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Using video in contemporary libraries

Claudia J. Dold

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Instructional Videos: Targeted Teaching Modules

Claudia J. Dold

University of South Florida, USA

Introduction:

Video is an ideal tool for reaching many of today's learners, especially when a process needs to be demonstrated and learned. Users can now access video to "see how it's done", offering information in visual and well as aural and textual formats. How-to videos have made inroads into everyday life: on airplanes they teach us how to prepare for take-off, in hardware stores, they demonstrate new attachments for electric tools, and DVDs now accompany products that explain the installation process. The concept is simple: By simultaneously implementing visual, textual, and aural modes of teaching, the message has a greater chance of success in reaching and being understood by an audience of learners. The future is bright for instructional videos in education.

Technological Readiness

The use of video was made possible by technological advancements in the speed and storage capacity of personal computers and networks, enabling the move from text to multimodal representation. At the same time, the availability of video-making software has been embraced by users, the results of which are evident in postings on YouTube and Vimeo. Better software, faster personal computers, and clearer monitors portend a continued growth in the depth and breadth of this teaching tool. At the level of the individual user, compatibility problems may occur as new software and hardware products come to market. Help desks at the software and hardware companies may offer work-arounds, and a search on the internet for the problem may also be rewarded with a solution.

Digital technologies have also had an impact on the expectations of students in higher education. Having grown up with technology, typical high school and college students in the United States are no longer satisfied with the simple literacy format of lectures and readings. They expect to use a wide range of digital technologies, and to engage actively and collaboratively in their education {{6204 DeHaan, R. L. 2005; 6210 Doiron, R. & Asselin, M. 2011}}. Multimodal literacy represents a revolution in education with implications for teacher preparation, librarian support, and student education.

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Creating Teaching Modules

Video enables the creator to design a learning module in which all the elements are controlled. Care and forethought should be exercised to create clearly structured content and delivery should be crisp, clear, and concise. While this is true for all good lesson planning, the video medium permits the creator to deconstruct the process into its elements.

The script may be written and polished before being read into a sound track. When recording, the reader may repeat a phrase or sentence that was flawed in its initial delivery, right after the error until the delivery is satisfactory. By following this procedure, the flawed material may be edited out of the final track, along with long pauses, sneezes, and other distracting bits of noise.   Without sophisticated equipment, the volume of the voice track is best controlled by completing the track in one sitting. Voice patches are usually noticeable and derail the auditor's attention.

Having structured the learning text, visuals are added to finish the product. The software accommodates a variety of formats: text, pictures, graphs, formula, video clips. Visuals offer the opportunity to deliver memorable graphic format to the viewer, and carefully chosen visuals can amplify the underlying text and reinforce learning. Special effects are also powerful but should be used with discretion. While a zoom-in treatment of a photo offers the viewer a close-up of a detail, the same feature may induce the uneasiness and disorientation of a roller coaster ride in some members of the captive audience.

Closed captions are important to an audience that may include the hearing-impaired. Font used in the captions and the visuals is another source of variety. Sans serif fonts are most easily read; they may be simply modified by underscores, capital letters, bold and/or italic treatments.

With so many creative choices in the composition of a video, restraint is recommended in the use of fonts and background colors in order to create a unified look to the finished product. These same suggestions are particularly important when creating a series of teaching modules.

During the creative process, it is a good idea to plan the process of updating the learning objectives. New data become available; URLs change; and the target audience may change.   Consistency will also be an asset when updating the videos. With interchangeable visual elements, simple revisions may be made quickly and without interruption in the flow of the narration, or sections of the narration may be edited out. For major overhauls, the script may be modified and rerecorded, the visuals may be

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updated, and the integrity of the series maybe maintained by relying on a consistent color theme, opening visual, and credits pages.

Video in Education

As higher education expands beyond the classroom to distant learners, life-long learners, and students who want to work after the library has closed, video has become increasingly popular as a means of delivering educational content. It can be designed to address basic questions or detailed, subject-specific material. It is also highly adaptable in terms of length, visual design, content, target audience, and viewing platform. Because it is online, students may access a teaching module at any time, and "just in time" to satisfy their need. In addition, they may view a segment as often as needed to master the content. Video has opened the window of opportunity to teach and to learn at the users' pace, on their timetable, and at their convenience.

Access is almost guaranteed, given the financial support for computers in schools, universities, and public libraries. The user population of students and teachers who grew up in a digital world is rapidly supplanting the older text-based generation.   Not only are the current users adept at computer usage, they also expect a computer-driven world.   This expectation is an opportunity to expand the use of video in education. Following are some current applications taken from my own experience as an Assistant Librarian at the University of South Florida in Tampa. In every case, the creator set out to solve a particular problem, and the results demonstrate the creativity that video may accommodate.

Video Interviews: The idea that human capital is a fleeting resource has been recognized for some time, and video has gained ground as a medium to preserve that resource as part of the historical record. The USF Library has an oral history project in which interviews with Floridians are conducted, edited, transcribed, and made part of a permanent collection. Perhaps the most renowned interviews are those conducted with Holocaust survivors in the Shoah Foundation's visual history archive project. The vitality, the immediacy, and the humanity of the speaker are captured on video in ways that printed words fail.

At USF, a sixteen-segment series of interviews was created to bring a rich and diverse array of mental health and integrative health practitioners to the academic preparation of students in the Department of Mental Health and Rehabilitation Counseling. A professor conducted interviews with yoga, tai chi, and meditation teachers, nutritionists, fitness and stress management specialists, mind/body oriented mental health professionals, allied health professionals, and support services professionals {{6211 Dold, C. J. 2012}}. Not only do students benefit from exposure to the variety of techniques available, but they may observe the communication skills, language, and demeanor of practicing counselors, many of whom work in the Tampa area. The interviews are available online and free of charge, so community members may view them as they look for different therapies or new practitioners in times of stress or growth.

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Video Lessons: Perhaps the most fundamental approach to education video is to "teach by showing." Videos of this nature are available through the USF Libraries, and they demonstrate how to use the new book scanner, how to find and use an article database, and how to connect to the library from off campus. This category of videos offers basic skills that let viewers move on with their task at hand.

At a more complex level, video can offer a full lesson, exploring in-depth use of a database or the process of writing a paper, moving from the initial idea to thinking broadly about the subject, narrowing the topic, finding information and collecting citations, and then writing the final product. Working with Ardis Hanson, a colleague in the USF Library system, we wrote and created a series of videos to improve the research and writing skills of students who write theses in the mental health fields at USF-- CITATION. These videos are structured to build one upon the other, but they have also been used independently by professors across campus. In numerous courses, a selection of videos is assigned during the first few weeks of a semester to cover important library concepts. This process serves two features: first, the professor can be assured that all of the students have a known set of skills to use in the course, and second, the professor does not need to spend time in class covering this material.

Lessons are also available on the Internet. The Khan Academy offers videos on a wide range of academic topics and levels (www.khanacademy.org). Some primary and secondary classrooms have adopted an Upside Down approach, where the students see the lectures at home and then do the exercises in class so the teacher may address specific aspects of the work. The concept is relatively new but it offers a new format for learning and teaching. These lessons are available without cost.

Video Lectures: Prominent people are an inspiration; by capturing a lecture on tape, the experience may be shared with future generations of students. Perhaps the most famous of all recent lectures is that given by Randy Pausch, a computer scientist at Carnegie-Mellon as he reflects on his lifework (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji5_MqicxSo). YouTube is the host site for the TED Talks, a series of lectures by leading thinkers in today's world (www.ted.com). YouTube has a section devoted to educational lectures at YouTube EDU; other video platforms also carry educational lectures.

Video Test Segments: Video software like Prezi and Camtasia allow test questions to be embedded in the video, so student learning may be assessed immediately. In the Audiology department at USF, one professor created a test that included interview clips of a patient-practitioner interaction and then asked her students questions based on the interview. Testing practical applications using video segments has already been applied to training in the health, physical therapy, and customer service fields.

Video Conference Presentations: Video is also useful for creating a presence at conferences. For the first time, the American Libraries Association in 2009 accepted virtual posters for its poster session. Instead of flying to the Chicago conference, participants could create videos to showcase their ideas and their work. Not only was money saved on travel and accommodations, but anyone in the ALA community could view the entries.

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Caveats: While the software is intuitive to some users, other may encounter a steep learning curve. At some universities, the librarians create video and are amenable to collaboration. They may know of other departments on campus that create video, whether within a department, a special office, or in a course. Funding may be obtained through grants to procure the software program, a video camera, a digital camera, and a computer fitted with adequate memory and ram.

Opportunities: While the examples cited here are drawn from my own experience and from the field of librarianship, the opportunities for using video in education apply across the board. As the availability of the equipment continues to expand, and the skills of potential users increase, video is poised to become a major component of education. Targeted videos have the potential to address immediate needs of a specific population and meet a specific teaching goal. As in any teaching situation, the instructional video that is well-designed, clearly presented, timely, and devoid of detractors has a good chance of success. Our world is moving from a print to an electronic format, and video is the medium that captures the broadest range of learning modes. Video is revolutionizing the way we teach and learn.

Worldwide access to the Internet, coupled with texting accounts like Google's gMail , create opportunities to collaborate with colleagues around the globe.

Interest in integrative health care is a growing area of health practice, combining treatments from conventional medicine with complementary and alternative medicine for which there is evidence of safety and effectiveness. However, introducing graduate students in the behavioral health counseling program to the principles and practices of a wide range of integrative and complementary health care modalities within the confines of a semester is a daunting task. These modalities relate to both improving physical and psychological well-being, and enhancing conventional talk therapy. In an interdisciplinary collaboration, teaching and library faculty created two series of on-line video interviews that introduce practitioner-relevant experiences to students as supplemental material. These videos are available through the department and the library web-pages to students in other related disciplines, including Social Work, Counselor Education, Psychology, and the Colleges of Public Health, Nursing, and Medicine. The two video series are considered part of the educational mission of the library, bringing to the classroom new material that is considered essential to the professional development of graduate students across the spectrum of health care.