Make It Snappy:
The Edge Hill University Library Snapchat Story!

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Introduction

Learning Services at Edge Hill University (EHU) has a strong commitment to staff development in the workplace, and in 2015–16 we undertook a service-wide project to strengthen this ethos, with a collective mind-set dedicated to developing a learning culture where learning is the rule, not an exception, barriers to learning are removed and staff are empowered to embrace learning, innovate and take risks.

Social media is just one area of innovation where we like to continually push boundaries and experiment with new ideas. Learning Services has been active on social media for a number of years, having joined Facebook in November 2010 and Twitter the following month, and in March 2016 we launched an Instagram account to increase our social media reach. We use our social media accounts to promote our many services, interact with EHU students and staff and to network with other libraries/organisations across the country and globally.

In June 2016 Learning Services staff attended a training session on *Learning at work week Eextra: how to tell a Snapchat video story!* hosted by an external digital communications specialist Imran Azam.[1] In this session staff were encouraged to engage with Snapchat and create their own story. It is incredibly simple to do yet beautifully effective, and there are a host of filters, images/texts and video-editing tools readily available to use alongside any photo or video created. Staff felt inspired and motivated to take a risk, prepared to try something new and supported when experimenting with visual storytelling as a new way of engaging students with the library.

Why Snapchat?

Snapchat is one of the world's most popular and fastest-growing social media platforms for authentic storytelling. We know our students are using it.[2] We know other universities are using it.[3] Whilst Snapchat is currently dominated by 13–25 year olds, it is clear that its user base is rapidly becoming more widespread.[4] As of February 2017, Snapchat has over 161 million users and 10 billion daily video views, so it is no surprise that major brands and social media marketers are taking Snapchat extremely seriously. At Learning Services we felt the platform and content ability could assist us in reaching students on a new and dynamic level to encourage engagement with our support services.

Make It Snappy

Strategy

Our plan was to launch a University Library Snapchat account ready for the new term in September 2016 and to pilot using the platform during first week(s) of term to promote the university library and its ongoing events. The key events we wanted to promote during first week(s) were the student-led library tours and Learning Edge technical support sessions, both of which took place in the university library.

We needed to consider content, who would record it and on what device, and how to promote our new account before we went live. We knew what we

wanted to record (tours/drop-in sessions) and wanted the students delivering these sessions to be involved as much as possible, so a small task group was assigned to take photos/videos each day during the first two weeks. This included me, a graduate trainee and our Learning Spaces Co-ordinator. We used our own smartphones (Apple and Android) and/or library tablet (Android).

We wanted the stories to be relaxed in delivery but inviting in content, so we used videos and photographs, often employing filters and editing tools for added interest. We were promoting the tours/drop-ins while also providing a glimpse, before the students even stepped through our doorway, of what they could expect to see if they visited the library during the first week(s). Each day our first story would introduce the students delivering the sessions by providing photographs of them with their first name, in order to break that initial barrier.

In terms of promotion, we relied heavily on our already well-established social media platforms and updated our profile images on Twitter and Facebook to our Snapcode image and posting regularly throughout the first few weeks in September on all platforms to raise awareness of our new account. We used posters in our main foyer, the meeting area for library tours and drop-in sessions, and asked the students delivering the daily sessions to encourage new students to follow our Snapchat stories, and invite them to take part in our posts and create their own stories.
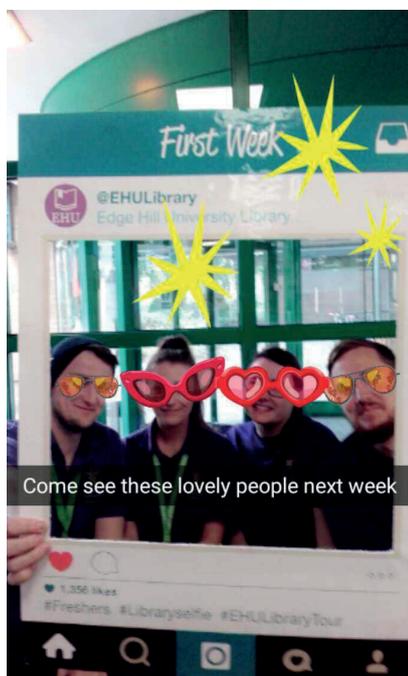
First week tour guides

First week drop in

Evaluation

Evaluating Snapchat is not as easy as evaluating other platforms as it requires a lot of manual interaction, and there is only a short window of opportunity to collect statistics. As soon as a story is posted, a 24-hour countdown begins until the story disappears forever… along with all the data. We posted a collection of photos and short videos every day during first and second weeks of term and each subsequent day we collected as many statistics as possible. There was no way (at the time[4]) to discover which stories were more popular as Snapchat played stories continuously, so if you viewed one it would run through them all.

We recorded the day, date, new friends, total friends, number of stories posted, number of views per story and number of stories screen shot. During first week(s), through student word of mouth and social media promotion, 105 new friends were following our account. We didn't post during the

weekend but surprisingly still gained new friends. Overall we posted 60 stories during first week(s) and had a total of 2811 views, an average 46.9 views per story.

Total Friends	Total Stories Posted	Total Story Views	Average View Per Story	Stories Screen Shot
110	60	2811	46.9	15

After the success of first week(s) promotion we decided to continue using Snapchat to showcase our National Poetry Day promotion. On 6 October 2016 we delivered a poetry walk in celebration of National Poetry Day and we 'snapped' the event as one story. Overall 22 stories were posted (a mixture of photos and videos) with a total of 1246 views, an average of 56.6 per story.

Friends	New Friends	Stories Posted	Stories Views	Average View Per Story	Stories Screen Shot
117	7	22	1246	56.6	0

Future

To date, we have a total of 159 friends, and our intention is to use Snapchat in a similar way for special events/promotions. It is unlikely that we shall lose friends because of inactivity, but we shall monitor this. We have discovered that to use Snapchat for promotional purposes requires more consideration than using other platforms such as tweeting or posting an image on Instagram. We shall continue to plan ahead and use Snapchat for more visual 'live' events rather than posting sporadically, as our other platforms work better for this method of communication.

We shall also consider using Instagram Stories, but most likely alongside Snapchat (you can now upload to both) as we have found Snapchat's editing tools to be far superior to Instagram's – and who doesn't love a dog filter! Now that Facebook owns Instagram, additional filters that are available in Facebook Messenger may gradually be introduced to Instagram. We look forward to seeing any new developments on these platforms as they fight to compete with Snapchat's success.

It has been exciting to start working in a new arena, and as the first UK university library to use Snapchat we took a risk in launching the EHULibrary Snapchat account. Overall, we feel our initial steps into this social media platform have been a success!

Notes

1   Imran Azam is the founder of the company called thisisreel.co, the video storytelling agency that provides brands with social media focused production, training and strategy. See Snapchat-as-a-service. (2016). Available from: http://thisisreel.co/services/snapchat-as-a-service [accessed 28 July 2016]

2   77% of UK Snapchat users are over 18. Titcomb, J. (2017). How can Snapchat lose $515 million and be worth $25 billion? Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/02/03/snap-ipo-can-snapchat-lose-515-million-worth-25-billion/ [accessed: 13 February 2017]

3   We follow other universities and libraries on Snapchat!

4   Snapchat update on 12 October 2016 altered the platform so you can now watch one story at a time, or play them in the sequence you prefer – we have yet to see any affect to our stories/views from this update.