

Tech Showdown – Canva vs MS Sway

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Tech Showdown is a regular feature of JoHILA. Novel products, software, and technologies will be compared against each other to determine who is the winner, based on available features, ease of use, and price. If you have an idea for Tech Showdown or would like to see a comparison of two particular technologies, please email Cass.

Promotions and marketing are core components of library services. Posters, brochures, and social media posts can be an effective means of promoting our services, resources, and expertise, but snazzy graphic design skills aren't taught in library school. Furthermore, as a society, we've moved away from Word Art and comic sans. These design choices stopped being chic the moment Clippy, the helpful paperclip, tearfully left Word, and our lives.

So how can we create stylish and inviting promotional materials that reflect our modern services?

In the blue corner, we have Canva, the red corner, we have MS Sway. If you haven't heard of Canva before, I can only assume you've been living under a rock. Essentially, it is an online tool used to create appealing graphic designs based on templates, but what about Microsoft's design competitor, MS Sway? Sway is more limited with its design outputs, which are called 'Sways', but perhaps it's simpler to use? Let's compare the two in detail before you sign up for an account.

Round 1: Features

Canva:

- Thousands of editable templates based on style, format, size, or medium.
- Export to PNG, JPG, PDF, GIF, MP4.
- Upload an existing design to edit.
- Recommended complementary colours – a boon for the colour blind!
- New AI features, including the Magic Replace tool, a copywriter that can generate text from a prompt, a translator, and a Magic Design tool, which can create personalised templates based on an uploaded image.

MS Sway:

- Few templates. The existing offerings are text-orientated and limited to newsletters, presentations, portfolios, and blogs.
- Export a Sway to Word or PDF.

- Add content directly from your OneDrive, SharePoint, Power BI.
- A 'remix' feature which randomly picks a colour for the style. My first 'remix' chose an especially lurid Barbie hot pink colour.
- Curated styles are available but look dated.
- Embed easily into an email – see a snapshot of the Sway and click on the link to view online.
- Generate content from Wikipedia. Auto insert text and images from Wikipedia based on a topic. I started with the suggested 'Dinosaur' topic and MS Sway pulled in images of birds.

Winner – Canva, of course. With thousands of templates, you're bound to find one that fits your audience and is visually appealing.

Round 2: Ease of Use

Canva:

- What you see is what you get. You're able to edit a template directly and it will be the exact same as what you print out.
- New AI features make creating a design easier than ever before. I wanted a particular image of strawberries in a glass bowl, and instead of trawling Google Images for something that might match but have dubious copyright or quality, Canva generated one for me.

MS Sway:

- Your text and image inputs are not in the same area. You need to switch between Storyline (editing) view and Design view to check if the changes you've made look as you intended them too.
- MS Sway claims to be interactive. The only evidence I can see of that is when you view a Sway, the text appears with an animation.
- Most importantly, using MS Sway doesn't feel fun. It feels like doing work, perhaps because it has that distinct Microsoft suite look. Using Canva feels like an explosion of creativity. It's very easy to get caught up in Canva for hours.

Winner – Canva again! Switching between two views continuously in MS Sway is tiresome.

Round 3: Price

Canva:

- The free version of Canva includes access to thousands of designs and templates, but there will be the occasional one that you need to pay for, if you decide to use it.
- The Pro version of Canva is \$164.99 per person per year. It includes access to additional templates and images, the Brand Kit, where you can upload your logo and colours, and Magic Resize, the option to change the size of your design instantly.

MS Sway:

- MS Sway is available with Office 365 subscriptions, which is great if you have it available through your workplace. If not, it will set you back \$139.00 per person per year.

Winner – Canva. The free version of Canva is still extremely useful.

Winner

I will declare my conflict of interest and state that I have been a Canva user since 2016. Although I may have a little bias toward Canva, I was interested to see Microsoft's competitor. Unfortunately, it had little to offer that was relevant and exciting. Bring back Clippy.

ALIA HLA is offering training sessions on using Canva. Register [here](#).