

## Using ePresence for video streaming, marketing, and information literacy at Seneca College



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With the rise of YouTube, DivX and other tools that enable video sharing, students are now regularly using video for research, entertainment and to demonstrate their own creative aspirations. As a result, libraries are looking for ways to provide access to online video content to support multimodal learning.

Until recently, Seneca Libraries only offered the traditional VHS/DVD borrowing model. We had tested YouTube's video streaming capabilities, but, beyond hosting some of our promotional materials, it didn't meet our needs to provide full online video services. Luckily, last year, our Academic Computing Services (ACS) department implemented ePresence. ePresence is an open-source webcasting software that was developed at the Knowledge Media Design Institute (KMDI) at the University of Toronto. The software not only provides video streaming but can also show digital slides along with a recorded lecture. As the speaker talks the slides progress from one to the next, synchronized with the lecture (see *image at right*). We decided to test ePresence to stream our video content.

### Streaming Licensed Content

Faculty are increasingly looking for streaming videos to use in their classes. ePresence's ability to

password protect and even hide videos from public view gives us the flexibility we were seeking. We began a pilot with a faculty who had been trying to use videostreamed clips from PBS, YouTube and other sites and was experiencing immense frustration because of bandwidth prioritization imposed by the college. We were able to trial a full documentary and several news segments that he streamed within his class from ePresence. He also provided links to the videos in his BlackBoard course so students could review them before exams.

Feedback from the faculty was positive – streaming the video in-house was reliable and fast. In addition, he noted that students used the video as a study tool, apparent by the large number of students referring to the videos in their exam answers.

Obtaining licensing rights to stream video content was tricky and cumbersome. Most video publishers were unprepared to deal with our need for in-house video streaming and instead

wanted to host the videos on their own servers. Each of our requests to store and stream a video was met with a variety of answers and sometimes lead nowhere; however, we still hope to pursue more streaming video content in the future.

### Creating Video Content in the Library

The other aspect of video that was of great interest to us was to create our own video content. We found that creating professional videos required us to become familiar with an area we had previously known virtually nothing about: video production.

For our pilot we enlisted two other librarians besides ourselves, Saira Mall and Mara Bordignon. Our main goal from the beginning was to create a series of short, interesting vignettes of 5 minutes or less that focused on one topic rather than trying to deliver a full lecture.

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The screenshot displays the ePresence interface. On the left, a video of a speaker is shown. On the right, digital slides are displayed, including a search results page for 'Google (and other search engines)'. The interface includes a 'Table of Contents' on the left, a 'Library: Lexis/Nexis' section on the right, and a 'Timeline for video' at the bottom. Red arrows point to the video, the slides, the timeline, and the search bar.

**video of speaker**

**digital slides**

**select which slide to view**

**timeline for video**

## ePresence at Seneca College

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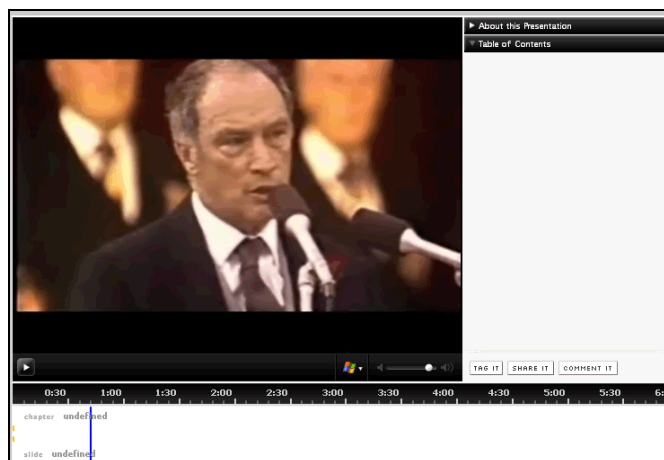
Saira presented an information literacy session titled *News and the Internet: Search Tool Comparisons*. One of our faculty liked it so much that he decided to show the video to his class, re-create the searches live, and discuss the results. View the video: [http://epresence.senecac.on.ca/archives/2007\\_nov29\\_633319484771718750/?archiveID=91](http://epresence.senecac.on.ca/archives/2007_nov29_633319484771718750/?archiveID=91).

Jennifer created two promotional videos, one for the new Seneca Libraries E-reserves service and one for the new Plagiarism Tutorial. Mara recorded a brief video comparing Wikipedia, Google and databases, and Jane demonstrated how research skills could be useful in everyday life, using travel planning as an example.

Throughout the production of these videos we worked closely with three Audio-Visual technicians to determine the best methods for recording, lighting, staging and sound. We started with a camera, a tripod, a wireless microphone and a whiteboard, then we tried a rear-projection set-up in a recording studio at the Seneca@York Campus. Our next attempt will probably involve blue screen technology.

In addition, we looked for advice on how to appear professional on-screen, including clothes, hair, make-up, eye contact, speech and tone. Some articles suggested to wear heavier make-up, neutral colours and a buttoned or zipped shirt (so they have a place to clip the microphone). This is just the tip of the iceberg for things to consider when appearing on-screen. Who knew it was so complicated?

We found that one of the biggest challenges of creating your own video content is the editing process. We rely heavily on the expertise of



Early days of our licensed video streaming collection



Jennifer's video included a touching tale about a student who is struggling to keep up with his school work (starring Michael Klein, a Seneca tutor, as the student, and Autumn Piette, a Seneca library technician, as his wife).

the audio-visual staff who are always fully booked. Once the video is written, rehearsed and recorded (which in itself takes a while to complete), it is a waiting game for when the audio-visual technicians can find a free moment to work on your film.

Another challenge is, well, YOU ARE BEING RECORDED! It doesn't matter how many times you have given a talk in public, being recorded is a completely different experience. Looking into the black hole of the camera, watching your peers watch you, having to repeat

what you've just said eight or nine times until you get it perfect, wow! We have a whole new respect for newscasters and actors.

Although we are still in the experimental stages of our ePresence project (and our film careers) we feel that ePresence has great potential to enable us to reach out to our faculty and students and provide them the video content they so desire.

