

MODULE 23

**ESTABLISHING
ARCHIVAL
CONNECTIONS
THROUGH ONLINE
ENGAGEMENT**

DINA KELLAMS AND JENNIE THOMAS



**SOCIETY OF
American
Archivists**

Moving Forward

Library staff are committed to continuing our internal and external editing events and to building a dedicated and knowledgeable group of Wikipedia editors on the Museum staff. We also hope to explore community partnerships to strengthen our group of core editors and increase our impact during events like the Art+Feminism edit-a-thons, while extending educational and cultural opportunities outside of our walls. In collaboration with a member of the Museum's digital team, we plan to leverage collections data to improve glass topics on Wikipedia on a larger scale and investigate how we can contribute to Wikimedia Commons. Overall, we are pleased with the results so far and look forward to continuing our efforts.

Testing Facebook Live at the University of Iowa Special Collections

By Colleen Theisen, Chief Curator of Exhibitions, Programs, and Education, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries (previously Outreach and Engagement Librarian, University of Iowa)

History with Livestreaming

The University of Iowa Special Collections hosted their first livestream in 2014, a two-hour, Shakespeare-themed Q&A session with a Shakespeare scholar from the University of Iowa and a librarian from Special Collections. The pair solicited questions about Shakespeare on Twitter and via the livestream and then spent the two hours answering those questions and showing Shakespeare-related items from Special Collections. At the time, YouTube was the available choice for livestreaming, accessed via Google Hangouts On Air. During the session, 122 people tuned in for an average of twenty-nine minutes each. (For a recording of the session, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVceEwlIFJs>.)

Why Facebook Live?

Before streaming on YouTube, a live event has to be created and advertised widely on all of our social media sites to draw an audience to the YouTube link. Though the University of Iowa Special Collections has over 500 subscribers, use of YouTube as a social media site, and the ability to message users there, is limited. Instead of trying to drive

our audience to another platform, we were interested in testing how live video that focused on our spaces, events, and people would add engagement to the one site where most of our users with a connection to our local campus spent their time. This connection to the physical location is not as strong on our Tumblr or Instagram accounts, where our content has a collections focus and is less specific to our particular institution. While this type of outreach by special collections libraries and book lovers as a whole draws audiences from major cities around the world, it is not a particularly successful approach for Facebook.

According to Pew research data, 79 percent of Americans had adopted Facebook by 2016—near ubiquitous usage.⁴² Since launching live video options for Facebook pages in April 2016, Facebook has prioritized video and live video in their algorithm. When a user posts a live video, Facebook will send a notification to the user's followers and also place a note at the top of their feeds stating that a page they follow is streaming live. Where pages struggle to have their Facebook content seen by their followers, essentially having to "pay to play" and boost posts monetarily to be seen widely, working with video optimizes the chance that Facebook will allow the content to reach the page's audience without additional money.

What Have We Done?

Since August 2016, the University of Iowa Special Collections has livestreamed thirteen videos on Facebook, yielding 3,281 views of a minimum of ten seconds and 1,042 engagements (likes, clicks, and reblogs). With experimentation as the goal, content varied widely and included:

- A live stream of a lecture,
- A demonstration of how a unique artist's book opens and closes,
- A tour of a newly opened library space,
- An exhibition preview and behind-the-scenes tour during installation,
- Exhibition tours after installation,

42 Shannon Greenwood, Andrew Perrin, and Maeve Duggin, "Social Media Update 2016," *Pew Research Center*, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>, captured at <https://perma.cc/5AMF-5CQQ>.

- An event where a guest demonstrated historic printing equipment,
- A prize giveaway related to an exhibition, and
- The opening of a new collection.

How We Did It: Practice and Logistics

Facebook Live streams are optimized for smartphones, and a Samsung smartphone is what we used to get started. Holding a smartphone at arm's length for a live feed creates a welcoming feeling of immediacy for viewers. For some types of streaming, particularly shorter videos, the slight shake from holding the phone conveyed an authentic sense of being on the spot. But for longer videos, we purchased and use a tripod adaptor for cell phones (at a cost of \$10). Adding a lapel microphone attachment for cell phones (\$20) increased the sound quality. Sound is the most important element influencing audiences to stick around and watch once the video is saved to your Facebook channel. A Rode SmartLav microphone (\$70) would be the next-level investment for those who are interested in streaming lectures and prioritizing quality.

The increasing push on social media is toward design features that are optimized for smartphones and give preference to users working from mobile devices or tablets. These design choices often mean that personal cell phones are used when creating social media content for work. Many of our staff members have their own smartphones, but several do not; necessitating that staff members use their own equipment to stream videos is therefore a mixed bag. If staff have a smartphone and carry it with them, they can easily use it for livestreaming. However, their equipment must have a reliable battery life and be able to capture content at a high enough quality for livestreams. Staff members must also have their own Facebook pages to use Facebook Live. If these factors prevent staff from using their personal smartphones for livestreams, a shared department tablet or even a laptop could be used.

Results: What Worked Live?

Long Videos and Scheduled Events

The content that attracts the largest number of live viewers are the longer streams announced ahead of time; typically, these were lectures given by faculty members. Announcing the event in advance gave

those who were interested a chance to plan to attend, just like they would for in-person events—and a necessity if they hoped to stick around for an hour-long video. However, longer videos also gained viewers in real time as Facebook rolled out announcements about the livestream to our followers, both alerting them with a notification and placing an alert at the top of their feeds. In contrast, a video that is only a few minutes has a shorter window of opportunity for Facebook to send these alerts and thus to attract viewers in real time.

Short Videos

The largest number of repeat views come from short live videos, which is comparable to other scripted short videos that were not recorded live but rather uploaded natively on Facebook. Whether recorded live or scripted and uploaded later, these short videos look the same in our followers' feeds. Creating a script ahead of time and using it when livestreaming can result in a smoother and more organized video. However, in practice, live videos are easier to make because you do not have to edit them. Viewers are also generally forgiving when it comes to performance quality and minor foibles in livestreams.

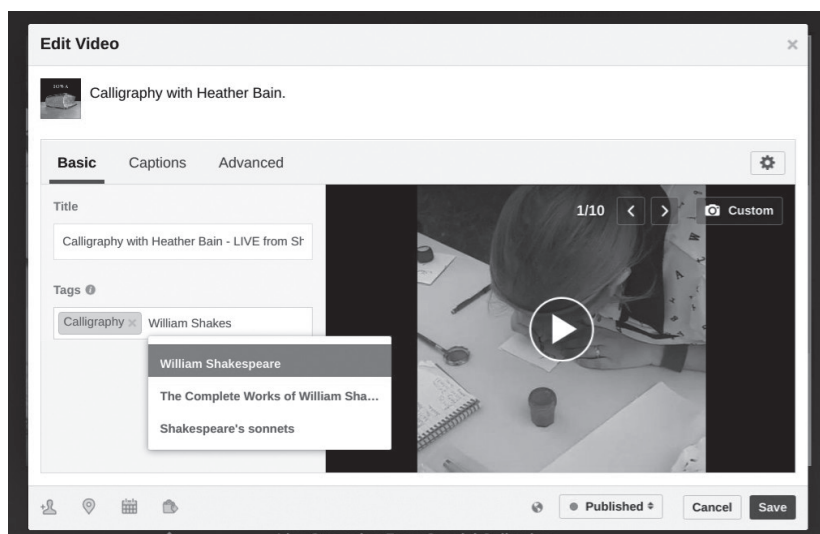


Figure 2: After recording, choose tags that represent the subject matter of your video so that Facebook's algorithm will push it to relevant audiences.

Did It Need to Be Live?

Our highest levels of user engagement came during two livestreams that coincided with big events of local significance. When Hancher Auditorium on the University of Iowa campus opened its new building after the devastating flood that destroyed the original auditorium, we paged through a guest book from the University Archives that featured signatures from the musicians, dancers, and singers who performed in Hancher's inaugural year in the 1970s. The video was shared widely on campus after the initial streaming. However, the most engagement came from a livestream following the death of University of Iowa alum Gene Wilder. As the repository holding his papers, Special Collections created a display of candid photographs from Wilder's life for those who wanted to revisit memories of him and his time as an actor at the University. A livestream panning around the table and examining his papers was shared widely on Facebook and Twitter.

After the Livestream

After your Facebook Live stream is completed, you can edit its thumbnail and description. A live video appears as an original post on your page but also as an entry on your page's video tab. On that tab, you can edit the video title and tags as well as upload a file with captions. Choosing a compelling title and uploading a custom thumbnail will increase the number of viewers in the video's second life as a post on your page, on Twitter, or in a blog. Choose tags that represent the subject matter of your video so that Facebook's algorithm will consider that information when it assesses your follower's interests and chooses who sees your video.

Captions

Captions for videos are necessary not only to enable access for hearing-impaired viewers in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act but also for the 85 percent of Facebook videos that are watched without the sound turned on.

When prerecording a video, captioning is quite easy because you can format and upload your script. However, improvised videos or livestreamed videos have no scripts, and though they can be engaging and easy to produce on the spot, the captioning process thus takes

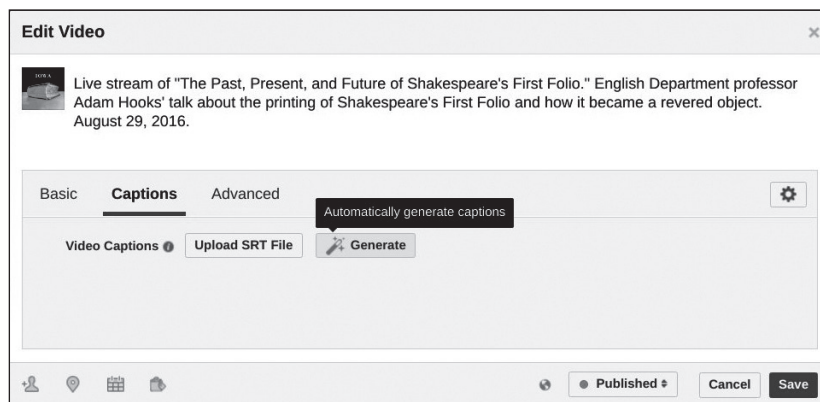


Figure 3: Captions, important for accessibility, can be automatically generated after the live event but will need to be edited.

more time. Several options are available for captioning videos after the fact, but this labor must be factored into your plans.

Facebook does not add any captions by default, though it has an option for generating automatic captions that you can select when editing the video (see Figure 3). These automatic captions are often flawed and must be edited for accuracy. Depending on your transcription speed, it is sometimes faster to use Facebook's built-in tools to listen to the video and type the captions by hand.

Metrics and Metric Caveats

Facebook employs several methods to measure the impact of videos. While a video is live, you will see a count of how many people are currently viewing it. Additional metrics include:

- **Reach:** How many news feeds a video appeared in. This number is useful for checking if your post is appearing in your followers' feeds. The more people who watch, click, and interact with your post, the more Facebook will promote it. Though reach can look impressive on its own, the fact that a post appears in numerous feeds is no measure of whether followers noticed it or cared.
- **Views:** Facebook reports the total number of views; however, you may want to ignore this number. As many Facebook feeds play video automatically, the total number of views is a misleading metric. It does not tell you if users sought out and

viewed the entire video or if the video simply played in users' feeds for a second as they scrolled by.

- **Ten-second views:** Facebook measures "views," but the numbers reported below are exclusively ten-second views. A "view," much like "reach," can mean anything. Once again, the fact that a video appears in a feed on autoplay does not mean that a user paid attention to it or cared. While ten seconds is still a rather limited amount of time for content to impact a user, this metric is still more useful than the autoplay count. It is important to note that YouTube does not count a view until a user has watched a video for thirty seconds—which may be a better measure of actual investment in the content. Facebook's definition of views skews the numbers to make it appear that videos are performing well on the site when that may not actually be the case.

In total, the thirteen videos that Special Collections has produced have garnered 3,281 ten-second views and 1,042 engagements (likes, clicks, and reblogs).

Reflections

Most of our short live videos were inspired by events that we decided to stream on the spot; they were not announced ahead of time. Typically, fewer than ten viewers experienced the video live, but the videos remain on our Facebook page as video posts and continue to be viewed long after the initial broadcast. Learning to react in the moment was an important step for venturing into livestreaming. When we witnessed interesting moments, we framed livestreaming them as a service to our audiences. That inspirational sense of service was important for overcoming the fear involved with livestreaming.

Upon reviewing the results of this initiative, however, we identified two clear avenues for reflection and future investment. First, we realized that streaming may remove some of the barriers that prevent libraries from experimenting with video. For example, streaming can be used strategically as a method for preparing a video intended to be viewed after the initial stream. Staff with editing experience may be hard to find or impossible to hire with current staffing levels. But camerawork and editing do not have to be barriers to video creation if librarians can harness the courage (and model that courage for the

community) to take on the work themselves; after all, livestreaming reduces the expectation for perfection and inspires a forgiving audience. Once the stream is finished, a video post is just a video post. Scripted and edited short videos appear in viewers' feeds in the same way as posts with completed live videos.

Second, we concluded (as other libraries and museums have done) that we should schedule a weekly time when librarians would be streaming live, whether for a short or long period. Maintaining a consistent schedule allowed our patrons and fans to anticipate the livestream, build up excitement, and schedule the time to tune in, or realize that they would miss a stream and go looking for the video afterwards.

Best Practices and Recommendations

- Bloopers are part of life. Model how to be a bold maker, and laugh at yourself.
- Schedule your livestreams for a recurring time to build an audience.
- Plan notes ahead of time, even if they are just a few bullet points.
- Prioritize sound. Invest in a microphone first.
- Stand during filming because it often encourages you to speak more energetically.
- Ask for questions ahead of time. It encourages people to tune in and participate.
- Say the name of the person who submitted the question when you ask it.
- Ask questions live and have viewers submit comments. Make the stream interactive.
- When someone joins the stream, say their name to give them credit for being there as part of the community and participating. ("Hi Sara, thanks for joining us.")
- Make a sign with a hashtag that can be seen on screen during your stream.
- If you have a front and back camera, toggle. Film yourself in selfie view, then switch and show collections.
- Use caution and avoid capturing patrons. Walk around the filming area before you start and warn patrons and staff that

you will soon be recording live. Do not film in areas with researchers or readers.

- Put up signs that explain what you're doing in case people wander by.
- Remember that if you'll be streaming for a long time, you may want to film next to a power outlet!
- The livestream creates a video that has a unique URL that can be shared to other sites. Share to Twitter.
- After the fact, write a blog post that describes the livestream and share it on the staff intranet.