



NJVid Commercial Video Workgroup
8/28/08 – 11.00AM – Middlesex County College
Meeting Minutes

Present: Brian Richards, Jane Hutchison, Jane Sloan, Denise O'Shea, Laura Barrett, Mary Mallery, Greg Fallon, John Cohn, Tom Nemeth

Interface Possibilities:

Denise suggested that NJVid run an RSS feed that announces what is new in the Commons.

There are a number of possibilities that this workgroup could pursue with regard to an approach to an interface, each with its pros and cons:

1. When an end-user such as a student clicks on a link to a commercial video within NJVid, he/she is led away from the NJVid native environment to the vendor's existing video interface
2. All videos hosted by NJVid are viewable through an NJVid-tailored interface and feature set, so that the end-user remains within the NJVid native environment when watching a video
3. A half-and-half combination of #s 1 and 2 based on the fact that some commercial video providers can host their own content while others cannot. Videos provided by commercial vendors who can host, such as Intelcom, would follow option #1 above, while videos of vendors who cannot host their own content would abide by the principle of option #2. FMG and others can host their own content until NJVid is ready to take over hosting duties.
4. Implement options #1 and #2 simultaneously and leave the choice of access protocol open to instructors and other gatekeepers. Professors who want their students to take advantage of an existing commercial video interface would have that option, but professors who do not care about the various existing bells and whistles (including pre-created learning objects) could take advantage of playing videos with a stripped-down, global, "one size fits all" NJVid video playback interface.

FMG titles present an interesting conundrum for the group: According to Brian, FMG's video player can only playback WMV files on both Windows and Mac operating systems. (Brian will check the validity of this by investigating whether QuickTime files can play through FMG's interface on both Windows and Mac; if they can, then perhaps this discussion is moot). NJVid is not creating WMV files, rather FLV and MOV, so this presents a compatibility problem.

Update: Brian has spoken with Scott Wojtowicz at Films on Demand (formerly FMG) who stated that, at present it is NOT possible to play QuickTime files on Windows IF you are hosting the files locally via their

interface rather than on their server where QT does work on Windows. In fact they have not supplied QT files for local use. Also it has not been possible to run any locally hosted files since early this year as they have been redeveloping that service since removing DRM. Scott tells me that they will be reintroducing local hosting (while playing via their interface) within the next month and that then they will be supporting local hosting of QuickTime files albeit at 300kb/s while WMV will be at 300 and 1200 kb/s. There are also some 750kb/s QuickTime files available for some titles that we may be able to use also. We also discussed source files, and he said some are MPEG-2 and some are VOB.

Tom wondered why the link to FMG files within NJVid and an institution's OPAC can't just link to the file hosted on FMG's server. Brian and Jane H. explained that such an arrangement is not acknowledged in the FMG commercial video license agreement, since FMG would prefer not to host their own titles. Plus Greg noted that part of NJVid's mission is to preserve its videos, whereas there's no guarantee that FMG will do that. Mary also added that using FMG's commercial video interface might contradict NJVid's intention to use open source software.

Going the opposite route, if FMG titles were to follow principle #2 above, many of the existing FMG features would have to be stripped away, including its existing learning objects. Tom pointed out that institutions could recreate the learning objects within NJVid using NJVid's segmentation tool, but Brian said that was not feasible given the large number of titles in FMG's collection. It would be great if the NJVid interface could replicate all of features already available through FMG, but that would take a long time to program. It might not even be within the scope of the NJVid grant.

Metadata:

Brian asked if NJVid has an OPAC. The answer is that NJVid will not have an OPAC per se, but will index videos' metadata by which to search. Tom was not sure if this answered Brian's question, though.

Brian also asked if a metadata batch upload process is available. Nobody wants to spend hours adding metadata for each and every commercial video title in their collection. It would be much more convenient to upload metadata in one fell swoop.

What happens if an institution licenses a collection that has already been cataloged in the Workflow Management System? Can secondary institution in effect copy catalog the existing record, or at least as much as possible since they will unavoidably have to change data such as name of institution and rights information (e.g. license term)? Can a commercial video provider give MARC records for licensed collections to institutions that can be batch uploaded into the WMS?

As Laura noted, a problem with MARC record import and export is that the metadata fields that are currently being used to describe locally-owned videos are simplified to an extent that one cannot simply map a MARC record's cataloging to an NJVid WMS record on a one-to-one basis. The question then is whether or not the WMS can create a separate record template for commercial videos that is more in tune with traditional MARC record cataloging that will enable uncomplicated metadata batch uploading and mapping from institutions' OPACs.

File Formats:

NJVid wants to create or otherwise acquire an uncompressed digital file for each title that will function as an archival “master,” which will be preserved on the back-end. NJVid will derive the publicly accessible FLV and MOV from this master file. However, some commercial video vendors do not license uncompressed digital master files. Jane Hutchison will find out if she can acquire uncompressed files when she goes to the Media Market conference in late September. Will institutions be stuck having to retroactively acquire masters for the commercial titles in their collections? Jane surmised that acquiring such huge sized files will be costly.

If an uncompressed master is not available, then what is the second-best file type to acquire? Some commercial vendors give DVDs with VOB files, and Tom believes those files for all intents and purposes will be good enough. Isaiah Beard at Rutgers has said in the past that DVDs are the easiest media container format to work with.

Next Steps:

Jane will try to acquire a real digital file of a work and the group can put it through its paces by simulating the process of acquisition, ingestion, metadata, access, etc. During the process, the group will discover first-hand all of the issues that need to be worked out. The group can advise the DV Production & Upload Training workgroup as to how to instruct institutions to create videos as far as file format(s) are concerned.

Furthermore, hopefully the Authentication & Authorization workgroup will meet so that some of the authentication issues can be addressed. For example, some institutions do not use an LDAP to authenticate their users. Middlesex authenticates by IP address. How will Middlesex’s students and other institutions authenticate their users?

Tom suggested linearly working through the various scenarios that the group had discussed in this meeting. He can report to the other workgroups, such as the technical team, with the stumbling blocks that the commercial video group discovered and report the group’s preference of how to overcome them.

The committee meeting closed and repaired to the Skylark Diner for lunch.