
Quid pro quo Harnessing multimedia students' skills to produce library videos



Siobhán Dunne
*Humanities and Social
Sciences Librarian
Dublin City University
siobhan.dunne@dcu.ie*

This article describes how DCU Library has collaborated with its School of Communications to develop high quality instructional and publicity videos. The videos have been produced to a considerably higher standard than we could have achieved with our limited in-house knowledge and skills. However, the collaboration has been mutually beneficial, with the process building confidence and engendering a spirit of entrepreneurship in the students as they venture forth to develop their careers.

BACKGROUND

In 2010 we began planning a library orientation video for new students. We wanted something that looked professional, would appeal to first-year students and wouldn't come across as forced or staged. At the same time, we were aware that our multimedia students were themselves considering topics for their own project work.

With that in mind, we approached one of the lecturers in the school to see if he could recommend any students who would be interested in working with us. As it happened, we were too late as the students' projects were already under way. However, our lecturer was confident that there would be some students interested in gaining some professional experience once any project and exam commitments were out of the way. The students in turn would be paid an honorarium and, most importantly, would be able to highlight the experience in their CVs.

THE BRIEF

On advice from the lecturer we compiled a brief to circulate. We outlined the aims of the project and aimed to create an appropriate tone, informing students in a relaxed style. We also wanted the piece to be of optimum length in order to give ourselves enough time to get our points across without losing the viewer's attention.

Two multimedia students were keen to gain some professional experience and answered our call. We went through the brief and discussed the logistics. We were to compile a script and work on a storyboard and the students would organise the equipment and identify a fellow student to act as narrator. We were extremely lucky that the school allowed the students to use their camera, lighting and software equipment. Aside from providing guidance as to what we wanted covered through a suggested script, we were clear that we wanted the piece to be conversational in tone and, as far as possible, in their own words.

Following this initial input and some queries around sequencing and scenes for inclusion, the students got stuck into the filming and editing process. After four weeks' work, we were shown the near-final cut and were asked for our feedback. We were instantly blown away by how professional it looked. The students had told the 'story' in their own voice and had done so much better than any of us could have done. The fact that they were able to incorporate their own experiences as library users into the production added a unique peer learning element which was evident in the tone. I would say that most of our input into the production process was concerned with editing. Deciding where to cut and which segments worked best was to a large degree determined by timing. Our lecturer had advised on optimum length – anything over three minutes and we would lose students' attention.

BUILDING ON EXPERIENCE

This was the first of several collaborative ventures with the school. The following year we were updating the citing and referencing module of our online tutorial LETS and wanted to introduce some video pieces on the topic of plagiarism. Again, we put a call out to the school and again we were lucky to get two great students. This time, the videos would take the form of a series of interviews with staff and students discussing what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. The 'script' was a set of interview questions which we circulated

Introduction to Library Video		
Time	Action	Reason
0.4	Insert Caption "Tours are scheduled in orientation week"	will read better
.57-1.04	Remove walkabout /general shots	To reduce overall length - some of these can be reused - s
1.05	Insert shot of information desk sign here	It's shown incorrectly when discussing ISS help desk later
1.05	Insert caption "Ask for help locating information for your assignments"	
1.16-1.20	Remove Catalogue screen shots + shot of books on shelf. instead, insert article search as detailed in next tab - 'article search screen grab'	We go into detail on catalogue shots later. Here we want t
1.29	Change caption text to " Thousands of books and journals - online and in print	Niall - will all this text fit?
1.37-1.40	Remove voice-over "The Library also provides electronic access to thousands of jou	Shot of searching catalogue for books doesn't match
1.37	Insert caption "Check the catalogue to locate books on your topic"	This sequence needs grounding as we're suddenly looking
1.50-1.55	Remove walking sequence	To reduce overall length
2.13-2.24	Remove sequence of staff stacking trolley & voice over + associated caption	looks clunky and concept of friendly staff captured at 1.05
2.3	Change caption so all words in lower case (except for Classes)	maintain all captions like this
2.41	Change image to ISS help desk sign and change caption to lower case	incorrect sign shown
2.54-2.58	Remove general shots	To reduce overall length
3.01	Change caption text to "Print, scan and photocopy on any floor	will read better
3.11	Remove Mentoring Suite sign	It looks like the shot that follows is mentoring suite when
3.14	Change caption text to read "Book a collaborative study room on your portal page"	will read better
3.18	Remove shot of taught postgraduate room, study area with brown boxes and shot	not very relevant/clear for message
	Add study area shots taken from...	.53-.55
	Add study area shots taken from...	1.02-1.05
3.33	Change caption text to "Express Service Points to borrow books and DVD's"	will read better

Edits for Introduction to library video

in advance. Again, we advised all interviewees that we wanted the interviews to be relaxed in tone. We weren't very sure how we would edit and break up the videos, but as it happened all the interviews fell into manageable themes:

- What is plagiarism?
- Why do students plagiarise?
- How to spot plagiarism

These videos are hosted on our LETS Cite module and complement the existing text-based content: <http://www.library.dcu.ie/lets/cite-1-03.htm>

The following year the same group of students collaborated with us on an inter-institutional project called MyRI – 'My research impact': <<http://www.ndlr.ie/myri/>>. This is a bibliometrics toolkit containing an online tutorial with associated lesson plans and materials for workshops. The multimedia students, now graduates, were paid a professional rate to record a series of interviews with researchers and a promotional video.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

The fact that we had experience of working with the students and could then recommend them for professional paid work was mutually beneficial. One of the students told me: 'The experience was certainly beneficial, both for my CV and for furthering my skill levels. Such a high-level project on a CV just after leaving college was a great asset, and certainly helped my employment prospects.'

The students are happy to be able to include the library as one of their 'clients' on their CVs, even

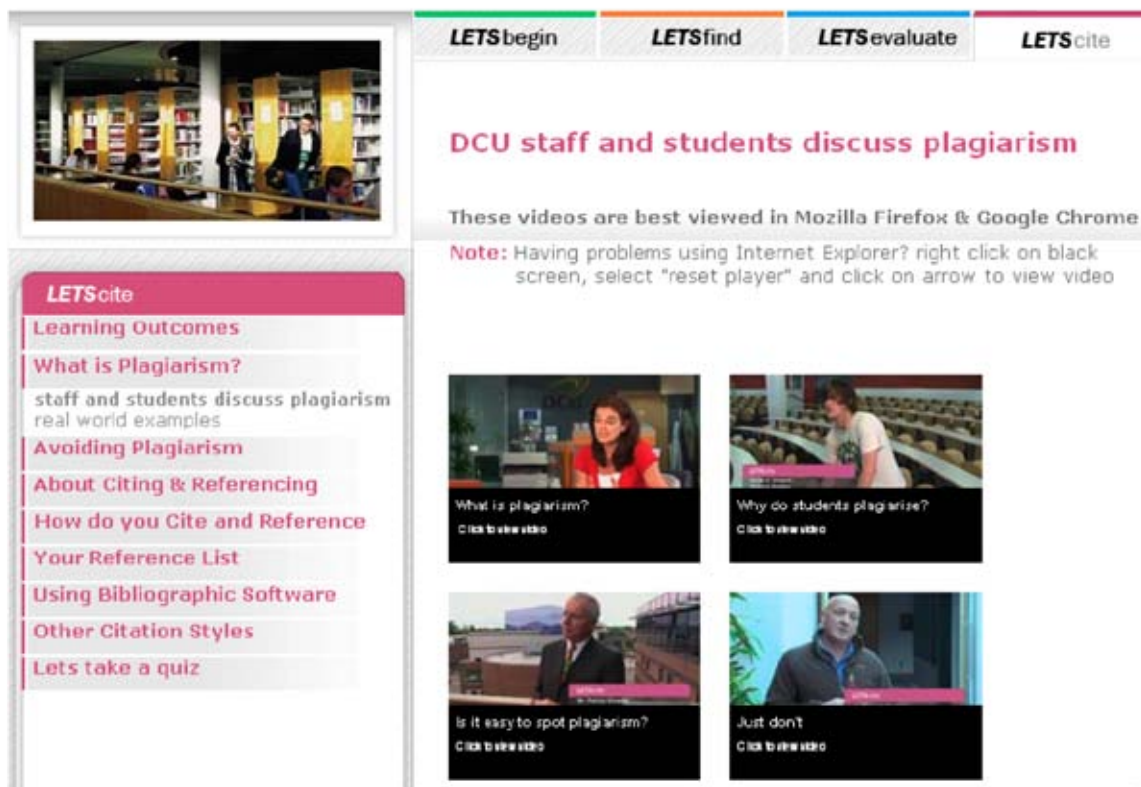
before they have left college. It gives a good starting point to their careers, allowing them to experience what working with a 'real' client is like. Attending meetings, making creative suggestions, meeting specific milestones or deadlines and delivering a project that will be viewed by a large number of people: these are skills that employers look for.

Our lecturer had this to say about how the students had benefited from working with the library:

For multimedia students, the chance to work with a 'real world client', such as the DCU library, has proved invaluable. The students themselves see it as an opportunity to gain insights and develop their professional skills and competencies that they have been working on so hard over the course of their multimedia studies. The 'client' brief is a cornerstone of any multimedia or video project, from which all subsequent time, energy and effort flows, so it is vitally important that such briefs are as comprehensive as possible. I have often informed my students that their projects are 'made' at the pre-production or planning stages. DCU Library's briefs have been both comprehensive and thorough, which in turn has enabled the students to further develop detailed scripted scenarios for each project.

BENEFITS TO LIBRARY

Getting involved in the script-writing, production and editing process has given me, as subject librarian for the school, a real insight into the



Screen shot of plagiarism materials web page

practical elements of both the BSc and MSc in Multimedia programmes. Prior to these experiences, I had been involved in assisting with the theory side of the curriculum: helping the students to locate academic source material through our information literacy programme. I can now better appreciate how the information literacy skills I helped to develop dovetail with the practical elements of the programmes.

The experiences have also provided me with greater confidence in developing various e-learning screen capture and web authoring skills. Both the students and lecturers have provided useful tips on the practical elements of video production such as sound, timing and when to introduce visual breakers such as screen captures.

By inviting staff members from across our faculties and our Student Support & Development team to participate in video interviews, we have, in an indirect way, been promoting the library service and its resources. Highlighting areas of support which heretofore may not have been considered as core library business has got our academics interested in further collaborations. All our videos are embedded throughout our website and we have a dedicated YouTube channel, <http://www.youtube.com/user/DCULibrary>. Having a single point of reference for the videos definitely makes it easy to promote them.

CONCLUSION

We have just finished another successful collaboration with a third set of students. For this, we developed an up-to-date version of our introduction to the library video. (Our catalogue interface had changed, and we wanted to promote our federated search and also generally update the look and feel of the video.) We also created a separate video on 'Finding items on the shelves', as this is one of the most frequent queries on our information desk. Lastly, we updated the third module in our tutorial (*LETSevaluate*) and captured staff and student thoughts on this subject. Advising on how to evaluate sources can be a tricky topic and the use of video interviews enabled us to get around this difficulty.

We obtained some excellent footage, with staff providing tips on sourcing information for specific subject areas which, whilst related to the main theme of evaluating sources, made the total video time too long. We plan on using YouTube's video editor to break up these snippets and embed them in our subject portal pages. Being able to secure the final project files also means that future multimedia students can amend any outdated scenes in Final Cut Pro, the software used by the school.

We had learnt a valuable lesson from our initial video project: to record the general library

scenes when the library was still busy. This time, although the multimedia students weren't able to commit to doing the bulk of the work until after their own exams, they did agree to spend an afternoon capturing the general shots – group study spaces, desk queries, training sessions, etc., while we still had a busy physical library space.

It is to our enormous benefit that we have such good facilities and student expertise on campus. Being able to draw on the students' own experience as library users and incorporate their feedback into promotional material is also hugely advantageous. We hope to continue future collaborations with the school. We are indebted to the staff for their advice and energy in recommending students and to the students themselves for their professionally produced work and the skills with which they have provided us. In return, we will continue to recommend the excellent work they carried out for us to potential employers.