

Towards a Better Appreciation of Online Educational Videos

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Educational videos are a useful tool for introducing people to key theories in diverse fields of inquiry. The best ones can give viewers a sense of the value and relevance of a central concept and can motivate them to explore this concept more fully on their own. The purpose of this special issue is to focus on the creation of such videos with the added intent of helping creators make more compelling videos and helping viewers better understand what goes into their creation.

Dennis Fount and Joanna Kwan contribute “Science Communication Through TED Talks: A Conceptual Replication of Sugimoto and Thelwall.” This article presents a new study by the co-authors that draws inspiration from a 2013 study conducted by information scientists Cassidy R. Sugimoto and Mike Thelwall. This earlier research sought to evaluate the effectiveness of scholarly communication through videos by focussing on TED Talks and assessing their use. The article included in this special issue explores the same topic to see what changes have unfolded over the past decade in the relationship between pedagogical videos and their audiences.

Of the four other articles in this special issue, three complement each other. Indeed, in all three, the authors draw on their own experiences of producing educational videos. As none of the authors was aware of the other authors’ efforts, the only overlaps are coincidental. Readers curious about this topic will benefit from exploring all three of these articles. In addition, the videos created by the authors are all freely available online, at least in part. Interested readers can watch them after having learned about the efforts that went into their creation.

The first of the three complementary articles is “Ten Key Factors for Making Educational and Instructional Videos” by Julia Guy and Michael B. McNally. In this piece, the authors describe their efforts at producing videos as part of a team of creators. Guy, as a student, research assistant, and actor, and McNally, as a professor, bring contrasting perspectives to the video-making process. In addition, in describing their modus operandi, they refer extensively to the existing literature on the production of educational videos, highlighting those ideas and approaches that proved most useful to them in the creative process.

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The second of the three complementary articles is “Co-Creating Educational YouTube Videos as a Community of Inquiry” by Yu-Ling Lee. In this article, the author discusses how he collaborated with students at his university to produce several instructional videos. In the process, he followed a “community of inquiry” approach inspired by the research of D. Randy Garrison and his colleagues (see notably Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999). Lee describes how, through several iterations, he and his students cooperated towards devising videos that present communication-related concepts in a clear and concise manner. For the author, the emphasis is on encouraging all participants in the creative process to have a say in how each video should be. Lee’s references to the very videos that he cocreated help him convey his thoughts on communities of inquiry in a straightforward manner.

The third of the three complementary articles—and the first of two “Field Notes”—is “Creating *On Method*: Translating Scholarly Research on Method” by Mary Elizabeth Luka and Annette Markham with Laine Rettmer and Andrea Merckx. In their lively article, the authors discuss the conditions under which they created a nine-episode series of videos about research methods. In a no-nonsense manner, they guide the reader through the various steps taken in the production of the series, from the initial creative-brainstorming and scriptwriting sessions to the posting of the end results on Vimeo. In their article, the coauthors stress the importance of teamwork in the creative process. Indeed, members of a team can achieve much more together than each member could alone. The objective of *On Method* is to present scholarly knowledge in a manner that is accessible to diverse audiences.

The second “Field Note” is “Creating Communities of Inquiry in Research and Scholarship Via Online Videos” by Rachael A. Lewitzky. In this concise article, the author focuses on the “community of inquiry” framework, the same one as in Yu-Ling Lee’s article. Lewitzky explores the three domains within this approach, namely social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. In doing so, she draws on her own experiences as a doctoral student, highlighting her online exchanges with her professors and fellow students. She concludes that an interactive and collaborative approach to online learning can enhance the graduate school experience and facilitate the acquisition and retention of knowledge.

These five articles can advance a reader’s understanding of how pedagogical videos are made and the objectives that creators pursue. Many of us spend hours and hours watching videos online without considering how they were put together and what their impact could be. The five essays in this special issue will increase readers’ understanding of the videos that they watch and how their viewing practices are affecting them. In addition, the essays can help readers become more self-aware creators of educational videos themselves.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following experts for their contributions to this special issue. Most of them have written on the topic at hand and their work is well worth looking up:

- David Joyner, Georgia Institute of Technology
- B. Jean Mandernach, Grand Canyon University

- Andrea Nolan, Deakin University
- Chaohua Ou, Georgia Institute of Technology
- Jennifer Putnam Davis, Augusta University
- Brenda Smith, Thompson Rivers University
- Jason Swarts, North Carolina State University
- Sylvaine Tuncer, King's Business School
- Michael Thelwall, University of Wolverhampton
- Hans van der Meij, University of Twente
- Thomas Weeks, Augusta University

Also, for my sabbatical, I thank Chantelle Marlor, Sylvie Murray, and Garry Fehr at the University of the Fraser Valley. Thanks also to Lily Crist, Clara Salja, Max Morris, Stuart Spalding, and Louise Spalding.

At *Scholarly and Research Communication*, I would like to thank editor-in-chief Rowly Lorimer for his guidance and support throughout the editorial process. Without his ongoing help, there would have been no special issue. Many thanks as well to managing editor Marilyn Bittman for her assistance during the copy-editing process. Over the years, I have benefited immeasurably from my association with both of them.

Reference

Garrison, D. Randy, Anderson, Terry, & Archer, Walter. (1999). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105. doi:10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6