

**CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
FILMS ON DEMAND
February 2012**

Films on Demand is a streaming video collection that provides unlimited, 24/7 access to more than 3,000 videos and 33,000 segments - all closed captioned. This collection was created specifically for California Community Colleges.

These videos cover topics in Humanities & Social Sciences, Business & Economics, Science & Mathematics, Health & Medicine, Technical Education, and Counseling & Careers.

The video content can be embedded into any course management system, such as Blackboard, and can be used by faculty and students anytime, anywhere.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION for COMMUNITY COLLEGES: 3, 3, 3

#1 --- Not recommended

#2 --- Recommended with reservations as noted

#3 --- Recommended

#4 --- Outstanding offer

RATINGS for SPECIFIC ASPECTS of the DATABASE:

The following features were examined and rated on a four point scale (1=Poor; 2= Needs Improvement; 3=Good; 4=Excellent):

DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT: 3, 3, 3

Consider functionality, appropriateness of format, database content, adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

The full *Films on Demand* database contains over 8,000 full length video titles. This review only covers the content from the closed captioned *Master Collection*, especially developed for the California Community Colleges. This collection contains over 3,000 streaming, closed captioned videos.

Films on Demand includes the full length of each of its videos but breaks the videos down into short segments lasting from 30 seconds to 5 minutes. Each segment has an individual description to allow students and faculty easy navigation through each title. The only concern with this format is that the segments are not always broken at a natural pause and sometimes stop in the middle of a phrase that continues in the next segment. Students and faculty do have the option to play the entire video straight through or create a playlist of desired segments to minimize this issue.

These shortened sections do allow for easy embedding in content management systems like Blackboard. Each segment has an HTML embedded code to allow for integrated viewing.

The master collection content is varied and supports classes across the curriculum. Plans are to add approximately 1,000 new titles per year.

Vendor-supplied subjects and title counts appear below. Reviewers were unable to access the Excel title lists (mentioned in a 2010 enhancement notice) to verify titles, and assume there is overlapping content in the numbers that follow, since they add up to 4,700:

- Humanities & Social Sciences (1,900 titles)
- Business & Economics (400 titles)
- Science and Mathematics (900 titles)
- Health (600 titles)
- Technical Education (200 titles)
- Careers and Job Search (200 titles)
- Family and Consumer Sciences (300 titles)
- Guidance & Counseling (200 titles)

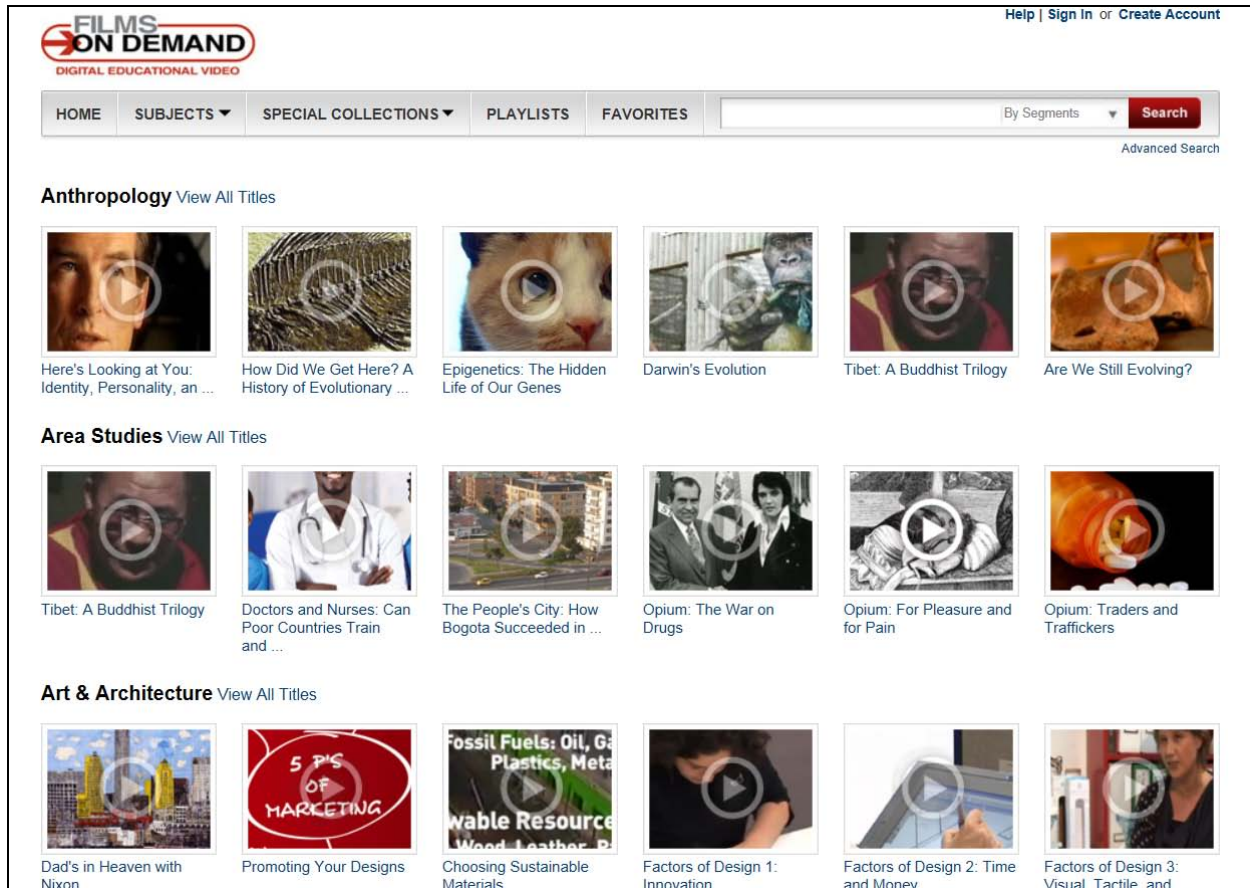
The *Films on Demand* homepage is organized according to 27 subjects which can be narrowed to more specific areas of interest. Selecting “Anthropology” brings the user to titles for the entire Anthropology collection as well as the option to limit results further to “Archaeology,” “Cultural Anthropology,” “Physical Anthropology,” or “Survey and Basic Concepts.” Clicking on the “plus” icon next to each of these five areas, allows the user to “drill down” to even more specific results. Many videos are listed under multiple areas which would indicate duplicate titles in the vendor supplied subjects listed above. Reviewers were unable to find a reported 2010 update “Export to Excel” function that would allow downloading of title lists in each subject area. It is possible that the function is part of an administrative feature that was not available in the trial, but it would certainly be more efficient for faculty to see all the titles related to their discipline without having to browse through many pages of images. At least one subject area was a bit misleading. “World Languages” contains videos in English and focuses more on the culture and history of a country than the language itself. Dates for videos vary from current 2011 videos such as “*Science Under Attack: Has the Public Lost Faith in Scientists?*” (2011) to historical titles such as “*A Conversation with Eleanor Roosevelt*” from NBC (1959).

A number of popular educational video producers are represented in the product and identified under the database’s “Special Collection” tab, including BBC, Bill Moyers Collection, Films for the Humanities & Sciences, Front Line, Ken Burns, Nightline, NBC News, and PBS News Hour. Public performance rights are included in the subscription price.

SEARCH INTERFACE: 3, 3, 3

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

Figure 1 Homepage of *Films on Demand* database



Colorful images of featured videos organized in 27 broad subject areas create interest and promote browsing from the database homepage. Users can easily scroll through the screen and select a video by clicking on the title or image. There is also a “View All Titles” link which will take the searcher to additional titles and images for videos in that subject area, along with the option to narrow results to specific topics or sub-topics. Text oriented searchers may prefer to use the “Subject” tab available at the top left of each *FOD* screen, the “Search” box, or “Advanced Search” option available at the top right. Selecting the “Special Collections” tab will allow the user to browse titles from popular producers such as BBC, Ken Burns, PBS, and Frontline. Users who have created accounts may also access their playlists or favorites directly from the homepage. Results retrieved by browsing are displayed from newest to oldest, but can be resorted “A to Z” or by “Most Viewed.” Keyword search results default to “Relevance” but can also be displayed alphabetically or in reverse chronological order.

The strength of the database is in browsing, but simple keyword searches can be executed from the database homepage. Boolean searching is supported in “Advanced Search,” along with the

ability to limit results by copyright date, special collection, or item number. “Closed captioned” can also be selected as a limiter, but this does not apply to the Community College offer since only closed captioned videos are included in the package. There is no spell check but there is an autocomplete function that suggests titles as the user is entering terms.

Reviewers think best results are retrieved from searching video segments rather than full titles. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain which segments in a title might address the actual search. A keyword search on “syphilis” retrieved 14 segments. The most relevant results contained the word “syphilis” in each of the segment titles, and appeared at the top of the results list. Further down the list of results, the word “syphilis” appeared in the description of the segment rather than the title of the segment. On the other hand, a title search on “syphilis” resulted in only 3 videos relating to sexual responsibility and/or infection. None of the 3 had the word “syphilis” in the title. The word “syphilis” appeared in the description of the contents of one video, but it was not possible to determine without watching the whole video, where a discussion of syphilis would occur.

Clicking on a title or image takes the searcher to the video and accompanying documentation (synopsis, list of segments, citation, and indexing information). Tabs to the right of the video provide information about the individual segments, the full title, or related videos. The default seems to be the “Segments” tab, but if the user inadvertently hovers or rests the cursor over another tab, the contents changes. Users who have not actually clicked on a tab may find they are viewing information about related videos rather than what they thought was information about the segments they are actually viewing.

Figure 2 Sample Search Result

The Mystical North: Spanish Art from the 19th Century to the Present

CC is off

Segments Full Title Related

- 1. Goya: Father of Modern Art (04:03)**
Goya, often referred to the father of modern art, left 80 etchings of war that reveal his dark political consciousness.
- 2. Goya's Art in Uncharted, Dark Territories (03:39)**
Goya, completely deaf, focuses his artistic vision on death, the wrath of God, and man's inhumanity to man. He further isolates himself in a house on whose walls he leaves his infamous "black paintings," of witches, violence, and devil worship.
- 3. Antoni Gaudi: Inspired by God's Natural World (02:37)**
For 50 years after Goya's death, Spanish art came to a standstill. At the start of the 20th century, Spain became a "powerhouse" of modern art. Architect Antoni Gaudi exemplified Barcelona's spirit of exuberance, represented in Park Guell.
- 4. Unfinished Gaudi Cathedral (02:47)**

Email this Video Add to Playlist Add to Favorites Embed this Video Citation

Video playback is easy and the closed caption option is prominent at the top right of the screen. Reviewers found the sound and image quality excellent and captioning was quite clear, even over black and white images. Closed captioning must be selected each time a new segment is

played. Reviewers only occasionally had problems with buffering, causing voice and image to be out of sync, or a slight break in the continuity of the video. This appears to be related to campus bandwidth issues rather than a defect in the database.

Below the video are the options to email, add to playlist or favorites, embed the video or obtain a citation. Citations are available in MLA 7th edition and Chicago but not APA -- a distinct weakness since so many of the videos would be useful for social science classes where APA format is used. Although elements are all there, students will need to refine the citation format by adding the hanging indent and double spacing.

Authenticated users can create free accounts with personal user ids and passwords in order to email videos, create playlists, or save favorites. The icons for taking these actions are labeled and located underneath the image for the selected video segment. It should be noted that these icons also appear under each video in lists of search results but are not labeled nor are alt tags available. This might be a small area in need of improvement for 508 compliance.

MARC records are available for loading in the library catalog, which will enhance the discoverability of the videos. However, it should be noted that the records available at the *FOD* website are in Unicode format. Many library catalogs only load records in the MARC8 format. Fortunately, records can be converted from Unicode to MARC8 with the free MarcEdit program prior to loading in a catalog. It would be helpful if *FOD* could provide a MARC8 format version of the file.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 3.5, 3, 4

What types of customer and technical support are available for end users and library administrators?

Help is easily accessible from a link appearing at the top right corner of any page in the database. The “Help Center” has six categories; Documentation, FAQs, Flash Tutorials, Configuration Test, Technical Support, and Software Updates. The Documentation category provides simple one-page “Quick Start Guides” on finding, viewing, organizing and sharing video segments as well as information related to authentication options, MARC records, and technical requirements. According to one FAQ, “If you have administrative permission, you will be able to access meta-data information, view title and collection status, view playlist URLs, manage users, and view usage statistics for every title and segment in your *Films on Demand* collection.” The Administrator options are found within the “My Preferences” tab.

According to the database site, Flash Tutorials covering the basics such as logging in, browsing and searching, and creating and sharing playlists, as well as more advanced features like integrating videos and using the Admin options are all coming soon. There is a comprehensive list of FAQs that give an overview of the database, programming, pricing, etc. Also “coming soon” are interactive transcripts, APA citations, additional help tutorials, sharable playlists, and mobile access. Training webinars are available to subscribers at no additional cost.

Technical support is offered via FAQs, email or a toll-free number, weekdays 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard time. The “Software Updates” page has convenient links to software downloads for the database.

COST: 3, 2.5, 3

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

Pricing for this subscription database is determined by FTE. Consultation with instructors would help a library determine if potential usage warrants cost. Although smaller libraries may find the cost to be prohibitive, grant money such as Perkins could possibly be used to help in this area. Colleges might also consider that purchase of a DVD or 3-year access for streaming video of just one title directly from *Films for the Humanities & Sciences* may cost between \$100 and \$150. At last count, the closed captioned *Films on Demand Master Collection* included 88 titles from *Films for the Humanities & Sciences*. A look at the complete title list could help an institution determine that it is getting a great value for the money through the *Films on Demand* database.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 3, 3

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate? Is product accessible to users with disabilities?

According to the vendor, “the Films on Demand streaming video platform addresses ADA compliance via providing closed captioning for our video titles and segments.” Closed captioning of all of the 3,000 videos in the *Master Collection*, makes this product especially desirable for California Community Colleges. Transcripts for each video are reported to be forthcoming. Other than the noted missing alt tags for some of the emailing, playlist and favorites icons, reviewers were impressed with the content and delivery of this service from both on and off campus.

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

No other reviews of this exact product could be found. There is a review of *Access Video on Demand* which is a broader version of *Films on Demand*.

LaGuardia, Cheryl. “Access Video on Demand.” *Library Journal* 139.9 (2011): 104-105.

Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web. 23 Sept. 2011.