



ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

Kanopy Streaming

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Composite Score: ★★★★★ 1/8

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Abstract

Kanopy Streaming, founded in 2008, markets itself as the “Netflix for education.” Kanopy aims to be a comprehensive streaming video solution for the education market by both distributing online video on their proprietary platform and providing a video hosting service. Kanopy distributes over 26,000 educational videos from leading producers including the Criterion Collection, PBS, California Newsreel, Media Education Foundation, BBC, First Run Features, and hundreds more. Libraries can purchase individual videos or collections with one- or three-year licenses. Institutions may also set up a Patron Driven Acquisitions (PDA) profile and light up almost all the films or just selected collections. Unlike Films on Demand and Alexander Street Press, libraries only pay for the content that they actually use. Titles, descriptions, and transcripts are keyword searchable. Videos can be played directly in Kanopy or embedded in a LMS or on a Web site. Users can also create custom playlists and clips. The administrator’s dashboard provides a comprehensive view of usage and purchases. In addition to distributing content, Kanopy’s video hosting service provides institutions with a secure location to easily host locally produced or owned video content with streaming rights. Kanopy’s free Search & Find Service tracks down rights to any requested videos they do not currently offer.

Pricing Options

Kanopy has a very straightforward business model. Unlike Films on Demand (FoD) or Alexander Street Press’s VAST that offer large video subscription packages, libraries only pay for what they actually use in Kanopy. Videos that are offered in the catalog are available for a one- or three-year license per “film product.” A film product consists of either a full-length film or a series of episodic short films that are grouped together to provide a similar value to a full-length film. For a typical college, a one-year license costs \$150; a 3-year license is \$350. Kanopy offers several ways to add videos to a library’s collection. Titles or collections can be individually selected from the Kanopy catalog and licensed for one- or three-years or a library can set up a Patron Driven Acquisitions (PDA) profile and light up individual collections or all films available in Kanopy. Four views a year will trigger a purchase. The four views must occur within a rolling twelve-month period so as soon as the library enters the thirteenth month all views that took place in month one drop off. Kanopy defines a “view” as any viewing of a video for thirty seconds or more. This allows faculty or selectors to individually view an entire film without triggering a purchase to determine if the film is appropriate for their class. Once a purchase is triggered the library is either billed for a one- or three-year license depending on what the library has chosen as its default. Libraries can also choose to override their default. For example, our

library has one-year license set as our default however we can choose a three-year license for an individual film.

Libraries also have the option of licensing individual collections. It is generally much more cost effective to purchase an upfront one- or three-year license for an entire collection (rather than make it available under PDA) if your library knows that a number of films in the collection will be used. Collection pricing varies based on the number of films in the collection, the profile of the library (college, community college, high school, public library, or otherwise) and the FTE. Collection pricing can afford discounts of anywhere between 60% to 95% off on a per title basis.

For the hosting service, Kanopy charges a flat rate of \$39 per video per year for hosting regardless of video size or length.

Product Description

Kanopy Streaming is a streaming video service that distributes educational videos and dramas as well as provides a secure hosted solution for locally created or owned content. Kanopy was founded in 2008 by Olivia Humphrey whose vision was “to bring the magic of film into colleges and universities.” Kanopy is headquartered in San Francisco, California.

Kanopy has over 26,000 films available in the United States and over 35,000 globally. In order to maintain their simple pricing model which involves standardized pricing for all products, they curate many films (especially short films and episodic films) into “playlists” so that they have a comparable value to other full length films (documentaries, feature films, etc). So currently, there are 11,500 “film products” composed of over 26,000 films. Libraries can view all films available through Kanopy at this site: <[https://www.kanopystreaming.com/s?query="+>](https://www.kanopystreaming.com/s?query=). Many of the films have previews available. Major producers include the Criterion Collection, PBS, BBC Active, California Newsreel, Green Planet Films, First Run Features, Kino Lorber Edu, Learning Zone Express, Media Education Foundation, Symptom Media, and PsychoTherapy.net. Films are grouped into seven broad subject areas: The Arts, Business/Training, Health, Media/Communication, Sciences, Humanities, and Education. Each of these subject areas are further broken down into subcategories. For example, the Humanities subject area encompasses: African Studies, Ancient History, Anthropology, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Community Development, European/Baltic Studies, Gender/Race/Class Studies, Geography, German Studies Human Rights, Military History, Modern History, North American Studies, and Psychology and Sociology.

The videos are available via Kanopy’s Web-based platform which features a flash-based player for PCs and an HTML5 player for smart devices.

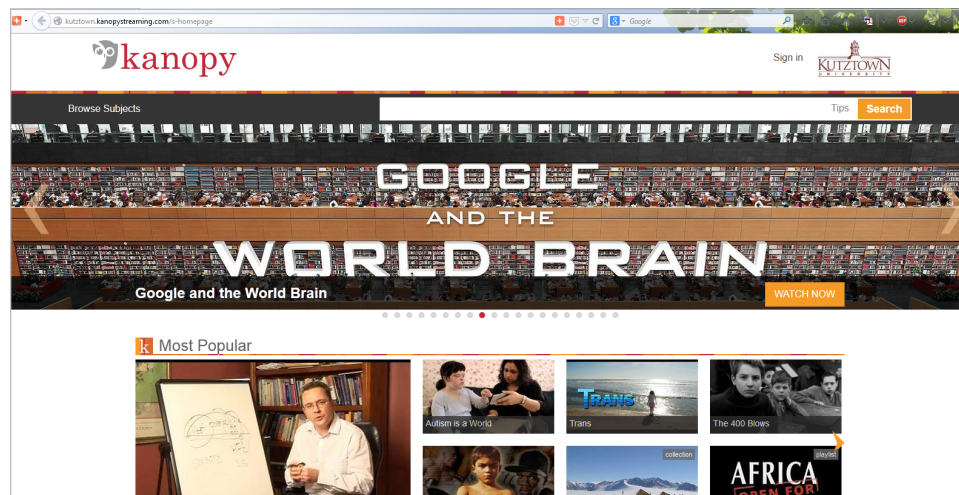


FIGURE 1 Kanopy Interface

Films are appropriate for undergraduate and graduate level college students.

Critical Evaluation

CONTENT

Kanopy includes an incredible depth and breadth of content ranging from nursing training videos to classic Italian films with everything in between. Although most Kanopy content is in the educational documentary genre they offer dramatic films including classics and independent films. As of this writing, the humanities and arts are the largest category of films with almost 7,000 titles with the next two largest categories being education and media/communications with over 2,000 titles each. The films run the gamut from high-quality major productions to low-budget independent films. Other strong categories include the sciences, social sciences, and history. A particularly strong area is film and media studies. Kanopy distributes the Criterion Collection and First Run Features and Kino Lorber collections, which are their best-selling collections for Film Schools. They offer all of the Media Education Foundation's (MEF) films as well as lesser known but high quality film distributors such as Symptom Media, Seventh Art Releasing, Illuminations Media, Checkerboard Film Foundation, making it an excellent resource for social sciences, communications, media, writing, and journalism students. However, it should be noted that the MEF collection is not available as part of the PDA program. There are a mix of well-known producers/distributors such as BBC Active, California Newsreel, PBS, and HBO, and lesser known ones such as TMW Media, Ronin Films, and Videofashion. Kanopy also works with hundreds of independent filmmakers directly, with some of their best-selling films including *Miss Representation*, *People Like Us*, *Here One Day*, and *Transgender Tuesdays*.

Kanopy includes a category for movies and television dramas including classic films such as *Seven Samurai* (1954). This category has a decidedly world cinema bent. One example from the Kanopy catalog is Criterion Collection/Janus Films. This producer features "the greatest films from around the world" including work by directors such as Godard, Kurosawa, Fellini, Bergman, and Hitchcock. Kanopy does not carry contemporary Hollywood feature films in North America but plans to offer Hollywood films in the future. Hollywood films are offered in other territories. Libraries seeking a source for streaming contemporary Hollywood films may want to investigate Swank Digital Campus.

The two other major players in this market include Films on Demand (FoD) and Alexander Street Press (ASP). Both of these vendors feature extensive collections of educational videos, documentaries, and classic feature films geared to an academic audience. FoD offers over 20,000 titles; ASP has over 22,000 titles. Both vendors allow libraries to purchase individual collections and offer significant discounting based on the number of subscribed collections. Neither vendor offers a PDA option. Both vendors offer large multidisciplinary video subscription packages (FoD's Master

Academic Collection & ASP's VAST) that provide the most discounting on a cost per title basis. There is overlap and exclusive content with Kanopy, FoD, and ASP. Libraries will need to investigate which provider(s) best meet their needs.

One concern that our library had was overlap with our subscription to FoD's Master Academic Collection. Kanopy informed the reviewer that if your library chooses to use the PDA model described above, they offer a guarantee to not charge libraries for any triggered titles that are available through their existing FoD or ASP subscription.

INTERFACE

The interface is straightforward and easy to use. It has a Netflix flavor and is colorful and engaging (Figure 1). It draws the user in to want to engage with the films as opposed to the FoD and ASP interfaces that are more academic in appearance. There is a ubiquitous prominent search box available on all pages at the top center of the screen for doing keyword searching with Browse Subjects drop-down to the left of the search box. Kanopy regularly makes minor enhancements to the interface and is responsive to suggestions for improvement. For example, this drop-down was recently moved over to the far left eliminating the annoying issue of triggering the drop-down by inadvertently rolling over it when navigating to the searchbox. This is followed by a rolling banner ad for new and popular films. Underneath are boxes that feature "Most Popular" films (on Kanopy not in your collection) then newly available films and finally collections that your library has made available either through purchase or the PDA program. If your library is a PDA customer there will be more content available for viewing from the main page. Libraries that license individual films or collections will only have those displayed.

Once a film is selected, users get a bigger viewer displayed. Underneath the viewer there is a toolbar that gives the options of reading the synopsis, creating a playlist, getting the code to embed the video in a LMS or web site, a link to report a problem, and the transcript if available. This reviewer noted that many films do not include transcripts, although Kanopy offers a free service to transcribe any films for free upon request, with a 48-hour turnaround.

The Kanopy video player performed well in all the major browsers that the reviewer tested including IE, Firefox, Chrome, and Safari. Kanopy automatically detects and adjusts its streaming speed to provide the best possible viewing experience. The player has a button to expand to full screen, turn on close captioning (if available), adjust

FIGURE 2 Kanopy Administrative Dashboard

the volume, and turn on/off captions where available. The Kanopy player performed well in various environments that the reviewer tested including on and off-campus locations using a laptop and with an iPad and Windows 8 Tablet.

Kanopy is diligently working on adding close captioning to films that do not have it. Kanopy informed the reviewer that approximately 57% of their films have captioning and that it is a laborious process as they do not use automated captioning systems as they feel automated captioning is not good enough for the academic market. All captioning is screened and edited for accuracy. Unfortunately many of the films the reviewer previewed did not have close captioning as of this writing, however Kanopy provides a free close captioning service upon request—prioritizing the captioning of these films as they are received and uploading the captions with a 48-hour turnaround. FoD has closed-captioning and transcripts for all their films; ASP does not include closed-captioning for all films although most, if not all, include transcripts.

A user does not need an account to search and view films but will need one to create clips, playlists, or post reviews. User-created reviews appear across all Kanopy platforms and reviewers have the option of submitting their review to the filmmaker. The reviews provide a forum for cross-pollination with other Kanopy users as well as the filmmaker. However, at the time of this writing there were very few reviews written by individual users. Kanopy includes published reviews in the synopsis section of many films.

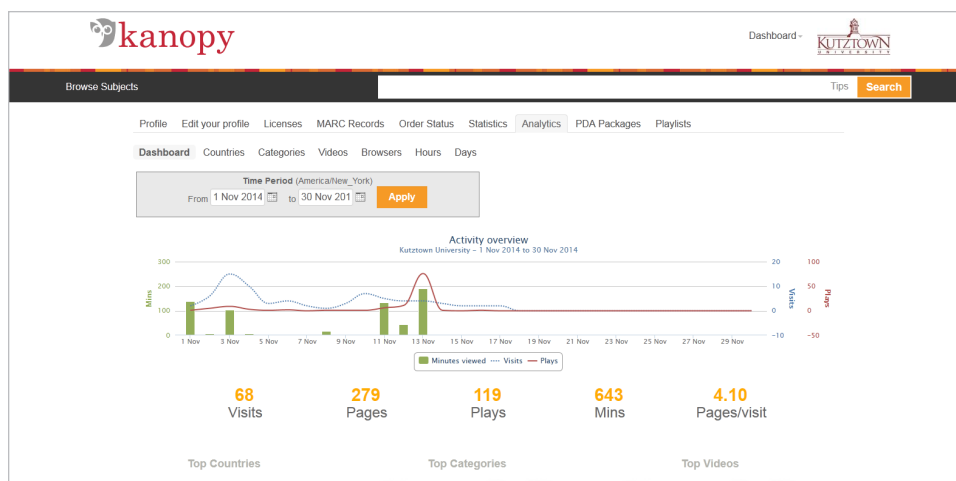
SEARCH

Kanopy supports keyword relevance searching of film titles, descriptions, and transcripts (when available) in your library's collection. After a search you get a ranked list of titles with your key words highlighted. The results also include a list of films grouped by subjects and producers that contain at least one of your key words. At the bottom of your search results are films that are not part of your library's collection but are available for preview via the Kanopy catalog. Users can preview these films and then recommend them to your library's site administrator. The site administrator will receive an e-mail containing the recommendation.

One criticism is that Kanopy lacks an advanced search option that allows users to do more precise searching by title, filmmaker, subject search, etc. Although Kanopy does feature "smart search filtering" that allows users to narrow their search results by producer, subject, year of production, language, and other criteria. Both FoD and ASP feature robust advanced searching options. Also, the transcript searchability in Kanopy is not as flexible as FoD and ASP which allow a user to easily search only transcripts across all films.

HOSTING SERVICE

What originally attracted our library to Kanopy was the fact they offer a video hosting service. We were looking for an outside vendor that would provide a reasonably priced, secure location to host,



and stream locally created or owned video content (that includes the streaming rights). Our library investigated hosting video ourselves, Kaltura, and Alexander Street Press. Kanopy provided the simplest and most cost effective option. Kanopy offers an excellent hosting service that is very easy to use. Basically all that is required is to convert your video file to MP4 format, upload the file via FTP, and fill out a simple metadata form that is e-mailed to your account representative. Kanopy does all the rest. The turnaround time is usually less than 24-hours. The film is often available on their platform within a few hours. Your library then has the option to add a MARC record for the film to your catalog. Kanopy charges a flat rate of \$39 per video per year regardless of size or length. This was a much simpler process both in terms of time and cost than using either Kaltura which requires the library to pay for and host and maintain software or Alexander Street Press which has a very complicated formula for figuring out hosting streaming costs. Our library has been very happy with the hosting service provided by Kanopy.

SEARCH AND FIND SERVICE

Another unique service that Kanopy offers is their Search and Find service. In a nutshell, Kanopy will do all the legwork to track down a film that they do not offer in the catalog and attempt to secure streaming rights and make the film available to your users. This service has come in very handy when faculty are seeking a streaming option for films not available online. Our experience has been that Kanopy has about a 50% success rate in tracking down film owners and securing the rights to put the film on the Kanopy platform. Kanopy secures the streaming rights and handles all the licensing. The film is then available for either the one- or three-year license.

CUSTOMIZATION AND DASHBOARD

Kanopy will create a customized secure URL for your institution. It will be <http://yourinstitution.kanopystreaming.com>. You can upload your library's logo to appear in the Kanopy banner.

Kanopy also sets your library up with a powerful Administrative Dashboard (Figure 2). Once logged in, the Dashboard offers a License Management System (to view and manage the licenses your library currently has running—it also sends automated notifications to manage expiries), Marc Record Tool (to track and download MARC records), an Invoice report (to review all historical invoices), Analytics Dashboard (to view detailed statistics in both excel and graphical format), PDA Dashboard (to monitor the performance of your PDA model and review the collections that you have activated), and a User Monitor (to monitor and view playlists and clips created by users).



Kanopy Streaming Review Scores Composite: ★★★★★ 1/8

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★★ 1/2

Kanopy provides an excellent selection of educational documentaries and theatrical films, as well as providing a platform to host local or purchased content not available through their catalog. There is some overlap with other providers. The hosting service is a huge plus for libraries looking to securely host their own content.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★★

The user interface is visually appealing, straightforward, and simple to use. Film titles, descriptions, transcripts, key cast members, and other metadata are keyword searchable. The addition of an advanced search option would be beneficial.

Pricing: ★★★★★

Kanopy provides a simple and straightforward pricing structure to license and host films. Libraries only pay for what they are actually using. For some individual films, pricing is slightly higher than securing streaming rights and hosting independently but this is offset by Kanopy’s platform and service. Kanopy offers significant discounting when licensing entire collections.

Contract Options: ★★★★★

Contract terms are standard and Kanopy is flexible to meet the needs of individual institutions although they only offer one- or three-year licenses.

Contract Provisions

The Kanopy license agreement features all the standard terms and conditions that appear in most license agreements and a section on hosting content owned by your university. The agreement allows any authorized users at your institution to view video content. The contracts staff at Kanopy is efficient and willing to work with any unique contracting needs that your institution may have. The Agreement is simple in that it covers your use for all of their films irrespective of producer (all films have the same licensing terms and user rights) and once signed, you never see another agreement again.

One criticism is that contracting options with Kanopy are limited. They only offer one- or three-year licenses for films. They currently do not have any perpetual access or longer term options for titles.

MARC RECORDS

Kanopy plans to provide free MARC records for all films however as of this writing the company was still in the process of creating MARC records for some of the newer collections they have uploaded. Kanopy has a system in the Dashboard that allows catalogers to track newly created records and which ones have been downloaded. So far, approximately 60% of the films have MARC records avail-

able for download with the other 40% yet to be delivered. Kanopy has mentioned that they are prioritizing the creation of these additional records.

STATISTICS

Kanopy provides a wealth of statistical information on usage including detailed statistics on content viewed (number of visits, times accessed, number of plays, and minutes watched); usage by time, day, month, country, and subject area; and browser and device trends. Usage statistics can be downloaded to Excel. Despite the richness of their data, at the time of writing, Kanopy currently does not offer COUNTER compliance on their Dashboard. However, Kanopy does offer to provide COUNTER-compliant reports upon request and is in the process of developing a new Collection Report feature on the Dashboard that would provide COUNTER-compliant formatting moving forward.

BILLING

Kanopy supports two models to pay for their services. Libraries can either set up a deposit account or be billed quarterly for films that have been licensed.

Authentication

Kanopy supports IP-based and EZ Proxy for authentication. They also offer user name/password and Shibboleth options as well.

About the Author

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