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Being Earnest with Collections — Finding Solutions for Streaming Video at Cornell University Library

by **Jesse Koennecke** (Director of Acquisitions & E-Resource Licensing Services, Cornell University Library) <jtk1@cornell.edu>

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Column Editor's Note: *In the inaugural column of **Being Earnest with Collections**, the focus was on the **Charleston Seminar** that was held at the **Charleston Conference** in 2014. Two major topics of that session focused on eBooks and e-journals. The speakers focused on new purchasing models, sustainability of models and, in the case of journals, a move away from purchasing content in the traditional subscription model. This edition moves to yet another hot button issue, providing access to streaming video content.*

*At the **University of Central Florida** we spent a lot of time in the past several years migrating from VHS to DVD as the demand for video in the classroom continued to increase. When I arrived in 2006, the library was still purchasing VHS, and we quickly moved to a DVD-only policy. We had steady demand for DVD, and that continues today while at the same time we now face a myriad of issues that impact the selection and purchase of streaming video. We are reviewing purchasing models, availability, and licensing for various providers. There are so many factors that can influence the decisions about which platforms to support and whether to purchase subject collections, or title-by-title. We are also looking at leasing vs. subscription, and purchase with perpetual rights. So, when trying to be earnest with collections, what should libraries do? To answer that question I sought the opinions and advice from a colleague I met last year. We had a discussion about some of the exciting things his library was doing in the e-resources realm. I was happy to learn that he considered streaming video to be under the purview of e-resources. I later attended a presentation where he outlined some of the factors he is balancing while trying to navigate a very fluid environment related to the acquisition and delivery of streaming video and its future. We are fortunate to have his outstanding summary of the issues and his take on the future of streaming video. — MA*

Like many libraries, **Cornell University Library (CUL)** has relatively recently begun exploring and licensing streaming video. Since **YouTube** and **Netflix** revolutionized how individuals interact with video content, users have come to expect streaming as the primary delivery method for video content. Many new vendors have emerged, and existing ones have adapted their services in just the last several years to offer streaming video content to libraries and other institutions. Delving deeper

into this market at **CUL**, we have encountered many new licensing models, developed new workflows to address some of the differences between handling traditional physical media and streaming video, and have begun to consider how to address streaming video in our long-term collection development vision.

Streaming video is available to libraries through a wide range of licensing models. Many of these models are familiar to the library acquisitions and collection development world, though there are some aspects that seem unique to streaming video. Furthermore, the market is evolving, with new vendors and models emerging frequently. Among the more familiar patterns are database subscriptions, collection licensing, and title-by-title firm ordering. Features of streaming video that are less common to other types of library resource acquisitions include: local hosting of content and limited term licensing where previously libraries could purchase the content outright. The following three categories help to illustrate how **CUL** has engaged with licensing streaming video: subscription database, third-party hosted, and locally encoded and hosted.

Subscription databases provide access to large collections of streaming video content at a relatively low cost per title. These are generally straightforward for libraries to implement, with sources for title-level MARC records, IP authentication, remote access, and many other features that libraries have been accustomed to dealing with in database, journal, and eBook collections for years. **CUL** has been exploring streaming video subscription database collections since 2007 with *Theatre in Video* from **Alexander Street Press**, *Naxos Video Library*, *Medici.tv*, and the *BBC Shakespeare Plays* from **Ambrose Digital**, among others. These databases gave us an opportunity to experiment with streaming video collection building that may have broader appeal beyond the theater and music user communities they ostensibly serve.

Third-party hosted streaming video typically consists of term licenses (typically one or three years) with the streaming files and access managed by a vendor. This model offers a wide range of titles and acquisition options with vendors such as **Kanopy**, **Alex-**

ander Street Press's Academic Video Store, and **docuseek2**. Several of these vendors are offering flexible access and purchasing options including single title and collection licensing, demand- and evidence-driven acquisition models, and volume discounts. Additionally, new vendors and licensing options are emerging frequently, making this third-party hosting model seem somewhat like the wild west of library acquisitions. In most cases, the workflow for licensing these is much like purchasing a single eBook title or collection.

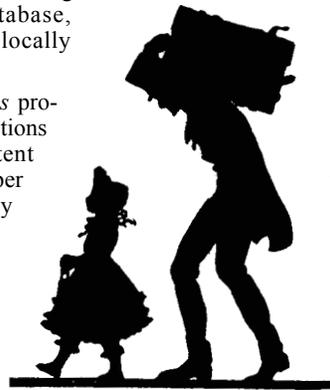
Due to the range of content available from these vendors, libraries can build very specific, targeted collections using third-party hosted content, although this will likely come at a higher cost-per-title than with subscription databases. Thus far, **CUL** has primarily been utilizing third-party hosted streaming video to fulfill faculty course content requests with costs ranging from \$70 to \$350 per title depending on the length of term and whether or not we can offer campus-wide access. We have worked

with **Kanopy** and **Alexander Street Press** for some of these, and with **Swank Motion Pictures** for feature film and television titles. We are considering one or more demand- or evidence-driven programs this year as a way to try to keep overall costs down while we identify the more important content areas for collection building.

The third category, *locally encoded and hosted*, is sometimes the only option for delivering certain titles in a streaming format. This involves licensing directly with

a producer or distributor whose content is not available from a hosting vendor or for which the library might be seeking special terms. Typical workflow includes obtaining permission to encode a digital file for streaming (typically ripped from a DVD or supplied as a digital file), uploading and storing it on a locally managed or hosted secure streaming server to the authorized users. This process requires a higher degree of technical skill and infrastructure than working through database or third-party models and is typically both expensive (\$100-\$300, often in addition to the cost of the DVD) and time consuming per title to manage. **Kanopy**, and perhaps other third-party vendors, have begun to offer streaming hosting services to alleviate much of the technical challenge in delivering locally encoded streaming video.

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Decoder Ring — Fireside Fiction Keeps the Stories Coming via Crowdfunding and Subscription

Column Editor: **Jerry Spiller** (Art Institute of Charleston) <yeri.spiller@gmail.com>

Boston newspaper editor **Brian White** started *Fireside Magazine* in 2013 to offer a venue for good storytelling. *Fireside* used **Kickstarter** to fund the print run of each of the first three issues in that first year.

Despite the considerable success in just getting off the ground, **White** quickly realized he needed to change his approach. *Fireside Magazine* changed to *Fireside Fiction*. Print changed to online and eBook, with a **Kickstarter** to fund all of *Fireside's* Year Two at once instead of per issue.¹ Year Three also saw help from **Kickstarter** (disclosure: I'm a **Kickstarter** supporter myself). In 2015, the small publisher is trying to move from its **Kickstarter** roots to a more fluid subscription system.

White repeats often that "**Fireside Fiction Company** has two goals: publishing great storytelling and fair pay for writers and artists."² To the second end, *Fireside* pays writers 12.5 cents per word, equating to \$500 for a 4,000-word story or \$125 for 1,000-word flash fiction. Each issue contains a mix of story lengths and genres.

The *Fireside* Website is a delightful reading experience.³ Each issue features wonderful illustrations by **Galen Dara**, who won the 2013 **Hugo for Best Fan Artist** and was nominated for the 2014 **Hugo for Best Professional Artist**.⁴ Story and art content are elegantly woven together by Web designer **Pablo Defendini**, with a responsive, Word-



Press-driven site (using Pressbooks) that lets the content breathe and flow nicely in layouts aimed at different device screens. **White** noted *Fireside's* desire to "return to first principles" with this design,⁵ following exemplars such as *The Magazine*, *Medium*, and the responsive design gurus at **A List Apart** in what designer **Craig Mod** called "sub-compact publishing."⁶ The approach has really paid off, putting the story content front and center.

The site is not just easy to read, but free. "By making the site free, we are hoping to draw in a lot of new readers who hadn't thought about giving us a try before. And we're offering multiple ways for people to support us if they are enjoying it, including subscriptions, Patreon, and recurring payments through Paypal, and Amazon."⁷

Fireside offers eBook downloads in .epub and Kindle .mobi format by email to the previous **Kickstarter** supporters, or for a Patreon pledge of \$2 monthly⁸ (for the uninitiated, Patreon is a crowdfunding platform that differs from **Kickstarter** in that support is not necessarily tied to a specific project or time period). *Fireside* promises an eBook store is coming soon, presumably extending purchases to users beyond Patreon and **Kickstarter**.

The current installment,⁹ Issue 23, features **Andrea Phillips'** short "Children of Rouwen," with more great art from **Galen Dara**. It also offers the seventh chapter of **Lilith Saintcrow's** "She

Wolf and Cub" as well as flash fiction from **Renee Elizabeths**.

Stay tuned to *Fireside Fiction* not just for great short form storytelling, but to see what smart indie publishers are doing to get fiction to readers. 🐾

Endnotes

1. **Brian White**, "Fireside Magazine: Year Two," *Kickstarter*, March 5, 2013, accessed Jan 18, 2015, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/firesidemag/fireside-magazine-year-two>.
2. **Brian White**, "Fireside Magazine: Year Two."
3. **Fireside Fiction Company**, "Fireside: Many Genres, No Limits, Just Good Stories." Accessed Jan 17, 2015, <http://www.firesidefiction.com/>.
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7. **Fireside Fiction Company**, email to **Kickstarter** supporters, Sept 29, 2014.
8. **Brian White**, "Fireside Fiction Company Is Creating an Online Multigenre Magazine," Patreon, accessed Jan 18, 2015, <https://www.patreon.com/firesidefiction>.
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Despite the challenges, **CUL** has licensed a number of titles in this way from vendors like **California Newsreel**, **Women Make Movies**, and several independent filmmakers. We have developed a workflow for obtaining and processing the files. Our campus IT division manages a streaming server using the **Kaltura Video Platform** where we are able to upload streaming files to be accessed by either the entire **Cornell** community or limited to specific courses, depending on the license terms.

As interest in streaming video continues to grow at **CUL**, we have begun to more clearly define our selection and acquisitions workflow to both streamline our efforts and to develop a clearer set of policies for how we want to grow these collections. For course use videos, we

now have a relatively clear path to determine if a video is already included in a database collection, which hosting vendor might supply the content, or how we can obtain rights to digitize and host the streaming file ourselves if the previous options are not possible. This allows us to respond to faculty requests as quickly as possible while finding the least expensive or labor-intensive path to providing access to the end user.

We are still in an experimental phase in developing long-term collection development policies around streaming video content. The biggest hurdle we are facing in this regard is that there are few options for perpetual access or ownership of streaming video content. Subscription databases and term licenses remain the norm. Some individual producers and distributors come close to perpetual ownership with licenses that cover "the life of the file" or something similar. **CUL** has licensed several

streaming titles under these terms, all of which have required us to host the files ourselves. We hope to see more true perpetual ownership models emerge in the marketplace soon.

Are we being earnest? For the most part, **CUL** has approached streaming video cautiously. We are trying a wide range of options to see which ones fit best for our collections and community. If recent history is an indicator, **CUL** will continue to explore new options as they arise with an eye towards learning what our users really expect compared to what we can provide as a library. In such a quickly evolving marketplace, this seems like the most earnest approach for the time being. 🐾