

Netflix at Dickinson

Problem

Faculty members have often been interested in using a DVD that we do not have in our collection. They do not want to spend valuable library funds on a film that they intend to only show once and will often place an ILL request to obtain the item. We have found very few libraries who would loan their film collection through ILL channels and even when we were able to get a film through ILL, it often would take a long time to receive it from a lender.

In July of 2007 Netflix came up in discussions as an alternative to interlibrary loan to fill borrower's requests for DVDs our library didn't own. The main incentives behind offering a Netflix service to our faculty were:

1. It gave the faculty a chance to preview films that they may wish to purchase.
2. It gave faculty a chance to show a brief clip of a film we would not normally purchase for our collection.
3. The faculty member would have the opportunity to show a film once in class, without ever using it again.
4. Faculty could use for their own scholarship.

We investigated Netflix and found it to be a low cost, fast, reliable service with a large, diverse collection; a collection, strong in foreign films, documentaries, popular films, recent releases and television shows. In addition, Netflix was offering a streaming feature which allowed instant viewing of content on specified classroom computers. We found other academic libraries were using Netflix in this way. After talking with them, our Netflix representatives, and the college's legal counsel, we felt there would be no legal issues with faculty viewing, individually, the films we own or borrow or rent for their use. As far as copyright issues involved in showing these videos to classes, we believe our usage is in keeping with fair use. Brown University has compiled a wonderful summary of issues relating to copyright for audio-visual materials that help inform about permissible uses for this content (<http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Copyright/media.html>).

Methodology

I met with the Access Service team to discuss what the service would look like. Everyone on the team saw this as another form of resource sharing so it became obvious that ILL staff would screen requests. We then decided to handle the Netflix DVD like any other ILL loan. It would go out onto the ILL pick-up shelves. Details such as identifying the DVD as an ILL loan rather than a Netflix loan would come later. Fines and replacement/damage costs would naturally be assumed by the requestor, just like any other ILL item.

Details of service:

- Requests will be entered into the Dickinson College Netflix Queue on a first come first serve basis. There is no guarantee of delivery.
- When film arrives, faculty will be notified by email.
- Film checkout period is for 1 week after email notification.
- Films must be returned on or prior to due date.
- Films cannot be renewed.
- Films will not be placed on reserves.
- Access Service staff will manage the account.

The next step was to set up an account create a policies page on our website and create a request form. By September 1, 2007 everything was in place.

Results

Use: We did little to market this service in the Fall, and the usage was low. In the spring, liaison librarians sent out email reminders and the amount of requests doubled.

Average time till request received: Appears to be about a week, although it can be strongly influenced by where the film ships from, how many copies Netflix owns, how many other requests are in the queue, and our patron's observation of return dates, which can sometimes be lax, to say the least. One request currently in our queue lists a "very long wait" for shipping, and I can only assume that means that all available copies are in use.

Fill rate: The number of requests that can be filled has been very encouraging. Only one request was not owned by Netflix, and the staff member was able to find a free streaming copy on the PBS website for the professor. This is especially impressive considering the academic or "indie" nature of most faculty requests.

Cost Analysis: We pay \$24/month for 8 films simultaneously. Cost of the service for the trial period divided by the number of films requested and used in this same period: \$5.50 per film.

Streaming via Netflix: This has only been a possibility for several requests made during the trial period, but was not utilized by the requestor.

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