

Learning Bytes: Session x: Wednesday 23 March 11, 12:15-13:15

Introduction to UniTube / Video Streaming

The session comprised a demonstration of Unitube – the University’s video streaming software, by Rob Felix from Computing and Library Services. This was followed by some suggestions on how to use the technology within teaching and learning from Cath Ellis, followed by a short question and answer session.

The University has just moved to a new version of Unitube (<https://unitube.hud.ac.uk>) and everything from the previous version has been migrated over. Access is straight forward, when staff login on our University network they will be automatically logged into Unitube, if you are offsite you will be prompted to enter your username and password which are your normal log in details. The new interface is quite busy and may take a little while for users to become familiar with it. The ‘Search’ area on the new version isn’t as obvious as previous and there will be two hands on training sessions arranged shortly.

Any colleagues producing screencasts or other media resources are encouraged to upload these to Unitube, so it may be used as a teaching and learning repository across the University.

There are now official University idents for both screencasts and podcasts, colleagues are asked to make sure these appear on any media that can be viewed outside of the University.

Uploading files to Unitube

To upload a file from your computer go to the ‘Add Media’ menu, and browse to choose the file off your drive. You need to provide a title and a description of the file. This is really important as it forms the main content of the metadata, which will allow other users to search and access files effectively. So be brief and specific. There are various file options to choose from for example, use Windows Media HD if you record/produce something in ‘HD’.

Currently by default whatever you upload to Unitube everyone else can view – unless you select ‘private’ in which case only you can see it. The private option might be appropriate to use if you want to work on the file – set chapters etc.

When you upload a file it goes into a queue where it is then converted to Flash and streamed over the web. You should now be able to see under the ‘My Links’ option what you have in the queue, i.e. pending for upload. The upload may take a while, dependent on how many people are currently using the network.

Under ‘Media’ you will be able to see a list of all the files you have ever uploaded.

If you want to set Chapters in your file, preview the uploaded file and got to *Chapter, Add a Chapter*, choose a start and stop time. Include a title and description and then save. You can set a thumbnail if

you want. When a programme is recorded you get the last 5 minutes of the previous programme, this can be removed via the chapter option.

If you want to embed the video or media into a web page (e.g. on Blackboard), with the file open, go to 'Share' and choose the 'Embed' code, copy and paste this into the web page. A similar process is used should you wish to embed a file located on YouTube.

Content in UniTube and Youtube can also be linked into PowerPoint, there is a video on UniTube which explains how to do this.

Scheduling and channels that are automatically taped

A certain number of freeview channels including the standard ones are automatically recorded, but not all. A survey was done a while ago on what staff wanted and the most popular choices are recorded. If you want to have something saved from anything on this channel list that has been on in the last four days, contact your subject librarian. However, it must have been scheduled within the last 4 days, as there is a 4-day cache. If you want to record something in the future that isn't on the standard list, contact your subject librarian and they will be able to arrange this. It takes at least as long as the original programme to convert to a Flash file (the medium used to stream over the web). There is an option to record subtitles, but advance notice needs to be given.

When you access/record files via UniTube a personalised favourites list is automatically created, making it quicker to find resources you may want to revisit. When viewing a file you can also rate it, so it appears higher up the list.

Cath Ellis: Using UniTube in Teaching and Learning

Cath Ellis explained that she used UniTube to make the learning environment richer and more engaging for her students.

For each of her lectures Cath has a folder on Blackboard containing resources. This may contain screencast lectures, embedded Google books and UniTube or youtube videos. Lecturers are able to include content that they want all their students to see.

Being able to access resources via youtube etc goes some way to democratising education, as a lecture series that has been recorded and uploaded to youtube can be viewed by students anywhere in the world.

To 'embed' an item in Blackboard you need to choose the 'Add Item option (as opposed to 'Link') and then paste in the sourced 'embed code'. Media files play within a small screen but there is also the option to view full screen.

Cath produces screencast lectures as an additional learning resource for her students as opposed to just replicating a classroom lecture. These screencasts are pedagogically different because of the content and the fact you are showing and telling at the same time. Cath tends to split her

screencasts into sections or small chapters as it is much easier to concentrate on and digest information and learning in smaller chunks. Students can re-view or re-listen to a specific resource. In addition Cath provided activities in between the chapters to reinforce the learning from the previous screencast. Screencasts can be particularly good for demonstrating technical processes and software.

The context of asynchronous learning is also different and students' react differently in an online environment. Students can access these resources 'on-demand' when and as often as they need to. They can be re-visited to reinforce learning at specific times and help students to gauge the advancement of their understanding.

Like anything the use of screencasts has its strengths and weaknesses, but isn't a replacement for lectures, as such.