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YouTube: Are we really using it effectively?

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BACKGROUND

A Pew/Internet study on online video use, dating from July of 2007, reports that 57% of internet users have watched videos online and most of them share what they find with others. Seventy-six percent of internet users between the ages of 18 and 29 have watched videos online, an important statistic for institutions trying to reach traditional undergraduate populations. The most common source of online videos is YouTube.[1]

With the emergence of social networking and other “Web 2.0” tools, libraries have the means to reach users through a variety of interactive web-based tools, many of which (e.g. Facebook, YouTube) patrons already use in their personal lives. Professional library literature abounds with exhortations to use such tools to meet patrons “where they live,” and examples of libraries doing just that. How widespread is library use of these technologies? How do we know whether or not our efforts are successful at reaching and engaging patrons? Few studies exist to inform our work in this area.

[1] Mary Madden. *Online Video*. Washington, CD: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2007.

METHODOLOGY

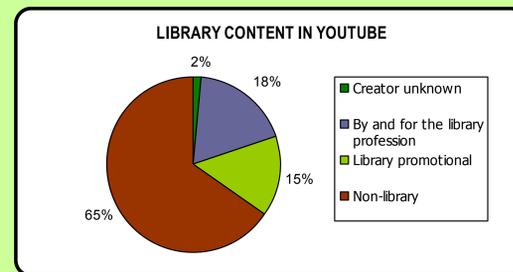
This study uses a methodology adapted from a number of related studies in the field of medicine[2] to locate library-related content on YouTube.

We conducted four searches in YouTube using the keywords “library, libraries, librarian, and librarians” and reviewed the top 100 results for each, as ranked by relevance. Each video was analyzed and assigned a subject heading, from an authority list devised for the study. We separated library-generated content from non-library generated content and further sorted library-generated content into sub-categories such as general promotion, orientation/tour, or instruction/tutorial.

We then further investigated the ways users were engaging with fifty-three examples of library promotional efforts in YouTube, through both quantitative and qualitative analysis of comments and other interactive features.

[2] Such as: Jennifer Keelan, Vera Pavri-Garcia, George Tomlinson, and Kumanan Wilson. “YouTube as a Source of Information on Immunization: A Content Analysis.” *JAMA*, 2007;298(21):2482-2484.

LIBRARY DEPICTION IN YOUTUBE



The four searches described above resulted in a data set of 379 unique video titles, six of which had been removed by users before we were able to assign subject headings. We were able to categorize a total of 373 unique videos.

Content in YouTube not generated by libraries or librarians included:

- Media clips from TV and films, including “The Librarian” and “Silent Library.”
- Music videos for songs about librarians and libraries.
- Events filmed in libraries.
- Pornography referencing “sexy librarians.”
- Gaming videos with segments occurring in a library.
- Homemade videos featuring librarian characters.

LIBRARY PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS BY CATEGORY

Category	N=	Percentage
Promotion/Appreciation	17	32%
Orientation/Tour	13	25%
Patron-Generated	7	13%
Promotion of Service/Collection	7	13%
Event Documentation	4	8%
News	4	8%
Instruction/Tutorial	1	2%

Event Documentation: Documents an event involving library workers, or taking place in or sponsored by a library. Professional conference documentation is classified as “Library, for library community.”

Instruction/tutorial: Content created by a library for the purpose of educating users in specific tasks, e.g. subject database searching.

News: Content created by a library for the purpose of informing users about news and events related to the library [e.g. library news vlog]. Library using YouTube/video as news vehicle.

Orientation/tour: Content created by a library for the purpose of orienting users to the facilities, collections, and services of a specific library.

Patron-generated: Content created by library users and others for library sponsored programs [e.g. library contest promotions, videos created as part of teen programming].

Promotion/appreciation: Content created by a library worker, library or group of libraries for the purpose of general promotion of library facilities, collections, and services, including humorous videos.

Promotion of service/collection: Content created by a library [or group of libraries] for the purpose of promoting a specific service or collection.

T.G. HAMILTON’S PHOTOGRAPHS OF ECTOPLASM



• 172 comments include heated discussion on the veracity of the photographs.

• Archives & Special Collections staff clarify the mission of an archive.

• Commenters advise on natural language tagging to garner more hits.

• Descendants of the Hamilton family shed light on the photos and related collections.

The University of Manitoba’s Hamilton family collection documents Dr. T.G. (Thomas Glendenning) and Lillian Hamilton’s investigations of psychic phenomena in their home in Winnipeg, Manitoba between 1918 and 1945. A video documenting the phenomenon of “ectoplasm,” said to be a physical manifestation of spirits, features images from the collection.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0HncGNBCqY>

LIBRARY PROMOTIONAL VIDEO VIEW COUNT

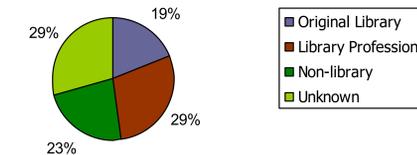
Average View Count	9,541
Average Growth over ~1 year	235%
Highest View Count	170,914
View Count of <i>Yes We Can – Barack Obama Music Video – Will.i.am</i>	16,777,951
View Count of Metropolitan Museum of Art video on an Italian Renaissance exhibit	3,372

View counts for library promotional videos varied dramatically, ranging from four to 170,914. While no library promotional videos came close to garnering the massive view counts associated with popular YouTube videos, results compared favorably with similar efforts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

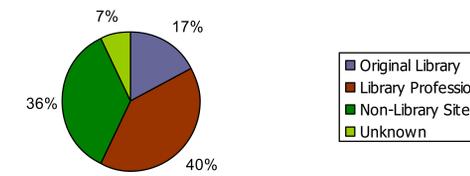
TRAFFIC PATTERNS:

REFERRING WEBSITES TO LIBRARY PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS

REFERRING WEBSITES BY TYPE



HITS FROM REFERRING WEBSITES BY TYPE



YouTube tracks the top five referring sites to each video, along with the number of hits coming from each site.

We were particularly interested in the question of who was viewing library promotional videos in YouTube and where they were coming from, and used this data to provide a cross-section view. Our finding is significant: **the library profession directs more traffic to YouTube library promotional videos than the originating library, or non-library sites.** Links often came from blogs maintained by librarians and/or library professional organizations.

INTERACTIVITY

The many interactive features supported by YouTube make it a useful video-sharing platform. These include the abilities to:

- Discuss the video through comment features; rate comments left by others
- Share via Facebook, Digg, MySpace, etc.
- Rate the video
- Favorite the video
- Add the video to a playlist
- Post video responses

Most library promotional videos left the comment feature enabled, resulting in comments in the majority of cases. Discussion in the form of comments posted in direct response to another comment, or comments by the video’s creator was less frequent.

Comments Enabled	96%
Comments Made	79%
Creator Comments	21%
Responses to Comments	28%
Rated Comments	40%

Ninety-one percent of library promotional videos had been rated, an average of 17 times. Ninety-four percent of library promotional videos had been favorited, an average of 29 times.

VIDEO CONTEST SUBMISSION— ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



• Video contests engage patrons—55 comments include opinions on winners.

• Uses the patron voice to articulate what’s valuable about libraries.

• Video contest videos tend to have high view counts, such as the 22,204 views for this one.

• Another video contest showcases teen-created video advertisements for books, and includes lots of online conversation about the books.

Submitted by a patron of the Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, IN, for a promotional video contest, this video shows two library patrons being chased by zombies through the streets of Fort Wayne into their local public library. Luckily the couple finds *The Zombie Survival Guide* and exclaims, “This is why I love my public library!”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUXp3E3YUdQ>

TOUR THE LIBRARY



• Uses humor effectively.

• High view count (14,618) and link from original library indicate possible integration into orientations.

• Focuses on the basics instead of telling viewers everything.

• Short and to-the-point: 2 minutes 40 seconds.

Harper College Library provides the standard library tour in a humorous video featuring a student and library staff. Instead of trying to incorporate an exhaustive amount of information about the library, it focuses on a couple of points and uses humor and high production value to relay its message in a short amount of time

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHljR4LYmOA>

CONCLUSIONS & FURTHER QUESTIONS

Given the amount of work involved in video marketing, we want to be sure we can assess the efficacy of our efforts. High view counts (which tend to correlate to high degrees of interactivity) are a good initial measure. Further analysis of referring sites can provide information about what constituents are connecting with your messages: are patrons and potential patrons being reached, or are you primarily garnering the attention of fellow librarians?

Additional measures might include expressed intent to use the library or service promoted (this was a very rare occurrence; we noted it in only 6% of library promotional videos) and/or the number of positive comments associated with the video (a rough analysis of comments indicated that 50% were positive, 6% were negative, and 44% were neutral in tone). Finally, we’re curious about interactivity—is it inherently desirable, as many proponents of social media suggest? If so, why, and what are useful indicators of success in YouTube?

TIPS FOR YOUTUBE SUCCESS

Have measurable goals & objectives—what are you promoting?

Showcase your most unique collections.

Participate in online discussion.

Link to your own content, as often as you can, in relevant locations. Partner with College or University website administrators to showcase content.

Engage patrons as content creators.

Use humor and keep it short.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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