

Creating with Canva

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For those of you that haven't heard of it before, Canva is a free-to-use graphic design tool that creates designs for web or print: blog graphics, presentations, Facebook covers, flyers, posters, invitations and so on. Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (LTHTR) has been using Canva for about a year. The following are two case studies describing how staff at LTHTR have successfully used Canva for very different purposes. We hope you find them useful and they provide some practical suggestions for you to try.

Canva for promotion – Sinead English

I shied away from using Canva for promotional materials at first; I found it to be too constrictive when wanting to change things from their set templates. I was used to using Publisher and Word and the flexibility they gave me when wanting to move things around and formatting them how I wanted. However, after persevering with Canva, I began to see its potential and benefits rather than its limits.

The first promotional material I designed was a poster for 'World Mental Health Day' as we had some books in the Library to promote alongside

the campaign. It was very simple to pick a style of design which I liked, but the confusion as to how I alter it to what I want was a stumbling block. However, I looked at it as a challenge and even if it looked terrible at the end, I could press undo and start over. I clicked on the pre-written text, messed around with different fonts until I found a style I liked and then inserted the text I wanted. Then came the fun bit, filters! Being an avid user of Snapchat and Instagram I felt very much at ease with



this, and began altering the contrast, blur and picking a filter which fit with the subject I was promoting. Although it was my first attempt using Canva, I was really happy with the results and I definitely caught the Canva bug!

After becoming the sole library assistant in the team who persevered with Canva, I was then given the task of creating a variety of promotional materials for the Library's new book challenge, 'Summer Reading Journey: escape with a book'. I had to create posters, social media posts and some form of review booklet; I knew immediately that Canva would have the design layouts available, enabling me to have a professional looking finished product.

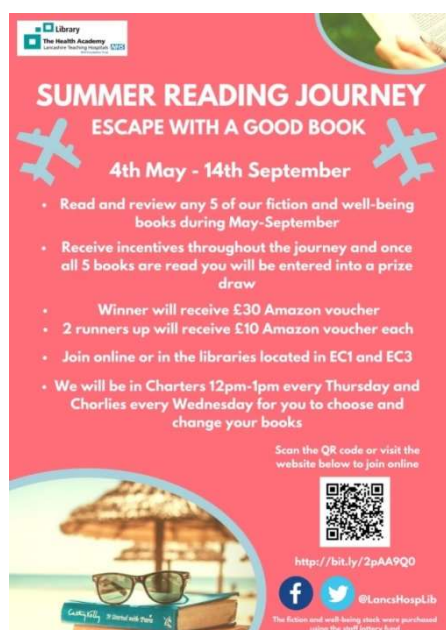
On the home page of Canva, you are presented with a variety of types of design options. I glanced through these and was immediately drawn to the 'marketing materials' heading, and underneath it was a trifold brochure design, so I starting looking at the available designs. The only thing to remember whilst using Canva is that not everything is free,

however if you absolutely love a design but it isn't free there may still be a way to use it. If you select the design you want, it may just be that it has a picture on it which costs money; if you then delete the picture from the design it becomes free.



So don't be put off if you see constant dollar signs, it doesn't always mean you won't be able to use it, you just might have to tweak it. Once I had selected one which had quite a nice layout I set to work at changing it to what I wanted. I first replaced the standard picture with one from my own files and then put a filter on it. I made the front page completely blank and deleted text from all the other pages. I adjusted the colours until I settled on two which I thought would fit well with the theme, and then I had my blank canvas ready. I inserted different elements such as shapes, lines and icons and then changed their default colours. I added text boxes and more images in order to create the design I wanted, separate from the template. On completion I had a design very different than what I had started out with, but that is the beauty of using Canva. You get lots of design ideas which you can then build on to create something personal to suit your marketing needs.

Next I created a poster and social media posts from a blank page, and just copied the colour schemes and sorts of text and elements I used for the brochure so they fit the theme. The only frustrating thing is that you can't copy something from one document into another; you have to find it and adjust its size/colour until it matches. However this is all part of getting used to Canva, and working around the limitations.



All things considered I think Canva is a great tool to be used for marketing and is something I am constantly pushing for people to use. Even if you think you have no clue where to begin in designing something you can use the pre-made designs to give you somewhere to start and in no time you'll end up adding more things into the design. Before you know it you'll be starting from a blank canvas and coming up with some original, personalised marketing materials.

Canva for presentation – Emily Hurt

I first found out about Canva from a [series of blog posts](#) on social media tools that the Health Care Libraries Unit North produced. I had a quick

play, and thought it would be useful for producing nice images for Twitter, and then forgot about it for a bit. A few months later I saw another librarian use it for a presentation. It looked so professional, like the kind of thing you could produce with an in-house graphic designer. I had used Prezi for presentations for a while, but found the templates clunky to edit and was aware that some people felt slightly motion sick when watching things zoom in and out on a screen. I had long fallen out of love with PowerPoint, although usually used it and stuck to the basic 'one image and a few words on each slide' format. I decided to try using Canva for my next presentation.



Unfortunately my next presentation was a pretty big one – [my very first time presenting at Health Libraries Group \(HLG\) conference](#). I was a little worried about using a new tool for something so important. Canva is web-based, and although you can download any presentations you create, they are saved as either an image, or a PDF. The idea is that you present direct from the Canva website, which despite us being well into the 21st century, still makes me a little nervous as it relies on a decent internet connection.



Instead of using Canva for the whole presentation, I compromised and created the images for my slides in Canva, and then pasted them into PowerPoint.

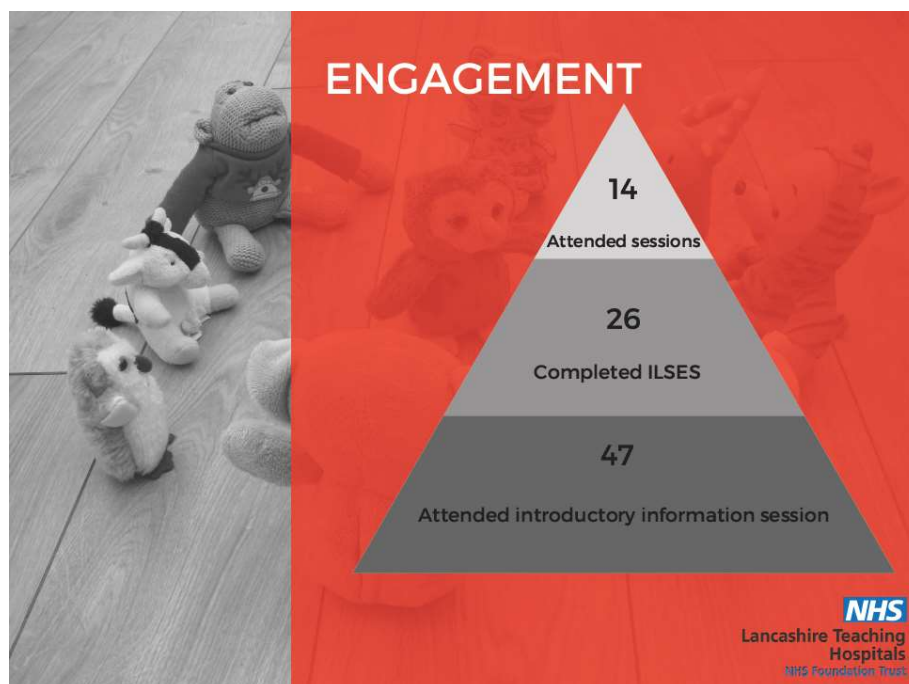
Creating custom images in Canva is very easy. For the pictures to go onto my slides I used the social media template, which is normally used for posts for Twitter or Facebook. I used a mix of my own images and free images from Canva. The free images are high quality (no amateurish looking clip-art!) and you can search using keywords, although this does bring up images you pay for as well. If you'd like to use your own image and overlay text, add a filter or crop it, then you can click and drag your picture into the uploads section and treat it in exactly the same way as you would do with an image from Canva. If you're



creating a series of images in a similar style – so for example if you want to use the same text and filter on each one – then you can just copy the first one you created and change the image you use.

I was happy with the process I used for my presentation at HLG, but I felt I needed to create a presentation from scratch using

Canva in order to get that 'polished' look. In April this year I was presenting at the Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) about a research project I had been working hard on and I wanted the whole session to appear professional. I used one of the free presentation templates as a starting point. If you hover over any of the templates a small number will appear in the top left hand corner which tells you how many slide layouts the template contains. Mine had ten, just the right amount to make sure each slide was slightly different. Then it was just a matter of choosing which layout I wanted and altering text and images. If you chose a layout with a graph, table or pie chart in, then it's easy to edit it using your own data.



I had a video I wanted to embed in a slide, something that I've always struggled with when using Powerpoint, and so have tended to avoid. Doing this is so easy in Canva! You can hyperlink a word or an image to a YouTube video. When you click on the text or picture, the slide greys out in the background and the video opens very smoothly in the foreground. When the video has played, you simply click on a little cross to close it, and you're back to your presentation. It looks effortless! I was very happy with my final presentation, it all went very well and my worries around internet access were unfounded. I think if you're presenting at a conference venue nowadays there is very little chance that there won't be reliable internet access. Internal presentations at my own Trust are slightly more haphazard, especially in the wake of the cyber attack. Canva is now my first choice of presentation tool, and I am almost evangelical about recommending it to others. When you're pushed for time and want to look polished with little effort, it's the perfect solution.

We hope this article will encourage you to try Canva. Registering is easy, and you won't be spammed with excessive emails. There are lots of tutorials provided on the site, from the very basics to more advanced skills. You can share designs with other people (up to ten for free), which makes team creations easy. At LTHTR we've found the version is enough for our needs, but there is a subscription option that lets you create custom templates and gives you access to all images. So what are you waiting for? Make yourself a cup of tea and sign up www.canva.com! Share what you've created by tweet if you want to ([@LancsHospLib](https://twitter.com/LancsHospLib)), we'd love to see what you come up with.