CONFERENCE PAPERS

Short but Sweet: How Nano-Training Expanded our Reach

Abstract: In this article, **Beth Flerlage**, an assistant librarian at The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, discusses the Middle Temple Library's experience in developing a nano-training platform for members. It details the creative process and describes how the organisation reviews the content using data from YouTube Studio.
Keywords: e-learning; Nano-learning; online learning; recording; streaming

TRAINING AT THE INN

Library staff from The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple contribute to the education of members of the Bar by providing a variety of legal training sessions, with topics covering EU law, US law, human rights, and general research skills. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, these were offered as an in-person experience only. The rationale behind this format was it promoted the collegiate element of the legal profession. Indubitably, every organisation adapted the way their services were delivered out of necessity during Covid. As one of our core offerings, training was greatly impacted.

As staff migrated to home working at the beginning of lockdown in 2020, our original in-person lectures were simply transposed to an online platform. The host delivered the existing PowerPoint presentations through one of many new applications, which appeared almost overnight – such as Stafleaf, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. As the pandemic carried on and remote learning became a more established practice, the library team still explored more creative ways to deliver information and interact with our isolated audience.

The early stages of the library's nano-training platform began with an idea to create quick, instructional videos and embed them within the existing PowerPoint trainings. For several years, Middle Temple Library included among its educational offerings a session emphasising general legal research skills – Boolean operators, legal research strategies, using keywords, and reviewing primary resources among the points highlighted by staff. The 'traditional', pre-pandemic version of the course contained a hands-on demonstration of how to use case citators, specifically print resources: *The Digest* and *Current Law Case Citator*. When the course transferred online for remote learning, structural changes were required for the presentation, and the library needed a new way to exhibit these hardcopy sources. The outcome of these alterations was a two-minute video filmed and edited on a dated iPhone 4s. It presented and instructed the audience in how to use *The Digest* and *Current Law Case Citator*. While *amateurish* is a fair descriptor of the

library's first attempt, the audiovisual guide added multimedia to the PowerPoint and provided a new methodology of instruction.

Staff enjoyed the process of creating videos, and the team felt encouraged to think more innovatively about new approaches for using multimedia to engage those now remote members. Post-pandemic, Middle Temple Library's initiatives during those days of lockdown led to the introduction of an online exhibition page hosted on the service Juncture Digital, the development of a virtual library tour, and the incarnation of short, instructional videos in the form of nano-training.

TRAINING: NANO-STYLE

Nano-training is a way to deliver information. Characterised by some as "bite-sized chunks of information," the duration of the learning experience is brief. Typically, a nano-lesson's length is kept to just a few minutes. Training in these short bursts mimics social media trends for disseminating content quickly and in an engaging audiovisual style.[1] Keeping the instruction concise offers educational benefits to the audience, especially as time is often identified as one of the biggest barriers to learning and personal growth.[2]

Nano-learning was a topic of discussion at the 2021 International Conference on Research in Education, where authors Saeed Jameel Aburizaizah and Tahany Abdulaziz Albaiz detailed that teaching in this way is typically offered online, without a real-time instructor, and the objectives for the learner will be very specific. The advantage of the shorter presentation is reduced mental fatigue, and because the user can revisit and replay the resource as often as needed, retention improves. The repetition of views can help transfer information from short-term memory to long-term memory.[3]

Nano-training also empowers the learner because it provides them with flexibility to choose the time and place of learning, with the video lessons supporting moment-of-need training. Researchers at the University of Goettingen

225

Beth Flerlage

Library staff leading a training session on Zoom. Photo credit: Beth Flerlage

conducted a qualitative study with instructional design professionals regarding aspects of micro-learning, concluding: "Demand-oriented learning is aiming to solve a particular problem in a particular situation."[4] Arranging the training in shorter units provides users with the opportunity to seek out the information required, independent of a more in-depth module.[5] Attendees also reportedly find more enjoyment in this learning format, expressing it is more efficient and accessible. The presentations are also generally responsive on mobile devices.[6]

Middle Temple Library's approach to nano-training was modelled on these expectations. The plan was to develop stand-alone videos, rather than a sequential series or course for individuals to undertake. Those videos were then embedded in various ways with the goals of the new platform to establish an archive addressing common queries, promote resources, and support remote users.

IN SEARCH OF INSPIRATION

The inspiration for content to achieve these goals was cultivated from several thoughts. The preliminary place was to consider frequently asked questions. Although Middle Temple Library does not retain a formal linked FAQ page, there was a consideration of those daily information requests – one of the most popular being the rudimentary: "How do I find a book?" To address this query, the team recorded a nano-training segment aptly titled: 'How do I find a book in the library?' The instructional recording referenced the library's online catalogue, explained the classification system utilised, and described the layout and organisation of the collection. The advantage of producing this video was the ability to circulate it amongst members to address a common question. The recording introduced the library, and the material could be shared with new clerks or members through a direct link. QR codes within the library also link to these types of 'how to' nano-trainings, allowing users to feel more independent using services.

Aside from frequently asked questions, the material for new videos developed organically as staff considered the resources we naturally find ourselves sharing. The team over the years has inherently built up a portfolio of preferred resources believed to provide an effective service. As previously mentioned, case citators have been referred to in trainings and in instances where requesters needed to locate reported versions and judicial treatment of older cases. The original, *amateurish* video used in early remote lessons was revamped and the video 'Case Citators' was published to include online case citators and featured the usage of citators in case law research. The video provided an opportunity to share knowledge about lesser-known products with a wider audience.

One of the aims in developing the nano-training platform was to promote databases and services. The article 'Implementing Nano-learning in the Law Firm' also pointed to this as a motivator for designing their online training programme for their law firm in Sweden: "The first Nano we sent out focused on legal alerts. We wanted to promote a couple of services that offer tailored alerts. We also wanted to tell our users about the advantages of using services with personal logins."[7] The firm reported the video was well received, encouraging them to create additional nano-trainings which saw an increase in the usage of their services.

Designing content with attention to resources the library already invested in was very important, to publicise their features. Middle Temple Library subscribes to the *Pepper v Hart* service of the database Public Information Online and to highlight its uses we recorded a video demonstrating its functionality. It offers an overview of the database and shows how to undertake research in searching for official publications connected with a piece of legislation. Usage improved for the database following the release of the nano-training. The month after posting the video Public Information Online saw a 266% increase in searches on the database compared with the previous month.

The catalyst for developing online training videos was to improve the way we engaged with members during

226

the Covid-19 pandemic. It was imperative we continued to support our audience as they shifted to home working patterns. The library needed a means to dispense information to those unable to visit the library in person. Our organisation recorded the video 'How to find unreported cases?' which discusses freely available websites and addresses one of our most common queries. This content could be distributed to a more widespread group, because it did not require access to hardcopy materials or specialised subscription databases one would normally need to be in the library to access. As with the other videos on the platform, this made available a resource for users to quickly reference.

EQUIPMENT USED

The nano-videos were assembled in-house by library staff, alongside regular duties and responsibilities. There is a practically endless supply of design software and hardware available to organisations who undertake this type of creative endeavour. The team opted to make use of a mixture of both free and fee-based software to realise the goals of our nano-platform. For others interested in developing training content in this style, the following outline of the equipment Middle Temple Library utilised might serve as a guide.

Audio

The audio was captured using an external microphone called a Snowball. The microphone simply connects via a USB port and allows someone to easily record their script directly into software. Audio files were captured in Microsoft's Voice Recorder program and saved for editing. This process was employed to record voice-overs, which can be heard during computer screen demonstrations. Audio also accompanied generic footage and images which appear throughout the videos. These recordings were processed in the same way using the external microphone. Subtitles were later added to the videos for accessibility.

Video and Images

Images of the library and bookshelves – any footage not focused on a computer screen – was recorded using a DSLR camera or a mobile phone in most instances. To film websites and exhibit how to navigate resources online the library used software called ScreenPal. Its logo features in the videos; although there has been a recent update to its name and emblem from ScreenCast to ScreenPal, so some of the videos featured on the nano-platform include the precursor name of ScreenCast. This software launches directly within the browser allowing you to record your actions. It includes built-in editing features, so you can highlight, blur or alter screen images as required. Incorporated in some of the videos are more 'professional' images, which were made possible through a staff member's access to the program Adobe After Effects. This service provides royalty-free stock images

and videos. For example, generic video of the Supreme Court and Old Bailey appear in recordings. The videos are all edited using Microsoft's Video Editor.

Branding

It was key the nano-trainings had a uniform look. Templates were designed, which include a standard intro and outro, using the same asset and music. Our organisation's branding guidelines are integrated, so the thumbnails can be easily identified as content created by The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple. The consistency in images and marketing means it is clear the videos are part of the nano-training platform. Design software Canva was used to develop the assets and some of the graphics in the videos.

WHAT DID WE DO WITH THE VIDEOS?

The nano-training videos are hosted on Middle Temple Library's YouTube channel. Additionally, the recordings are embedded on the library's website, as part of the 'Services' page. With a dedicated social media campaign, the nano-training platform launched in April 2023. Four videos were included in the initial promotion: forms and precedents, case citators, unreported cases, and artificial intelligence. The social media announcement included posts on LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and a blog post featured on the library website.

Beyond the website and social media, how else have the videos been utilised? Some nano-trainings are rooted within more in-depth trainings, a call-back to the original approach to using multi-media in the first lockdown. For example, the nano-video highlighting the database Public Information Online has been integrated into the library's more detailed presentation concentrating on parliamentary papers. The ability to play the video during the training session is advantageous in providing a steady pace to the lesson – there is no lag time as the website loads, and the video is maintained for future reference when the slides are circulated among attendees.

The library also generated QR codes, which appear adjacent to the hardcopy works within the library, aiding as a 'how to use' feature. A QR code for the case citators nano-training appears next to *The Digest* and *Current Law Case Citator*. A code is also prominently located near the *Encyclopaedia of Forms and Precedents* and *Atkin's Court Forms* to direct members to the forms and precedents short film.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The benefit of hosting the nano-training recordings on our own YouTube channel is the ability to consider the analytics accessible via YouTube Studio. YouTube Studio is part of the YouTube package and is specifically designed for content creators to measure the success of their channel and view real-time metrics. Some of the data
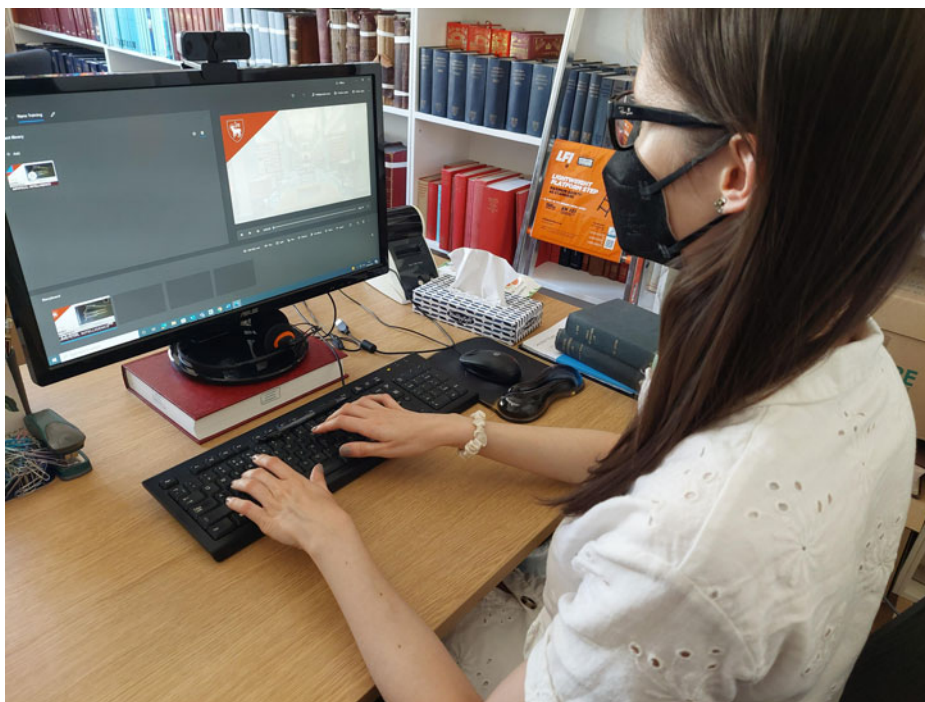
Staff editing video using Video Editor Program on Microsoft. Photo credit: Beth Flerlage

sets available to review include the number of views, average view duration, and audience retention information, which offer insight into how the videos are performing. YouTube Studio collects analytics based on what it describes as "legitimate engagement" – to ensure data is high quality and results from human activity, not interference from computer bots.[8]

Between April and September 2023, the nano-training videos had over 600 watches. The most popular topics to date are forms and precedents, unreported cases, and artificial intelligence. The library also reviewed the average view duration for the videos. One of the goals of our online videos was to establish a new training model, and for nano-training to be successful it should focus on specific objectives and be succinct. Therefore, it was important to note the average view duration to see if viewers' attention was sustained throughout the entirety of the video.

The session focused on forms and precedents is nearly seven minutes long. This is the first video staff developed for the platform and the beginning process involved a learning curve for the team. Although it is our most watched video the average view duration is a little over two minutes, meaning audiences are getting through approximately 32% of it. Compare this with the shortest video created about finding a book, which clocks in at three and a half minutes with an average view duration of 50%.

The correlation between the timing of the video and percentage viewed is one part of the analytics. It is necessary to also take note of the audience retention. For instance, the video related to case citators happens to be the second longest video in duration on the website. As seen in Figure 1, a chart guide on YouTube Studio points

to a decline in viewership at the beginning, perhaps indicating the video did not cover what the individual thought, or perhaps the intro was skipped, but then the line flattens out indicating for those who were interested in the video remained engaged until the end.

The other important element from the analytics is how viewers found your content. For us, most of it is external, meaning traffic from websites and apps that embed or link to the videos from the channel. As described, the videos are located on our website and were advertised on social media, so it is unsurprising this was the most popular way individuals obtained access; 75% of the traffic is through an external link, and since the launch other organisations have shared our content, which increases this percentage. We also received some traffic through direct or indirect references, which YouTube Studio points to access obtained from a direct URL entry; QR codes are an example of this.

Hosting the videos on YouTube allows us to track various statistics and ensure our channel's success. The importance of these metrics has led to improvements in the content we create and how we reach our audience. No matter what goals your organisation has for creating video content, ensuring a way to measure success will be important for both your team and stakeholders.

GOING FORWARD

The nano-training library now includes six videos with a plan to produce additional content related to other resources, including a concentration on our library's specialised subjects – US law, EU law, arbitration, and employment, to name a few. The varied coverage of the digital
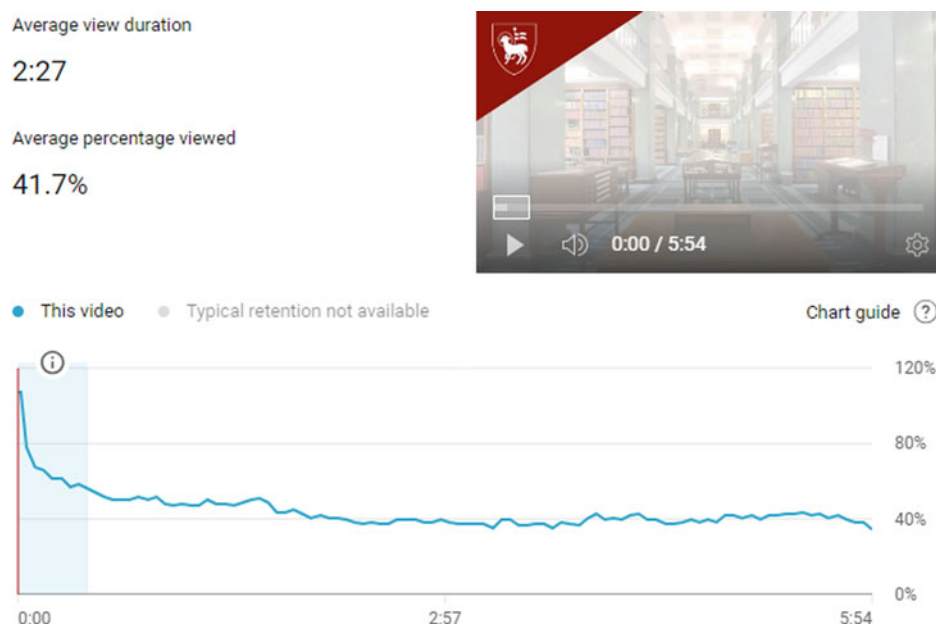
Figure 1: Chart featuring audience retention for case citators. Data correct as of 12/10/2023

collection serves as a reference guide for common queries and provides a means to promote proprietary resources, as well as highlight lesser-known products. Most notably, nano-training gives the library a new method to share information with users who may not be able to visit the library, which was the incentive for starting the project. Hosting the videos on YouTube allows us to track various statistics and ensure our channel's success.

What we discovered from the analytics and the initial batch of nano-training videos is to focus on one objective and ensure the videos reflect the bite-sized nature of this methodology. Another item to consider is how content should be reviewed. Some of our videos were developed before LexisNexis' rebrand to Lexis+, so it will be vital to continue to review trainings to check their currency. Despite the brevity of the videos, it can take time to develop the content. Our organisation found success in taking advantage of the creativity and skill sets of several members of the team to achieve the initiative of developing a nano-training platform.

Endnotes

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[6] Aburizaizah and Albaiz, p.85

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Biography

Beth Flerlage is an assistant librarian at The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple. She is responsible for the development of the UK and Official Publications collections and contributes to the teaching programme provided by the organisation to support members of the Bar. She received her MLIS from the University of Kentucky in 2012. Prior to working in law librarianship, Beth spent a decade working in public libraries in the United States.