On Air – Rich Media Streaming in Teaching

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Abstract

Synchronized streaming video-and-slides presentations are a good approximation for live lectures or talks. An archive of lectures and other events that can be retrieved on-demand from the web is an attractive alternative for interested people who missed the live event. In the year 2000 we started to produce synchronized video-and-slides presentations manually and it soon became clear that the manual production of such rich media streaming content requires too many time-consuming steps prone to faults. In some cases up to 20 hours had to be spent per hour video material. To overcome this problem, the rich media production environment PLAY was developed in collaboration with a software company and financially funded as an ETH World project (http://www.ethworld.ch). The server-based software PLAY allows for an automation of the production workflow for live and on-demand rich media presentations and thus reduces the production time to almost real-time.

PLAY was designed as a web-application, thus only a web-browser is required to moderate a streaming event. The video stream is generated independently using QuickTime Broadcaster or Real HelixProducer. The viewer as well only needs a web-browser and the QuickTime or RealOne video player plugin, no proprietary player software is required.

PLAY was introduced in January of 2003 and after a phase of testing it is now available as a regular service to stream and archive lectures, seminars, congresses and other events. Presently it is employed at both the ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich for two weekly lectures as well as for some other sporadic events. Recent examples of the products may be found at http://tokyolectures.org, and http://www.net.ethz.ch/sengstag/movies.html.