



Lessons Learned from the Mooresville YouTube Miracle (/midwestern-libscapes /2018/1/22/the-mooresville-youtube- miracle)

**Jeff Tamblyn (/midwestern-libscapes
/?author=578d42402994ca7e41b5135f) · January 23, 2018
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miracle)**

Assuming it hasn't changed much since the 2010 US Census, Mooresville, Indiana has a population of 9,326. A casual glance at Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Mooresville,+IN/@39.5953552,-86.4021659,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x886c98dce8f4880d:0x10eed496d4904e13!8m2!3d39.6128243!4d-86.37416>) shows it to be an apparently ordinary Central Indiana town that rates a Steak 'n Shake and a Lowe's Home Improvement, but also sports local color such as Squealers Award Winning Barbeque and Dong's Chinese Buffet. Whatever else it has going for it, Mooresville has at least

one extraordinary aspect: its public library has a YouTube channel

(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvor2suodA_CJui8-vWuliA) with over 1,200,000 views.



Mooresville, Indiana, Public Library. Looks normal, right?

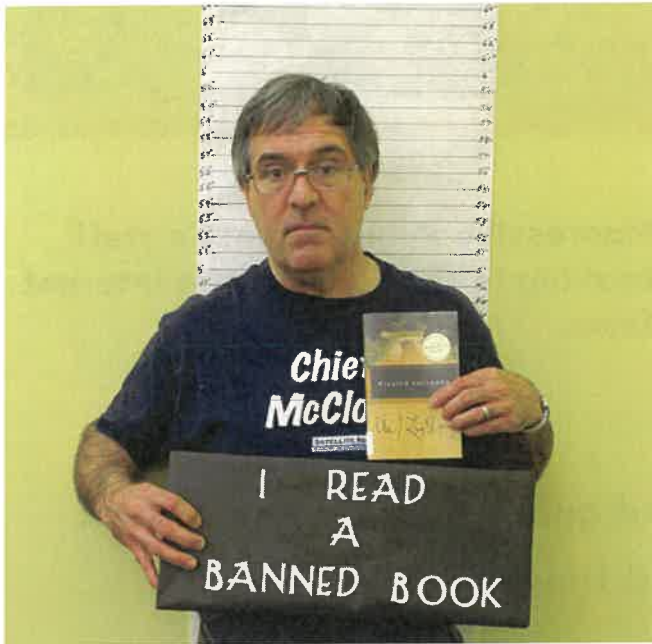
If you want to place that in perspective, the New York Public Library's YouTube Channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/user/NewYorkPublicLibrary>) has 10,732 subscribers and 677 videos. Mooresville has 810 subscribers (3 were added while I was writing this), and 800 videos. NYPL's most-watched video is an expensive time-lapse piece (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkD9aNO6v0>) with 197,181 views. Mooresville's most-watched video is Animal Alphabet Song Video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INHSFej7yZU>), by Miss Jaymi (357,574 views).

Some of the library's other successful videos have included a book trailer for *Took* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fchjHoU0Dkk>), by Mary Downing Hahn (66K views), and a book trailer for *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3cOSBCmoJY>) by Scott O'Dell (92,356 views).

The Mooresville Public Library channel features book trailers, how-to pieces, sing-alongs, read-alouds, a ukulele checkout promotion, and a w (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaoMFBGTVcQ&>

feature=youtu.be)elcome video that sums up their style in a minute and 20 seconds. If that's not enough to get your heart pumping, see their video for Banned Books Week (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGjRsNM39Ms>).



Bill Buckley, Mooresville Public Library's video writer/director/producer, poses for a mug shot.

The mastermind behind this incredibly successful social media story is William (Bill) Buckley, who founded the channel 8 years ago this month. You don't have to be Roger Ebert to figure out that Bill's not a Stanford film school grad and that the library's production budget is next to nothing. I doubt if Bill has spent 30 seconds thinking about his channel's SEO or watching one of those "How to Get a Million

Views" videos on YouTube. Nevertheless, he and his colleagues have created an enduring, nay — *burgeoning*, video brand that appeals to the kind of people who like public libraries.

I believe other institutions can learn from MPL because underneath its low-budget simplicity lies a scathingly brilliant strategy.

First, the videos are fun and unpretentious — some are scary, some are hilarious, and some are so cute that you have to watch them several times. The latest is a Dr. Who-type piece complete with

BBC opening graphics

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdoKc0r6MGA>) that is flatly the silliest thing I've seen in a long time. And I loved it. This level of creativity says volumes about the institution it represents: that they're smart but likeable; they care enough about the viewer to create something interesting with few resources; they're the opposite of the library stereotype of stern and quiet; they sincerely want you to come to the library and spend time there.



Mooresville Public Library's staff, basking in the glow of vast internet fame.

Second, the videos are prodigious — they've averaged two per week, so there's always something new to look at. And the unspoken message behind that big number is that the library in this small town is important and loaded with fascinating content and services.

Finally, the MPL videos exemplify the notion that libraries themselves embody a spirit of generosity, hopefulness, curiosity, wonder, civility and community. That's a pretty important message to get across and one that likely transcends the Mooresville city limits, inspiring shares across the internet.

Here's a link to Bill Buckley's own blog

(<https://mplindianaroom.blogspot.com/2018/01/video-eight.html>) and more about the MPL YouTube Channel. And here's a link to their

most popular blog, **Cat's Eye View @ MPL**
(<http://mplcatseyeview.blogspot.com/>), which Bill insists is
actually written by a cat.

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