The Mass Market and Consumer Tools

Abstract

With a focus on feature films and their distribution to libraries, chapter 4 of Library Technology Reports *(vol. 50, no. 2), "Streaming Video Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Research," covers streaming platforms and consumer models available for individuals and spotlights some for-fee or subscription content available to public and academic libraries. The chapter also provides a list of useful browser-, mobile-, and tablet-based applications and web tools for using and developing online video.*

Popular Movies and Television Resources

Popular movies and television shows can be a tricky area for libraries and our traditional models of collecting. One copy per library no longer works, and keeping up with trends in popularity is a struggle. Very often libraries purchase multiple copies of a title to keep up with patron demand, only to have that demand dwindle in a couple of months. So what can we learn, or utilize, about the individual-user, consumer model of streaming products? The digital marketplace is a competitive and confusing place for consumers, so even if we are not utilizing the platforms in our libraries, it is helpful for us to know what is available to our users and some of the challenges they face. As libraries, we obviously have a different mission from the larger content distributors and corporations—Amazon, Apple, Netflix, etc.—but we can assist our patrons by thinking of such companies as competitors and providing similar resources on behalf of our communities.

The consumer market is now saturated with individual streaming products and licenses. These models are unlike the institutional or community models required for libraries, where the licenses support asynchronous and multiuser access to online resources. The streaming marketplace for libraries continues to evolve, while standards and demands from libraries are emerging. More streaming content providers are appearing for libraries and their communities, but licensing, content, and pricing all vary. To fill the gap between what is available to individual users and what is available as a site or multiuser license, libraries have become creative in getting their patrons access to streaming content—especially popular and feature film content, where the licensing and distribution can be more complicated.

Streaming for the Individual

Below are brief overviews of competitors and consumer content providers for the streaming video marketplace. Hardware and device capability vary, as does content availability.

Amazon offers its Amazon Prime members the ability to watch any streaming title in its Prime Instant library. Individuals must sign up for and pay for a Prime membership. Additional fees are charged for items purchased or rented outside of the Prime Instant library. Apps for mobile and game devices are free, but a paid membership is required for viewing.[1] Amazon Digital Marketplace also allows for the purchase and download of digital content.

Netflix offers a subscription service with unlimited streaming video content for a monthly rate. Netflix also offers flat-rate DVD-by-mail subscriptions.[2] Free apps for mobile and game devices are available, but a membership is required for viewing.

Hulu and Hulu Plus are online video services that offer a selection of popular television shows, clips, and movies. Hulu provides free content, while Hulu Plus is a monthly subscription service for additional popular film and TV content. Hulu Plus also offers the ability to stream items on mobile, tablet, and gaming devices.[3]

iTunes is Apple's platform for all things digital. A native application available on all Apple operating systems, it is also available for download onto PCs.[4] The iTunes Store has become a leader for mass market digital content available for purchase and download.[5] Unlike the case with streaming services, content can be downloaded to your iTunes library and distributed among compatible devices.[6] Prices reflect a purchase model rather than the monthly subscription model of a membership service like Netflix or Amazon Prime.

In addition to the above services, there are other competitors on the market. VUDU is another digital marketplace for popular films and television shows. In addition to storing titles for its users in the cloud, VUDU requires that users sign up for an account, and it prompts them to sign up using their Facebook account.[7] Through a partnership with Walmart Entertainment, VUDU also offers a DVD-to-digital service for a fee.[8] This allows users to not only purchase digital content, but also convert the physical materials to digital formats on the VUDU platform.

Department stores are also competing in the digital download marketplace. Best Buy's CinemaNow offers its users a cloud platform to purchase and store video content and to get digital versions of content purchased as DVDs at Best Buy.[9] And Target is the most recent department store to enter the streaming video distribution service competition with Target Ticket.[10] As with other services, compatible devices vary, and comparison charts about the services and devices can be very useful.[11]

Several of these platforms (Hulu, Netflix, and Amazon) are content creators in addition to being distributors. Content is still making its way onto DVD format, but these providers are licensing and retaining content to be as competitive as possible. As cable feels the shift to digital providers, the content creators are holding out for the platforms that are going to give them as many users as possible. For example, a TV show might have all seasons available on one or more of these platforms, or it might have the seasons divided among the platforms. A good example is HBO, which stayed out of the streaming market (besides iTunes) in order to create its own application and platform for current cable subscribers, called HBO GO.[12] This is partially how the market has become increasingly fragmented. In some ways, the Internet has been a great unifier, but of course, it is still an active marketplace of platforms and corporations.[13]

Public libraries are experimenting with device loan to bring streaming services to their patrons. The

Figure 4.1
CanIStream.it? results screen for a search for the film *Jurassic Park*

Ephrata Public Library launched a Roku lending program, which includes lending a device already loaded with applications and dedicated subscriptions to Netflix and Hulu Plus. This is a very practical and innovative approach to providing access to its patrons, but libraries must be careful to not violate the terms of service provided. In this case, library administrators took this issue into account.[14]

Issues of copyright and ownership, as always, are gray areas, but it is important to point out that services like Netflix streaming do see a role for their content in the face-to-face classroom. Instructors can stream Netflix titles in their classrooms if the institution's network supports it, though Netflix does prohibit capturing and downloading the streams for additional offline use.

Given the sheer number of providers and amount of content available, an excellent tool to help users navigate this very confusing, and at times frustrating, marketplace is Can I Stream.it? (see figure 4.1). Can I Stream.it? allows users to search for popular film and TV content and aggregates a list of digital providers with the available title in several categories: streaming (e.g., Netflix, Crackle), digital rental (e.g., Amazon, iTunes), digital purchase (e.g., Amazon, iTunes), disc rental or purchase (e.g., Netflix, Amazon, Redbox), and cable access (e.g., Xfinity, HBO). CISI is also available as a mobile or tablet app or browser plug-in.
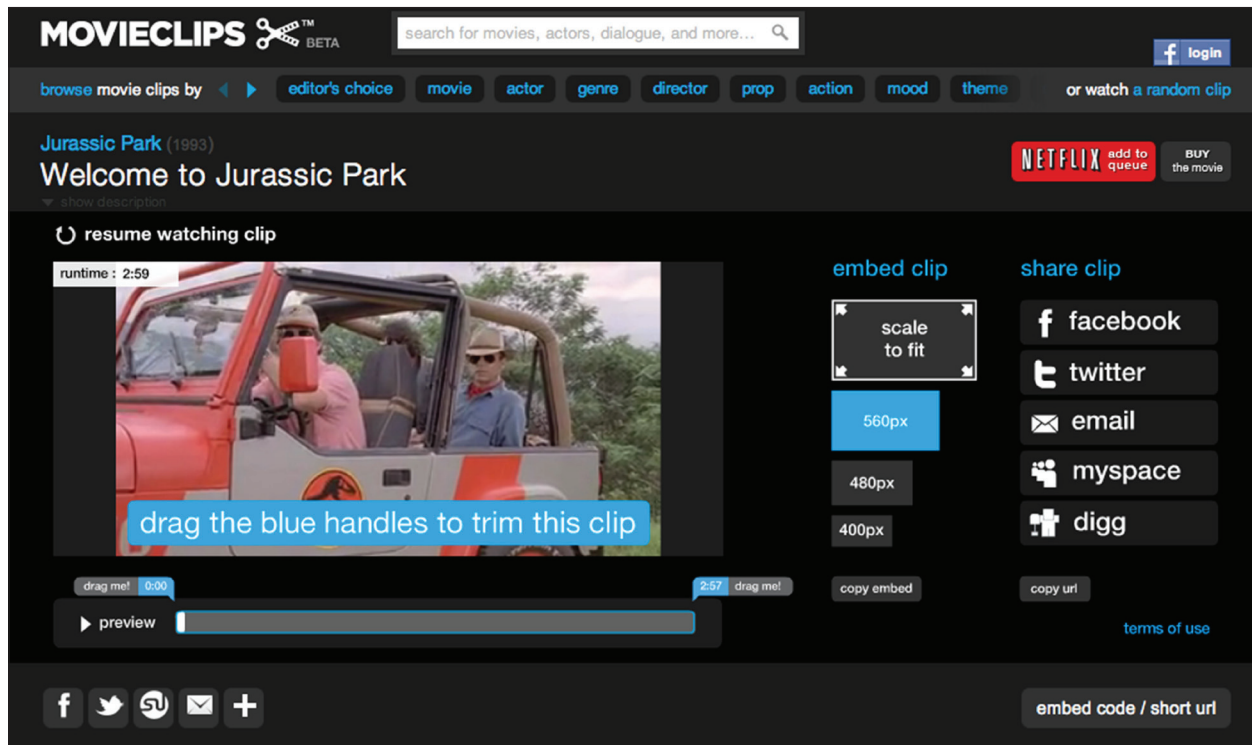
Can I Stream.it?
www.canistream.it

Figure 4.2
Example of MovieClips options for trimming, embedding, and sharing of clips (http://movieclips.com/cda5-jurassic-park
-movie-welcome-to-jurassic-park)

Another free site I highly recommend for popular and feature film content is MovieClips. MovieClips is a streaming video library and search engine of clips from popular movies. The great aspect of this site, as opposed to a user-upload site like YouTube, is that the clips and materials have been licensed by MovieClips from larger movie distributors, such as MGM, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros., and several others. All clips are limited to two minutes and thirteen seconds. Clips can be trimmed, resized, shared, and embedded into other sites and resources (like a learning management system). Since the content is licensed and legal, there is less of a chance of the clip disappearing from the site due to copyright infringement, and the website abides by DMCA (Digitial Millennium Copyright Act) regulations (previously mentioned in Chapter 1).

MovieClips
http://movieclips.com

Clips can be browsed by a variety of categories, for example, actors, directors, theme, mood, genre, prop, and action. Famous quotes, trivia, and additional information are available. Each clip is categorized by MovieClips content curators and is tagged with appropriate metadata.[15] In addition to the website, MovieClips is available as an iPad application, but the clips are in Flash format, and users need to log in with their Facebook account to use the app. MovieClips has a YouTube One channel. MovieClips also provides a great how-to on incorporating its clips into other sites, PowerPoint files, and presentation materials. MovieClips also provides a variety of options for trimming, embedding, and sharing clips (see figure 4.2).

MovieClips YouTube One Channel
www.youtube.com/user/movieclips

MovieClips: Embedding Clips in PowerPoint
http://movieclips.com/about/powerpoint

Streaming Video Models for Libraries

More and more streaming video resources are becoming available to libraries and their patrons. Again, the marketplace is complicated, but there are a few growing areas and models that librarians should be aware of when collecting for their users. Feature films and

popular content are still the most complicated for libraries, and they differ greatly for public and academic libraries. Licensing fees, subscription fees, pay-per-view, and one-time purchases of collections or individual titles are all models available on the market today. Streaming video is really an area that is still working out standards and best practices in terms of library collections. For this section, I am going to focus on content hosted by the provider as opposed to hosted by the library via its own streaming server. Many institutions are choosing to purchase their own streaming server and are also purchasing, hosting, and maintaining content on it. I don't feel I could do that area justice and give the explanation it needs in this chapter, though it is a popular and necessary model in many cases, especially for academic libraries.

One resource for academic libraries and institutions is Swank Motion Pictures Digital Campus. Digital Campus provides faculty access to course-related movies and titles, therefore providing students with the opportunity to legally view engaging films online via the learning management system. Libraries can license individual titles on a semester-long basis on behalf of faculty members and their courses. After a title is found in the Digital Campus catalog and licensing is arranged between Swank and the institution, a secure streaming link is generated for the faculty member and is shared via the library. Once the link is shared, Digital Campus allows faculty members to embed or link to the movie via the learning management system, as well as to create lesson plans surrounding the title, create custom clips, and timestamp different parts of movies in order to highlight important segments. This allows students 24/7 access to full-length feature and popular titles. Pricing depends on the length of time the title is needed, the number of classes, and the number of students. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the titles (feature and popular films), this is an expensive model, but one that is imperative for full-length feature films to be transmitted through a learning management system. The Swank Digital Campus catalog is not exhaustive, but it does have a wide range of documentary, popular movie, and television titles.

Swank Motion Pictures Digital Campus
http://digitalcampus.swankmp.com

One model for public libraries is the pay-per-circ or pay-per-use model of Hoopla, which is the digital content platform of MidWest Tape. MidWest Tape has been a physical media distributor to public libraries, and it developed Hoopla to compete in the digital market. Hoopla is exclusive to public libraries, and instead of providing a subscription service or charging annual fees, Hoopla charges public libraries by patron usage. This mode for digital content is becoming an increasingly popular cost structure for all libraries. Rather than spending money on large digital collections and content "just in case," the "just in time" model allows libraries to pay for content their patrons are actively using. Again, this allows libraries to forgo purchasing multiple copies of a popular title, only to watch the demand decrease within weeks.

Hoopla
www.hoopladigital.com

Patrons with library cards in good standing from participating public libraries can create an account on Hoopla. This account allows them to download free apps and plugins for a variety of different devices, browsers, and platforms for use on both PC and Mac products. The Hoopla catalog contains popular movies, television shows, audiobooks, and music albums. Patrons can rent the titles, and a title disappears from the cart when the loan period ends. The participating library can set parameters for budget, loan time, and loan frequency on behalf of its patrons. Hoopla requires sixty days' notice from withdrawal from the program.[16]

Swank Digital Campus and Hoopla are just a couple of examples of options for feature films. Most library database vendors for online video have multiple purchase and/or subscription models for documentaries and educational content. For example, Films on Demand by Films Media Group has an option for libraries to pay an annual fee or subscription based on users (FTE for academic libraries) to access its bundled video-on-demand content. These are quality academic and educational films in the sciences, social sciences, business, and humanities.

Films on Demand
www.filmsmediagroup.com/digitallanding.aspx

Alexander Street Press offers libraries an option to purchase its subject In Video collections with a one-time fee based on FTE, but with an annual technology and maintenance fee. Both Alexander Street Press and Films on Demand have excellent content with functionality, such as captions and video-synced transcripts. Synced transcripts aid in accessibility issues and allow users to perform keyword searching and navigation throughout the video (see figure 4.3). The systems also allow users to set up individual accounts in order to create clips and playlists, share content via learning management systems and other content management

Figure 4.3
Example of transcript and tools options from Alexander Street Press's Silent Film Online

systems (like LibGuides), and save a library of favorite or frequently used titles. ASP licenses content from vendors like PBS, Discovery Channel, A&E, and other providers to create video collections in a range of subjects—World and American History, Health, Nursing, Counseling and Therapy, LGBT Studies, Education, Meet the Press, and Silent Film Online are just a few. Alexander Street Press also offers a Best Practices tutorial for embedding its content into a variety of learning management systems.

Alexander Street Press Online Collections
http://alexanderstreet.com/products

Alexander Street Press: Best Practices for Embedding Media
http://alexanderstreet.com/support-center/resources/best-practices-embedding-media

Video Tools

Mobile and desktop applications have opened up the world of what librarians, educators, and technologists can do with online video. If there is limited functionality on a video player on a website, tools like Embed.ly
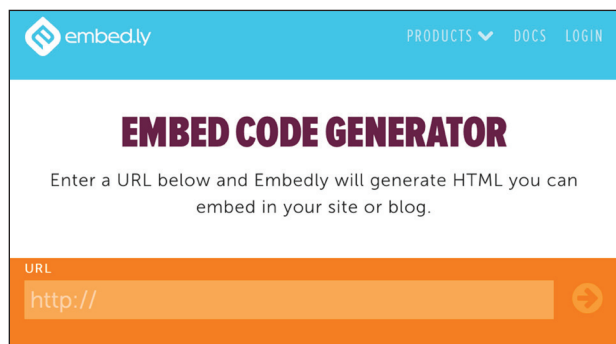

Figure 4.4
Embed.ly embed code generator

or Amara can help extend the use of the video in a learning environment. Embed.ly is a web browser–based tool that creates embed code from a video's URL (see figure 4.4). This way, if embed code is not readily available for an online video, Embed.ly will generate the appropriate code for embedding into content and learning management systems. Amara is a web browser–based application that provides translation and captioning to videos. Again, inputting a URL will create other possibilities and accessibility for a video that doesn't have these text-based options readily available.

Embed.ly Embed Code Generator
http://embed.ly/code

Amara
www.amara.org/en/videos/create

There are many video tools available for a variety of different platforms, but I have focused primarily on tools for Mac desktops and iOS devices, available from the iTunes Preview App Store. These tools not only help create video content, but also capture video content for teaching, learning, and research purposes.

iTunes Preview App Store
https://itunes.apple.com/us/genre/ios/id36?mt=8

VideoScribe creates whiteboard animation videos from a library of graphics, music, content, and drawing styles, or from your own drawings (SVG/Standard Vector Graphics format). There is a monthly fee for a VideoScribe license, but with annual or perpetual license options as well.

VideoScribe
www.sparkol.com

iDraw is available for iOS devices only. iDraw allows users to create images and graphics in standard vector graphics formats. These files can be used in conjunction with a tool like VideoScribe to create unique video tutorials. An alternative for PCs is Inkscape.

iDraw
www.indeeo.com/idraw

Inkscape
http://inkscape.org/en

Explain Everything is a video-capture tool that lets you annotate, animate, and narrate explanations and presentations. It records on-screen drawing, annotation, and object movement, and captures audio. Users can also import photos, PDF files, PowerPoint files, and Keynote files from Dropbox, Evernote, e-mail, iPad photo roll, and iPad2 camera. Export options include MP4 movie files, PNG image files, and sharing the .XPL project file with others for collaboration. This is a great option for creating lesson plans or innovative presentations. Currently, the application is $2.99 in the Apple iTunes Store and Google Play.

Explain Everything
www.explaineverything.com

VoiceThread is an application for discussing not only video, but text as well. Upload, share, and discuss documents, presentations, images, audio files, and videos. Over fifty different types of media can be used in VoiceThread, and users can comment on the uploaded content by using one of five options: microphone, webcam, text, phone, and audio file upload. VoiceThread can be shared with a group, kept private, or shared publicly.

VoiceThread
http://voicethread.com/mobile

Toontastic creates cartoons using graphics, characters, actions, and scenes. The app is geared for users ages 5–10. It empowers kids to create story arcs and scripts and design the action of their cartoons. The app is free, but users can purchase additional libraries of content and graphics.

Toontastic
http://launchpadtoys.com/toontastic

Streaming video is a fast-growing and complicated field for librarians, but as consumer culture and trends suggest, it is not slowing down. Libraries are in a unique place, not only to help provide the content for our patrons, but also to recognize and explain some of the tools they can use for teaching, learning, and research. Video tools and content give librarians, as teachers, new and innovative tools to use in our instruction endeavors—whether it is face-to-face or online. Knowing that this publication has really just scratched the surface of what is available, I hope it has provided some basics and encouraged the reader to be curious about video and some of the amazing resources available to librarians, technologists, educators, and our patrons.

Notes

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