YouTuBe: Are we really using it effectively?

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METHODOLOGY

This study used 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, librarians, and libraries' 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 subcategories such as general promotion, orientation/tour, instruction/tutorial, or instruction/intervention.

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.


CONCLUSIONS & FURTHER QUESTIONS

Given the amount of work involved in performing the study, we want to be sure we can assess the efficacy of our efforts. High view counts (which tend to correlate to high degrees of interaction) are not always an indicator of referral success or provide information about what content is connected with your messaging; are patrons and potential patrons being reached, or are you primarily generating the attention of library patrons? Additional measures might include expressed intent to use the library or service promoted (this was a very rare occurrence; we read it in only 6% of library promotional videos). For the number of positive comments associated with the video (a rough analysis of comments indicated that 56% were positive, 4% were negative, and 44% were neutral in tone). Finally, we’ve certainly only scratched the surface—there are as many proponents of social media suggest? If so, why, and what are useful indicators of success in YouTube?

INTERACTIVITY

The many interactive features supported by YouTube make it a useful video platform for libraries. Many of the comments featured here are important.

• 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 creator was less frequent.

Traffic patterns for library promotional videos varied dramatically, ranging from four to over 170,914. While no library promotional videos came close to garnering the massive view counts associated with popular YouTube videos, results compared favorably to traffic to YouTube library promotional videos than the originating library, or non-library, websites. Links often come from blogs maintained by librarians and library professionals.

BLOG/WEB 2.0

• The emergence of social networking and other “Web 2.0” tools, libraries have the means to reach users through a variety of interactive web tools, many of which (e.g. Facebook, YouTube) patrons already use in their personal lives. Professional library libraries abound with volunteerism to use such tools to reach patrons who “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 engaging and reaching patrons? Few studies exist to inform our work in this area.

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