ACCESSING THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA THROUGH ITUNES UNIVERSITY (BEYOND THE CAMPUS)

Searchers Working Paper 4

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The Searchers

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Summary
This paper provides an indication of the potential of iTunes University (beyond the campus) for the State Library of Victoria (SLV) to serve its users. It concludes with an outline of how the Searchers project could add value to any SLV involvement with iTunes University (beyond the campus).

Background
In recent years, the State Library of Victoria (SLV) has shifted its focus from printed material to digital resources, with the intention of expanding its holdings of electronic and multimedia resources. Acknowledging that this move enables the Library to increase the range of resources available to its users and offers users with the potential to access the collection from anywhere, at any time, it is the Library's intention to continue to move in this direction. (State Library of Victoria's Collection & Resources Development Policy, available at www.slv.vic.gov.au).

Changing internet use
The speed of Internet connections in Australia has been increasing. In 2007-2008, almost four fifths (78%) of home internet connections were broadband (ABS 2008a) and by June 2008, 43% of all internet subscriptions had connections with download speeds of at least 1.5Mbps (ABS 2008b).

Increased internet connection speeds mean that internet users are routinely accessing audiovisual content online. In 2007, half of internet users downloaded or listened to music online, almost one fifth (19%) downloaded or watched video every week, and more than a quarter of users (27%) listened to a radio station online. (Scott et al 2008). These figures are rapidly increasing. YouTube first appeared in 2005 yet by the end of 2008 had achieved the status of being the 3rd most visited website worldwide (Source: www.alexa.com). Approximately 15% of website visits by Australian internet users are to YouTube (Source: www.hitwise.com).
This paper is about the potential of iTunes University (beyond the campus). However, given the enormous popularity of YouTube, it is necessary to explain the differences between a video-sharing site such as YouTube and iTunes University.

**YouTube and libraries**

It is impossible to know how many libraries have YouTube accounts and are establishing channels on YouTube as a means for making audio-visual content available. However, a survey of libraries found that 9% of US libraries had posted videos about their library, its building, grounds, and special events on YouTube; a further 16% intended to do so within the next year (Primary Research Inc 2008).

In Australia, the State Library of Queensland has posted a mixture of digital stories, interviews and material relating to the collection and material relating to the library building. The number of views of the material is relatively small, generally in the order of hundreds of views. In contrast, two YouTube videos of performances at the National Library of Australia Staff Party have each attracted more than 10,000 views. This disparity is a reflection of the general nature of YouTube and YouTube use. As Burgess and Green describe, a particular attraction of YouTube is the user-created content, the “weird, wonderful, and trashy vernacular” (Burgess and Green 2008:8).

This provides some risks for libraries placing their material on YouTube. As well as the possibility of lurid advertisements appearing alongside the content, there is no filtering of the content. The most innocuous searches can turn up adult content. Moreover, there is no control over use of the library brand. For example, a search for ‘State Library of Victoria’ yields a clip with that title that consists of thirty-nine seconds of footage of a tabby cat called Scruffy.

YouTube does not present content in a neutral way. The design of the YouTube website guides user interpretation of the content with popularity metrics such as the number of views, ratings and text and video comments alongside the content. (Burgess and Green 2008)
iTunes

Both iTunes (store) and YouTube are enormously popular sources of audiovisual content. This content can be downloaded directly to an internet enabled mobile device or downloaded to a computer and then synced to a portable listening/viewing device (eg mp3 player) where it can be listened to ‘on the go’\(^1\).

However, iTunes is based on a completely different model to YouTube. Rather than being contained in a website, iTunes is a software application that establishes a direct link to the iTunes store. Whereas YouTube enables anyone to easily upload content, content in the iTunes store is only there by prior agreement with Apple. So while YouTube is best known for user-generated content, iTunes is known for its catalogue of music, audiobooks, movies, games, applications and TV shows. At present, the only movies available on iTunes are those from Hollywood studios that have a deal with Apple. Similarly, the only music available is from artists signed to record companies that have a deal with Apple. iTunes University (iTunes U) is a section of the iTunes store that hosts content from participating educational institutions and iTunes U (beyond the campus) is a section of iTunes U that contains content from participating cultural institutions.

Unlike YouTube, iTunes does not have any aspects of a social networking site. iTunes U gives providers the ability to add password protection to content and gives users the ability to subscribe to content using RSS. So for example, if a user subscribes to a particular series of lectures on iTunes U, new material is automatically downloaded to a user’s device as soon as it becomes available.

Because iTunes is not a website and Apple do not release detailed statistics on downloads, the usage figures cannot be compared to YouTube. However, it is known that iTunes is extremely popular. In mid 2005, Apple released a version of iTunes which enabled podcast subscriptions. Within two days, users had subscribed to more than one million podcasts. According to Apple, when universities place identical educational content on YouTube as well as iTunes, the number of downloads from iTunes greatly exceed the number of downloads from YouTube.

\(^1\) Additional software is required to download YouTube videos.
iTunes University – beyond the campus
In Australia, seven universities (including Swinburne) are involved in iTunes University (iTunes U), a new way of disseminating educational material through the iTunes store/software. As yet, no cultural institution in Australia is using iTunes, although the ABC has some of their popular TV shows available on the main iTunes Store (some free, some for a small fee).

In America, however, there are several cultural institutions involved in iTunes University (beyond the campus). These include the Smithsonian, the Brooklyn Museum and the New York Public Library.

The Smithsonian has a range of podcasts including audio profiles from the National Portrait Gallery; these are curatorial and historical analyses of portraiture, historical events, and historical figures. Brooklyn Museum has audio and visual content relating to exhibitions and their collection.

Example 1: New York Public Library
The content of the New York Public Library (NYPL) will be described in more detail to give an indication of how iTunes U works. The New York Public Library is comprised of four research libraries (similar to SLV) and community branch libraries (like the Victorian Public Library Network). Figure 1 shows a screen photo of the NYPL’s ‘menu page’ in the iTunes store. From here, one can delve directly into the NYPL content that is available free on iTunes. It is organized under the main headings Events, Archival Collections and NYPL Channel and summarized below:

Events
- Center for Scholars and Writers
  - Content from a fellowship program - including interviews with authors (some almost two hours long)
Figure 1: The New York Public Library at the iTunes Store

- Live from the NPYL
  - Digitisation of audio recordings of lectures and interviews presented as part of its public education program series.

- Public Education Program

- Children’s Events

- Performing Arts

- Small Business (NYPL has a NYC Small Business Resource Center)
  - Videos and podcasts on a range of topics such as ‘Tips for Opening and Running A Restaurant in NYC’.

- Learn@NYPL
  - This includes lectures and classes taught by library staff members. According to the NYPL, ‘These offerings are part of the library’s mission to make available to the public, educational programs of the highest quality’. An example is a five minute movie on ‘How to research a Building in NYC’.
• Periodically Speaking
  o A reading series for “emerging writers to present their work while highlighting the riches of literary magazines in New York City and the magazine collections of The New York Public Library.

• Teen Programs
  o Only some of these have been put on iTunes. There are many more downloadable as mp3s on the relevant library webpage.

Archival Collections
• Oral history interviews with black jazz musicians
• Audio-visual footage – for example, H. Earl Hoover’s Home Movies from the 1939 NY World Fair
• Performing Arts Archives

NYPL Channel
• About the NYPL – a 23 minute movie
• LGBT@NYPL
  o An initiative ‘to connect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities with the exciting resources, services, and expertise that the NYPL has to offer’.
• NYPL supporters
  o Recordings of addresses by donors of the library; for example, the Treasury Secretary speaking on “The State of Capital Markets and the Economy”

Each content page on iTunes U has links to related NYPL webpages. Apple releases statistics to content providers on iTunes, and there is the option to display top downloads (linked) on the iTunes page.

The NYPL’s presence in iTunesU does not replace NYPL having audio or audiovisual content on their own website. It is a supplement, a free additional way of distributing branded, multimedia content. For example, NYPL also has a video-on-demand
service called MyLibraryDV which is quite separate from the content at iTunes U and is accessible via the NYPL web page.

*Agreement between Apple and NYPL*

There is no exchange of money. Apple do not pay the NYPL for the content, and the NYPL does not pay to have its content on iTunes. The arrangement is a mutually beneficial association. NYPL benefit from the popularity and ease of use of the iTunes interface. Apple benefits by the association of its brand with the educational and cultural sector and the fact that although the content can easily be downloaded onto any computer or mp3 player, iTunes is designed to work completely seamlessly on a Mac device.

All content is owned by the content provider and loaded directly onto iTunes U without involvement from Apple. Apple strongly recommends that all content be clearly branded by the supplying institution (for example, watermarked with a logo and consistent intros and outros used). Funding bodies can be acknowledged in credits, and so on.

Institutions involved in iTunes U are free to exit from the agreement with Apple at any time.

*Top 10 Downloads From iTunes U – October 2007*

The following list of the top 10 downloads from iTunes U gives an indication of the breadth of content on iTunes U.

1. "Steve Job's 2005 Commencement Address" (Stanford University)
2. "Modern Theoretical Physics." (Stanford University)
3. "Exploring Black Holes: General Relativity & Astrophysics; Einstein's Field Equation" (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
4. "The Heart of Nonviolence: A Conversation With the Dalai Lama" (Stanford University)

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Example 2: Swinburne University at iTunes University

Australian institutions involved in iTunes U host all of their iTunes content on their own servers. Swinburne University has a diverse range of material available through iTunes U. This includes current orientation information and information on student services, archival material on the history of Swinburne (for example, 9 minutes of footage from 1972 of Malcolm Fraser opening Swinburne library), short films made by Swinburne film students, academic and guest lectures, footage of graduation ceremonies, trailers of 3D films produced by the Astrophysics and Supercomputing Centre and Swinburne research highlights.

Following are some statistics on the accessing of this content:

- Between September 2008 – December 2008, Swinburne content on iTunes U averaged 7,000 downloads per week peaking to approximately 17,000 downloads per week whenever a podcast was featured on the iTunes U welcome page.

- In contrast, the podcast content on the Swinburne University website received a total of 1,600 downloads between September 2008 – December 2008.

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3 Thanks to Lisa Germany of Swinburne University for providing these statistics.
Implications for the SLV

Following are a few suggestions for how the SLV could possibly use iTunes U.

- **Education**
  - ERGO content could be distributed on iTunes U. Short audio-visuals could be made to supplement the ERGO content on the slv website; audio-visuals drawing on the slv collection could bring aspects of history to life.
  - InsideADog could have interviews with authors, or host relevant material made by young people themselves. Use could also be made of optional iTunes U features like “Tell A Friend”, “Reviews” and so on.

- **Community**
  Some examples of the type of content that could be distributed on iTunes U include
  - An audio-visual magazine about past and upcoming events
  - Audio-visual tours of the State Library and how to use it (these could then be watched on a mobile device by someone in the library)
  - Recordings of guest lectures and readings
  - Recordings of oral histories held in the SLV collection
  - Archival footage held in the SLV collection

- **Disadvantaged groups**
  - *Publish content in community languages.* The medium of audio/audio-visual is a perfect way of reaching out to groups with poor literacy. While VicNet is involved in publishing in Community languages, some languages do not have a written tradition and many of the speakers are not literate. For example, Dinka, spoken by many of the Sudanese in Australia, is an oral language and few of the Sudanese
who do not speak English can read. In recognition of this, some public libraries in Victoria are involved in making DVDs for distribution to particular language communities. iTunes U could enable the SLV to facilitate a coordinated approach to this, overcoming distribution problems, problems with keeping material up-to-date and issues of access. Those unable to access the materials in their own home could be guided to them in their local library.

• **Victorian Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history**

Much Victorian Aboriginal cultural knowledge does not exist in written form. The Libraries Building Community report “Connecting with the Community” notes the important role of public libraries in capturing and preserving Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history and refers specifically to the ‘enormous potential for capturing the songs, dance, art and stories of Aboriginal communities’ (Library Board of Victoria 2008: 15). iTunes U (beyond the campus) may be an appropriate vehicle for making this type of material available. The format of iTunes is well suited to material such as oral recollections of elders, digital stories, footage of cultural performances and material in Victorian aboriginal languages. Of course, if the SLV used iTunes in this way ‘emphasis would need to be placed on Aboriginal ownership, management and control of this material, and ensuring respect for Aboriginal languages and culture’. (Library Board of Victoria 2008:16).

**Implications for the Searchers Project**

If SLV decided to become involved in iTunes U (beyond the campus), the Searchers could monitor usage (measure downloads of different types of content), and link this to a qualitative study of use.

In particular, the Searchers research team would be very interested in evaluating the use of any material made available specifically for disadvantaged sectors of the Library’s publics. For example, if SLV (VicNet) hosted material in a community language, then the Searchers would select this language community as a case study ‘site’. As well as more broadly investigating the social practices around information search (for this language community), the case study would include a particular focus
on the level of use of the SLV iTunes material. This would be extremely useful to the SLV in deciding whether to invest more in services or content for groups like this.

More information on iTunes U (beyond the campus) is available at
http://www.apple.com/uk/education/itunesu_mobilelearning/beyondcampus.html

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