Against the Grain

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Stop, Look, Listen — Academic Content for Generation Y: Videos in Scholarly Publishing

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Vids as an innovative form of academic communication are gaining importance. They fully use the potential of digitality, and they do so to a much greater extent than older and more established media formats developed in the process of digitization, like for instance ebooks or ejournals. And they particularly address new audiences that have been raised in a different media environment and that now enter into the research process.

Academic publishing is not at all short of digital innovation. Digital content models as well as its business models are for quite some time already the only growth drivers in the industry, even if print constitutes still in many libraries around the world. A comparable trend can be observed in some fields of the natural sciences or engineering, especially in clinical medicine or dentistry.

In some fields of research communication, videos already have a certain tradition. The great collections of historical or media-related “publishers” like Alexander Street Press, Bloomsbury or Gale are by now present in many libraries around the world. A comparable approach can be observed in some fields of the natural sciences or engineering, especially in clinical medicine or dentistry.

JoVE (www.jove.com), the Journal of Visual Experiments, has built upon this already about ten years ago, and in the meantime it has grown beyond its traditional core. Comparable to the Journal of Medical Insight (www.jomi.com), experts lead their audience through surgeries or experiments in the lab and explain either introductory or highly sophisticated procedures to students and their fellow researchers. Videos in the communication of research results are hence much more than the playful art to waste time, they very practically help to shorten time spent in understanding complex issues. At the same time, they help to reduce barriers to research results — an important advantage in a time where the attention span of the average audience is rather decreasing than growing, as one of the unintended and rather negative implications of digitization.

A new and very innovative approach is presently being tested by a startup from Hamburg, Germany. Latest Thinking (www.lt.org), as it is called, has set out to explore the boundaries of research focused around a specific research question, and it does so for many different disciplines. The ambition: Latest Thinking research and also rather discursive questions and debates are being discussed by top experts in the respective fields. All in English language, Latest Thinking covers a broad field of topics, from stem cell research and its ethical implications to medical complications from air pollution. The videos, mostly 10 to 15 minutes long, are structured in chapters to allow for easy navigation through the content, from research question to methodology, results and overall relevance of the presentation.

What is of special interest to users as well as researchers that present their results is the fact that Latest Thinking makes all of its content available in Open Access. The institutions that employ the researchers cover the costs of
Having been a sales executive with global responsibilities for many years, I've spent a considerable amount of time travelling on planes. Anyone who has ever had the pleasure (or not) of lengthy stays aboard a plane travelling at 30,000 feet in the air has inevitably picked up the airline magazine to read. I have never been a fan of those magazines, but given the boredom of flying, a quick perusal of the usually mediocre topics covered in those magazines will certainly help pass the time if one cares to take the time to look at the articles or has nothing better to do.

On one particular flight, after finishing the crossword puzzle in the airline magazine I came upon an article that talked about being able to speak with authority from the grave. “What fun!” I thought and therefore took the chance to examine the article.

The writer was talking about the preparation of last wills & testament so as to being able to direct the dispersion of one’s assets after death. In essence, the author said, you can literally do this by using videos of one’s assets to be distributed after death.

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producing the videos, allowing them to reach the widest possible audience.

The development of the innovative is encouraging — Latest Thinking reports strong increases in users accessing their platform every month.

Videos are, not least because of the easy digital distribution, are increasingly becoming a serious channel for the communication of research results. Especially members of Generation Y, who have inhaled audio-visual media from their infancy, are attracted by the medium. ☛

Most information industry companies send out renewal notices 90-120 days prior to expiration of the subscription. It is within this time period that the two parties need to get together and hammer out a new agreement. In the case of a renewal, these days prior to the subscription expiration date give the library incredible leverage in the negotiation process. After all, for the aggregator the renewal represents cash flow and continuation of services. Interfering in the timely receipt of any library renewal will cause a bit of pain for the aggregator. To avoid that pain, the vendor is usually willing to agree to terms more favorable to the library. Why should the library give up that edge to the vendor by agreeing to an evergreen clause in the contract? Makes no sense to do so.

For the sales rep, those 90-120 days represent a golden opportunity to not only renew current subscriptions, but interest the library in the company’s new offerings. Selling more products to existing customers is much easier than selling products to prospects who are not customers. People who have a history of doing business with the company are more likely to entertain the notion of adding additional services due to their comfort level of past satisfactory dealings. And of course, this is the time to “write it down!”

The great Canadian songwriter and performer, Gordon Lightfoot wrote, “If you could read my mind.” The lyrics go “If I could read your mind, love, what a tale your thoughts could tell...” In the art of negotiation, since we cannot read each other’s minds, writing down the terms and conditions will eliminate misinformation and distrust and will ultimately produce a mutually beneficial relationship between the two parties that should last for many years. ☛