Library offers video streaming for Shakespeare’s plays and other resources

BY SASHA BELANI – POSTED ON FEBRUARY 25, 2014
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Dost the “thou” and “thee” make you squirm-eth?
Does talk about roses and names make your head go round?
Does reading Shakespeare in English class make you wonder ‘What the heck is he talking about?”

Well, do not fear, the library is here. A new streaming service at the Pollak Library brings Shakespeare’s 500-year-old prose to life.

Last November, the Cal State Fullerton library began a subscription to Ambrose Digital, a streaming video database that has over 500 videos that can be streamed, including all 37 BBC adaptations of Shakespeare plays at a cost to the library of $2,700 annually.

Ambrose Digital can be accessed for free by all CSUF students, faculty members and staff who can log into the university’s online portal.

This is the first time the Pollak Library has offered such a video streaming resource, said Jaclyn Bedoya, an electronic resources librarian at CSUF.

“There has been this huge demand for streaming video from students,” Bedoya said.

The library did offer many of the popular BBC Shakespeare plays on VHS and DVD, but students were complaining because they can only be viewed in the library. With the streaming service, students can access it from anywhere, Bedoya said.

“It’s harder for students if they have to come into the library to check out one DVD,” Bedoya said. “Whereas with this, they have unlimited users so a bunch of students can be watching it from their house. So for the library, that’s a win-win because we’re providing as much access as possible from wherever it’s convenient.”

Ambrose Digital is a video streaming site launched in 2009 by Ambrose Publishing. Half of the videos available for streaming come from production companies such as BBC, while the other half are produced by the Centre Communications for Ambrose Video Publishing, according to Elnor Barron, the sales representative in charge of California accounts.

In addition to the videos, which can be accessed by all devices, the service offers eight citation styles for each video for easy referencing and closed captions.

Because the service is still new, not many students know about it and use it, Bedoya said.

Currently, library statistics have found only two to three dozen users have logged into use the service in the past few months.

“We’re really hoping that people start to use it a lot more because I think it’s a fantastic service,” Bedoya said.

Students can access the database through the research tab in the Pollak Library website, then clicking the “find databases” link and then scrolling down to Ambrose Video. Users might have to log in to use the resource, as they would with any other database in the library.

Professor Ellen Caldwell teaches the Shakespeare (ENG 316) and Shakespeare in Film (ENG 331) courses. She
said she does not personally use the Ambrose service, since it does not have a lot of the films she uses, and she did not like the production values in some of the videos available. However, Caldwell said the site might be useful for her students.

“In my Shakespeare on Film class (331), I ask students to develop an adaptation of a Shakespeare play for their final project,” Caldwell said. “I think these Ambrose videos can help them develop ideas of their own.”

The service also has videos on topics such as political history, ancient history, civil rights movements, fine arts, science and more.

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About Sasha Belani
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