Guerrilla Video: Adjudicating the Credible and the Cool

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Because video on the web has spread almost virally, video crafted out of an amateur aesthetic has contributed to a disruption of professional communication economies as it prompts us to ask: Can we use digital video to make work-related communication cool? Professional writing pedagogies are beginning to respond to new student expectations about what and how video can/should represent them, but students' amateur aesthetics sometimes are at odds with professional approaches in ways that lead the students to be thought "amateurs." Thus, students need to know when and how to be credible or cool. This article advocates the rhetoric of guerrilla video, which promotes a rhetorically-based choice of professional or amateur video aesthetics. To make sound choices, we argue, video communicators need to understand professional techniques and conventions, know how to use garage video techniques to approximate that professional video grammar, and know how to adapt an amateur video aesthetic. These processes will assist them in building a sense of which choices are appropriate, and when—or, in adjudicating among the credible and the cool.

A 2009 issue of *Business Week* related how CEO James Schiro of Zurich Financial Services [1] set out on a global trip to reassure his employees that their company is sound. Schiro was armed with a Flip camcorder and he uploaded his talks to YouTube. Schiro said he used video because "A leader has to be the catalyst of change, has to champion it passionately, and epitomize it personally." (Gallo, 2009) After labeling the activity as a move to "use cheap videos," Carmine Gallo relates Schiro's communication process in this way: after he visits a site, he uploads one- or two-minute updates onto YouTube about his reaction to the site meeting. Schiro contends that this works better than email because it gives a differentsense of leadership and because people would rather watch a video than read an email. Gallo concludes that Schiro believes YouTube video "is just as powerful, if not more so, because it telegraphs informality and immediacy. It 'humanizes' people and can provide a deeper level of emotional engagement than posting a piece of text." The article implies that "cool" is important (again), though the relate line about "cheap videos" hedges Gallo's bets. If an insurance/finance company CEO is embracing

YouTube in ways that impact internal corporate communications as well as corporate branding to customers, then "amateur" digital video is upsetting normal communication economies. More interesting to us, it signals that Mr. Schiro may have found the "cool," thus making amateur aesthetic a more vital consideration when we build video communications intended for corporate uses.

Education, too, has been alert to the potential/growing impact of digital video. In 2008, EDUCAUSE's *Horizon Report* named "grassroots video"[2] its key emerging technology for instructional technology, noting that "Virtually anyone can capture, edit, and share short video clips, using inexpensive equipment (such as a cell phone) and free or nearly free software," and "What used to be difficult and expensive, and often required special servers and content distribution networks, now has become something anyone can do easily for almost nothing." (New Media Consortium and EDUCAUSE, 2008, para 1)

What might these developments mean for professional communication and ultimately for professional writing pedagogy, we ask? Our answer—Guerrilla Video [3]—is interested in how video [and other communication technologies] is [or might be] incorporated into professional writing pedagogies. Interested, as well, in the paradox posed by promoting amateur aesthetics for professional writing courses, we consider how students can both conform to the "ugly" aesthetics celebrated by social media venues (so that their videos gain a wide and young audience) *and* demonstrate a more traditional (and usually credible) aesthetic of professionalism that is often thought to be antithetical to the ugly. Can they forge new laws of cool that use garage video tools to build appropriately professional identities for themselves? And further, how might this "new" writing technology/tool adjust genres and expectations for all professional communication and its instruction?[4] Thus, this discussion airs issues surrounding the integration of a video production assignment into professional writing pedagogy and offers our take on how "guerrilla video" can be founded on our rhetorical skills. At this point video is a wild and woolly medium. Rhetoric, we argue, can be used to tame the wild [video] west.

Figure 1: James Schiro's Opening Road Show Broadcast

Scene 1 [background]: A Crowded Curriculum and New Social Media

There's ample evidence [5] that professional writing courses and programs pursue a calling to imbue professional communication with humanistic values while they prepare professional communicators for employment (and thus look to industry for information about the genres and technologies needed to make their students employable) amidst a professional job market in ruins and an increasingly crowded curriculum.

It is important, all recognize, to develop means for teaching writing technologies/tools that are needed for the workplace. And professional writing teachers and programs aim to stay ahead of the technological curve. Laura Gurak and Ann Hill Duin (2004), for example, offer that strategic partnering with industry can deliver to students the up-to-date instruction they need to keep abreast of technological developments. But, Allen and Benninghoff's 2004 survey found little consensus among programs about how to handle literacy instruction for technology tools. Few

programs reported that they strategically deployed such instruction across their curricula, relying more on individual instruction (teachers' office hours, unsupervised individual work, or peer-to-peer efforts). Further, while programs have added courses in advanced technologies considered important to employability, even that move can be argued to be reactive (and thus behind the curve); we noted that only two had courses in video/audio production when the survey was completed in 2003 (the pre-YouTube era).

Social media [6] is an important newcomer to the professional communication technologies mix. Acknowledged as a phenomenon of the young, the use of social media has recently become much more widespread, with 47% of adult Internet users in 2009 reporting that they have a profile on a social media site (Lenhart et al, 2010), a jump from 35% reported in 2008 (Lenhart, 2009). This rapid growth in the adult sector makes social media more comprehensive in its coverage (and more likely to be included in workplace writing assignments). But like the youth before them, Pew Data Tracking Surveys (see Rainie, 2008) find that adults are more like to use social media sites for personal (rather than professional) uses, for staying connected to people they already know (rather than for networking), and are likely to be privacy conscious. So, in what way (if any) might professional writing pedagogy need to respond to the video in social media? Should teachers expect that all their students are young, so therefore they will already be conversant in the uses of social media for communication? Should we expect that social media is likely to reshape workplace communication in some ways, and therefore at least examine how it operates? Should it be taught? And, how does this growth of social media relate to the Horizon Report's prediction that grassroots video is [should be] exploding in the classroom?

In addition to these curricular questions, or perhaps prior to them, it makes sense to ponder what makes video so attractive in this age of social media. One simple answer is: we can finally do it. Early on in the World Wide Web, only images of modest resolution could be displayed online. But today the Internet can stream video reasonably well, and file compression programs have improved its ability to squeeze video through the pipes of the Internet. So it surprises us little that since YouTube was launched in 2005, the growth of online video viewing [and posting] has been remarkable.[7] Hulu, too, is growing rapidly; since Hulu distributes television and movies, this site's skyrocketing popularity is an expression of television-style consumption rather than grassroots media. Such dual popularity means both traditional and user-produced videos are thriving. YouTube delivers giddiness over the prospect of actually making/watching a consumer produced approximation of television. In a real sense, the allure of video is tied to our desires to make/star in movies, and the Internet's gift of video to us extends the coolness of the Internet

Of course, there are reasons other than "we can do it" or "it's television" that explain the importance of video to social media. Gregory Ulmer offers two important ones: the merger of text and image in current sensibilities and entertainment. In *Electronic monuments* (2005), a work primarily about teaching writing in the contemporary culture, Ulmer argues that we are already in the technological age of electracy, a time when the older institutions of knowing--the school and the library--are giving way to the emerging institution for this digital media culture, entertainment. Just as literacy was the technology traded on in the modern period of Western culture and selfhood the goal of its individual identity, Ulmer argues that this new age of electracy merges text and image digitally, makes the Internet the place of instruction, and aims "to do for the community as a whole what literacy did for individuals within the community." (xxvi) Even, or maybe especially, news becomes filtered through this institution of entertainment.

Video has always been linked with entertainment, but Ulmer's insistence that entertainment is becoming the institution connected with the culture's learning suggests that in this social media age video has a vital role to play in education. Henry Jenkins agrees, as he has urged educators to focus on the participatory dimensions of social media in *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture*, and grassroots video counts as an educating activity that promotes participation as he defines it. Indeed, his participatory culture has low barriers to *artistic* expression and civic engagement, strong support for sharing creations with others, mentorship, members who are connected with others and expect their contributions to matter to others. (5-6) Video is important media for education in participatory cultures, and as wide dissemination of video has become more viable, he and his former colleagues at MIT have focused on education that leverages participation through technology.

So, whether or not Ulmer's entertainment explanation holds, most accept that social media is visually saturated and keen to operate via group participation. So, the widespread distribution of videos afforded us by the Internet makes space for our students to reach new audiences beyond the classroom; further, the videos themselves invite collaborative production and practice the crafting of complex social media.

It quickly becomes understandable why we might expect professional writing programs to respond slowly to the amateur video phenomenon. They aim to prepare skilled workplace writers

with humanistic values, have already crowded curricula, and lack of a consensus on how technology/tools should be taught, so these programs use technology the workplaces require of writers. Further, alert to preparing students who present polished, professional identities, and programs may well dismiss amateur video as an "unprofessional" communication activity that falls outside the scope of professional communication. Of course, this view may inhibit their attempts to move ahead of the technological curve, but it is a reasonable position in the face of crowded curricula, and ever increasing numbers of communication technology tools.

Cut to: Reactions of Professional Writing Teachers

[music crescendos, then silence]
[pan among a series of spotlighted faces in on a dark stage]

face 1: We know writing, not video.
face 2: We teach writing, not video.
face 3: My students know more about this than I do, and they already think I'm not cool.
narrator [off camera]: But they know more than they think.
face 4: My students speak excitedly about videos they uploaded.
face 5: I wandered around on YouTube a bit and found an interesting **grassroots video** assignment by Beth Ritter-Guth about feral cats [8].

Figure 3: Beth Ritter-Guth's Animoto Model for the "Feral Cat Project" Assignment in her Technical Writing Class at Lehigh Carbon Community College in 2008

[music starts slowly]
face 4: My searches turned up tapings of **oral presentations** and, of course, **instructions**. [9]
face 6: I was bombarded by **video resumes**. . . though it was sometimes hard to tell if they are serious or spoofs.
face 5: I actually had to "scour" the site for videos that were clearly professional writing projects. [10]
[music builds slowly]
narrator [off camera]: And their commitment to engaging students banks the embers of their curiosity.

Cut to [Procedural aside]

As the discussion proceeds we will discuss video aesthetics and grammars and then apply that discussion to the **video resume** as an assignment for professional writing classes. We focus on the video resume as a way to manage a potentially vast discussion about video in professional writing because it delivers a short form (and is do-able without turning over one's class to video),

has clearly persuasive intent, usually speaks to complex audiences, can highlight choices between professional and amateur grammars/aesthetics of both credibility and cool, and above all carries obvious importance to often our job-panicked students. To facilitate that assignment, we end this discussion by touring a PowerPoint presentation. This presentation can be used to demonstrate video aesthetics in the context of video resumes found on YouTube and, in turn, to provide good and flawed models for video resumes.

Scene 2: Professional and Amateur -- The Invisible and the Ugly

When we use video in pursuit of the credible and the cool, it's useful to begin with a continuum of roles from professional to amateur.[11] Before technology advances in equipment, software, and distribution made garage-level video available to many, video and film were the purview of professionals who spent years learning the intricacies of film/video-making and substantial sums on equipment, personnel, and even film stock (see Fadde and Sullivan, 2009, for a discussion of pre-consumer video). Film, video, and television had up to a century of controlling the making of moving pictures, and they built powerful grammars of film/video. Recently, in contrast to the long professional tradition, social media video producers have not only entered the video fray as amateurs but also have developed amateur aesthetic that stands in contrast with professional conventions, techniques and conventions.

The resulting tensions between those who consider themselves professional and those who consider themselves amateur videographers include decided differences about: production techniques, aesthetics, and rhetoric. Whether the makers of moving pictures call themselves feature filmmakers, INDIE filmmakers, industrial video makers, reality televisioners, animators or animes, documentarians, viddeobloggers, vidders. DIY media, YouTubers, and so on, they typically align themselves along the continuum between the professional tradition and the amateur movement.
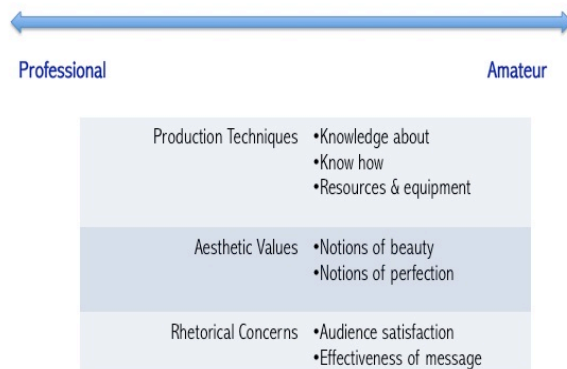
Discussion in the field focuses on the new and disruptive aspects of grassroots video and video in social media, which are indeed coming over the horizon in a wave. However, we don't want to lose track of the power generated by the rapid expansion of video distribution opportunities/capabilities and the corresponding diminished gatekeeping by video professionals. The social implications are great--video for the people--but the implications for business communications are also substantial. Like PowerPoint and Desktop Publishing, business and professional communicators increasingly have the opportunity--and ultimately, the responsibility--of producing for themselves corporate media communications that were formerly the sole province of professional media producers.

Outside of those writing teachers who have also taught film studies, however, the aesthetic conventions and production techniques of professional film and video production have not been part of the writing teachers' tool kit. Obviously, a full treatment of the aesthetics and techniques of film and video production is well beyond the scope of professional writing. However, we offer a

brief discussion of the film and video production traditions, and later expand on specific elements as they emerge in the video resume assignment.

Cutaway 1: Professional Film/Video Production Aesthetics

Since professional writing classes have "professional" in their titles, one potential response to the explosion of video on the web (and the *Horizon report*'s assumption that grassroots video is now being incorporated into the classrooms), is to learn and teach professional production aesthetics. But, of course, that is not as easy to do as it is to say. Professional production aesthetics typically are found in discussions of film, of television, and of industrial, corporate and educational video. To be a video/film producer in any of these areas, though some of their techniques interpenetrate the others, requires years of study and/or practice to master, and thus it is unrealistic to think that professional writing classes might cover the art of film/video production in part of one course

Consider how the American Film Institute's *Lights, camera, education!* frames the various aspects of filmmaking to youth. As a film approach often does, it makes advancement of the story the arbiter of decisions. It addresses production quality directly, for example, in the segment "Making a good movie," as Sean Astin [Figure 4]

Figure 4: Sean Astin narrating "Making a mood Movie" for American Film Institute

poses the question "How do I create believable characters, locations and situations that meet the needs of my story?" and then answers, "Well, as is the case with most questions in the film industry, there's a technical answer and an artistic answer." (AFI, n.d.) The view taught to fledgling filmmakers in this educational series is that you have technical tools and artistic choices. Later in this clip Stephen Lighthill voices the first point: "The first thing you have to think about when you're a beginning filmmaker is that everything in the frame is assumed by the audience as something you put there . . . and has meaning. . . So everything. . . should be done after you've thought about it." Thus, the segment discusses the camera as an instrument, as the foundation for the quality of the movie, and then discusses three-point lighting, camera placement, camera movement, rule-of-thirds shot composition, art direction, editing, and communicating to actors why characters are doing what they do. They admonish filmmakers not to try tricks they haven't mastered (and thereby might execute amateurishly)and not to lose sight of the story. Later, in "AFI learn: Sound tips" Xander Anders

Figure 5: Xander Anders narrating "AFI learn: Sound tips" for American Film Institute

tells fledgling filmmakers they need to use external microphones that they keep out of the shot or to cozy up to the actor; they need to pay attention to ambient sound added by the setting of the shoot (e.g. a busy street), trying to get consistent background sound to help with edits, turning off electronics (to get rid of low‑level hum), and using headphones to monitor the sound that is being recorded. These video segments, then, progress through various steps in assembling a film. One of the comments made by Stephen Lighthill resonates with the value system being taught. "You don't want to be obvious but you also want to lead the person who's looking at the image to the part of the image that's important to you," he tells us. Such is the way of professional production. All its "tricks" are used to achieve the emotionally powerful story, but to achieve it in a seamless, invisible way. Professional production aesthetics, then, use its technology and skill to hide its maneuvers from the audience and deliver to them a seemingly "natural," thoroughly credible story.

Cutaway 2:Aesthetic of the Ugly

Ugly aesthetics are quickly evolving as an amateur video aesthetic that counters professional video/film aesthetics. Michael Newman (2008) interrogates Ze Frank's video blog *The show* to assert that v‑blog productions have a new amateur aesthetic that fits their essentially interstitial form of viewing. This aesthetic is molded by the manner of its consumption as much as it is by the amateur stance taken by the productions' makers. Because those viewing these videos are doing so in a liminal state between work and leisure, they more likely adopt the pull attitudes of Internet browsing than the traditional push consumption of the film medium. Thus, these videos morph away from the standards of film: they have to be short and attention grabbing products that can compete with the other windows of activity open on a computer screen.

The show [Figure 6], a web‑delivered video program produced by Ze Frank every weekday for a year starting in 2006, presents as an amateur video (as opposed to a studio or corporate film), that has been produced on limited equipment by a self‑educated movie maker; it trades on the sense that "Amateurism is an ideal form for personal expression because it brings a sense of raw immediacy and unfiltered honesty." (para 21)

Figure 6: Ze Frank, on the July 14, 2006 edition of *The show*, demonstrates an extreme closeup

Newman extrapolates from Ze Frank's comments and concludes that:

> Using consumer-grade production apparatus adds value to Frank's videoblog because it suggests that Ze is just like us. Rather than a purveyor of traditional, professional mass culture, he is part of our community. A technological and economic constraint, having limited means, is turned into an aesthetic advantage in The Show and many videos like it. [para 22]

Ze Frank promoted "ugly aesthetic" directly by running an "Ugly MySpace Contest" in July 2006, putting it this way:

> In MySpace millions of people have opted out of premade templates that 'work' in exchange for ugly. Ugly when compared to pre-existing notions of taste is a bummer. But ugly as a representation of mass experimentation and learning is pretty damned cool. Regardless of what you might think, the actions you take to make your MySpace page ugly are pretty sophisticated. Over time as consumer created media engulfs the other kind, it's possible that completely new norms develop around the notions of talent and artistic ability. Happy Ugly. (July 14, 2006)

His ugly aesthetic is not an anti-aesthetic, claims Newman, but a counter-aesthetic that substitutes amateur aesthetics for professional (read major motion picture here, as Newman is a film theorist) ones. Interestingly, it is probably in the area of format that the amateur video first (and perhaps most extensively) takes hold. It tends to mash up the forms of short format television--a segment of a newscast, an interview, a game show round, a segment of a sports show, a cartoon, a story of advertisement-length, and so forth. Episodic in nature, it uses a labeling strategy for the beginning and ending of each episode. Frank's *The show* heralds a "shift in taste from an assumption of professionalism as the norm and standard of quality to a position that amateurism has equal or even greater value." [para 25]

Scene 3: Guerrilla Video Strategy and Aesthetic

> "To improve the quality of you video, borrow techniques from the pros, but use prosumer gear that's not as expensive … and doesn't require such a steep learning curve to master." (Bourne with Burstein, 2009, pg. 5)

A hybrid--or, we contend, a rhetorical--approach to digital video, guerrilla video values both professional production values and amateur production aesthetics at the same time as it operates in a milieu of grassroots or garage (home made) video. Guerrilla video respects the grammar of professional video production--i.e., its aims to produce an invisible or "natural" look to viewers by conforming to the video moves they expect as lifelong viewers of television and films. Simultaneously, it is aware of the limitations of grassroots and garage video producers in dealing with amateur talent, consumer camcorders, limited accessory equipment, and limited videography and editing skills. It is aware, too, of how the ugly aesthetic promoted by amateur video productions operates to counter (and make visible) the maneuvers of professional production, and it is not above using those techniques. Guerrilla video, then, is aware of the forms and productions of both groups, and it aims to use each aesthetic when it is rhetorically

astute to do so.

Step 1: Locate Professional Aesthetics that garage equipment can approximate.

Whether consciously or not, almost everybody in modern society perceives the *grammar* of professional video production—much of it evolved from movie and documentary filmmaking. We know that a dissolve means time has passed. We know that a hand-held point-of-view shot means trouble for somebody. A video framing that places the subject of primary interest in the middle of the frame doesn't feel "right" to us, even if we have never heard of the Rule-of-Thirds. Our eyes are trained to *not* see edits that follow conventional rules, such as cutting on the action and covering edits with cut-away shots.

Like spoken grammar, using the video rules properly doesn't draw the viewers' attention or leave viewers impressed with the video production. The craft of professional video production is to be invisible, while at the same time directing the viewers' understanding and influencing the viewers' beliefs. Following the rules provides a level of credibility as well as invisibility. Grassroots and garage video producers who know the rules and can at least approximate the desired effects within their limitations can tap into the audiences' body of shared interpretation. Some of the techniques of professional production that can be approximated as guerrilla video by grassroots producers include:

- **Composition**. Storyboards, treatment outlines, scripts, and shot lists help a producer make sure to collect the necessary video footage and other media elements, such as photographs. Grassroots video often involves documentary-style composition primarily in the editing and post-production stages.
- **Field or Set Locations**. Guerrilla video almost always involves shooting in "real world" settings, and a producer needs to take control of the setting in order to make it work for the video. The key is to know how much intrusion on a natural setting, such as a conference presentation, can be made in the pursuit of making a good video.
- **Audio**. Voices of speakers must be clear and have presence. In movies, microphones must not be seen. In documentaries or news formats, an interviewer may use a visible microphone. A wireless, lavaliere (tie-clasp) microphone is a must for guerrilla video production.
- **Lighting**. Professional three-point lighting (key, fill, back) may not be achievable, but a grassroots or garage video producer can arrange the subjects to take advantage of existing light sources and consider adding one video light on a stand.
- **Shot Framing**. Notably the Rule-of-Thirds, which is based in western architecture, art, and photography. If lines are mentally drawn over the video image in Tic-Tac-Toe fashion, then the points of greatest interest should be placed along the lines or, optimally, at the intersection of lines—and not in the center of the screen.
- **Camera Movement**. A stationary camera is typically set on a tripod. Moving the camera from side-to-side (dolly) and in-and-out (truck) is preferable to zooming the lens.
- **Editing**. Conventional video editing involves representing a scene using a standard shot sequence: Establishing Shot followed by Medium Shots and then Close Up Shots to pull a viewer into the scene. Video-over-audio (B-Roll) editing is used to cover edit points and to illustrate comments by an on-screen speaker.
- **Post-production**. Titles, graphics identifying speakers, theme music, narration, and transitions are added during the editing process, in part to establish a video identify. These basic editing and post-production can be created in free and low-cost video editing programs.

Using available video equipment and technical expertise to approximate professional video production aesthetics is a key aspect of guerrilla video--"making do" opportunistically. This aspect in commonly expressed in terms of what not to do in order to avoid an amateurish looking video, such as, "Don't frame a subject with a plant growing out of his head" (Grabowicz, Seidler, & Reynolds, 2007). Grassroots video often works within this goal of producing credible videos by not violating traditional video aesthetics.

Step 2: Learn the Amateur Aesthetics used to rebel against professional aesthetics.

The other aspect of guerrilla video is represented by amateur video producers who both reject professional rules and evolve their own set of aesthetic rules. Social media video (e.g., podcasts and video blogs) value individuality and authenticity--which may be demonstrated in part by production that breaks the conventional rules. Ironically, the amateur video approach offers more opportunities to develop a unique style because breaking rules is more noticeable than following rules that are intended to be invisible. James Schiro certainly created much more individual identity by adopting an amateur video blogging approach than he would have by using a professional video approach. The mis-match between the establishment power of a CEO and blog aesthetics makes for an interesting, if unconventional, format.

Emerging amateur video aesthetics represent an alternative set of rules and grammar, rather than "no rules" or "no format" approaches. The new aesthetics evolve, in part, to either embrace or to overcome the limitations of producing video programs with garage-level equipment and technical ability. Examples are the "in your face" approach of much amateur video programs distributed on YouTube and other social media video sharing sites. By recording with a camcorder that is held within two or three feet of the subject, who is often the amateur video producer, the internal microphone of the camcorder is close enough to pick up adequate sound. In addition, a hand-held camcorder that is close to the subject does not "shake" as noticeably as a long shot of a stationary subject that is recorded without a tripod. A video recording that is distant, shaky, and difficult to hear is simply amateurish—not a representation of amateur video aesthetics. Indeed, amateur aesthetic includes extreme close-ups that violate the personal space of subject and viewer alike.

The differences between professional, amateur, and amateurish video can also be seen in the handling of jump cuts. As a result of editing out footage in post-production or pausing the camcorder during shooting, a jump cut occurs when video of the same subject resumes without changing the angle of the camcorder in relation to the subject. The background remains the same while the subject appears to "jump" to a slightly different position. Professional video aesthetics require all jump cuts to be obscured. In an interview, the jump cut may be covered by a cut-away shot such as the interviewer nodding in agreement or a wide shot showing interviewer and subject. Alternatively, separate video footage or still photographs that illustrate what the subject is talking about can be cut in as B-Roll while the audio from the interview (A-Roll) continues underneath. Another alternative is to keep the subject in the frame but change the angle of the shot. Millerson (1968) notes that a change in angle of at least 20 but no more than 60 degrees is optimal for disguising a jump cut.

Amateurish video is marked by an apparent unawareness of jump cuts. Amateur video production aesthetics, on the other hand, embrace jump cuts. Indeed, many video blogs and other amateur video productions appear to exaggerate jump cuts and use them as a device to add pacing and excitement to "talking head" shots. A benefit of the evolving alternative aesthetic of amateur video to include short segments of video without disguising jump cuts means that amateur producers can deliver their on-camera lines in short, un-scripted chunks and spend less time editing. The amateur video approach of revealing jump cuts also represents a rhetorical stance of transparency, in contrast to the invisible but highly manipulative professional approach —as embodied in CBS television's long-running, award-winning, and ratings grabbing interview program *60 minutes*.

Step 3: Make Choices based on the rhetorical situation and the communication aims.

The guerrilla video approach that we advocate is based on understanding professional and amateur video aesthetics and on being able to apply either, both, or something in between in the cause of effectively communicating a message to an audience—that is, based on rhetorical decisions. In the video resume assignment that we outline next, the differences between professional, amateur, amateurish, and guerrilla video are further revealed. While the tasks of first analyzing video resumes and then producing a video resume are obviously extensions of the types of resume assignments that are common in professional writing courses, we hope that the assignment leads to consideration of larger issues related to rhetorically sound use of video in professional contexts.

Scene 4 [Assignment]: Analysis and Production of Video Resumes

Analysis:

Students should first use the Internet, or other sources, to investigate the phenomenon of *video resumes* in their majors. Searching for video resumes on YouTube as well as on dedicated websites such as ResumeTube.com reveals a wide variety of approaches to the seemingly simple task of presenting oneself on video to a potential employer.[12] Our experience is that students will quickly get into "I can top that" mode, sharing the good, the bad, and the ugly video resumes as they search.

As support for this analytic phase of the assignment we include a PowerPoint slide set that teachers can use to support discussion of the video production aesthetics revealed in typical video resumes.[13] You may want to select one or two video resumes to view, checking the links and having ready alternatives if they are no longer available.

We recommend that students be assigned to profile a video resume, either as a classroom

presentation or on a class website or content management system (such as Blackboard). The discussion of the examples in the slide set should provide students with criteria to categorize and evaluate the video resumes that they profile. You probably want to steer students away from video resumes that are essentially demo tapes for media professionals, as well as away from the video resume "spoofs" and "take offs" that abound on YouTube (some of which are very funny). Since students will ultimately have to make their own video resumes, they are well served by finding websites where professionals in their areas post video resumes and profiling video resumes from their particular disciplines/professions. Keep in mind that a good example to profile is not necessarily a good video resume. Indeed, it is usually easier to point out things that are wrong with an example.

With a variety of video resume formats profiled by fellow students in addition to their own searches, students should begin to develop both criteria for good video resumes and also ideas for how to present themselves in a video resume format. While not wanting to throw a bucket of cold water on their bubbling creativity, this is the perfect time to lead students in analyzing the purpose and audience for their video resumes. Who is the primary audience? Is there a secondary audience? What is the purpose of the video resume? What action do they want viewers to take? How does the poster of the video resume want to be perceived? Competent? Confident? Comfortable? Likable? Driven? Media savvy? After students have decided how they want to be perceived by a particular audience, then they can consider the video production format that is most likely to have the intended effect.

Production:

The assignment follows a four-step model for developing video-based writing projects: Ideate, locate, evaluate, and integrate (Fadde & Sullivan, 2009). Hopefully, we have provided a good idea of why a video resume project is worth implementing. In the accompanying PowerPoint slide set, we provide guidance in locating and evaluating video resumes. The video resume project is intended to extend established professional writing goals and projects so that it integrates into your course schedule and syllabus. It is certainly possible to conduct a video resume project that ends with finding and analyzing examples. However, we expect that writing students will be anxious to show what they can do in producing video resumes for themselves or their classmates. Depending on the number of students and the availability of video camcorders and computers, you can have students work as individuals, in pairs, or in small groups. Video production, by nature, involves a number of roles including producer, director, on camera talent, and videographer. Whether by a group or by an individual, all of these production roles must ultimately be filled. We recommend producing video resumes in small groups that can take advantage of students' existing skills and experience with video camcorders and with software packages such as PowerPoint and Photoshop in addition to video editing programs such as iMovie or Windows Movie Maker.

Your college or university may have instructional technology or information technology personnel who are ready and willing to conduct in-class workshops or project consulting to students. Alternatively, some of the students are likely to have fairly advanced skills to share. But the key aspect of the video resume format is that it can be executed quite successfully with a single camcorder and limited production technique and time. Guerrilla video means making the most of whatever time, talent, and equipment you have.

Finished video resumes can then be debuted at an in-class showcase, and/or posted to a CMS or to YouTube or ResumeTube (if you have some imminent job searchers in class) or on TeacherTube if you want to keep your students' projects in a more controlled-access video environment. We believe that your students will learn a lot about the relationships of aesthetics and rhetoric—both in and beyond the realm of video. They will develop confidence and criteria for appropriately using video, and potentially other aspects of social media, in their professional as well as personal lives. We also think that such an assignment will diminish the number of students who post problematic video resumes to the Web.

[Sidebar] Comments on Video Resume PowerPoint Slide Set

We offer comments below to assist you in using the PowerPoint slide set [14] to teach the aesthetic and rhetorical aspects of professional, amateur, amateurish, and guerrilla video production aesthetics and rhetoric to your students.

Slide One

A video resume is a video production that involves a camcorder (consumer grade shown), a setting (could be home or office), and content to be delivered. The production can be done by an individual, or with the help of a friend ("crew"), or can be contracted to a semi-professional video producer who can be expected to bring extra expertise and equipment—especially mics and lights. Whichever way that it is produced, the *producer* (usually the person on the video resume) must have a vision and communicate it clearly. Producing a video doesn't necessarily, or even optimally, mean running the camcorder. It does mean running the show.

Slide Two

The top images depict a typical video resume as it is shot and as it appears to a potential employer. The images are from a "how to make a video resume" video posted on YouTube by VAULT.com, a company that hosts video resumes. The shot of the Vault spokesperson is not from a video resume—but it should be. The shot represents almost perfect web video. The speaker is framed according to the Rule-of-Thirds. She has a lavalier (tie-clasp) microphone on, with the cord tucked into her blouse. She is lit by a stronger light, called a *key* light, that is elevated on her left side (screen right). A weaker *fill* light is positioned up and to her right side. You can tell where the lights are placed by the shadows under the subject's chin. She is positioned to look comfortable--with a bit of tilt to her shoulders (as a professional photographer would likely use), avoiding the straight-on stare common to web video. The computer screen and keyboard represent a simplified office set. Although professional aesthetics would suggest that the set needs to be "dressed" more and the subject pulled away from the wall, it is just right for the small-window world of web video. The computer screen is LCD rather than CRT, so it doesn't have the computer-on-video flickering look and could actually be used to display contact information, photos, or PowerPoint slides in a video resume. Now that would be guerrilla video at its best.

Although the spokesperson is not professional, she speaks with easy pacing and naturally because she only needs to talk for about 20 seconds in each clip. Therefore, she doesn't need to memorize text or read a teleprompter. While the screen shot of the spokesperson shows a standard medium shot (framed with a touch of head room on the top, cut below the chest on the bottom), the smaller insert depicts the close-up framing that could have been used after the establishing Medium Shot.

How can there be so much involved in this simple shot of the VAULT spokesperson? It looks completely un-produced! That is the invisible art of professional production aesthetics. But the magic isn't embedded in professional equipment, it is in the framing—available at no cost.

Slide Three

Typical "talking head" shots—none offering much credibility or cool. The two screen shots with colored background are semi-professional productions, with added lighting (see the shadows). But are they any better than the others, all clearly taken with webcams? Tricia, in the upper right, seems to have lost her head altogether!

Straight-on webcam shots can make people appear buffoonish or untrustworthy to an audience that has internalized traditional production values—although a new media audience might see these interviewees as unpretentious and relaxed. As *Web Video* author Jennie Bourne says, "if you must use a Webcam, balance it on a suitcase or put your laptop on a stack of dictionaries to get just the right angle and improve your shot" (Bourne, 2009, p. 127).

Slide Four

Anita poses for the firing squad! Even worse than being "shot" by a webcam, the camcorder—and the microphone on it—are so far away that we can barely hear,

much less grow to like, this articulate and well-qualified candidate.

Slide Five

One of few video resume formats that would benefit from the 16x9 ratio, high-definition video frame. The suggestion of PowerPoint seems very appropriate. Savvy movement of "talking head" from MS to CU and screen left to screen right with each change of sub-topic. High credibility … But what about cool? Does it matter?

Slide Six

David is eating a burger in the opening shot of the video. "Mmm, good. But it's missing something. Just like your business is good, but missing something. Me." This video resume, produced by a college friend who is getting a video production business going and has his own YouTube channel, represents a garage version of a corporate (professional) treatment of a Ze Frank-type jump cutting video blog. This one's worth playing if the link lives on. The video will make students' howl, but (maybe) it's hip to a square audience. A YouTube viewer comment that followed

some snarky comments: "Ignore the other comments. It took b---s to put this out. I'd hire you in a minute."

Slide Seven

The producer adapts a hip Hewlett Packard commercial that broke all the rules. Then it turns into a demo tape for a budding video producer (which we otherwise avoid as video resume examples). But the hip-hop, sweater-vest portion of the video resume is remarkably credible *and* cool. The producer could use that portion of his video resume to apply for corporate communications positions. Many companies, including the television networks themselves, literally scour YouTube looking for media savvy talent. Lil' Nate has big potential.
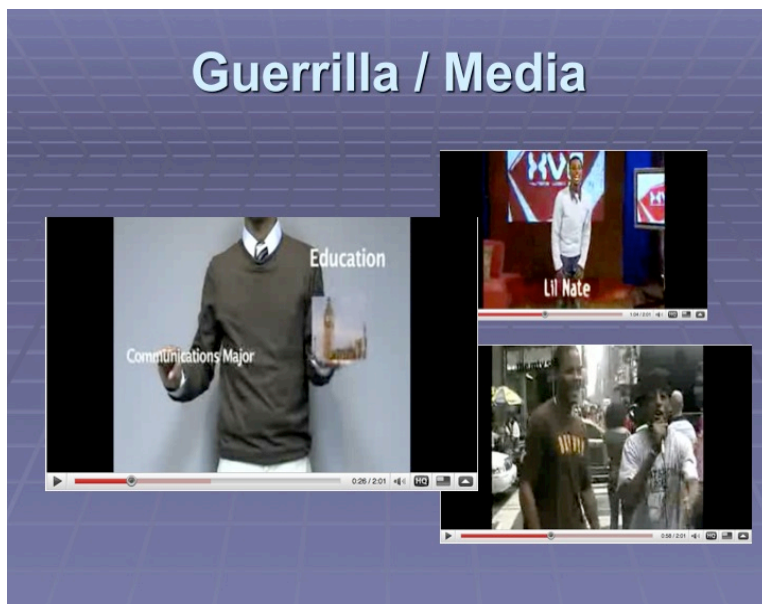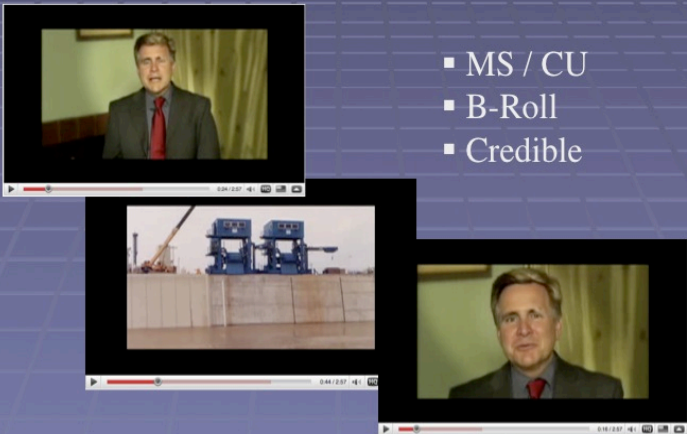
Slide Eight

Modest but well done. The experienced engineer incorporates photos of projects he's worked on as B-Roll over his continuing narration. He cuts from Medium Shot to Close Up at natural break points, which helps him to talk in a conversational,

comfortable, confident manner for short segments. An office "set" would be better than cheap hotel.

Slide Nine

Very slick, professional production. Has a new media feel to it … in the same way that the IBM ads with the blue letter-boxing do (faux new media?). It might appeal to the target audience. We find it a little too corporate to be cool, too slick to be really credible. But we aren't he target audience, are we?


Slide Ten

So much wrong and so much right. It has been said that, compared to movies, television is the close up medium. If so, the web, compared to television, is the extreme close up medium. There is no place in web video for wide, full-body shots. Aesthetics aside, what is the rhetoric of recording a video resume in your living room? And "Star Wars" text superimposed on the subject!? On the other hand, about 60 seconds into his video resume we see photos showing PR projects that he did over

the past summer while interning for a corporation. That's gold … but the rest ….
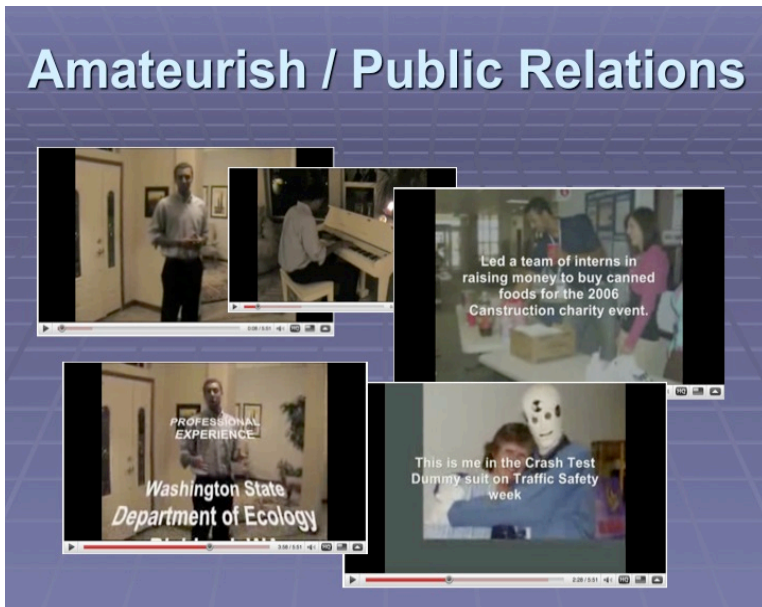

Slide Eleven

A little wrong and so very much right. The subject walks up to the camera in the opening frame. A cinematic device. Unfortunately, she is relying on the camcorder's internal microphone and the opening audio is low volume. But as she takes us on a stroll around Budapest (walking and talking—a very engaging technique), unabashedly talking about her world travels and language study, she displays worldliness and confidence. Not depicted are the portions of the video resume that listed qualifications, education, etc. with Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" playing in the background. She produced the video, with the help of a cameraperson friend. It's not perfect, but it is inspired.

Slide Twelve

Fully embracing every salesman cliché, Stan rocks excitedly, pulls props from behind

the desk, and describes all the hats he's worn as a small business owner/sales manager. He also lays out his sales philosophy and strategies. He finds the decision-maker, he asks for a sale or an objection, he's ready to overcome any objection, and he doesn't quit until he gets a "Yes!" Now that's why we want from our sales manager! As goofy as Stan is (he also has a YouTube channel with some really goofy stuff), Stan strikes us as credible and cool. And he probably picks up the tab more often than not.
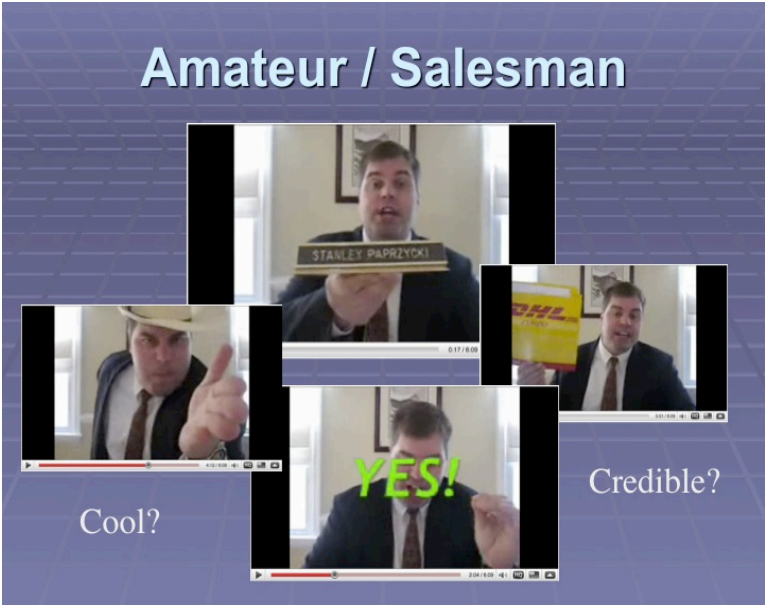
Slide Thirteen

Two highly qualified, experienced, and articulate resume posters who are not well served by videos that are homemade, but are not grassroots or garage or new media or DIY or ugly or cool or anything other discernible form. In both cases, decent audio could still save the day. But the camcorder is set too far away, resulting in framings that don't acknowledge web video picture size and, worst of all, produces inadequate audio.

Slide Fourteen

Nick does a simple but effective "talking PowerPoint" and makes it work. His talking head is small, but the smallness of the video image masks Nick looking down just below the camera at his script, which is disconcerting in some other video resume examples. So the faults (eyes checking cue cards and small size image) work together to overcome each other. Nick's head could move from the left to the right side of the screen with changing topics, as in the earlier PowerPoint-based video resume example. That would give Nick cutting points so that he wouldn't have to deliver the whole pitch intact. Switching from side to side, and maybe changing his size, with each new sub-topic would add visual variety as well as providing edit points.

We note that Nick essentially reads the slides word for word, which would normally be considered poor presentation form. Indeed, the slides could be leaner, with text elaborated by audio. On the other hand, Nick's video resume is unique enough and short enough to maintain our interest. Further, learning theorist Richard Mayer maintains that the modality principle supports the learning effectiveness of duplicating words in visual and audio modes. (Mayer, 2001)

Slide Fifteen

Mica's video resume is professionally produced in the approach of a "publicity shot" photo. Production is almost certainly by a professional studio photographer who has branched out into video resumes. Which might explain the uneven audio and over-mixed music. Looks great, less filling.

Slide Sixteen

Van has a unique career and a suitably unique video resume. Demonstrates how good guerrilla-level video production can be better than professional video production. It is probably made by a professional video producer, but it is guerrilla because of Van's personal involvement and vision—even if he didn't shoot or edit any video. Van acted, as a business or professional person should, as the *producer* of his own video communications program. Singing "Come Fly Away" in Air Force uniform is an effective grabber, but not overdone. Substantively, this video resume includes testimonials by former supervisors—who are identified with an on-screen graphic. The video also includes photos as B-Roll as Van gives his pitch. Between segments and at the end, Van's "set" shot conveys personality as well as visual interest. Professional and personal. Credible, and cool.

Scene 3: Coda

In this discussion we have balanced professional and amateur aesthetics by valuing *both* the credible and the cool. Both are reasonable aesthetic goals in and of themselves. The extent to which students can produce videos that are accepted as credible at the same time as they are lauded as cool, though, is the measure of their programs' excellence.

To pursue that excellence we use a rhetorical approach to production choices we have referred to as guerrilla video. We adopted "Guerrilla Video" as a moniker for this approach because we were attracted to its opportunistic, rule-bending, messy, dirty persona. In a real sense the current state of video on the Web is unstable and detached from ruling institutions: it is in a "Wild West" period. But, in guerrilla video we were also attracted to the thoroughly pragmatic nature of guerrilla warfare that deploys any tactics that work to further the group's objectives. It is opportunistic, pragmatic, and goal driven. We see obvious parallels to the types of teacherly actions vis-à-vis video that need to be taken if video is to reach its potential communicative and rhetorical power in professional communication.

Finis

Notes

[1] If we tune in to some of James Schiro's YouTube broadcasts we find that he clearly projects as a banker who retains that banker's ethos--and ties--even as he tries to connect with his employees. But, he also offers a window into his Road Show tour that seeks to trade information with employees at the same time as it promotes a corporate message, and in doing so he inserts digital video into internal corporate communications at the same time as he offers a translucent lens to some of Zurich Financial's corporate story. [Figure 1 is the kickoff, and it is stiff.] A later broadcast shows him clearly more at ease with the process. In this May broadcast from Fareham UK [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkfZAe1FV8g [45]] Schiro delivers his report and then welcomes a manager into the frame to tell a story about dealing with a difficult phone customer via song, and she sings "Close to You" to the camera as people in the background, including Schiro, spur her on. The intended messages? 1) Our employees go to great lengths to please our customers, 2) We are so "with it" that we use YouTube to report back from the field, and 3) The CEO of our insurance/finance company can use amateur video aesthetics when they are appropriate. A possible unintended message? We know the lyrics to Carpenter songs and that undercuts our coolness, but you're not so cool either, you're singing along. Carpenter songs aside, we think the effect is cool and credible.

[2] Grassroots video is different from social media video because it suggests social consciousness. Both grassroots video and social media video are undergirded by use of *garage*-level video tools that approximate professional tools at a fraction of the cost.

[3] Guerrilla video was used in the early days of portable video and community access television to suggest activist video shot outside of the studio. In another context, Fadde and Rich (2010) use guerrilla video to describe a new approach of actively videotaping in the classrooms for teacher education purposes, replacing the passive, unattended video camera in the back of the room. The challenge, as they put it, is to get in and capture the action without impinging upon it, and the stakes are levels of judged performance on impending video teacher evaluation.

[4] We have witnessed tectonic shifts in writing technology (for example desktop publishing) that have radically impacted the workings (and definition) of professional writing. Today we see evidence that young engineers, such as our daughter Elizabeth Fadde (a materials engineering co-op at GE Aviation), build their research reports in PowerPoint and claim they no longer write. When asked what writing she does, Elizabeth replied, "I just spend a lot of time emailing and I present two PowerPoints per week for my group on my research, but I don't write." (personal communication 11/03/08)

[5] If we peruse Jo Allen's (2004) discussion of student learning outcomes for course/program assessment, we see an abundance of needed instruction, and because her top-level discussion omits technology competencies, the actual list of proficiencies to be taught is even longer. Recent surveys of ATTW-affiliated faculty (Dayton and Bernhardt, 2004) and of programs (Allen and Benninghoff, 2004) demonstrate the crowded curricula well, with Nancy Allen and Stephen Benninghoff noting the "heavy load of topics, skills, and procedures that TPC instructors need to include along with tool skills in an undergraduate program." (167) David Dayton and Stephen Bernhardt focus more on research, faculty, and disciplinary issues (than they do on curriculum), though they do identify ten skills that faculty consider important for students to succeed as professionals with rhetoric and writing/editing the primary skills mentioned, and they conclude that "technology skills emerged as a specific area where teaching could be stronger, although

no. . . area was mentioned . .. by more than 13% of the respondents." (32). Allen and Benninghoff report similar curricular focuses on rhetoric and writing and claim programs make curricular changes that help them with "anticipating. . . new workplace demands." (160)

[6] Social media obviously is bigger than the part of it that involves video, but video (as opposed to blogging) has an established corporate presence that has been the province of professional media producers. At least it has until now.

[7] Less than a year after its launch, YouTube.com reported that more and 100 million videos were watched per day (*USAToday*, July 16, 2006). That exponential growth has not slowed. Recent figures reported by comScore (April 2010) claim that U.S. viewers watched 28.1 billion online videos during the month of February 2010, and 42.5% (or 11.9 billion videos) were watched at YouTube.com.

[8] One particularly good use of "mashup" [or repurposed] video was wrought by Beth Ritter-Guth's technical writing class at Lehigh Carbon Community College in Pennsylvania. Ritter-Guth posted the Feral Cats Project assignment, her version, and some student projects to YouTube in Spring 2008. Her class had worked with a class at Duquesne University that was tagging and DNA testing feral cats as their service project. Ritter-Guth's students developed the Feral Cats videos to encourage public awareness of the science work done by the Duquesne students, and she folded work on typical technical communication genres into the tent of producing the public videos; it also operated as a grassroots project that showed the emotion of the producers and the social conscience of the class. Ritter-Guth and her students use repurposing of music, photos, and video in their programs. See Fadde and Sullivan (2009) for a discussion of repurposing video.

[9] YouTube, we find, is a cornucopia of instruction, so much so that the *New York Times* devoted a feature article to "Making money, the how-to way" in 2008 that focused on the cottage industry of making short how-to videos. Miguel Helft reported that in April 2008, ExpertVillage had created 90,000 short instructional videos, with its channel on YouTube housing 73,000. He quotes Byron Reese, founder of ExpertVillage: "It's what the Internet screams for. People get up in the morning and type, 'how do I treat a sprained ankle" or how do I get a bee sting out of a kid's arm?" If you are discussing this "for fun," you might want to use Christopher Walken's instructions for cooking chicken with pears. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43VjLCRqKNk [46]

[10] We use "scour" here because locating classroom videos is not a straightforward process. Because the general terms for professional writing return a wide variety of professional videos and the videos are posted by students are idiosyncratically labeled, we found that we had to search online syllabi for the term "youtube" as a way to locate course numbers, instructor names, and university names that might be associated with the videos posted online. Clearly, YouTube is not run by librarians.

[11] "Amateur" in this context refers to video productions, many of high quality and creativity, that are created by people who are not media professionals and usually distributed on the Internet. "Amateurish" is a derisive term for video that is unproduced or poorly produced. We acknowledge Andrew Keen's derisive use of amateur (as both amateurish and destructive of culture) in *The cult of the amateur*—where he claims "YouTube eclipses even the blogs in the inanity and absurdity of its content. Nothing seems too prosaic or narcissistic for these videographer monkeys." (5)

[12] Students can search for video resumes outside of class or in class, if the course is taught in a computer classroom with access to the Internet. If searches are conducted in class, headphones minimize the resulting cacophony.

[13] The slides are hyperlinked to the videos posted on YouTube, Vimeo or ResumeTube. However, we don't guarantee "live" links and the slides set works as well, and considerably faster, without playing the actual videos. The PowerPoint slide set is in read/write mode so that you can add, edit, or rearrange slides as you like. Links to the actual video resumes posted on YouTube or ResumeTube are embedded in the "freeze frame" screen shots. Where multiple screen shots represent a single video, the URL is embedded in the upper most or upper-left screen shot.

[14] The PowerPoint slide set guerrillavideoPIX/VideoResume.ppt [47] is in read/write mode so that you can add, edit, or rearrange slides as you like. Links to the actual video resumes posted on YouTube or ResumeTube are embedded in the "freeze frame" screen shots. Where multiple screen shots represent a single video, the URL is embedded in the upper most or upper-left screen shot.

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