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The Academic Mainstream | Streaming Video

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The Academic Mainstream | Streaming Video

by [Jennifer A. Dixon](#)

Sep 07, 2017 | Filed in [Reviews+](#)

Streaming video is becoming a mainstay on college campuses, but discovery and walled-off content create their own challenges



Recent trends in technology are dramatically reshaping academic library collections, and while the use of video in higher education isn't new, the move toward streaming brings a new array of benefits and challenges for academic librarians. *LJ* recently explored the ways in which libraries are addressing interest in streaming video services.

In April 2017, *LJ* conducted a blind survey of academic librarians in the United States and Canada, sponsored by Swank Motion

Pictures, receiving 330 responses. Most respondents—221—are in four-year colleges and university programs, serving an average of 10,392 students, while the remainder are at community colleges or graduate schools. Slightly over half of the schools were in public university systems.

STREAMING FROM THE OUTSIDE

The vast majority of responding libraries—95 percent—offered some sort of streaming video content, with a particular focus on documentaries, full-length movies and television programs, and historical archive footage. Of those that offer streaming, 83 percent license their video content from multiple vendors' video streaming platforms, particularly Films on Demand, Kanopy, Alexander Street, and Swank Motion Pictures. Other notable platforms included Ambrose Digital, Swank Digital Campus, Docuseek2, Film Platform, Intelliform, JOVE, and MedCOM.

Alexander Street is the vendor from which libraries license the most content, though Films on Demand is the vendor with which they spend the most money. Kanopy was selected as the "most valuable" streaming platform for both students and faculty.

Over 90 percent of respondents rely on IP address authentication to access these platforms. About a third use single sign on, while others work with proxy servers, geolocation authentication, or multiple logins.

HOSTING AT HOME

Once you get beyond commercially available content, the numbers drop significantly, though a substantial minority are streaming other content as well:

61 percent of responding libraries provide access to streaming faculty- or student-produced videos. Of those that do, 76 percent host them locally, while 32 percent offer them through a vendor platform. Christine Fischer, head of technical services for the University of North Carolina (UNC), Greensboro, Library, described working with a faculty member who inquired about posting his own film to make it more widely available. The library connected him with vendor Kanopy, and the film is now not only available to UNC students, it is part of the Kanopy catalog. Making that happen was an “interesting and different” library service, she said.

Hosting streaming video comes with its own concerns. As a community college librarian in Illinois explained, content from commercially available sources “is vetted for copyright compliance. As such, we do not rip anything in its entirety.” Multiple respondents emphasized the importance of taking into account legal restrictions, particularly copyright, when hosting videos. A librarian at a private postgraduate Massachusetts library said in response to this topic, “We are very careful about not ripping commercially available DVDs as that violates copyright. The locally streamed content is content taped at [the] university that is produced by the university.”

HOW LIBRARIES BUY STREAMING CONTENT

The most significant factors for libraries in choosing vendors are cost per title, nature of the content, and available streaming technology and platform. Other noteworthy considerations are the purchasing model, availability of a specific title, and license duration. Most streaming video content selection—70 percent—is guided by faculty requests. For example, Fischer told *LJ* that the significant increase in the library’s streaming video collection over the past four years has largely come via faculty. While many requests can

HOW DO STUDENTS FIND VIDEO?

LibGuides	72.6%
Word of mouth from librarian	70.2%
Through OPAC	68.8%
Word of mouth from faculty	67.0%
Directly through vendor platform	57.7%
Library discovery layer	54.4%
LMS/Courseware	54.0%
Open web search	10.2%
Other	5.6%

TOTAL ANSWERING 215

SOURCE: *LJ* ACADEMIC LIBRARY VIDEO STREAMING SURVEY 2017

HOW DO STUDENTS USE VIDEO?

As a specific assignment via courseware, LMS, or syllabus	91.4%
For entertainment	45.7%
As part of a “flipped classroom”	45.2%
For demonstration of techniques (e.g., How to suture, etc.)	42.4%
As introduction to a topic of independent research	40.5%
As a primary source	36.2%
As a later stage of their independent research	18.6%
Other	5.2%

TOTAL ANSWERING 210

SOURCE: *LJ* ACADEMIC LIBRARY VIDEO STREAMING SURVEY 2017

TYPES OF STREAMING VIDEO OFFERED

Documentaries	89.1%
Full-length movies & television shows	70.2%
Historical archive footage	67.2%
Newly produced professional content for the academic market	52.0%
Faculty- and/or student-produced content	36.8%
Other	6.7%
None	4.6%

TOTAL RESPONDING: 329

SOURCE: *LJ* ACADEMIC LIBRARY VIDEO STREAMING SURVEY 2017

be satisfied through vendors such as Kanopy, Docuseek2, and Films on Demand, Fischer noted that it can present challenges when a “faculty member wants this one thing, and it is in this one place, or only available through a single provider.” This can lead to librarians navigating questions of licensing for one-off downloads. Where faculty request a video that the librarians can’t locate, they have presented specific requests to vendors like Kanopy, with some success.

61%

of schools
host faculty
and/or student
created video
content

For approximately 59 percent of libraries, a collection development/acquisitions librarian will make streaming content selections. Other influencers on content choices are subject librarians, electronic resources librarians, or requests from a library director. Of the librarians responding to the *LJ* survey, 76 percent are involved in licensing streaming videos for their library, and a quarter (26 percent) are the final decision-makers.

The majority of libraries, 48 percent, acquire their video content through preselected collections curated by vendors, though only 20 percent prefer to do so. Many responding librarians (39 percent) expressed a preference for acquiring video content through demand-driven acquisition instead, while 16 percent prefer making evidence-based decisions. Librarians assess the return on investment of streaming video services according to usage metrics, frequency of inclusion in course assignments, and cost per use. Based on responses to the *LJ* survey, librarians estimate that the average number of streaming video views in 2015–16 was 11,429, which amounts to .65 views per each streaming title.

STREAMING BY THE NUMBERS

Over half of responding librarians said that the funding for streaming video comes out of their electronic resources budget, while a third said it comes from a media budget. The average budget for streaming content is \$19,800 (median \$12,800), with nearly half of libraries reporting budgets in the \$5,000–\$19,999 range. The average amount spent per annual license for one streaming title is \$110.60.

Because of the rising popularity of streaming video, libraries are seeing their budgets for this type of material increase. Over a third of schools reported that their 2016–17 streaming video budgets increased from the 2015–16 year, with an overall increase of 16.3 percent. Additional funds were commonly taken from budgets for physical media and print monographs. In addition, 45 percent of librarians reported an expectation that their streaming budgets would increase in the 2017–18 year. Only five percent expected a decrease.

Libraries offer large collections of streaming content: the average number of streaming video titles licensed by responding libraries is 17,481. Almost half (41 percent) of the respondents currently have access to more than 5,000 titles.

Most content is provided via a license lasting one to two years, although over 40 percent of responding librarians expressed a preference for perpetual licenses. A number of librarians, 22 percent, did state a preference for one- to two-year licenses. Others expressed interest in licensing based on number of views rather than a set time frame.

EASY AND EVERYWHERE

For most libraries, the greatest benefit of offering streaming video content is that patrons can access materials at any time, from any place. According to a librarian at a private four-year college in Massachusetts, round the clock access “is especially important for online, distance, and continuing education programs.” The same librarian also noted the benefit of resources that “can’t get lost, stolen, or damaged” and don’t “take up shelf space,” as well as the “ability to embed links in [the] Learning Management System [and] create playlists, clips, comments.” Besides making material more findable and usable, the online format removes common librarian worries about wear and tear, loss, or theft.

Several praised the flexibility that these new materials present for students’ academic experiences. Streaming video allows faculty to “offer classes online that were impossible in the DVD era,” responded a Michigan public university librarian. “Students also have the option to rewatch content, which was harder when [they were] forced to attend an in-class screening.” Many other respondents emphasized the accessibility of this type of content, with patrons able to watch videos in class, at home, or in the library, with multiple students able to view the same content simultaneously.

Numerous librarians described streaming video as “convenient” and “easy to use” for students and faculty and highlighted that the content can be obtained “instantly.” According to Faye O’Reilly, assistant professor and digital resources librarian at Wichita State University, KS, “With the growth of distance learning and nontraditional students, there is no need to commute to the library—users can watch the video on their own time in their own home.”

O’Reilly also pointed out that, as streaming technology becomes the ubiquitous new norm for home entertainment, students may no longer have access to other off-site viewing options: “As most of the world is streaming now, users may not have DVD players or even televisions available.”

WHY STUDENTS STREAM

WHICH DISCIPLINES USE VIDEO MOST?

Social sciences	74.5%
Humanities	62.5%
Arts	35.9%
Preprofessional programs	23.4%
Hard sciences	15.6%
Other	5.2%

TOTAL RESPONDING: 192

SOURCE: L/J ACADEMIC LIBRARY VIDEO STREAMING SURVEY 2017

VIDEO STREAMING PLATFORM(S) USED

Films on Demand	68.2%
Kanopy	63.7%
Alexander Street	63.0%
Swank Digital Campus	39.5%
Ambrose Digital	20.9%
Other	30.5%
None of the above	2.3%
Don’t know	2.6%

TOTAL RESPONDING: 311

SOURCE: L/J ACADEMIC LIBRARY VIDEO STREAMING SURVEY 2017

Social science and humanities students use video content the most, while students in preprofessional programs and the hard sciences use it the least—despite the presence in the field of the *Journal of Visualized Experiments (JOVE)*, which specifically focuses on hard science. Librarians have found that nine out of ten students use the library’s video content as part of a specific assignment, while nearly half have used the content for entertainment or as part of a “flipped classroom.” About 40 percent will use video content as an introduction to a research topic, but students rarely use videos in later stages of their research.

STREAMING VIDEO ALLOWS FACULTY TO “OFFER CLASSES ONLINE THAT WERE IMPOSSIBLE IN THE DVD ERA.”
—A MICHIGAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

About 75 percent of faculty assign video content from nonlibrary sources for their coursework, with the majority (98 percent) directing students to open websites such as YouTube or Vimeo. Nearly

half have also assigned content from paid consumer sites like Netflix, Hulu, or Amazon.

Sarah McCleskey, head of resource and collection services with Hofstra University Library, Hempstead, NY, pointed out the unique challenge posed by popular streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, which provide original content to streaming subscribers that is not available in a different format. When it comes to this content, librarians “don’t have any way to acquire it or preserve it or make it accessible to users in a way that is legal,” she said. “There is no way that I can make the content accessible to someone teaching with it or someone who wants to study it.... I can’t license it.” This places barriers in the way of students and faculty who do not have access to their own personal streaming subscriptions.

Faculty may also assign faculty-produced videos that are not hosted by the library, or open access materials from other institutions, such as EdX videos.

COMMON CHALLENGES

Slightly over half of the responding libraries noted cost as the biggest challenge to providing streaming content. For the minority of academic libraries reporting that they do not offer streaming content, cost is the primary reason, although a small number also referenced bandwidth problems. Other common issues include copyright concerns and patron discovery of the resources (or lack thereof). Some librarians described difficulties incorporating streaming video into their catalogs and ensuring that patrons were aware of these resources. Only 14 percent of the libraries that don’t offer streaming video expressed plans to add it in the near future.

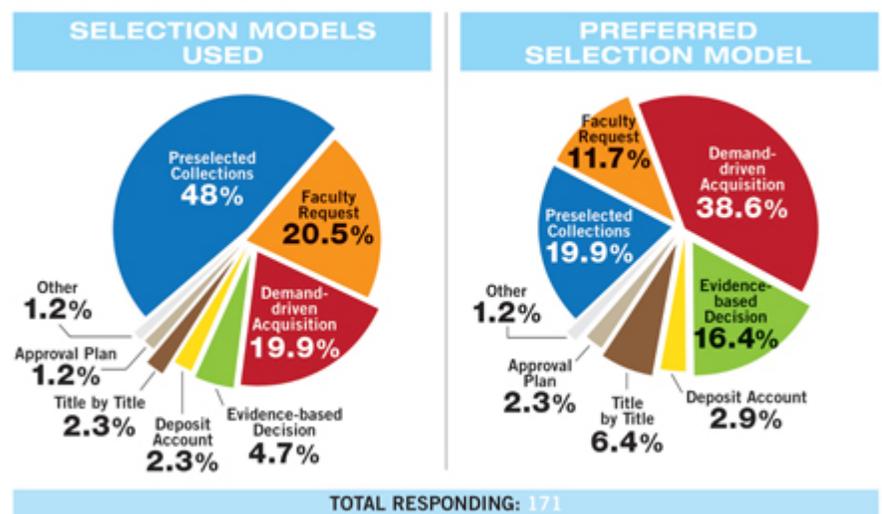
Some librarians noted resistance, from faculty and sometimes from students, to streaming technology. As a librarian from a private four-year institution in Kentucky wrote in the survey, for students there may be “a bias against using video content as a scholarly source for research.” Meanwhile, Charlene Baxter, public and technical services librarian at LaGrange College Library, GA, has found that faculty can be hesitant to incorporate the library’s streaming collection into

their courses, and “they still use YouTube to show clips in class [and] say it is easier. It is more familiar to them.”

For those who do offer streaming, lack of awareness and discovery issues are the top barriers keeping faculty and students from making greater use of these collections. For students, the top three methods of providing information about the library’s streaming resources are via the library website (91.3 percent), through one-on-one reference interactions (76.2 percent), and through information literacy sessions (69.4 percent). To keep faculty informed, librarians rely again on the library website (85.4 percent), as well as departmental liaison relationships, one-on-one meetings (76.9 percent), and email (66 percent). Students and faculty may also learn from signage in the library or elsewhere on campus, or from e-newsletters. Survey respondents told *LJ* that students also frequently discover videos through LibGuides (73 percent), word of mouth from a librarian (70 percent) or faculty (67 percent), or the library OPAC (69 percent).

As with any change in library collections, streaming video offers its own unique challenges and barriers to use. Overall, however, librarians responding to the *LJ* survey reported a strong interest in this kind of content, as many students and faculty in their communities find it to be a powerful tool for teaching and learning. For students raised on Netflix and Amazon, streaming video platforms fit with their lives and their expectations for how technology works—and how to work with it.

SELECTION MODELS



SOURCE: *LJ* ACADEMIC LIBRARY VIDEO STREAMING SURVEY 2017