

“Lights, Camera, Animoto!”

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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As the end of the year approaches, you may feel the need for a new activity to motivate and engage students and staff. You want a technique that provides zip to your lessons but that isn't going to overwork teachers or students. You are in luck! You can use a multi-media tool called Animoto. Multi-media tool? What is that? Don't panic! We know you can learn this because we did even though we are technologically challenged teacher librarians. We successfully used this tool for personal applications as well as in our classrooms. Read on to discover how you too can be an Animoto star.

What Is Animoto?

Animoto is website which helps you create a multi-media product. Essentially that means you use more than one form of content: music, pictures and video. In an easy, three step process you upload pictures and videos, choose music and create a video. The "Create" button and the geniuses at Animoto render a polished video that makes you look talented and professional. We agree with Joyce Valenza, well-known high school library media specialist, who states: "Animoto is a magically-easy way to grab attention, produce professional-looking public relations products, archive an event, visually showcase our best, and create new visual contexts." (Valenza, 2008)

Joining Animoto!

Animoto is easy to use and to join. All you need is an e-mail account. At www.animoto.com you can sign up for a free account; however, you are limited to only thirty second videos. This is a great place for you to begin playing and see just how easy it is to use! The developers at Animoto know you are inexperienced so they've made it easy for you.

Animoto for Educators

Animoto offers preferred access to educators. If you sign up for an educator account <http://education.animoto.com>, you will receive full access and be able to create full length videos for free. Animoto don't advertise this option on their front page though. You will find the link to do this by typing "animoto and education", in the site search box. We highly recommend that you try the full access account for Animoto. Because Animoto creates class accounts on a first come, first served basis, do not expect to register for your class account before school and use it that same day. It may take a few days or a week to receive your account information.

Creating a Class Account:

Once you receive your teacher code, your students can sign in to Animoto and create their account using their own e-mail. The sign up form will ask for a promo code, and that is where they will type in the educator's code you received when you registered. This will give your students full access to Animoto. Animoto provides a timeline within which you must register your accounts. After this date, your code will expire, and you will need to apply for a new one.

For safety reasons, you may prefer to have students register with "dummy" e-mail accounts. This will take some time depending on how many you have to create. We used Gmail because it is one of the e-mail providers that allow you to do this easily. This method of registering is recommended by Animoto if you have younger students. Students under 13 years of age are not able to register for their own accounts, but they can use Animoto if they have a "dummy" e-mail and use your classroom code when they register. When set up in this way, everything they do goes through your main e-mail account.

Here's how to make "dummy" accounts in Gmail. Create a special Gmail account for school projects. For these purposes, let's say it was awesometl@gmail.com. Then create awesometl+1@gmail.com; awesometl+2@gmail.com and so on until you have enough to assign one to each student. Once Animoto videos are complete, a finished copy of the video shows up on your screen and another is automatically delivered to your email. Any e-mail sent to one of the "dummy" accounts actually goes to your main e-mail address. This method offers a little more control which may be important with younger students. We appreciate this feature.

What Can I Do With Animoto?

- Introduce or summarize a unit
- Showcase your library
- Create book trailers
- Showcase class trips, social studies fairs, culture fairs
- Tell digital stories
- Replace Powerpoint in any assignment
- Create science projects
- Study artists and paintings
- Make student video projects
- Teach math concepts (check out this link for examples: <http://langwitches.org/blog/2010/01/06/math-tutorial-music-videos/>)
- Insert your creative ideas here!

Celebrations:

- Classroom account videos are private; no one can view videos or contact students unless they are uploaded to a public site.
- There is a wide variety of ways to use Animoto.
- Animoto does not require technical computer knowledge to use.

- Animoto is motivating and engaging for students and staff.
- Animoto is quick and easy to learn.

Cautions:

With any new Web 2.0 tool there are cautions that as an educator you will need to be aware of so you can be successful.

- Animoto is a web based application so you must have high speed internet and Flash.
- Animoto will not allow for individual editing; therefore, the level of creativity is limited to choice of images, photos and music.
- Animoto limits the amount of text that you can use.
- Users should use copyright friendly music, images and photos.
- Because students under 13 years of age are not allowed to have their own account, you must create a master account and inform parents.
- Students may view inappropriate material when searching for images if student searching is unrestricted.

Examples:

Animoto is as easy as we say. Below are two example videos we created. The first one highlights two Saskatoon Public School libraries and the other is a book trailer.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vgc0pACmoY0>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE7tyQ0IpDQ>

Now all that is left for you to do is to get in that director's chair and shout: "Lights, Camera, Animoto!"

Want to Learn More?

Valenza, J. (2008, April 4). Announcing: animoto for education. Retrieved from <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/blog/1340000334/post/1560024356.html?q=animoto>