Delivering video streamed library orientation on the Web: technology for the educational setting

by Karmen N. T. Crowther and Alan H. Wallace
University of Tennessee Libraries
Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

As college and university libraries prepare to meet the challenge of delivering quality services to an increasingly divergent 21st century population, traditional methodologies for providing those services also are changing. The development of the Web has greatly increased the electronic options that libraries now have available for service delivery. Despite the fact that libraries have been among the first on many campuses to use new Web-based technologies, one such technology, streaming media, has been little used. Yet it holds considerable promise for instruction and orientation, especially to the burgeoning number of remote library users on campus and in distance education programs.

We envision a number of library applications of video streaming. For example, one of our recent projects is a brief introduction to the UT Libraries that serves as a public relations tool. It shows prospective students, their parents, or anyone interested in the Libraries the facilities and services available to our users.

Video streaming may also be used successfully in library instruction, especially for multisection classes with similar assignments. We are currently working on an in-depth orientation for our freshman English classes at the University of Tennessee. These typically serve as venues for an introduction to the library, the catalog, and database searching techniques. Using video streamed presentations for such basic instruction will allow students to view the orientation day or night, whenever appropriate or convenient. In fact, any user new to the library or wanting a refresher could view such orientation. It has the added appeal of presentation in a medium that is familiar to and liked by students. To accompany these streamed tutorials we are developing online quizzes to be completed at the end of the instruction. This library orientation project is the primary work we will be sharing with others during the conference.

For the future we anticipate applications of video streaming to library instruction for upper-division and graduate students, even for faculty. By using a video streamed presentation for general orientation, one that could be viewed before a classroom session, class time could be spent on more specialized needs. Tutorials for especially challenging research materials could be created as video-streamed files. Any or all of these video-streamed applications would be useful in teaching distance education students how to do library research. Even in-house training for student assistants or library staff could be done effectively with video streaming.

As campuses turn increasingly to Web-based instruction, we consider video streaming to be yet another way that college and university libraries can be visible and accessible to our students and faculty wherever and whenever they need us.