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Instructor Use of Educational Streaming Video Resources

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ABSTRACT

Although a substantial majority of academic libraries now provide streaming video, the literature contains few studies which focus on how such resources are used. This article presents the results of a qualitative research study consisting of in-depth interviews with 18 instructors who use of one category of streaming video resources, educational videos, which are important because they are sold a higher price than most individuals can afford, and thus are typically only available to instructors through the library. The study's main findings are that instructors think educational streaming video resources compare favorably to commercial and non-streaming alternatives in most respects and use them whenever possible, that the primary benefit of these resources is to facilitate better use of limited class time by enabling instructors to assign videos as outside-of-class viewing, and that the library is not the primary means instructors use to discover new educational streaming video resources. Additional insights are provided into factors that academic libraries should consider when deciding which resources to invest in, which acquisition models to pursue, and what marketing strategies to employ to ensure maximum usage.

Introduction

In 2013, Farrelly and Hutchinson conducted a national survey of academic libraries about the status of streaming video, which they defined as “video content delivered to computer desktops via an internet connection.” They found that 70% of all academic libraries were providing streaming video resources, leading them to conclude in an article published the following year that a “tipping point” had been reached (2014, p. 73). This was born out by a follow-up study they conducted in 2015 which found that the number had increased to 84.5% (p. 17); they also discovered that academic libraries which provided streaming video were spending an average of \$24,500 on resources of this type (p. 24). Despite the massive amount of money that this represents, virtually no research has been published which describes what academic library patrons actually do with streaming video. This glaring omission is, if anything, made even worse by the abundance of articles describing the creation of academic library streaming video collections and services, which combine to create the impression that individual libraries need to invest in this area now or risk being left behind, but provide little guidance on how to make financially prudent decision.

The present article addresses this gap in the literature by analyzing the results of in-depth interviews with 18 instructors at the University of Maryland about their use of one important category of streaming video resources, educational videos, which Franco (2002) defines as non-fiction titles which “contain information that is important for

educators” but are not “of enough interest to consumers to warrant distribution to the home market” and thus are sold at higher prices than most individuals can afford.

Literature review

Brancolini (2002) provided a thorough overview of video collections in academic libraries for Gary Handman's landmark work on media librarianship, *Video Collection Development in Multi-Type Libraries: A Handbook*, but touched only lightly on streaming video, which was still in its infancy at the time of publication. More in-depth treatments of this subject, including overviews of the history, prevalent collection and pricing models, challenges, and benefits of streaming video can be found in Enis (2015), Farrelly (2014, 2016), Ferguson and Erdmann (2016), Handman (2010), and Wahl (2016), who described “five key points to consider when choosing a streaming video database to add to your library's collections” (p. 11).

Extensive research into the prevalence of streaming video resources in academic libraries and how they are acquired, funded, and hosted was conducted by Farrelly and Hutchinson (2013, 2014, and 2016) and the Primary Research Group (2011). Similar, albeit less comprehensive, surveys of Australasian Universities and two different library consortia were conducted by Cleary, Humphrey, and Bates (2014), Allison (2010), and Bossenga et al. (2014).

Faculty use of moving images was investigated by Kaufman and Mohan (2009); Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2012); and Otto

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(2014). All three studies found that the library plays a secondary role to reviews and word-of-mouth as a resource for discovering moving images to use, and to online video sites and personal and departmental purchases as a resource for obtaining them. Kaufman and Mohan (2009) and Otto (2014) also found evidence that faculty use of moving images is increasing, and that faculty prefer to use video in web-based formats, although they identified many barriers to the more widespread adoption of streaming video as well.

Overviews of the research on multimedia as a pedagogical tool in higher education have been provided by Cruse (2006); Krippel, McKee, and Moody (2010); and Thornhill, Asensio, and Young (2002). A similar overview focused specifically on streaming video content was provided by Greenberg and Zanetis (2012). The literature on the role of streaming video in the online education environment was reviewed by Hartsell and Yuen (2006), and Shephard (2003) analyzed case studies to describe how higher education instructors use streaming video in the classroom in order to articulate a “research agenda” for investigating how it can support student learning. Osteen, Basu, and Allan (2011) built on Shephard’s work by reviewing the literature published since 2003 and adding three new case studies featuring streaming media to “serve as guidance for other higher education instructors considering using it” (p. 146). The use of “public online video” resources such as YouTube in higher education was reviewed by Anderson (2009) and Barnatt (2011), and the use of such sites by academic libraries was reviewed by Ariew (2008), Cho (2013), and Little (2010). Higher education student use of video was studied by Leonard (2015), who found that 79% of students voluntarily watch educational videos in addition to the ones they are assigned by their professors, but that very few of them look for these videos on the library website (p. 3). Student preferences for streaming video were examined by Tiernan (2015), who found that students valued it and wanted to see its use by instructors become more ubiquitous, and by Chao and Zhao (2013) and Cleary et al. (2014), who found that college students prefer streaming video to video in physical formats.

A thorough overview of all the issues related to academic library streaming video collections and services was provided by Duncan and Peterson (2014), and a brief summary of the same was provided by Garofalo (2013), who captured the immensity of the challenges they represent by asserting that “[w]hat might seem like a straightforward transition from DVDs to streaming media is in actuality more complex than the shift from print books to ebooks” (p. 294). Cottrell (2012) argued that academic libraries need to be aggressive collectors of digital video content or risk being usurped by IT managers. The discoverability issues related to academic streaming video resources was described by Hoover (2016). Experiences creating streaming video services and collections at academic libraries were described by Anderson (2015); Cross, Fischer, and Rothermel (2014); Eng and Hernandez (2006); Fountain (2011); Koennecke (2015); Laskowski and Teper (2014); McKenzie and Schmidt (2012); Morris and Currie (2016); Prosser (2006); Schroeder and Williamsen (2011); and Tucker (2013), and the creation of NJVID, a “digital video portal and repository” for the state of New Jersey was described by Miller (2013). The creation of a “moving image/hypermedia hub” at the Borough of Manhattan Community College was described by Coiffe (2014), who demonstrated that open resources like this offer a superior social return on investment to subscription streaming video databases.

Finlay, Johnson, and Behles (2014) found that availability through commercial streaming video resources like Netflix was predictive of higher circulation of library copies of the same title. Student access to commercial streaming video resources was investigated by Morris and Currie (2016), who concluded that providing access to feature films in streaming video form is not a good use of academic library resources. An overview of use-driven acquisition (UDA) plans for acquiring educational streaming video resources was provided by Shelton (2016), and a UDA program implemented by Simmons College and the University of Massachusetts Amherst was described by Erdmann, Ferguson,

and Stangroom (2014), who found it offered a significantly better return on investment than either a DVD collection or a purchased streaming video collection. They also reported having success in increasing usage through an awareness campaign. A UDA program implemented by a consortium of eight academic libraries in New York was described by Knab, Humphrey, and Ward (2016), who determined that usage was primarily driven by faculty and classes. Academic library UDA programs for streaming video were also described by Farrelly (2008) and Cleary et al. (2014).

The copyright issues associated with streaming video were discussed by Cross (2016), Duncan and Peterson (2014), Fountain (2011), Frunin (2012), King (2014), and Russell (2010). Cross specifically addressed the practice of using streaming video resources obtained through commercial services such as Netflix and argued that “[a] licensed copy of a streaming service like Netflix should be understood as ‘lawfully made’ for performance and display in a classroom just as a DVD borrowed from a library’s collection would be” (p. 14). Ezor (2013) took the opposing view, arguing that “teachers should be wary of using their own personal accounts, particularly those with restrictions such as those placed by Netflix on its users, to show movies and other video content” (p. 236). Association of Research Libraries et al. (2012) addressed the specific practice of creating streaming video course reserves and concluded that “[i]t is fair use to make appropriately tailored course-related content available to enrolled students via digital networks” (p. 14). Butler (2015) largely agreed, arguing that the use of videos in this way to teach themes, genres, or stylistic movements in film or literature classes should be considered a transformative fair use, and that all such uses have a strong claim to being a “non-transformative educational fair use” (p. 524). Besser et al. (2012) discussed the legal definition of “obsolete” under § 108(c) of the United States Copyright Act, which permits libraries to copy AV works for preservation, but not how this may or may not apply to other types of digitization activities.

Methods

Qualitative research methods “typically answer questions such as, ‘What is the meaning of...?’ or ‘What is the experience of...?’” and are appropriate when the main object of the research is to explore or investigate (Halpern, Eaker, Jackson, & Bouquin, 2015). The specific approach employed in this study is an adaptation of the applied thematic analysis methodology developed by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012), which was chosen because of its emphasis on “trying to answer research problems of a more practical nature” (p. 12).

Following approval by the University of Maryland College Park’s Institutional Review Board, a purposeful sampling method was used to select participants who were adults 18 and older, were current or former instructors at the University of Maryland, and had used a library-provided educational streaming video resource within the previous five years. The researcher recruited participants through two means: by sending a recruitment email to liaison librarians and asking them to distribute it to instructors in their subject areas, and by directly emailing instructors who had requested materials available in Films@UM, an in-house database of licensed educational streaming video content, through the library’s electronic media course reserves service. Because videos outside the scope of this study are available through the library’s electronic media reserves service, all respondents were asked to complete a screening questionnaire (see Appendix A) to confirm their eligibility; this questionnaire was also used to collect demographic information, including departmental affiliation and frequency of educational streaming media resource use.

Thirty-two people responded to the screening questionnaire. The researcher identified 23 of these respondents as being eligible for the study and contacted them to schedule in-depth interviews, which Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013) have defined as one-on-one conversations utilizing open-ended questioning and inductive probing to get at depth.

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