Video-Making at Your Library: A Beginner's Guide

This guide contains practical tips for video-making at your library, including how to get started with just your phone, as well as recommendations for taking it to the next level.

Why make a video in the first place? Here are some primary reasons:

- To demonstrate something that is difficult to communicate with words or images alone, such as how to use a piece of equipment or how to perform a children's finger play
- To add value for the viewer, in terms of understanding, entertainment or convenience
- To address an ongoing need and/or demand on staff time, such as a training video for new volunteers, or a how-to video on navigating online resources
- To increase accessibility of content for individuals with low literacy skills

Is it better to make a video ahead of time, or just "go live"?

Live video is a great option for content that only needs to be accessed once, or when video quality is not as important as getting the message across, for example:

- Announcing prize winners for a library program
- Regularly occurring updates, such as highlighting new collection items
- Storytimes or other regular programming that has temporarily moved online (*Please note, current guidance asks that libraries delete live read-alouds as soon as possible after broadcast, and encourages the use of closed Facebook groups or password-protected YouTube links for read-alouds of copyrighted content*)

If you want a more professional look, or you are creating something with the potential to be a permanent resource, consider investing the extra time in shooting and editing a scripted video.

What should my planning process look like?

If you've never made a video before, here is a suggested general workflow you can follow:

1. Concept

Begin by defining your primary audience (*e.g. "preschoolers and their families," or "patrons with low computer literacy"*); the overall tone of the video (*instructional? motivating? fun?*); what you want your viewers to walk away with; and about how long you envision the video to be. Consider your viewers' attention spans, interests and existing levels of knowledge about the content.

2. Logistics

Consider what resources you have at your disposal and how you envision your video within these constraints. What type of equipment will you use? (*See below for an overview of different types of sound, video and lighting equipment.*) Where will you shoot? If shooting offsite, how will you access the space and secure your equipment? Who and what will be on camera? How do you want the background to look? It's generally best to make these decisions early in the planning process, so that your content fits your set-up.

3. Outline/Storyboard

Formalize your initial ideas into a workable outline. One way to do this is to use a storyboard, a series of cells on paper, each of which represents a single scene or frame. Write or draw what happens in each "scene," as well as notes about how the shot will look. A typical library services video will likely be just a few minutes long and might have only a few scenes.

4. Script

From your outline, work on developing a script, which should include what the subject says *and* does. It may be tempting to wing it, but a formal script will prevent anything from being left out, and keep your speech clear, concise, and free of filler. Keep in mind how the script will sound *spoken aloud*, and have your subject give it a test read for anything awkward or difficult to say. If shooting something unscripted, like an interview or candid footage, brainstorm a list of talking points and/or things you want to capture.

5. Shooting Script

Create a list of shots for your video in the order in which you'll shoot them. This is often not chronological, but instead organized by the *type* of shot, for example, you might do all your overhead shots, then your head-on shots. Add checkboxes to make sure you get everything and cross them out as you go. For each shot, include notes about the set-up, necessary equipment, etc. This the last step before you're ready to go!

What should I use to film my video?

- Phone: Your phone is a great way to get started if you've never made a video before. You can still make a decent video on a smartphone, and the quality will be greatly improved with the help of some of the accessories described below. Some phones may even have settings in the camera app to optimize video recording (e.g. "low light," "outdoor setting"). Use them! You can also upgrade your video quality by purchasing a set of external lenses for your phone.
- Camera: Most digital cameras come with a video recording function. A common drawback is that they tend to lose quality as you zoom in, so it's best to try to frame (set up) your shot ahead of time so that you never have to zoom.
- GoPro: A great pick if you plan to be filming a lot of "action shots" i.e. videos where the camera and the subject are in motion, or if you need to film in places you wouldn't feel comfortable taking a normal camera. For most libraries, a camera with these features probably won't be necessary over a less costly alternative. But if you have one, use it!
- DSLR Camera: These high-quality digital cameras have interchangeable lenses for different types of shots (wide-angle, close-up, etc.) Entry-level DSLR cameras start in the $500 range, while additional lenses can run $100-$300 apiece. This is a good investment if you're looking to provide professional but accessible videography equipment for your staff and community partners.
- Screencast: If creating a video on how to use an online resource or a piece of software, consider creating a screencast: a digital recording of your computer screen, often paired with audio narration. A screencast can be a video in and of itself, or you can insert it as a clip within a larger video. There are many free, easy-to-use screencast applications, such as Screencastify, available as an extension for Google Chrome, or Screencast-O-Matic, which can be downloaded onto your phone. Screen recording is also a built-in option for iPhones and iPads running iOS11 or later.

How do I make the lighting look good?

- DIY (Indoor): Avoid harsh, fluorescent lights. Instead, strategically place rope lights or table lamps with soft wattage bulbs to create the effect you need.

- DIY (Outdoor): Shoot with the sun behind the camera and shining on the subject (but not directly in their eyes!). The best "golden" light is typically in the morning and evening.
- For $25: A smart-phone compatible ring light (works great for photos too!)
- For $120: A three-point softbox lighting kit: Use in combination with white backdrop for a very professional look. Make sure you have the storage space before purchasing.
- Place lights above and on either side of your camera and point toward your subject. Adjust placement and angle as needed until you have an on-camera look you like. Have extension cords on hand so you can place lights exactly where you want them.
- Be ready to block unwanted light or shadow with curtains, cardboard or sheets
- Be mindful of reflective surfaces in your shot such as whiteboards, book jackets and screens; place these objects so they are not hit directly by the light, or use an alternative

What's the best way to capture audio (sound)?

- For $15: A lavalier (lapel) mic that plugs into your phone or camera and clips to the collar of your subject. The plug-in option is handy for Facebook Live and/or self-recording, but limits how far the subject can be from the recording device.
- For $60: A shotgun mic is a long, directional mic that captures sound from your subject while minimizing ambient noise. Plug into your camera or smartphone (note: smartphone connection will require an adapter, sold separately) Or for $150, try this higher-end mic designed specifically for iOS devices.
- For $460: If you plan on making videos a lot, or want to invest in more professional video making equipment for library and community use, purchase an external sound recorder, like the Zoom H4N, and a wireless lavalier mic system. This will produce the highest quality sound and allow you the flexibility to manipulate audio separately from video -- but will also require more advanced editing software and expertise.
- Be mindful of unwanted background noise. If filming in your building, consider shooting outside of regular business hours. If filming outdoors, pick a location and time where noises such as traffic, construction, animals, etc. are minimal.
- To improve accessibility for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, consider adding subtitles, *especially* for how-to videos intended for general use. If your library serves a large community of English language learners, make a version of the video available with subtitles in their native language.

Additional Equipment:

- Tripod: A must-have for holding your video recording device in place. You don't need anything fancy, as long as it has the right attachments to fit your device. (You may need to purchase an adapter for your smartphone or tablet.) For a more versatile option, try the GorillaPod, which has flexible legs and is small enough to fit in your pocket.
- Smartphone Stabilizer: A handheld stabilizer for action shots
- Backdrop: A collapsible studio backdrop allows for a consistent, professional background in every video. Hack it with a curtain rod and a clean sheet that's been pressed or steamed.

- **Teleprompter:** You can buy a teleprompter for around $200 to help shooting go more smoothly, especially for subjects who are less comfortable on video. In a pinch, try writing their lines on a dry erase board and holding it up behind the camera.

Post-Production (Editing & Sharing):

- **Basic:** Keep it simple by shooting on your smartphone or tablet and using an application like iMovie (iOS) or FilmoraGo (Android) to edit directly on the device. If you're eventually hoping to upgrade to a more advanced software, consider trying Adobe's cross-platform video editor, Premiere Rush, an entry-level version of the more sophisticated Premiere Pro. (Rush has a free trial available; both programs are included with a Creative Cloud subscription.) You can also use YouTube Studio, which is built directly into the site.
- **Advanced:** If you're thinking of making the leap to more advanced editing software, do some research on the different options that are out there and see if there is community interest in a particular program. If your library has a subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud, you may already have access to these programs. Whatever program you choose, take advantage of the built-in tutorials as well as how-to information you can find online.
- Export your video to an online platform like YouTube, where you can host all your videos on your organization's own channel. Make sure to mark any videos for which the primary intended audience is children as "made for kids." Once uploaded to YouTube, you can embed your video on a webpage, share on social media, or distribute the link directly.
- Always check how your video looks and sounds on an alternative device to the one you're working on. Remember that many people will watch on a mobile device.

General Tips:

- Expect that making a quality video is going to take time, especially when you're starting out. Give yourself enough time for planning, shooting *and* editing, and leave some wiggle room for unexpected delays (bad weather, equipment issues, etc.) As much as possible, involve library leadership in the video-making process so they can appreciate the effort required and provide appropriate support.
- If making videos for the first time, keep your videos to a single location and frame (camera view never changes), and basic editing with free or low-cost software. Continue to challenge yourself by adding a little more complexity each time.
- Make sure you have video releases for any patrons or volunteers who appear in your videos, even if they only appear in the background. Video releases for individuals under 18 must be signed by a parent or guardian.
- It's always a good idea to have extra batteries, chargers and a back-up camera on hand, especially if filming offsite.
- Explore avenues for involving local students and community members in making videos for your library. This can be an opportunity to both provide important career skills and gain new perspectives on the kind of content your patrons want.
- Always thoroughly research any equipment before you buy, including equipment recommended on this list, to ensure it is compatible with your existing device, skill level and organizational needs. Be on the look-out for educational and non-profit discounts while shopping around!

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