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Critical Reviews of Web Products for Information Professionals

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Abstract
SAGE Video’s Communication and Media Studies collection is described and reviewed with regard to SAGE’s new video platform and video content for an important subject area of the social sciences.

Pricing Options
SAGE Video is available for lease or purchase. Pricing for an academic institution is based on FTE, and discounting may be available based on consortium associations or current promotions. For specific pricing requests, please contact your local SAGE sales manager or <librarysales@sagepub.com>.

Product Description
Communication and Media Studies is one in a series of streaming video collections focused on the social sciences and delivered on SAGE Video. SAGE Publishing is a leading publishing company for the social sciences developing its own authors and partnering with major academic and information providers.

SAGE Video debuted in 2015 as a many-featured, state of the art streaming service offering content curated for undergraduate teaching and learning and for serving academic research. At the platform level it supports 1,600 videos and 400 hours of teaching materials, covering not only communication and media studies but also education, counseling, and psychotherapy. Much of the content is original, commissioned by SAGE of its many authors. Other content partnerships are with notable providers in the social sciences including the Media Education Foundation, BBC Worldwide, Siren Films, and CPCAB (The Counseling Channel). Learning approaches include the documentary, in practice case studies, raw observational footage, interviews, and tutorials.

Content is fully indexed with special emphasis on performers and their roles, the teaching goal, and topical data. MARC records are available for the online catalog. Indexing is also optimized to work with the major discovery services.

Content design criteria is focused on evidence based matching of social science curricula and the teaching content needs of practicing or teaching social scientists.

Some 500 videos now make up the Communication and Media Studies collection. These videos cover a wide range of instructional, tutorial, definitional, and case studies covering the major theories and research in communication and media studies.

Videos can be streamed to devices familiar to library users. The platform is built on HTML 5 and its post-Flash environment. Non-HTML 5 browsers use a flash fallback option. The program senses a user’s device settings and adjusts appropriately for the available media software and bandwidth. An array of streaming bit rates are supported, from 500 KBS to 2,500 KBS. Videos will display well on Smartphones and desktop displays.

By the end of 2015 SAGE Video and SAGE Knowledge, SAGE’s platform for book and reference collections, will be fully integrated. Users will be able to search and access SAGE’s substantial collections of social science content in a variety of formats.

SAGE usage data is compliant with Project Counter 4. Content is licensed and hosted by SAGE. Options are available to purchase video content in perpetuity. SAGE produces roughly 60% of its video and partners or licenses the remaining 40%. SAGE plans to maintain these ratios.

FIGURE 1  SAGE Video Program Display
Critical Evaluation

SAGE Publishing is a leading provider of social science journals, edited monographs, monographs, and now instructional video content. It has entered the market after nearly a decade of the rapid development of online learning.

This timing may pay off. Over the years, SAGE has built a solid reputation in social sciences publishing. Like many academic publishers, SAGE deployed its resources conservatively slowly evolving from its print heritage. This included the familiar print only, print + online, online only, comprehensive pricing (the big deal), and consortium pricing.

The forthcoming integration promises interesting integration of SAGE products on a platform that makes sense for today’s users—mobile access, streaming video, discovery indexing, and searching. We await the options this integration will bring to affordable content and excellent user experience.

SAGE’s Communication and Media Collection as a streaming platform contributes much to needed learning tools for the social sciences. Online programs will benefit from focused tutorials and instruction which help define and expand the student’s understanding of these important disciplines.

SAGE wisely relies on its authors and evidence-based matching of authors and their expertise to required curriculum topics. Just a brief foray into the platform retrieves videos that define key social science concepts, models, and theories that provide the entry and advanced student with overviews or case studies.

Searching is easy. Each learning object is exhaustively indexed by criteria relevant to how social science content is understood. For example, a search on “compliance gaining messages,” one of the first major research areas in communication studies, retrieves definitional, theoretical, and applied studies videos that in a few minutes locate this topic in the field.

Convenient and easy searching of complex topics is especially important. Faculty and course designers must create relevant courses from relevant content that deploys easily and readily online. SAGE’s excellent metadata and a search engine that matches this metadata in easily understandable and used search interfaces increases discovery and use (Figure 3).

The user interface is feature rich. It comes with functions we expect: citation formatting, favorites, embed, and sharing via e-mail, and social sharing like Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, and Pinterest.

Also notable is SAGE’s extensive Help, including Webinars, tutorials, and online information. A few minutes with the onsite Help rewards the user; even more time spent with the Webinars brings the user up to speed with the platform’s many learning features.

Particularly impressive, suggesting diligent attention to quality and scope of metadata, is the search engine’s Related Content feature. Used to the recommendation features of consumer Web sites like Netflix and Amazon, the bar is set higher for library products and their capacity and ability to refer the user to related relevant material. The SAGE Video platform performs well at expanding results. We can attribute this to the company’s grasp and deployment of metadata.
The videos are time efficient mostly employing a speaker intercut with text that emphasizes major points. A streaming transcript runs real-time on the screen allowing the student to read along or even scroll back in the transcript with a corresponding scroll back in the visuals. The platform has a clipping feature that allows users to save and re-purpose video segments.

Conclusion

This review focuses on the Communication and Media Studies, a streaming video collection on the SAGE Video platform. On its own, it constitutes a good platform to distribute relevant learning content to general student populations and online students. The platform incorporates state of the art video streaming techniques and has the look and feel of a commercial platform like Vimeo.

SAGE has also done an outstanding job at rollout. The product’s editorial purpose and features are well explained in product literature and on the SAGE Video Web site.

What remains to be seen is how SAGE builds content as times goes on. Its editorial board as it stands and is currently conceptualized promises a smart and timely approach to new content. The use of SAGE authors stands out as a good way to assure content development and high creative standards. SAGE’s ownership of content is promising, as it will guard against content loss that plagues providers who simply license content. Some good questions for SAGE would be, how stable is its partner content and what provisions are in place to protect or replace partnership content when it goes away? Will it be able to maintain video collections while at the same time providing affordable and meaningful growth?

My sense and hope is that they will.

Contract Provisions

Contract language reads consistently with common licensing agreements now in use at large in academic libraries. No special terms are introduced to address the often sensitive market concern related to licensing streaming media. Because SAGE owns most content they mainly control terms and conditions of use.

Authentication

SAGE Video supports IP authentication, Shibboleth, and other industry practices.

Author’s References


About the Author

**Dennis Brunning** is a librarian at Arizona State University. He currently directs the Design Library which supports architecture and design studies at Arizona State University Herberger Institute for the Arts and Design. Dennis has over thirty years library experience and focuses on library technology, information retrieval theory, practices, and history. Dennis is currently contributing editor to *The Charleston Advisor* and the author of many interviews with industry professionals published in *TCA*. He is also a columnist for *Against the Grain*. ■