

# Taking Your Library Instruction to YouTube

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When the discussion began for this issue of *Library Technology Reports*, I knew I wanted to focus on different types of technologies and digital resources for library information and instruction. As the editor for this report, I sought librarians who blogged and created podcasts. I looked at colleagues who created virtual and augmented reality tours and instructional models. I had a range of peers who taught online and used a host of digital resources and applications in their face-to-face as well as online instruction. I have served on or have been chair of the American Association of School Librarians Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee since 2008. I knew how to talk about technology with instruction. These experiences are what led me to the creation of my own technology channels based on YouTube. For my chapter, I wanted to delve into the journey of my two YouTube channels. This issue of *Library Technology Reports* originally came from a discussion about these channels and why they had been created in the first place. This chapter dives into why I chose to create instructional video channels, how I created my own channels, the topics I picked for my focus, and recommendations for practitioners, as well as resources for your own channels.

## Why I Chose to Make Videos

I have been delivering professional development face-to-face or at a distance for almost twenty years. In my early years as a librarian, I would train my peer educators on HTML, videography, Dreamweaver, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint skills, and a variety of district-based technology. As the years passed, the training became more complex. With the introduction of Web 2.0 tools and interactive digital resources, I started delivering workshops on best websites, digital storytelling tools, online presentation resources, citation sites, databases, and much more. When tablets and

handheld devices arrived on the scene, I started delivering training on topics like best apps, storage of tablets for libraries, application mashups, and technology integration. The years continued, and the websites, applications, and technology continued to change with the times. There will always be new resources, technologies, and tools to demonstrate, share, and teach.

In 2014, I received a full-time teaching position as an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina. During my interview, I discussed my professional development workshops with the faculty of the School of Library and Information Science. They seemed to be excited to have someone interview with them who had professional training and technology experience. Their concern revolved around timing. What happened if someone couldn't come to a training? What would I do if faculty members or peers in other departments wanted to attend a workshop and missed the opportunity? My response during my interview at the time: video.

Before I joined the faculty at the University of South Carolina, I was working as an academic librarian at Virginia Tech. In that job, I typically would teach live or synchronously in face-to-face as well as online formats. I was also commonly creating short videos using Jing to answer reference questions for my faculty and students. These short videos had offered a new option for short reference and instructional interaction. Creating videos for professional development seemed to be a logical and simple step.

Once I started full-time at the University of South Carolina, I began my first channel. I called it *Tech Fifteen*. Originally, I wanted to call it *Tech Five*, as in take five or a short break, but that name was already taken. This was my introduction to branding. The focus of the site was to have short five-minute videos that focused on a specific online tool or resource. The format was simple: introduce the tool or resource, feature the highlights, and discuss how it could be used

with instruction. The content was easy; there were always new technology tools, websites, applications, and resources being released. I would find the ones that best applied to the field of librarianship and education and feature those on my site. All technology tools shown on *Tech Fifteen* were free or free at some level (some had a subscription level for more memory or space). I decided to create a website to further brand and extend the reach of the YouTube videos. I also share each video on Twitter as it is made. All videos are closed captioned and Creative Commons–licensed for accessibility and embedding.

In 2017, we had a statewide conference with a focus on information literacy skills in the K–12 schools of South Carolina. The School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina decided to further work with this statewide initiative. It was during this time that I created my second YouTube channel, *Research Xpress*, a channel where young people, middle-to-high-school-age students, could seek aid in their information seeking and literacy skills. This was also a channel for librarians and their peer educators, a place to aid them in the explanation of concepts such as keywords, databases, presentation skills, and citations.

There have been successes and challenges with each channel. Currently, in 2019, both channels are still up and running. As the person creating and editing the videos, along with producing the channels alone, I can say there is a consistency issue with releasing videos. My original plan was a new video each week. That idea fell through quickly. Currently, I am pleased with one or two videos a month. Audience was an issue, especially with my second channel. Creating a channel for peers in the field of librarianship was easy; creating a channel for teens was a challenge. I have many questions for myself on content, video length, and usefulness. Sustainability is a common concern as well. When you are solo in the creation of a product, it will be difficult to sustain it forever. In truth, these projects were never meant to have a permanent or enduring shelf life. They are created and often archived to meet a need at a particular time. My fellow authors would possibly say the same thing about their blogs, podcasts, vlogs, and more. They are wonderful while they last but can't remain forever.

## Creating Videos

There are a variety of items to consider when creating a good instructional or informational video. The following is a selection of topics on which to ponder.

**Audience**—Who is the intended audience of your videos or video channel? For *Tech Fifteen*, my audience includes librarians, peer educators, and anyone else who might like to learn about different types of

technology tools, online resources, and digital apps. From my YouTube analytics, my videos have been viewed by teachers, librarians, university students, and professionals in business and industry—all adults. For *Research Xpress*, the channel was intended for middle-to-high-school students as well as young people looking for research skills at the early secondary education level. I know that educators and librarians have also used these videos in their instruction. It is important to have an audience in mind when you are creating your material. This also will aid you in your tone, content, and length of video.

**Length**—Keep your videos short, especially if you are delivering an instructional video. No one wants to watch a thirty-minute video. Personally, I am keen on five minutes. They are easy to view and absorb, and if my audience likes what they see, they can always watch more. My videos are asynchronous, not offered in real or live time. This is not the same as creating a class, course, webinar, or online workshop. Those will typically be longer, will commonly be offered live (synchronously), as well as recorded for archival purposes and future viewing.

**Content**—What type of information or instruction do you plan to impart? If you have decided to start your own YouTube channel or video series, then you must have something to share. Is there something you are passionate about in your field? Have you noticed a topic missing from conversations, blogs, social media feeds, and more in librarianship, technology, archives, or reference? Do you have a friend with whom you love to converse, and you feel everyone would benefit from those professional conversations? Do you have an amazing space, ideas, lessons, instruction, or plans that you want to share with world? This is how you narrow a focus for content.

**Technology**—If you look at the resources listed below, you will find many useful online resources for video creation and storage. Other types of technology to aid in the success of making a video can include a webcam and a microphone. A webcam that includes a microphone can really take care of everything. You really don't need a headset microphone. Talk clearly and loudly, using the microphone in the webcam, and you will have a nice sound.<sup>1</sup> I personally have a webcam and a separate mic. I am a fan of the Blue Nessie microphone—it isn't super expensive, and the sound quality can't be beat for the cost.

## Accessibility

When talking about accessibility and videos, you are mainly looking at captioning and narration. If you are not interested in captioning, make sure to provide transcriptions of your videos. If you are on top of your game as a professional or instructor, you provide

both. There are a variety of tools and services to aid in video captioning. YouTube (see Tools for Video Creation) will caption videos for you, but editing the captions is typically required. Rev and other transcription services are excellent resources to know when looking to have videos transcribed for your viewing audience. Transcribing isn't too difficult if the video is short. If the video is longer, then the transcription obviously takes more time. If you have the funds to pay for transcriptions, I highly recommend doing so.

Narration in a video is very important. If you are offering professional development, instruction, and information, it is important for your viewing audience to know what is occurring. Explain what is on the screen, spell out links, and guide your users through the instruction. Make sure they understand what is happening visually and through your narrative.

A final note on accessibility is a look at file types. How you format your video and the types of files that you use for your videos matter. Currently, HTML 5 is a good format for video viewing and playing. YouTube creators can choose to have videos played in the HTML 5 version. Depending on the type of video production tool you use (Camtasia, Screencast-O-Matic), you can choose to save your video in HTML 5. Why is this important? Accessibility across devices. There is a great deal of flexibility in being able to view a video on a laptop, handheld device, or phone. It's a wonderful option to provide your viewers the chance to watch videos at home or in line getting a cup of coffee. Accessibility across devices is highly useful for your audience.<sup>2</sup>

## Resources for Video Creation

The following is a selection of tools to help in the creation of your own videos.

**Screencast-O-Matic:** <https://screencast-o-matic.com>. When you need to create how-to or flipped lesson videos for your library or classroom, then Screencast-O-Matic is a great option. Simply choose online what you plan to record or narrate over a set of slides. This online tool is incredibly easy to use and free for up to fifteen minutes of recording time. It is a great instructional tool for teacher librarians and peer educators but also appropriate for K–12 students.

**Camtasia:** <https://www.techsmith.com/video-editor.html>. If you are familiar with Jing, then you know the company that created Camtasia, Techsmith. Camtasia is a screen recording, video creation tool that performs similarly to Jing and Screencast-O-Matic. The main difference is that this is a subscription-based product, and there is no limit to your video length. Camtasia also offers a variety of options like captioning, zooming, panning, fades, and more.

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com>. You may

use YouTube for your educational or entertainment video needs. YouTube can also be a wonderful curation location for all your videos. Once you have created a video, simply load it into YouTube, label and choose settings, and you are ready to share. YouTube also has automatic captioning for accessibility purposes, which you can easily edit. YouTube provides a useful platform for instructional and informational videos.

**Vimeo:** <https://vimeo.com>. Another popular video platform, Vimeo is a location to house your video creations. It is not free, but you won't have to deal with ads, and for some creators, there is comfort in that. Vimeo's community is not as large as YouTube's, but you have a more concentrated, supportive group of viewers. When it comes to accessibility, the video creator has to provide the transcripts and captions. When deciding where you want your videos housed, audience is important. For whom are you creating these videos? Where would you like them to live once they are created?<sup>3</sup>

**Kapwing:** <https://www.kapwing.com>. Kapwing provides a multi-tool solution for teachers, librarians, and students to create everything from video montages and memes to stop-action videos and sound effects. It is a very valuable tool for video editing as well. Its simple yet robust platform makes it useful for students of all ages. If you are looking for a user-friendly editing tool that offers a wide range of options, Kapwing is worth taking a look.

**Rev:** <https://www.rev.com>. If you are looking for a transcription company, Rev is a great option. It is one name among many in the transcription business, but it is my personal favorite. Why might you need a transcription service? For videos, captioning or transcriptions are very important for accessibility. Typically, you can choose one or the other. Both is the best. For my podcasting friends, transcriptions are very important in making their audio files fully accessible. Rev not only provides transcriptions, it also translates your subtitles into other languages and provide captions. It is not free, but it is very reasonable for a transcription service.

**Blue Microphones:** <https://www.bluedesigns.com>. Blue Designs offers a wide range of microphones and headsets for computer and music recording as well as gaming. There is also a selection of recording tools to sync with your handheld devices for interviews. Microphones are available across a wide range of prices, and most are very reasonable.

## Sample Online Video Resources

Look at the following online video sources for good educational content or as examples for your own online video. There are many YouTube channels and

other online video sources in the field of education and technology—the list below is just a tiny, selected sample.

**Tech Fifteen:** <https://www.youtube.com/TechFifteen>. My YouTube channel that I created in fall 2014. This channel is focused on technology integration. Each video focuses on one technology or digital tool or application. I show what the tool is, show how it can be used, and share ideas for instruction for librarians and peer educators.

**Research Xpress:** <https://www.youtube.com/researchxpress>. My second YouTube channel created in spring 2017. After seeking ideas to further aid middle- and high-school students in their information-seeking and literacy skills, I started this channel to aid librarians and their fellow teachers. This channel takes the viewer through different information-seeking skills such as finding keywords, using different databases, presenting information, and creating citations.

**Physics Girl:** <https://www.youtube.com/physicsgirl>. A resource for physics videos and other science material. Dianna Cowern, the creator, has a Twitter feed and website with all sorts of physics goodness. This is a channel that makes science fun and exciting.

**Free Technology for Teachers:** <https://www.freetechnologyforteachers.com>. Richard Byrne has created a blog about resources that educators and librarians can use in their learning spaces. In his blog, he has videos in many of his entries to further explain the technology he is discussing.

**TED-Ed:** <https://ed.ted.com>. TED-Ed is all videos for education. Launched in 2012, this video database has something for everyone. There are videos, animated videos, lesson plans, a global network of educators, and much more. TED-Ed brings a myriad of educational videos to your laptop, tablet, or phone.

**Vlogbrothers:** <https://www.youtube.com/vlogbrothers>. Created by John and Hank Green, *Vlogbrothers* is a video blog (vlog). The two brothers have celebrated over ten years on YouTube. Followers of their vlog are called Nerdfighters, and the topics of their YouTube series are wide and varied. A wonderful example of a show that celebrates education, science, and the nerd community.

## Notes

1. Michael Smedshammer, “10 Tips for Creating Effective Instructional Videos,” Faculty Focus website, Magna Publications, March 31, 2017, <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-with-technology-articles/10-tips-creating-effective-instructional-videos>.
2. University of Minnesota Disability Resource Center, “Accessible U: Video Formats,” accessed March 19, 2019, <https://accessibility.umn.edu/multimedia/video-formats>.
3. Justin Simon, “YouTube vs. Vimeo: What’s the Difference?” *TechSmith Blog*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.techsmith.com/blog/youtube-vs-vimeo-whats-the-difference>.