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Time to Embrace Video in the Academy

by **Stephen Rhind-Tutt** (Alexander Street Press) <rhindtutt@astreetpress.com>

Video is big and getting bigger. By 2013 it will account for 90% of all consumer IP traffic.¹ It already counts for 51% of total U.S. Web traffic. Subscription TV in the U.S. in 2008 was worth \$146 billion.² Consumer books made up less than a fifth of that total. **YouTube** reaches twice the number of people that **Wikipedia** does.³

Arguably, film and television are the most important forms of cultural expression today — and not just entertainment video. Documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Supersize Me* today impact the social agenda in the same way that books like *Silent Spring* did in the past. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is the 369th highest-grossing theatrical film of all time.

Yet video remains underprivileged in the academy. Uncataloged, uncollected, trapped in older media, difficult to cite, inaccessible, unsearchable, moving-image works are the library equivalent of third-class citizens.

Perhaps this was inevitable. Since it arrived in 1895, the moving image has gone through one technological shift after another. It was expensive to capture and expensive to preserve. Until thirty years ago, one needed a darkened room to view it. Would librarians have collected so much paper if, like silver nitrate film, it crumbled and exploded if you didn't treat it right? Would journals be quite so popular if, as for DVDs, one needed to carry a media cart around in order to read them?

Toward the end of 2004, Internet technologies finally came together so that video could be delivered well on the Web. There was no Gutenberg moment — it happened gradually. Computers became powerful enough to process video; compression algorithms became good enough to deliver sufficient quality; video input devices, affordable; and broadband, common. Each of these technologies moved the medium forward until, sometime late in 2004, the capability reached a critical mass. At last quality video could be delivered economically and with ease across the Internet. The rapid success of **YouTube**, launched in February 2005, confirmed that this was going to be a mass-market phenomenon, and with no special storage mechanism and no special reader required. Video is here to stay.

The migration from silver screen to silver disk to the Internet is the most obvious part of the change. But in 2004, video was not just liberated from the formats that had imprisoned it. The potential to clip it, annotate it, cite it, link to and from it, and make it part of the world of search also arrived. Just as print freed text to be used in thousands of new ways, so the Web has freed video.

For many in the library and publishing worlds, the most obvious thing to do is to add video clips to existing journals and books. Online newspapers do this. These developments are firmly rooted in the print medium, in the same way that the first cars were strongly influenced by their carriages that preceded them.

The **Vook** attempts to go further. To quote from the **Vook** Website, a **Vook** is an “innovation in reading that blends a well-written book, high-quality video, and the power of the Internet into a single, complete story. You can read your book, watch videos that enhance the story, and connect with authors and your friends through social media all on one screen, without switching between platforms.” This takes things further but still borrows heavily from the book experience.

The first printed encyclopedia is generally recognized to be *De sermonum proprietate, seu de universo*, written by **Hrabanus Maurus** and printed in 1467, some twelve years after **Gutenberg** printed the first book. Since then, reference works have proliferated. Handbooks, almanacs, Gazetteers, Dictionaries, Thesauri, scientific tables, directories — all made possible because the form of the book (in contrast to the scroll) allows easy, random access and because the economics of distribution have become cheap enough. I believe we're likely to see a similar proliferation of “born digital” forms of knowledge with video at their core.

Many of these forms are around us today — embedded in blogs, general Websites, and on **Vimeo** and **YouTube**. By and large, they're largely absent from the academy. A lecture here, an interview there. Think about this

page. The citations at the ends of journal articles are interlinked. No such standards exist for video. Glance over the citation practices recommended by **APA** and **MLA**, and you notice immediately that they are varied and non-uniform. Worst of all, they don't address the medium as linear, they leave it one-dimensional, with all in-text citations and notes lacking any reference to where the reference occurs (the equivalent of page numbers). We're still struggling to have video fit standard publishing practices. Some video distributors routinely strip information about the original publisher, rename titles, and edit video — things that would never be tolerated in the printed record. The situation is all the more serious when one considers that a number of disciplines can't effectively be taught or studied without video.

In dance, for example, there are two well-used Western systems for expressing physical motion symbolically. They obviously provide value in allowing physical movement to be codified and compared. But for all but the experts, they remain difficult to interpret. In video form, dance is accessible, nuances can be studied, and students from a wide range of allied disciplines can come to understand it.

Choreography notation from *La Cachucha* by Friedrich Albert Zorn.

Source: **Wikipedia**, June 2011.

from the mindset of the 2011 freshman student. She's used **YouTube** since she was 13. She video chats with her friends and grandparents using **Skype**. She takes video with her phone and shares it with her friends using **Facebook**. Her parties, hobbies, travel, and more are all documented and shared with video.

The tools she finds in her library are paper centric — plenty of bibliographies, the odd discography, but very few videographies. The canonical discipline-specific abstract and index databases largely eschew video and audio. In full-text, there are massive databases of books, newspapers, and journals, along with some primary-source images and the odd dataset.

With journals, we're at a point where we can cite volume, issue, article and even

Video is such an important part of anthropology that the **American Association of Anthropology** has a special division for it. The **Society of Visual Anthropology** encourages the use of media for the “description, analysis, communication, and interpretation of human [and sometimes nonhuman] behavior.”⁴ It takes interest “in all visual aspects of culture, including art, architecture, and material artifacts, as well as kinesics, proxemics, and related forms of body motion communication (e.g., gesture, emotion, dance, sign language).”

I could go on. The purpose of theatre is performance, not textual study. Is it easier to understand an experiment by reading or by watching it? From surgical techniques to car repair, video is essential for training.

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Perhaps though the most telling examples of the importance of video in the academy are the most simple. Is it enough to judge someone just by what he's written? Doesn't it make more sense to get a feeling for the person by seeing him, too?

Video does more than enrich academic debate. It's part of the argument. Imagine if we could see **Cook** argue with **Peary**, see **Montagnier** confront **Gallo**, or **Keynes** debate **Hayek**. Such evidence should surely inform the record, not just illustrate it. Perhaps video of these encounters even exists. I was unable to find any. Yet another example of the problem.

I don't know how we feel about it, but tomorrow's students may well prefer to create and consume a video than a letter, paper, or idea. At the very least, they'll think that publications absent video are less exciting, less easy to digest, and perhaps even boring. Rightly, they will demand that knowledge is created and conveyed in a medium-agnostic way.

My request is simple. It's time for all of us in the academy — publishers, librarians, faculty, and students — to respect and embrace video. It's time to integrate it into library catalogs and indices, develop standards on how it should be cited, make it part of syllabi, cherish it, and preserve it.

At **Alexander Street** we've begun several initiatives. We've already launched ten major video collections in a wide range of disciplines. We're building a fully-indexed, 20,000-title project that we hope will be the video equivalent of the standard journal databases. We have more than 50,000 academics and scholars who've cited and embedded video from one or more of our databases. We're working with the Open Annotation Collaboration to develop a standard way to annotate video and share annotations across platforms. We're about to launch a metadata repository for our video content that will allow third parties to easily link to any of our streaming video publications.

These are exciting times for video. New uses are legion. A video encyclopedia of human people.⁵ A database of video experiments.⁶ Tomorrow's students should be able to see video of recent historical figures as easily as they can find newspaper mentions of them. They should be able to incorporate video into their papers as easily as they do images. And it's up to us — publishers and librarians — to ensure that this happens. 🐼

Rumors from page 20

Speaking of which, how many of you are paying attention to the **ATG NewsChannel**? I have gotten many notifications from friends on the **ATG Facebook page**! Thanks to you all!

Speaking of which, I am horrible with

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: Born: Rockford, Illinois. Lived: Alabama and Arkansas. Live: Blacksburg, VA.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I recently moved into my position after working for five years as the College Librarian for Humanities at **Virginia Tech**. In the new position, much of the focus centers on usage statistics and analysis, preparing reports to aid bibliographers, developing policy, collaborating with others in **ASERL** for the journal retention plan, and assisting with materials budget allocations.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Backpacking, running, or watching and identifying flora and fauna. Oh, and reading! (We have to say that, right?)

FAVORITE BOOKS: This is always such a hard question! I will go with these today: *Song of Solomon* by **Toni Morrison**; *The Things They Carried* by **Tim O'Brien**; *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**; *Native Son* by **Richard Wright**; and *As I Lay Dying* by **William Faulkner**.

PET PEEVES: Closed-mindedness.

PHILOSOPHY: I can't say that I follow a well-formulated philosophy, but the following words are very important in my daily life: compassion, curiosity, service, and perseverance.

GOAL(S) I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Achieve tenure, continue to contribute to the profession, and run two more half-marathons per year.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Obviously, more and more content will be online, and more readers will prefer to read using handheld electronic devices, even for pleasure reading. Adjustments will be made accordingly to approval plans and patron-driven plans. Less title-by-title selection will be performed. Academic libraries will continue to cultivate partnerships with other libraries and academic units for cost-sharing, visibility, and relevance. Unique digital collections become more important than ever. 🐼

Endnotes

1. *TechCrunch*. Cisco: By 2013 Video Will Be 90 Percent Of All Consumer IP Traffic And 64 Percent of Mobile, **Erick Schonfeld**, Jun 9, 2009.
2. VSS Communications Industry Forecast, 2009-2013, 23rd Edition.
3. **YouTube**: Source *Alexa.com* October 26th, 2010.
4. **Society for Visual Anthropology**, About Section, Retrieved June 29, 2011.
5. Ethnographic Video Online, **Alexander Street Press**, Virginia, 2010.
6. The **Journal of Visualized Experiments**, "a peer-reviewed, **PubMed** indexed journal devoted to the publication of biological, medical, chemical and physical research in a video format."

social media even though I enjoyed **The Social Network**. It's a matter of time! I rarely check my **Facebook** page and I seem to have two **LinkedIn** accounts, one of which I can access and the other I can't. So — I apologize to people who I haven't answered back. Just chalk it up to my lack of social media skills and time!! Wish that there were more of it. Ah! If there were world enough and time ...

Get so many calls from **Great People** (the capitals are not a mistake, they are on purpose!). The other day heard from **Lisa Larson**, remember her? Used to be at **CQ** and now works with **Alix Vance** at **GeoScienceWorld** database. Remember when I met a guy in publishing who told me that everyone in publishing just moved around a lot and stayed

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