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SAFARI Montage Wins Head-to-Head Comparison



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and all-important visual clarity in the classroom.*”

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STREAMING VIDEO OFFERS EASE AND FLEXIBILITY

The big issues? Visual quality, content information

If you're having a hard time deciding whether to buy more video equipment to accommodate the needs of both the VHS and DVD users within your school, then maybe it's time to rethink video access and delivery. For many, educational "video-on-demand" or video-streaming programs offer a unique opportunity to allow students and teachers access to a wide variety of quality programming without limited access to popular video programs, lost videos, or the need for multiple formats for different users within the school.

Time for a new approach to video access and use within your library program? Then here are a few video-streaming programs that might meet your teachers' instructional needs.

CCC! VIDEO ON DEMAND

New Dimension Media
www.ndmccc.com/vod

Grades K–12+

Cost Because CCC! Video on Demand is a server-based product, pricing is based upon the number of buildings, the server and content options chosen, and the connectivity between buildings. Server and content licenses start at \$2295 per year with an additional \$1 per student fee for buildings or districts. To learn more about a specific pricing structure for a school or district, complete your request at www.ndmccc.com/contact.

The Big Picture CCC! Video on Demand is part of New Dimension Media Films Media Group, which was founded in 1979 and acquired by Chicago-based Questar in 2001. CCC! provides core curriculum content to grades K–12 and is recognized as a major producer of classroom-content videos. Through innovative systems, CCC! not only provides video-on-demand but also live Webcast and iPod capabilities. Using an Intranet server, teachers and students have access to thousands of titles that can be played instantly without the need for buffering or downloading.

Videos may be bookmarked and teachers can create playlists that provide for immediate access to specific titles or subjects. Videos provided through CCC! also include support materials such as teacher guides and student activity and knowledge checks. Aside from video-on-demand, CCC! also provides users with the option to add school-produced video programming such as staff development presentations, visiting speakers, athletic events, and meetings to be archived for playback on demand.

CCC! provides programming that is correlated to state and national standards (as well as Canadian standards) and supplements the classroom curriculum.

Look & Feel Because this is an intranet-based product and is not accessible to the general public to examine before purchase, testimonials from those using the product are the best source for its true look and feel. From the CCC! Web site, testimonials include those from technology specialists and principals but none from educators or librarians—who may have a better understanding of content quality for videos.

Aside from the lack of content information available online and limitations on viewing the materials without access to the product, the technical aspects of the product look to be high quality. However, the content for instruction remains questionable. Searching the online catalog available through the Web site, general keywords such as "history," "plants," or "children" produced no results.

Video titles listed in the online PDF format catalog show that they are produced by New Dimension Media, AIT (the Agency for Instructional Video, which has been around since 1962), and the Phoenix Learning Group (which provides many of the well-known Coronet videos). Titles, grade levels, and producers are given, but summaries of the video content, run time, copyright dates, and summaries are not.

For example, a video entitled "Our Sun and the Planets" for grades 6–12 produced by New Dimension Media offers no other information. This requires additional investigation for those who might be considering the product for their schools. For a complete list of video content for grades K–8 or grades 9–12, go to: www.ndmccc.com/vod.

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Safari Montage
(www.safarimontage.com)

How It Works CCC! is delivered over an intranet through a server, and is available two ways: either as a single site model (Gold 1.2TB System) or WAN model (Platinum 3.5TB System). For LANs, bandwidth is generally 10Mbps, 100Mbps, or 1000Mbps (also called Gigabit or 1Gbps) and delivered over CAT-5 cable.

Videos have been recorded at variable bit rates depending upon how they will be delivered. For classroom presentations, the full screen video is encoded at 1.5 Mbps. This produces a near-DVD resolution, but for student viewing in a lab or a teacher previewing for a future lesson, the smaller screen encoded at 300Mbps works just as well.

The 1.2 TB Gold Server, designed for single building installations, can store up to 4,500 20-minute videos. The 3.5 TB Platinum Server, designed for large-scale district installations or those that will take advantage of adding thousands of their own titles, can store approximately 7,000 20-minute videos. Both servers come pre-configured and are true plug-and-play with nothing to install.

Once installed, CCC! provides access to 2,076 video titles for grades K–8 and 976 for grades 9–12. Videos can be shown on an individual computer screen, on a TV, or through an LCD projector. Because multiple users can access the same video at the same time (as many as 55 simultaneous viewings), CCC! offers larger districts the opportunity to provide curriculum content without delay. To learn more about specific requirements, media content, delivery systems, or server specifics, go to www.ndmccc.com/vod/captivevideo.html.

For Students and Teachers While the options to add locally produced video content provide advantages for some teaching areas, it is difficult to determine if many of the videos in CCC! are truly standards-based by browsing the online catalog. Through the list of titles available, it is obvious that the content quantity is limited compared to other streaming-video products. This, according to the company, is balanced by the quality of the programs, which are not choppy or grainy (common for many Internet-based video-streaming products).

Through CCC!, teachers can add their own classroom content such as school produced plays, guest speakers, projects, or newscasts, which can be useful for some subject areas such as speech, drama, English, and even athletics. This allows for individualized classroom instruction or review of specific content or project. Teachers can also provide instructional content by incorporating videos into PowerPoint presentations, Webquests, or learning stations that contain specific video programs or school produced programs.

For those teachers and students who utilize iPod technology, CCC! provides down-

load capabilities that allow students to access instructional videos through their iPods. This allows for flexibility and mobility for student access. In addition, for those schools that want to provide off-campus access to the video content server, homebound students will find that they can access online content through their home computers.

Grade CCC! earns a **B-** because of the “hidden content” of videos and the lack of information available online for those who might be interested in pursuing this product for instructional use. While the product hardware appears to be of quality, the primary reason for purchasing a streaming video product for most educators is the content. Additional information regarding content titles, content summaries, and copyright dates must be added for classroom teachers and librarians to be able to utilize this product in the classroom.

SAFARI MONTAGE

Library Video Company
www.safarimontage.com

To request information about the product or a titles list, go to www.safarimontage.com/requestinfo.aspx.

Grade K–12+

Cost Pricing involves the purchase of servers for either single schools or district-wide campuses. One-time purchases of servers range from the **Safari Montage T-400**, which is a four-bay tower costing \$2,495, to the WAN 1000, a ten-bay rack-mount server that costs \$12,995. (For information on server choices go to www.safarimontage.com/products/products/servers.aspx.) The content is an annual subscription and includes the choice of the K–8 package of 1000 videos for \$1,000; the 9–12 Core Content package of 1,000 videos for \$1,500; or the K–12 Core Content package of 2,000 videos for \$2,000. Content videos can be made available in either Windows Media Player or QuickTime, or can be provided in dual formats for an additional charge ranging from \$295 to \$495, depending upon the Core Content package selected.

For a list of the Core Content packages, go to www.safarimontage.com/products/products/content.aspx.

The Big Picture As the brother to the well-known Library Video Company, **Safari Montage** has become a recognized name among many school districts seeking to utilize video-on-demand programming within the classroom. **Safari Montage** provides a broadcast quality, plug-and-play video server that comes preloaded with educational programs from publishers such as PBS, WGBH of Boston, Scholastic, Weston Woods, A&E Home Video, Disney,

National Geographic, Sesame Street, and Schlessinger Media.

Programs in the Core Content packages are segmented and fully searchable to allow teachers, librarians, and students to access video content at specific points within the program. All videos in the Core Content package are also correlated to state standards which allow teachers to search for programs that support specific benchmarks.

Look & Feel **Safari Montage** provides a broadcast image that is clear and easily viewed by individuals at single computer stations or as a projected video presentation for large groups. Teachers are able to create multimedia lessons using the program's search engine, which allows results to be listed by relevance, alphabetical by title or publisher, or by grade level. Important descriptive information concerning the video is listed, so educators can determine if the film fits their needs before using it in the classroom.

Video titles contain grade ranges, run time, copyright dates, publishers, and brief descriptive information. Because the titles also contain key concepts and descriptive text relating to the chapters within the video, teachers can determine if the material is appropriate for classroom use. Once videos are selected, a playlist can be created to organize videos or video segments for immediate use or playback at a later date.

Teachers can also collect video segments, such as chapters, concepts, or clips from various programs and create new programs or playlists relating to a specific topic rather than viewing several videos within the classroom. **Safari Montage** also allows teachers to create their own start and stop points, fast forward, or rewind and replay video segments for reinforcement.

For schools that want to provide users with access to self-created programming, there is **Safari Montage's** CreationStation, an add-on server priced at \$1,495. This tool allows educators to include videos of athletic events, special guest speakers, or student-created programs in the network server for all to access. Formats available for self-created programming include QuickTime, Windows Media Player, and MP4 programs.

Finally, Additional Content packages that include Reading Rainbow, the Schlessinger Media K–8 package, and the Video Encyclopedia of the 20th Century can be added to the Core Content programming. The Reading Rainbow package (which is specifically geared for grades K–4) includes the entire collection of 148 titles and can be added to any Core Content package for an additional annual subscription of \$295. Schlessinger Media K–8 contains 350 titles not included in the K–8 Core Content pack-

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age in areas of science, language arts, social studies, and health and it can be added to any Core Content package for an additional annual subscription of \$350. And finally, the Video Encyclopedia of the 20th Century (for grades 7–12) provides 77 hours of primary source footage of the people, events, and issues in history from 1893 to 1990 and can be added to any Core Content package for an additional subscription of \$295.

For Students and Teachers The lists of quality videos contained in this product offer extensive instructional opportunities. Because **Safari Montage** is a server-based product within the school, it is easily accessible and provides the sort of broadcast quality content that many have come to expect in the classroom. With the ability to create personal video playlists of instructional content, teachers will appreciate the option of choosing those titles that contain the materials necessary to provide value-added curricular resources to their lessons.

For many students, the clarity of videos within the classroom is the biggest issue with many video-streaming products and **Safari Montage** offers a quality product in this area. Students will also enjoy the option of adding self-created video production programming for use and access within the school.

Grade Innovative and educationally exciting, **Safari Montage** deserves an **A+** for its quality of content, ease of use, and all-important visual clarity in the classroom.

UNITEDSTREAMING

Discovery Education
www.unitedstreaming.com

A free 30-day trial is available at
www4.unitedstreaming.com/index.cfm.

Grade PreK–12+

Cost Depending on the product package chosen, the fees will vary. An annual site license for Internet access and video streaming for most high schools will cost approximately \$1,995; an annual site license for K–8 schools will cost approximately \$1,495. Additional media packages are available for an annual fee of \$495 per building. Local hosting and network manager options are also available. Homeschool pricing and packaging is available for an annual fee of \$199 per household. For additional information on fees and options go to www4.unitedstreaming.com/publicPages/servicesPricing.cfm#.

The Big Picture Discovery Education's **unitedstreaming** is one of the largest K–12 “on demand” digital video applications on the market. With over 4,000 videos available from producers such as Discovery Channel Schools, Sunburst, Weston Woods, AIMS

Multimedia, United Learning, and others, educators and librarians will find that this program provides convenient access to some of the most popular educational videos available. Promoting itself as a standards-based product that has proven to increase student achievement, **unitedstreaming** provides educators with not only immediate access to educational videos, but also direct correlation to state standards.

Educators are able to set up individual accounts via their school's subscription and create their own profiles that contain assignments, quizzes, and writing prompts for students. To access and use the video content, you need Windows Media Player or QuickTime and videos may be streamed directly from the Web site or downloaded to a computer for later use. To provide closed captioning for a video, users must simply select this option within their personal preferences or within the individual video being accessed.

Look & Feel Discovery's **unitedstreaming** Web site provides the user with the option to select a specific title, if known, or search for titles by subject and grade level. Additional search capabilities include video segments, audio songs or sound effects, articles, quizzes, events, lesson plans, images, or clip art. A State Curricular standards box also provides users with the ability to link instructional content to the specific state or provincial educational standards for lesson plans.

The home page provides the Thematic Unit focus which can be used to promote specific topics to be used in the classroom. To the right of the page is a list of New Videos added; below that is the list of Most Popular titles. Teaching Tips and the Discovery Educator's Network links complete the page content on the right and provide users with in-depth resources to extend instructional programs.

While most of the content within the program is exceptional, the quality of the video display for both the online and downloaded versions is grainy and can be distracting to viewers who are used to the clarity of videos or DVDs played through conventional video equipment.

How It Works Teachers, librarians, and even students may access the contents of **unitedstreaming** through a unique username and password provided at the time of subscription. Educators can create their own playlists of videos or provide students with access to specific videos that they can access and watch via the Web site as an assignment or homework.

The Teacher Center area allows educators to create assignments, provide writing prompts for classroom use, or create or select quizzes for students to access online. The Curriculum Resources area provides an on-

line calendar that helps students connect the past to present through videos tied to historical events. The Lesson Plans and Thematic Focus areas contain detailed lessons with video lists and content links, which can be utilized by teachers to expand their curriculum.

Finally, the Professional Development area of the Web site provides Teaching Tips, Trainer Kits, Best Practices, Interactive Training, Project Demonstrations, and the exclusive Discovery Educator's Network (DEN). The latter allows educators to share their enthusiasm for education by submitting evidence of their use of technology in the classroom in order to achieve the status of DEN educator and have access to even more educational resources and promotional programs. Clearly, **unitedstreaming** provides users with a wealth of resource ideas and information to effectively use the product.

Webinar workshops and online training is available year-round. EdTech Connect Webinars provided by Discovery School include free Webinars featuring experts such as Alan November, Kathy Schrock, and Joe Brennan.

For Students and Teachers For educators, **unitedstreaming** is a convenient and easily accessible video-on-demand program that allows them to develop lessons with added multimedia content without extensive instruction in the use of various media equipment or software. Teachers can access the product from home or school; download all or portions of a video, audio, or image file; and immediately use the material in class.

Videos can also be embedded into PowerPoint programs to provide instructional reinforcement. Through the use of video segments, educators can streamline the media presentation time within the classroom by utilizing only those sections of content necessary for instruction, rather than viewing the entire film.

Because **unitedstreaming** provides the ability for educators to create online quizzes for students to access through the use of a pass code, both students and teachers can eliminate the need for paper and pencil for tests (or lengthy grading sessions, since answers provided during the development of the quiz also provide teachers with immediate test results).

Grade **Unitedstreaming** receives an **A-**, marked down only because of the lack of visual clarity. While most users would agree that the choices in video content and the ease of use are outstanding, many also note the video quality. However, as one of the first companies to provide video-on-demand within the classroom, **unitedstreaming** will remain one of the first choices for many educators as it continues to provide unique products, lessons, and programs through its parent company, Discovery Learning.