the library's Web services director, on May 16, 2007, to find out more.

MS: What inspired you to pursue videoblogging?

IL: We were working with some goals that we wanted to accomplish: We wanted to be able to reach our users in new ways, we wanted to be able to do it 24/7, and we wanted to show them the breadth of our services. Some of the solutions that we considered were podcasts and videocasts and many other Library or Web 2.0 concepts. One day a grant opportunity came to our attention. The Illinois State Library through LSTA was offering money to explore emerging technologies. The timing couldn't have been better. We were looking at new technologies, they wanted to provide money. A match made in heaven! We looked through the grant criteria—to employ technology as a means for library to deliver information and services to patrons—and the types of things that we wanted to do. We came up with a best fit—to explore videoblogging—a new way of getting the library message to our users and to increase our Web site visibility. We received the grant, and that was the start.

MS: How many staff are involved?

IL: That's not an easy question. In many ways all staff are involved. All are encouraged to suggest topic areas and participate in any way they can (act, write, be an extra, provide props). In our case, the "standard" participants for a new production include:

Arlington Heights Memorial Library's videoblogging site.

- project manager and jack-of-all-trades
- scriptwriter
- filming/production
- on-camera performers
- Public Information Office (scheduling, graphics, man on street filming)
- Web personnel—preparing content for the Web

In our case we do have some people wearing more than one hat.

MS: What is the time commitment for a typical post?

IL: A typical new production at this point would take about 7 person/hours:

- scriptwriting, including blocking, etc., 1 hour
- filming, 1 hour
- on-camera personnel, 2 hours (We usually have two people in a video.)
- editing, 1 hour
- rendering, 1 hour
- preparation for posting and Web page, 1 hour

Our typical LibVlog is 2–5 minutes. Depending on the complexity of the piece, of course, this may be more.

MS: How did you create staff buy-in?

IL: We involved a lot of people from different areas of the library from the onset. We tried to tap into and unleash everyone's creativity and aimed at getting the involvement of younger and more technologically savvy staff members in beginning—fresh eyes for a fresh approach. I can't even begin to describe the amazing electricity in the room in those early days where we brainstormed and ideas just flew off the wall. Such energy and excitement—staff felt the excitement and became involved.

We filmed one "special" LibVlog when the Chicago Bears were heading for the Super Bowl. It was an exciting topic for all us and staff flocked to participate. We had so much positive feedback from staff. The project has had a totally unexpected result of boosting staff morale. We approached the project with a great degree of humor and tried not to take ourselves too seriously. If we wanted people to watch it would have to be interesting. And the more we did, the more interested staff became.

MS: How has your user response been? How did you get patron buy-in or use? How did you market the videoblog?

IL: Response has been good, but, of course, we'd like to see it better. We have approximately 220 views per day. People who watch the LibVlogs like them. But we need to get the message out to a greater portion of the community.

Our marketing was a soft rollout. We waited until we had a few under our belt and felt comfortable with the product and then advertised for a few days. We have also advertised since, after we won an InfoTubey award. Our regular Monday segment (a "What's Happening" this week at the library segment) always starts with a Man on the Street Introduction from someone in the community. This has created a buzz—community members are looking out to see if some-

one they know will appear. We've been "blogged about," which has created more buzz.

And a really cool thing we did was creating a banner to put on the bookmobile that advertised the LibVlogs.

We can directly correlate marketing efforts (advertisements, newspaper articles, blog entries, etc.) with viewership spikes. Something that has evolved from the beginning of the project, and is working toward marketing and user involvement, is a deeper integration into our Web product. For each LibVlog we try to add "value added" content to the LibVlog Web page. For example, a saving on taxes video was tied to other available resources in our library.

We are starting to "repurpose" video segments so that they appear on pertinent pages as well. For example, a piece on our ESL offerings pointed the user to our Literacy page. We put the video on the Literacy page, too, for those users not coming through the home page. We will be striving to add pertinent video components on all relevant pages in the future. We have also been evolving our pieces to contain more community content. For a recent local election, we produced a "meet the candidates" video, which received a strong response in the community. These timely community pieces have also proven to be popular and increase viewership.

Promoting the videoblog at AHML.

tech-savvy, cutting-edge library search YouTube for possibilities? Could libraries create recruitment videos for marketing to new LIS grads? The possibilities of video sharing seem endless.

Other libraries have discovered the power of the video-sharing community as well. The librarians at Gail Borden Memorial Library in Elgin, Illinois, recently hosted "Storypalooza," which gathered user-created videos:

At the library web site www.gailborden.info/video extras.html, we are using YouTube to help us tell stories about the library and reading. This January and February, with sponsorship from First Community Bank, we're asking everybody in our library community to pick up their cameras and join the visual storytelling fun. People of all ages are invited to upload a 4-minute (or shorter) video to YouTube. Then send a link to us, for entry into one of two categories: "My

Favorite Book," will be for those who want to tell about their favorite book; or "Community Favorites," about supporting the art of verbal storytelling. This should involve filming a short, uplifting piece about a person, organization or event that has made a difference in the community. Videos can be funny, poignant, clever or cool, and they must be library-appropriate.[4]

The Denver Public Library recently mounted a similar contest for teens. Teens were invited to create videos about their use of the library. The teen eVolver Web site explained the contest: "The theme of your YouTube video should be 'How I have fun at the Library' and should include the following: a scene in or outside of a Denver Public Library, the words 'Denver Public Library,' and mention of the eVolver site."[5]

The Storypalooza and Denver projects tie together many of the principles of a 2.0 world: harnessing the

"Ray of Light" St. Joseph County Public Library Version

Figure 15
Library video on YouTube.

collective, encouraging user creation of content, citizen journalism, and marketing. It's a benefit in many ways for libraries to explore this type of endeavor: users are welcomed into library spaces to create content AND marketing the library becomes the realm of not just the publicity librarian, but everyone.

ACPL & the Library Zombies

I spoke with Sean Robinson at Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, about YouTube.[6] His library has been doing a series of engaging, funny, and useful videos for users and for other librarians. Takeoffs on the Apple vs. Mac ads, a gorilla running through the library, and zombies attacking are all part of the ACPL repertoire. "YouTube allows us to really give a voice to our organization and share the services that we offer," he said. "It has caused us to cross departmental boundaries, and I think that this has had a positive effect for our organization."

Video productions at ACPL are created by staff from various departments. They might involve just two or three staff or many more, depending on the project. "The Zombie project is perhaps out largest," Robinson acknowledged. Robinson uses Final Cut Pro for video editing, open-source option Audacity for sound, and a basic digital video camera.

What of staff buy-in? The librarians just dove in after the okay from the library director. "After we were finished with the production we shared it with the staff," Robinson said. He's received very positive feedback from the staff

and believes this is the best way to get buy-in. "I also hope that we have inspired other staff to give this a try. This was really the whole point. To show others that this can be done and that it is fun.

"I think the user response has been very positive," Robinson told me as well. "People leave comments, and other organizations have asked how we did certain things." He also detailed the library's marketing strategies: "Marketing was a little interesting. We put the videos up on YouTube, but I also e-mailed people and asked them to check out the videos. I am lucky that I have some friends that write blogs that many people read, and they posted these videos on their blog. I also have a blog and posted it there. I think that this helped. I was very nervous about sending these requests out, but people have been very supportive and I think that after you have put many hours into creating something you really want to share it."

A Video Caveat

This chapter has detailed some innovative uses of video, but there is one caveat. Time and money are needed to make this type of video. Smaller libraries with fewer staff members and less funding might explore other ways to establish a multimedia presence. Podcasting, screencasting, and videoblogging are still within the reach of any size library that has access to a bit of equipment and some time. As prices for inexpensive video cameras fall, we may see all sorts of productions from all sorts of libraries.

For more about libraries and video visit the Library Videos blog (listed in the Resources box).

What You Can Do Now

Here are some steps you can take now to begin using the ideas in this chapter:

- Check out some of the videoblogs and library-produced videos at YouTube. Create a YouTube account to comment on videos and select "favorites."
- View some favorites at a staff meeting and discuss the feasibility of creating video for your library. What events might you highlight? What interviews could you do?
- Look for ways to involve the community. If you can't produce your own videos, ponder having a contest for library users to create videos about the library and submit them to you via YouTube.

Notes

1. Lev Grossman, "Best Invention: YouTube," Best Inventions 2006, Time Web site, www.time.com/time/2006/techguide/bestinventions/inventions/youtube.html (accessed July 26, 2007).
2. Ibid., www.time.com/time/2006/techguide/bestinventions/inventions/youtube2.html (accessed July 26, 2007).
3. "OK Go—Here It Goes Again," on the YouTube Web site, July 31, 2006, www.youtube.com/watch?v=pv5zWaTEVkI (accessed July 26, 2007); "Democratic Candidates Face Off in YouTube Debate," National Public Radio, July 24, 2007, available online at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12192896 (accessed July 26, 2007).
4. Storypalooza Information, Gail Borden Public Library Web site, www.elgin.lib.il.us/storypaloozainformation.html (accessed July 12, 2007).
5. Denver Public Library, "YouTube Contest," last update Feb. 20, 2007, eVolver Web site, http://teens.denverlibrary.org/media/youtube.html (accessed July 26, 2007).
6. Sean Robinson, interview by the author, May 26, 2007.

Appendix 2
Videoblogging Equipment and Software from Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Provided by Ingrid Lebolt

AHML is fortunate to have access to video professionals. Most of the LibVlog work was produced by Library Production Studios. However, all man-on-the-street interviews as well as some other individual segments were produced by other staff members, using non-professional equipment. Below is a list of the different hardware/software products used.

You'll notice two different video cameras used on the "amateur" side. We have found the quality of the HDV camera to be significantly better than the DV camera,

resulting in a clearer, crisper image. Good quality microphones are important—particularly in loud environments.

We have used Camtasia software for computer "screen recording"—used to demonstrate software and for training modules. Camtasia output has been used in both the professional and amateur videos.

All videos were output in QuickTime format for uploading to YouTube. We are also working on taking some of the videos and making them available for iPod viewing.

Table 1
Videoblogging hardware and software used by AHML.

	Professional Video Equipment	"Amateur" Equipment
Production Equipment	• Sony DSR-390L DVCAM camcorder • Vinten Vision 2LF tripod • DVCAM tape X15 • Frezzi camera light with NP-1B rechargeable batteries • Sony ECM-55s lavalier microphone • Shure SM63 handheld microphone • Audio Technica AT815b shotgun microphone • Behringer HPX2000 headphone • XLR audio cables	• Samsung DV camera • Sony HDR-HC7 HDV camera • Sony ECM-44B condenser microphone • Azden 500 UPR portable receiver • Azden 51XT UHF transmitter • Shure E2c earbuds • tripod
Post-Production Equipment	• Sony DSR-40 recorder/player tape deck • Dual processor editing computer with dual 20" monitors—300Gb • Maxtor 1Tb External Firewire drive • Avid Xpress Pro editing software • Inscriber CG Xtreme character generator plug-in for Avid Xpress Pro • Sorenson Squeeze 4 compression software to create QuickTime movie templates for You Tube. • Sony RDR-GX300 Set-Top DVD recorder • Maxell Pro Series DVDs for give-away and promotional use	• Apple Macbook • iMovie '06 • Final Cut Pro 5.1 (for more in-depth/technical editing only) • Windows Movie Maker