

LOW HANGING FRUIT ON THE VINE: LEVERAGING “VINE” TO ENHANCE ONLINE INSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

This Lightning Talk will outline best practices in the utilization of the popular mobile app, Vine, which enables users to create and share short, six-second looping videos that can be shared or embedded on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. As of August 2013, Vine reported 40 million users. Organizations and companies—libraries included—are integrating the app into existing social media strategies (Morehart, 2013). However, a review of Vine videos from library accounts reveals the application is generally missing the mark. So how can we take full advantage of this popular, simple social media tool? This paper will demonstrate one user’s approach to Vine and suggest alternatives to simple marketing and highlighting services.

Tutorials using screencasting software are common practice in online library instruction, but it has been demonstrated that students perform better after using a static web page with screenshots than they did after viewing a screencasting tutorial (Mestre, 2012). Vine presents the opportunity for librarians to create hybrid instructional tutorials of static information highlighted by quick, six-second looping videos. Short Vine videos can be substituted for screenshots, adding allure and pizzazz to instructional content. Looping Vine videos embedded in a research guide, or a library’s blog, results in dynamic posts that can visually enhance the written information. Applying this method to library instruction can be just as effective.

HOW TO VINE

Vine is an attractive platform for creating content because there’s so little involved. To get started, all you need is a smartphone and the Vine application. To create a Vine, as they are called, touch the camera icon in the upper-right of the screen, which will open a new Vine session. To record, aim

your device at whatever you’d like to film and tap or touch the screen. Each tap/touch essentially films a frame. A green bar at the top of the screen grows to indicate how much of your six seconds you have filmed. Once the bar reaches the other side, you are finished filming. Touch the arrow at the end of the green bar to view what you have filmed. At this point you have the option of editing your video or finalizing it. In the edit mode, you’re limited to rearranging or deleting frames. You are given the option to rerecord a deleted frame. Once you are satisfied with your Vine, touch the checkmark to finalize your work. From here, there’s a caption box to include a title and hashtags to your Vine. You also have the option to include a location, providing another way to promote your library. The last step is to post it to Vine, Twitter, Facebook, or all of the above.

LESSONS LEARNED

Vine is deceptively simple. In just a few simple steps you can start creating your own short videos. I first imagined educators making attention-grabbing or discussion-prompting videos that would inspire students to engage with the material being presented. As I investigated more and explored the content on Vine, I envisioned a series of how-to Vines that would instruct students in some process-based learning, such as constructing effective search strategies. I quickly realized that this is nearly impossible to do in the six-second timeframe Vine allows. I attempted to make a how-to Vine demonstrating the steps of gaining off-campus access from the library’s homepage, locating the subject guide for hospitality and tourism management, navigating to the list of main resources for the discipline, and gaining access to Hospitality and Tourism Complete. What resulted was little more than a PowerPoint presentation cycling through a series of slides way too fast. It may make sense to a librarian, but a first-time library user would be lost. I also noticed that my video was unstable, making the final product a bit disorienting. Lastly, recording a computer screen was uninteresting and lacked visual appeal.

While a background in Media Arts is not necessary to create Vines, a little theory goes a long way. First you'll need to visualize a concept. The most interesting Vines make objects move in unexpected ways. Stop-motion is a good technique to achieve this effect. A tripod is ideal to use since you do not want your device to move a single millimeter while you're filming. Willis (2014) emphasizes the importance of composition: "Think of your video like a moving photo. All of the same principals that apply to good photography apply to making videos. Use the rule of thirds or an unusual perspective to give your video visual appeal" (Composition, para. 3). To help with composition, Vine offers an on-screen grid to frame the shot. Lighting is another important feature, as it can make a major difference in production value and overall aesthetics.

Vine is simple enough for anyone to use, but to make effective videos to supplement online instruction is a challenge. However, it has the potential to be transformative for online research guides—it can fill a niche between tutorials using static web pages with screenshots (Mestre, 2012) and the more popular screencasting tutorials, which have been shown to be taxing on students' short-term memory (Oud, 2009). A series of Vines embedded in an online research guide gives accustomed users a quick refresher on task-based functions without requiring them to perform extra steps. Simple, quick, and captivating, Vine goes beyond a screenshot, but less than a three-minute tutorial in which one's eyes glaze over, or constantly pause and rewind to keep up.

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