

CAVAL Digital Interest Group

Streaming Media – Round Table Discussion

Wednesday 18th May 2011
Seminar Room 1
10am

The Digital Interest Group consists of a representative from each CAVAL member library.

Group meetings have proved to be a useful forum for the exchange of information regarding the management and implementation of access to and licensing of electronic resources in the member libraries.

The last meeting was a forum for round table discussion of streaming media.

The forum began with guest speaker Olivia Humphrey from Kanopy. Apart from offering DVD content, Kanopy also provides a streaming delivery service to Australian Tertiary Education Institutions. Olivia's presentation covered the services and features that the Kanopy streaming service offers, as well as pricing and licensing options. One of Kanopy's strong points is its browser in-built smart player that requires no installation or plugins to use. And a new feature offered by Kanopy is a clipping service, whereby users can take segments from different videos and create a "reading list" of viewing for users.

The next point of discussion was if any institutes were providing in-house streaming services. Swinburne University has one, but treat it more like a repository, while RMIT University has a set up dedicated to streaming in house content on a firewalled server, but is not a searchable system, and does allow downloading the content. Deakin University manage their in-house streaming content through their catalogue, as does LaTrobe University, although they have issues with harvesting data for copyright.

There was also a discussion on RequestTV – quality and issues. On the whole, academic institutes have noted no complaints from students regarding quality and resolution of videos purchased from Informit's RequestTV – this may be due to a "you-tube culture", being used to non-DVD quality. RMIT University have noted some concerns with regards to the quality of the DVDs – it is not up to theatre standard. It is uncertain whether the issue is a technical one, or a demand for a certain standard – if it is the latter, then it is not a vendor problem. If it is just for home use, then quality would not be a major concern. Kanopy could provide HD versions of their content if requested, but only if the supplier provides a HD copy.

Browser issues with streaming media can also be a problem. Swinburne University has noted issues with Kanopy and Firefox, and are documenting them for Olivia Humphrey. RMIT University tested Kanopy with Chrome, IE and Firefox, and have found streaming works through these browsers, after they resolved some access issues. There was an issue with watching streaming media via the Safari browser, which was rectified by ITS opening up certain ports. The Kanopy smartplayer doesn't require a plug-in, which is a welcome feature, since many academic institutes cannot change their SOE's for at least 3 years. It was noted that the VEA platform requires Silverlight, a Microsoft plugin that many academic institutes cannot easily install on public PCs.

It was mentioned that off-shore campuses might be a good topic for future discussion at meetings. It seems that vendors are treating off-shore campuses as a way of extracting more fees from an academic institute. If the off-shore campus is a commercial arm, then charging a fee is justified, but off-shore campuses in general should fall under the standard academic multi-campus rule. It is about usage of content, and not about where your students are. Licensing seems to play a part, as an example: Ebsco can't supply IEEE products to off-shore campuses because Malaysia has the license.

It was then asked if anyone was using streaming products other than Kanopy: for example, VEA or Informit. Swinburne University noted that a search via primo on campus yielded streaming results from Cengage/Gale, which were mostly business clips. Deakin noted that they obtain streaming content from Stat!ref. RMIT University had a problem with Stat!ref because of their maintenance fee.

It was enquired to Olivia Humphrey about the pricing and billing models. Kanopy employed. For example, Swinburne University would find it convenient if Kanopy could have 6 monthly billing systems. Or whether it might be possible to charge pro rata. At Swinburne University, the subscription policy is that products are automatically renewed unless otherwise specified. The group around the table agreed that one of the benefits of the Kanopy service was that media from different publishers was available on the one platform, and that it was also cost effective and flexible.

The last item on the agenda was audio books. It was enquired whether they could be available for text books or lecturer notes? However, most found that audio books seem to be more popular in fiction format. It was noted that sites such as Audible.com do not make most of their content available to Australia, due to licensing issues. If lectures could be provided as audiobooks or podcasts, it would be preferable for them to be downloadable. Deakin University already provides lectures as podcasts, however they have the issue that copyright notices have to be written, which is not possible on an audio format.