November 2013

Our Next Challenge: Integrating Video into the Academy

Stephen Rhind-Tutt
Alexander Street Press, rhindtutt@astreetpress.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6603

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Historically, librarians and publishers have often struggled and failed in regards to media. WorldCat lists hundreds of copies and iterations of The Illustrated London News currently in circulation. What a pity that in the 1920s not one of these copies was weeded out to make place for the thousands of jazz records that are now lost. The Library of Congress has documented that thousands of jazz records that are now lost. What a pity that in the 1920s not one of these treated London News
The Illus-
seum and Library
formats.  Data from
journals are the reigning
printed word.  Books and
communities have favored the
where the library and publishing
production before 1950, only about half still
exist.

Preservation is only one instance where the library and publishing communities have favored the printed word. Books and journals are the reigning formats. Data from the Institute of Museum and Library Services show that a whopping 67 percent of public libraries' collection development spending is on print materials and just over 20 percent on all newer format materials — audio, video, DVD, and microform — combined. Abstract and indexing databases historically omitted media. MARC records, DOIs, SFX, Z39.50 — almost all library standards are book- or journal-centric. Cataloging for shorts, documentaries, and independently produced films is at such a level that we have no way of knowing how much has been lost.

This would be bad enough if media were a marginal part of our culture and our communication. But the opposite is the case. In the two days surrounding New Year’s 2013 the world posted 1.3 billion (yes, billion) images on Facebook. Every minute, 100 hours of video are posted to YouTube. When factoring in sites like Flickr and Picasa, it’s reasonable to project that the Web will contain more than one trillion images before 2020. Video and images are ever more important in our society.

Ah, yes, I hear you say, most interesting, most impressive, but what does it have to do with my institution? These items are of marginal interest to the day-to-day operations of faculty. My budget is too meager to be wasted on entertainment. I have to focus on impact factors and accreditation — on the “real” world of knowledge.

The counter to this argument is clear. For example, the 2012 Ithaka S+R survey of faculty members at U.S. four-year colleges and universities revealed that “films, artwork, or other non-textual sources” were assigned more frequently than were monographs in the social and natural sciences. The Chronicle of Higher Education too reported growing instances of final papers and capstones being presented in multimedia.
Most educators are aware of the value of video, and if they’re not, the phenomenon of the MOOC is making it clearer and clearer. Video animations, simulations, expert testimony, demonstrations, and “real life footage” are critical parts of a MOOC’s effectiveness. And that effectiveness has been shown to parallel the experience of attending college physically. Yet, these items are offered without the ability to cite, without details of provenance, and typically without dates. In short, they have none of the supporting information afforded journals or books.

New technology has made media radically easier to create and disseminate. Less than ten years ago, a teacher who wished to use video for her students was faced with lining up a TV, selecting a section to present, firing up the DVD in the middle of the lesson, waiting for the FBL warning and other miscellany to pass, and so taking up valuable class time. Now she can single out just the key moments of each performance, string them together in an online playlist, and share the permanent link to that playlist on the course syllabus. Students then have the opportunity to view that full playlist online from their campus library, home computer, or mobile device and come to class already prepared to discuss and practice the material.

The value of video applies not just to teaching. Video has direct research applications in field after field from anthropology (which has an entire sub-discipline in visual studies) and performance studies (shouldn’t we get to know Shakespeare in performance as well as we do in reading?) to history (where newspapers provide visual documentation of events), science (where video documents the results of experiments), and many more.

Fields like sociology (defined in Wikipedia as “the study of human behavior”) can benefit enormously from videos. How much of human behavior is written? Even in fields as textually intense as philosophy, video can reveal biases, strengths, and weaknesses — as seen by gestural, facial expressions, and intonation — and so affect the argument. We know this to be true. Why else do we insist on conducting legal research to video’s proliferation in academic settings.

Alexander Street Press’s Journey

In 2006, as an avid consumer of media myself, I was acutely aware that Alexander Street Press might play a role in solving the problems of video. The company mission is to “make silent voices heard,” and video housed an enormous body of material that was, by and large, unheard in the academy. Streaming technology meant that the devices most were using to read could be used to listen and view. Alexander Street’s successful history streaming music made us a natural fit to help solve technical, licensing, and other barriers to video’s proliferation in academic settings.

We found a natural ally in individuals like deg farrelly at Arizona State University, Carlton Jackson at The University of Maryland, Christopher Lewis of American University, and Kim Stanton at the University of North Texas. These folks — along with Jane Hutchison, William Patterson, Meghann Matwichuk, and Gary Handman — were kind enough to join our editorial board and help advise us on a spectrum of subjects. We’ve worked through a host of issues, ranging from how to produce MARC records that work for video and how our content should be treated in discovery services to resolving technical problems (e.g., how to ensure streaming works with EZProxy). We’ve had to educate distributors and publishers on the importance of allowing libraries to own streaming rights in perpetuity. As a company it’s been a learning process for us too, as we appreciate the potential of the medium and the costs associated with it. A typical monograph might cost, say, $5,000 to produce. A standard documentary might cost 100 times that.

Perhaps the biggest lesson for us was the paradox that for almost all research and teaching the effectiveness depends on transcription. It takes 30 minutes to watch a nightly newscast. That same video approximates to 12 double-spared typewritten pages. One can scan these pages in less than two minutes, and a computer can search them in microseconds. This technology enables researchers and teachers to incorporate video as never before.

As you’ll read in this issue, many of these challenges are behind us. You’ll read how Jisc built a database of more than 60,000 still and moving images, convincing content holders to grant new and different kinds of licenses, dealing with cataloging and metadata challenges, and finally addressing how to evaluate their project.

In another article, you’ll read how JoVE is helping researchers perform experiments more effectively. The U.S. spends approximately six cents out of every health care dollar on medical research, the equivalent of $30 billion each year. Despite this staggering amount, one recent independent study showed an inability to reproduce the findings in 16 out of 18 studies published as text articles — that’s 89 percent of research that is functionally useless. JoVE responded to this dramatic need by developing a PubMed-indexed journal that incorporates the element of video. By publishing more than 2,500 video articles, JoVE has removed many of the barriers to successful scientific collaboration.

Endnotes
8. http://library.nyu.edu/about/Video_Use_in_Higher_Education.pdf