

How Video Can Help Authors Promote Themselves and Their Books

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WHY PRODUCE VIDEO?

If you are going to continue as a “player” in the “writing game,” you should learn to produce video content.

Here’s why.

Viewing video via Internet connection, either on platforms like YouTube or Vimeo, streamed from services like Netflix, or embedded in Websites and blogs, is steadily increasing. (<http://www.statista.com/topics/1137/online-video/>).

People are not merely looking to Internet videos for entertainment. They want *information displayed to them visually, not merely in text*. So they are doing keyword searches on YouTube, not just on search engines such as Google.

High-speed Internet connections for computers, 4G LTE cellular data networks, larger screens and faster processing chips in mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, has made viewing high definition video possible for millions of people.

At the same time, improvements in camera technology and video shooting and editing software has made it feasible for virtually anyone to emulate Steven Spielberg. Entire film festivals are devoted to movies shot on smartphones, and *Searching for Sugar Man*, winner of the 2013 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, was filmed in part using an iPhone.

“SHOOT AND SHARE VIDEO”

Producing the type of high quality, engaging video that we will focus on in today’s program involves more than pointing a camera and hitting the “Record” button. Advance planning and post-filming (known as “post-production” or simply “post” in filmmaking parlance) work are the hallmarks of this type of video, and can involve a great deal of time and effort.

The general public tends to take a more “quick and dirty” approach, creating what I call “Shoot and Share” video that can be recorded using smartphone apps and then shared on social media sites or via e-mail. Authors might employ those apps as well.

Vine (owned by Twitter) lets users create looping, 6-second videos. It will probably be quite a challenge for authors to figure out how to use it as an effective promotional tool. But its one nifty feature, stop motion, might be of use to those who write illustrated children's books. (See "The Beginner's Guide to Vine" - <http://mashable.com/2013/12/11/vine-beginners-guide/>.)

Instagram (owned by Facebook) began as an app for sharing still photos on social media. The ability to create 15-second videos was added later. Instagram videos can be edited to a certain degree, and probably would be a better choice for author promotion than Vine videos, particularly for those who have a substantial following on Facebook.

(See this Social Media Examiner article, "How to Use Instagram Video for Marketing" - <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-use-instagram-video-for-marketing/>.)

LIVE STREAMING VIDEO BROADCASTS

Meerkat (meerkatapp.co) and **Periscope** (www.periscope.tv) are free apps for both Apple and Android mobile devices that let you stream live video to those who follow you on Twitter and in the case of Meerkat, post the video on Facebook.

Both create "in the moment" video that streams live, but can also be saved to your mobile device. Meerkat's new "Library" feature lets you store videos on its servers.

Periscope provides a more direct connection to your Twitter followers than Meerkat.

Meerkat broadcasts can be scheduled in advance, posted to your Facebook business page, and embedded in Websites and blogs.

Authors could consider using these apps when attending or speaking at events or conferences.

Google Hangouts on Air (<http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/onair.html>) allow you to broadcast live from a computer (but not a mobile device) to anyone with an Internet connection, embed the live broadcast on your Website or blog, and have a YouTube video created automatically when the broadcast ends.

Although you can do a "solo" broadcast, a Hangout on Air is ideal for having "guests" on your "show." (To learn how to use this live streaming tool from Google, see "Get Started with Hangouts on Air" - <http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/onair.html>.)

If you frequently participate in or host events, it might be worth your while to investigate premium, paid live streaming video services such as Livestream (<http://livestream.com>) or Ustream (ustream.tv).

AUTHORS WHO WILL BENEFIT MOST FROM VIDEO PROMOTION

All authors, regardless of the nature of their writing, could utilize video as a promotional tool. But these authors will probably benefit the most:

1. Those with a good “on-camera persona.
2. Those with acting or extensive public speaking experience.
3. Those whose are entertaining interviewees.
4. Those who have written or plan to write several books.
5. Those who write “Do-It-Yourself” books.
6. Those whose books lend themselves to “visual presentation” of the content.

TYPES OF VIDEOS AN AUTHOR MIGHT USE FOR PROMOTION

There are several types of videos that authors could utilize for promotion, including:

1. Book trailers (See “Book Trailers and Using Video For Book Marketing” article: <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/2015/03/02/book-trailers/>)
2. Interviews.
3. Book readings.
4. Speaking engagements.
5. Depiction of locations (where “place” is important to your story).
6. “Demo” videos would be ideal for promoting “How-To” books, such as those about home improvement, cooking, or photography.
7. “Teasers” with actors playing scenes from fiction or non-fiction works.

WHERE YOUR VIDEO CAN BE SEEN

YouTube

YouTube should be the place where your videos “begin life.” You should have a YouTube Channel, which, like a TV channel, includes multiple videos that people can watch.

The advantages of having your videos on YouTube are:

1. It is free.
2. It is easy to upload videos to it, even from smartphones and tablets.
3. Everyone knows YouTube is where you can find video content on the Internet.
4. YouTube videos are easy to share on social media sites like Facebook.
5. You can incorporate YouTube videos into Website or blogs.
6. It is easy to include on your YouTube Channel videos from other YouTube Channels that relate to you, your books, or the topics of about which you write.

Vimeo

Vimeo (vimeo.com) is a video hosting platform less well known to the general public than YouTube.

Unlike YouTube, Vimeo is not entirely free. You can get a free “Basic” account, but must sign up for a paid, premium account to obtain some features and functions.

One big advantage of Vimeo is that when someone finishes watching one of your videos, they are prompted to view *only your other videos*. On the other hand, YouTube gives viewers a list of “related videos” *by other filmmakers*, which means they may watch those videos rather than more of yours.

Your Amazon.com Author Page

While you can't produce your own video (such as a book trailer) for *your book's Amazon.com product page*, you can include up to eight videos, none longer than 10 minutes or larger than 500 MB in size, on *your Amazon Central Author Page* (<https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?topicID=200418470>).

Public Access Television

While it is highly unlikely that you would be able to produce programming that will air on national television broadcast and major cable networks, you'll be happy to learn that “public access television” provides an affordable opportunity for you to produce and distribute shows locally and across the U.S.

PEG (Public, Education, Government) community access television programs are carried over cable TV (and sometimes via the Internet).

Some stations are operated by government entities such as cities and counties whose programming may be limited to services that they provide to their community. Others are run by school districts and may carry only programs of interest to their students and teachers.

Other non-profit organizations, which often include “Media Center” in their names, may offer educational programming and cover local government meetings, but also air a wide-range of content produced by members, and teach classes on video/TV production.

Programs that would have an appeal to more than the local community can be distributed nation-wide through PegMedia.org (pegmedia.org). (My “Travel With A Sense of Place” shows have been on about twenty public access TV stations in the U.S.)

If you use a media center’s equipment and facilities, it will probably have “first rights” to air your show. After that, you should retain all rights to the program, including the right to post the show on your YouTube or Vimeo channels, embed the show on Websites or blogs, or even sell the show if it has commercial value.

The programming must be non-commercial in nature, and you probably can’t include phone numbers/Websites/addresses for any business entity mentioned in the show. But in the show’s “credits” you can thank them by name, and they can help underwrite the production expenses for your show, although they can’t pay you to produce it or be the subject of the program.

Usually you must work or live in the station’s service area in order to use its equipment and facilities. (A list of PEG stations in the San Francisco Bay Area and nearby Northern California locations is appended to the end of this document.)

USING VIDEO OTHERS HAVE PRODUCED

If you, your books, or the subject about which you write, has been featured in a video that appears on another YouTube Channel, you can easily add that video to a “Playlist” on your own YouTube Channel.

HIRING OTHERS TO PRODUCE VIDEO

There are several advantages to hiring a professional videographer or video production company to produce your videos rather than doing it yourself:

1. You don't have to buy and learn to use equipment and software.
2. You don't have to take classes to learn how to produce video.
3. You can spend your time doing what you do best (e.g., writing).
4. You will probably get more professional looking results.

But there are potential disadvantages to hiring someone to produce your videos:

1. The film crew and/or studio may not be available when you need them.
2. An editor may not be able finish the video on short notice.
3. You will spend anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand dollars per video, depending on the nature and extent of the project.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PRODUCE YOUR OWN VIDEOS

If you can't obtain video that someone else has already produced, or don't want to hire professionals to create video for you, here is what you will need to be a filmmaker.

Cameras

Although “4K” (Ultrahigh definition) TV sets and cameras are starting to appear on the market, prices remain fairly high, and UHD television programming is relatively limited. (Read more about “4K” on my Website: <http://talestoldfromtheroad.com/2014/10/10/4k-generation-tv-video/>.)

While that might begin to change by the end of 2014 (<http://bit.ly/1SiNyWe>), today most of the best video content available for viewing on TVs, computers, and mobile devices was probably recorded in HD (high definition—either 720p or 1080p resolution). So you should have a camera that is HD capable.

The good news is that if you own a smartphone, a digital point-and-shoot or digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera, it can probably record HD video. And some filmmakers are using tablets, such as the iPad, to shoot video.

If you want to use a separate camcorder instead of your smartphone or digital still camera, you can buy them from camera stores or online vendors at prices ranging from

under \$100 for consumer models to several thousands of dollars for professional-quality gear.

Smartphone Video Applications

The smartphone or tablet you purchased no doubt came with a software application (“app”) that can be used for shooting video. For example, the “Camera” app for iPhones and iPads lets users record video as well as take still photos.

However, the dedicated video app, FiLMiC Pro (<http://www.filmicpro.com/>) for iPhones and iPads, is popular with filmmakers, only costs \$7.99, and has much more functionality than the “native” app for those Apple mobile devices.

Microphones

A maxim of video production is that even if the *visual part* is terrific, no one will watch your video *if the audio is poor*.

While smartphones and digital cameras can record very high quality *video*, their built-in microphones are not ideal for *recording audio simultaneously with video* under all shooting conditions.

For example, if you are filming outdoors, wind blowing across the face of the smartphone or camera microphone can create noise that makes it difficult to hear the audio, such as the voice of a person speaking on-camera.

During editing, unwanted background noise can sometimes be eliminated, or the audio recorded with the video replaced by music or voice-over narration. But it is best if that noise was not recorded at all while the video was being shot.

External microphones can improve sound quality and limit background noise. You can find “wireless” and “wired” models, the latter connecting to a smartphone or camera via a cable and usually being less expensive.

You may be able to buy such microphones at a camera or an electronics store, or a store that sells audio equipment to musicians. Samy’s Cameras (www.samys.com) and Adolph Gasser (<http://www.gassersphoto.com>) both have stores in San Francisco that sell microphones along with other camera equipment. Bananas At Large (bananas.com) has stores in San Rafael and Santa Rosa that carry microphones and audio equipment as well as musical instruments.

Best Buy (bestbuy.com) carries some microphones in its stores, but sells many more from its Website. Apple retail stores and its Website (store.apple.com/us) offer a few microphones for sale.

You can also buy microphones from online retailers such as Amazon.com and B&H Photo (<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/>).

Smartphones and tablets have a different type of microphone/earphone jack than video cameras. If you plan to use a smartphone or tablet for video recording, you'll need to either purchase microphones *specifically designed for those devices* (such as the Røde smartLav+, <http://www.rote.com/microphones/smartlav-plus>) or adapters (sold by kVconnection.com) that allow you to connect conventional microphones to mobile devices.

Supplemental Batteries

Recording video can rapidly draw down battery power on a smartphone or a tablet, so you may wish to buy a supplemental battery, fast battery charger, or a battery case (such as ones made by Mophie, <http://www.mophie.com>) into which your smartphone fits.

“Steadying” Accessories

While cameras, and smartphones in particular, may have “image stabilization” capability, and video editing software can sometimes smooth out shaky video, at times you'll want to shoot with your phone, tablet or camera on a tripod or pistol-grip, or inside a case that has handles that let you hold the smartphone or tablet steady while shooting.

You can buy tripods in most camera stores and places like Best Buy. The camera and video equipment retailers I've mentioned probably sell those other “steadying” devices.

A case called “The Padcaster” (<http://thepadcaster.com/>) is designed to fit around an iPad and hold microphones and lighting gear. Makayama makes a similar product. (<http://www.makayama.com/moviemount.html>). Both attach to tripods.

This story (and accompanying video) on the FiLMiC Website shows the types of accessory equipment available for filming with an iPhone or iPad: <http://www.filmicpro.com/video-gear/creativelive-film-riot/>.

(For tips on what gear to use when recording video with a DSLR, see “Secrets to DSLR HD Video on the Road,” <http://www.gonewiththewynns.com/hd-video-secrets.>)

Video Editing Software

Unless someone else is going to do it for you, you'll often want to edit the video you've shot to cut out bloopers, add sound, music, still photos, and to produce a more professional looking movie.

The bad news is that editing is often more time-consuming than shooting.

The good news is that if you have purchased a Mac laptop or desktop computer within the last few years, it probably came with Apple's consumer-level video editing software, iMovie (<https://www.apple.com/mac/imovie/>) installed on it. And there's even a "lite" version of iMovie available for iPhone and iPad (<https://www.apple.com/ios/imovie/>).

iMovie is relatively easy to learn and use. Although it doesn't have all of the "bells and whistles" of Apple's professional video editing program, Final Cut Pro X (<https://www.apple.com/final-cut-pro/>), it is probably capable of creating video content that will suit the promotional needs of most authors.

If you own a Windows PC, it may have come with a program like Microsoft Movie Maker (<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-live/movie-maker>).

Both Macs and PCs can run Adobe's Premiere Elements (<http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere-elements.html>), the company's consumer-level alternative to its Premiere Pro CC professional video editing program (<http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere.html>).

Video Skills

The bad news is that you probably will have to acquire a new set of skills to produce compelling video content. The good news is that you have what a vocational rehabilitation counselor would call "transferrable skills" that you have developed as a writer.

Video is simply *another medium for storytelling*. You are already an accomplished storyteller, accustomed to doing research, acquiring information, taking photos and notes, conducting interviews, and assembling everything into *a written project*.

Most film projects are based on a "pre-production" plan that can include a written script, outline, list of interview questions, and/or a "shot list" or "storyboards" that tell you what video clips you'll need to record.

Video editing isn't much different than editing a written story. You have to figure out what to include, what to omit, in what order to put together the elements of the story, and its overall length. You will, of course, have to learn how to use the technology for capturing and editing video, unless someone else is going to do that for you.

"Self-help" video shooting and editing books are available from large bookstores, such as Barnes & Noble, online booksellers like Amazon.com, and specialty publishers such as O'Reilly (<http://www.oreilly.com/>).

If you plan to shoot video using an iPhone, you will find Allen Bronstein's recent book, *Make iPhone Movies Everyone Loves* (available in paperback and Kindle e-book versions from Amazon.com), extremely useful.

You may be able to take classes offered through “adult education” programs of high school and community college districts, as well as at “media centers” (such as the Community Media Center of Marin, cmcm.tv) which operate public access television stations.

YouTube has numerous free, on-line tutorials covering video production topics.

So does the online training site, Lynda.com (<http://www.lynda.com>). Most of its videos are available only to those who pay a monthly membership fee or who have free access through a library or other organization to which they belong, although some that cover video production can be viewed free on YouTube.

If you are an accomplished still photographer, what you’ve learned about lighting, exposure and composition, will often apply when you are recording video.

Audio Makes The Movie

Unless you want to make a “silent movie,” you’ll need audio as well as video to convey information and set the “mood” for your film.

The sound used can be:

- Audio recorded simultaneously with the video, such as monologue, dialogue, or ambient background sounds.
- Voice-over narration recorded and added during editing.
- Sound effects.
- Music.

Adding music to your videos can raise copyright issues unless you compose and record the music or hire someone to do so for you. Just because you own a music album or soundtrack doesn’t mean that you have the right to use it in your video project.

But there are several online sources of royalty-free music, such as Incompetech (<http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/>), where you can probably find suitable music for your video project. Sometimes such music is free, some you will have to pay for a license to use it.

(See the online article “Using Copyrighted Music in Videos: When Is It Legal?” for an excellent discussion of the use of copyrighted music and sourcing royalty-free music for your videos: <http://www.reelseo.com/copyrighted-music-in-video/>.)

Sourcing “Visual” Elements

While using your own video or still photos is ideal, sometimes you’ll have to “source it” elsewhere. Fortunately, as with music, there are online sources of royalty-free “visuals.”

Archive.org has many clips and even entire motion pictures that are in the “public domain” and free for you to use.

Conduct an Internet search for “royalty free film” and you’ll find several Websites, such as Dissolve.com, that are willing to license the use of clips for a fee.

Creative Commons is an excellent online source of still photos, many of which you can use for free, even for commercial purposes, if you credit the photographer.

Do You Need “Crew”?

Putting yourself “in the frame” when shooting “selfie” photos or videos with a smartphone has become popular.

With video, you have to decide whether to be the “talent” (seen on-camera) or the camera operator, or both, and whether you need “crew” to help you with the “shoot.”

For example, Rick Steves is the “talent” on his PBS European travel shows, although viewers sometimes see his producer, Simon, dining with him at a restaurant, or a tour guide accompanying him on a stroll through city streets.

Rick’s on-location film crew is small: Usually just one camera operator and the producer. Rick and his crew work collaboratively on revisions to the script during shooting, lugging the gear around, and working out problems that arise on-location. A half-dozen or so people help in the “post-production” of Rick’s TV shows and YouTube videos.

While it’s possible to be the camera operator and the “talent” by using a tripod or a “camera stick” (<http://personalcameracrew.com/>), having two people (one in front of the camera, one behind it) will give you more flexibility when shooting. And for interviews, a two-person crew, with one person doing the filming and the other conducting the interview, will work best.

As with a written story, having someone else serve as your video editor, particularly a person who wasn’t present during filming, provides another set of eyes to evaluate how the “audience” will respond to your video.

But as a practical matter, as you add crew to your project, the logistics of getting everyone together for the shoot, and then doing the editing, becomes more problematic, especially if you are relying on non-professional, unpaid “helpers.”

Filming Location and Permissions

Where your video is filmed may be a key element in its success or failure as a means of visually conveying a message or story.

Is the artificial or natural light appropriate and adequate? (See “How to Improve Your Photos and Videos with Affordable Lighting” - <http://lifehacker.com/how-to-improve-your-photos-and-videos-with-affordable-l-1715963400>).

Will background noise from wind, traffic, mechanical equipment, or people not involved in the film create a distraction, or make the audio that you are recording simultaneously with the video difficult or impossible to hear?

Do you need the use of a studio to deal with those issues and, if there is a cost (which will likely be the case unless you have the use of a public access television station’s studio), can you afford it?

Do you have permission, preferably in writing, to film at the location?

Places such as restaurants, shopping malls and stores that are “open to the public” are not “public places” where you are free to film without the consent of the private property owner.

You may need to pay for a permit to film on publicly owned property, such as parks, especially if your film project has a commercial purpose. (See my article, “The Right to Bear Cameras” - <http://talestoldfromtheroad.com/2014/10/08/bear-cameras/>).

Using tripods, portable lighting, and filming with a crew are likely to trigger the need for such a permit. And many public and private locations now ban the use of “selfie sticks” for photography and videography.

Museums often limit taking of both still photos and video, especially of works on loan from other museums. A written release is a good idea if you are filming privately owned personal property, such as works of art. There may even be restrictions on filming art, such as sculptures, on public property.

It is preferable to have a written “model release” from anyone who can be identified in your film. As an alternative, you can have them give their permission on-camera at the time of filming. Parents or guardians must grant permission for you to film minor children.

(See “Ask a Lawyer: Filming in A Public Place” - <https://www.rocketlawyer.com/blog/ask-a-lawyer-filming-in-a-public-space-97747> and “Why Do You Need Release Forms” - <http://www.videomaker.com/article/15398-why-do-you-need-release-forms>.)

The “KISS” Principle

The viability of a proposed film project depends on its feasibility. And in turn, the feasibility of a film project is based on the availability of time, money, resources, and skills needed to bring the project to fruition.

At the outset of your “career in cinema,” focus on producing videos that involve limited time, effort and money. For example, it is possible to use *only still photos* when making a “movie.” (See this playlist of 3-minute-plus videos on my YouTube Channel: <http://bit.ly/1v2OuoN>.)

Shorter video projects are not only less time consuming to film and edit, their length (often in the 1-5 minute range) makes them easy to watch online, particularly on mobile devices.

And as I learned at last year’s Mill Valley Film Festival, documentary filmmakers are discovering that such “shorts” may be more effective projects than the traditional “long form” films that they have made in the past.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Consumption of video from online sources is rapidly increasing. To stay competitive as a 21st century writer, you should be able to produce video content.

Ten years ago, it would have been expensive and difficult for you to produce and distribute videos. Today, especially if you “start small,” it is very affordable and relatively easy.

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC ACCESS TV STATIONS/MEDIA CENTERSNorth Bay

- Community Media Center of Marin, San Rafael – cmcm.tv
- Petaluma Community Access - <http://pca.tv/>
- CMedia, Community Media Center for the North Bay, Santa Rosa - <http://cmedralab.org/>
- Novato Public Access TV - <http://www.npat.org/>
- Napa Valley TV - <http://www.napavalleytv.org/>

East Bay

- Contra Costa Community Media Center - <http://www.contracostamedia.com/>
- Berkeley Community Media - <https://www.bcmtv.org/>

San Francisco South

- Bay Area Video Coalition, San Francisco - <http://www.bavc.org/membership>)
- Pacifica Community Television - <http://pacificcoast.tv/page/training>
- Mid-Peninsula Media Center, Palo Alto - <http://midpenmedia.org/make-tv/eligibility/>
- Silicon Valley Community Media - <http://www.kmvt15.org/>

San Jose South

- CreaTV, San Jose - <http://www.creatvsj.org/>
- Community Media Access Partnership, Gilroy - <http://cmaptv.org/>
- Media Access Coalition of Central California, Morgan Hill - <http://mhat.tv/>
- Access Monterey Peninsula - <https://sites.google.com/site/ampmediacenter/>

East of SF Bay Area

- Vacaville Community Access TV - <http://www.vctaccess27.org/index.html>
- Davis Media - <http://davismedia.org/>
- Woodland Access Visual Enterprises, WaveTV, Woodland - <http://www.wavetv.org/>

Here's a more extensive list of California PEG stations:

<https://dhsrmultimedia.wordpress.com/californias-public-access-tv-station-list/>