Recommendations of the Streaming Instructional Videos Working Group

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The Streaming Instructional Videos Working Group was formed to address the increasing use of video as an instructional tool by the faculty and staff of the Rutgers University Libraries. The group is composed of RUL members who are actively involved in video production. We are prepared to offer the following recommendations intended to improve the visibility and use of videos at RUL, to share expertise about video creation, and to encourage standards that will provide a better and more stable user experience for video users.

Scope: These recommendations apply to interactive, moving image materials designed for use at the point-of-need, created by librarians or staff working individually or in small groups. Instructional videos may address information literacy, library usage, and/or library staff training. Excluded from consideration are: videos longer than ten minutes long, including event and presentation videos; static instructional documents such as help guides or PowerPoints; and larger group-designed instructional tutorials such as RIOT or Searchpath.

Standards and Preservation: Currently videos are primarily being produced using either Camtasia or Adobe Captivate. Video is output in the Flash format. We recommend that this be the standard format for RUL videos, with exceptions only when required by specialized content. Specifications will be developed for recommended resolutions and file sizes.

RUL should house the videos on its own servers. This allows for long-term storage of high-quality files, and complete control over files. Systems has servers available for this purpose. Giving video creators access to a sand-box area for works-in-progress will facilitate the creation of videos, and make it easy to transfer the final videos to a production server. This does not preclude the distribution of videos through other third-party sites such as YouTube, but third-party sites cannot be viewed as reliable hosts.

It would also be useful to have space to post not only the videos, but also the associated development files used to create the work. Access to these files will allow others to update tutorials in the event the creator retires or leaves the Libraries.

RUL branding on works should be evident but not overpower the work. All works should contain the names of creators and either date created or updated, whichever is more current. The Rutgers University Libraries logo should be present at either the beginning or end of the work. A power point slide will be made readily available as a template for those creators wishing to use a template containing logo, name of creator(s) and date of creation/update.

Accessibility: Streaming videos will comply with RUL standards for accessibility as these standards are formalized. At a minimum, content creators will be encouraged to make text versions of their videos available, or point to alternative help material for those unable to use the videos.

Location and Distribution: There should be a central location for videos on the RUL website. This location would contain all of the “authorized” videos of RUL. We use this term loosely, as it is
important to allow individual freedom to create videos. However, videos that are listed on the RUL pages are in a sense endorsed by RUL, and will be monitored to make sure they meet basic quality standards and are sufficiently current. Videos from this list can then be linked to from anyplace on the RUL site where the video fits the context (database descriptions, research guides, FAQs, staff pages). A consistent video icon would aid recognition.

YouTube and iTunesU are two video repositories that have critical mindshare among the college-age population. It is important that RUL have a presence there. Rather than individual librarians posting YouTube videos, it would be more professional, and easier for our users to locate relevant content, if a dedicated Rutgers University Libraries channel were to be created. Content on this channel could be coordinated through a single contact person. Ideally, we could work with the official Rutgers channel on YouTube Education and iTunesU. Failing that, we could create a Rutgers University Libraries account that would aggregate our content. Note that neither YouTube or iTunes support Flash as a preferred format, so creators would also need to supply additional formats (e.g., MPEG-4) for these sites.

Awareness of instructional videos could be increased by including them in our regular marketing channels, such as the news and events on the RUL home page.

**Education**: A user's group should be formed, including a Sakai site with wiki and listserv that can be used to share tips and information about the software. The libraries do not have the staffing to create a training program, but sharing of expertise can help those who are new to the software and process. We should also have an internal staff page which lists projects that are completed or in production, and the individuals associated with them. This page would encourage collaboration and reduce duplication of effort. The Instructional Community of Practice would be another natural place to begin discussion and information sharing.

**Maintenance**: The group recommends that a small group (two or three people) be appointed to monitor videos. This group would provide a basic quality check for videos being added to the official list, and would advise video creators when their videos needed refreshing or replacement (for example, due to database changes, library site changes, or simply age), and also seek adoptive parents for orphaned works. The group will report on a regular basis to User Services Council.