

Educational Video Streaming Platform for Universities



Olivia Humphrey
CEO & Founder

CEOCFO: Ms. Humphrey, what is Kanopy Streaming? What is the concept?

Ms. Humphrey: Kanopy is the Netflix of education. There is no doubt in anyone's mind now about the power of video and the way that it transforms and challenges the way people think about some of the most important issues of our time. Students engage with video more than any other resource outside of their academic life, so it always intrigued me why video was not more of a core resource in higher education.

I founded Kanopy in 2008 to address this gap. Kanopy is not just about distributing film to institutions; it is about really encouraging students to engage with video and as a result, is changing the way academics are teaching and the way students are learning.

The business has been founded on the core principle of creating a sustainable economy for filmmakers. The educational channel is often considered unsexy and producers have complained about the lack of revenue and transparency the channel offers. Kanopy has really changed this mindset by offering a model for filmmakers whereby they receive the majority of every sale we make. They can access a live dashboard to understand how their films are being viewed across the world and are therefore motivated to help us sell their films.

CEOCFO: One by one, how do you accomplish each of the facets of your business?

Ms. Humphrey: The first thing, and possibly the most important, is the film collection itself. We have one of the largest and most unique collections on the planet. It is a way for institutions to very easily access a huge breadth of film from mainstream documentaries and indie film, to rare and archival film. Interestingly, blockbusters on Kanopy are very different from what a blockbuster looks like in home video or in a theatrical (cinema) world. It is important that we provide access to all genres of films and it is fascinating to review what students and professors are choosing to watch.

One of the core strengths of the business is the video platform that we have built. It is designed to be exciting, accessible and elegant. We continue to develop ways for students to better engage with the videos, from filmmaker debates to social media activity.

CEOCFO: What is your criteria? What are you looking for in films and how do you collect them?

Ms. Humphrey: Kanopy's model is designed very differently to traditional film distributor (home video and library vendor) models in that we do not play a huge curation role. We have two purchase models – a college library can license any Kanopy video up front on a one or three year subscription. Our more popular model is called PDA - patron-driven acquisition. It is the way that college libraries buy their ebooks and ejournals. A library can have access to our videos at no cost, and only when a video is used a certain number of times will it trigger a one-year license fee. So the students are playing a very active role in curating the library collection by virtue of their viewing behavior. Libraries like this model because they are not paying for videos that are not watched, and they are allowing their students and academics to actually curate the collection for them. Filmmakers love the model because their films are available in potentially thousands of institutions around the world. It motivates them to raise the awareness of their films through their own channels to encourage the students to view their videos.

CEOCFO: How are you gaining access to the videos?

Ms. Humphrey: We work with hundreds of major educational video producers like Criterion Collection, PBS, Media Education Foundation, BBC et cetera, as well as directly with individual filmmakers. We very rarely reject a film on the platform, and that is mainly because we are often pleasantly surprised at how well films that may not have performed well

in a home video environment become best-sellers on Kanopy. This is because we are successfully targeting a new market – the students themselves, who are often the overlooked segment of the educational distribution equation. In terms of the way that we acquire content, we proactively approach filmmakers or they are referred to us. We also have a search and find service, so any institution can email us with a video request that they may have received from an academic that we do not currently advertise on our platform. It is a free service, and we attempt to track down the rights owner and acquire that video to sell not only to the requesting institutions, but also to the thousands of other institutions worldwide.

CEOCFO: *How are schools accessing video now?*

Ms. Humphrey: The way that Kanopy's model works is each school receives its own unique website, e.g. stanford.kanopystreaming.com or harvard.kanopystreaming.com. The website contains any videos the institution has licensed from Kanopy or any videos that they have opted to have on the PDA model. They can also host videos on Kanopy that they own. Students can access their Kanopy video portal anywhere, any time on any device.

CEOCFO: *What is the range of schools?*

Ms. Humphrey: It is across the board from large institutions like Penn State University all the way down to small community colleges and pretty much everything in between. We have only just started streaming for the K-12 market, and we also have a number of non-educational customers that we service like law firms, psychology clinics, GPs et cetera. Even funeral homes!

“Kanopy is not just about distributing film to institutions; it is about really encouraging students to engage with video and as a result, is changing the way academics are teaching and the way students are learning... For me, I am excited about the way we are not only changing the way students learn, but we are also changing the way professors are teaching. Recently a professor wrote to me and said she had been teaching film for 23 years and students come to her classes armed with their Kanopy playlists. She wrote that she had never felt more connected to her students than ever before. So Kanopy is playing a small but important part in the new educational paradigm through the power of video.” - Olivia Humphrey

CEOCFO: *How do schools find out about you?*

Mr. Humphrey: Over the years, our sales team has actively acquired most universities and colleges through direct marketing initiatives, site visits and filmmaker referrals. We regularly have academics purchasing licenses from our webshop (www.kanopystreaming.com) which has helped us acquire institutions in non-English markets. We are very active on the conference circuit and are grateful that many institutions continue to present papers on the Kanopy model. Referral by a customer is the best form of sales.

Our North American business has shifted from a customer acquisition focus to better understanding our core audience – the students. Probably one of the biggest challenge any library vendor faces is raising the awareness of their digital resource to the academic and student community. In the past, library vendors sold physical goods (such as books/DVDs) to libraries that you could see and touch when you browsed a library collection. Now that most resources are moving to a digital format, librarians are challenged with the task of becoming a PR agent for their cloud collections – a skillset that is new to them.

Kanopy's model has been a welcomed and refreshing change for the market. Rather than buying video collections that are rarely accessed, Kanopy's model means libraries are only being charged if videos are actually getting viewed. There is a big philosophical shift taking place in the way libraries are approaching the development of their collections.

We have become very good at raising the awareness of the platform among students, and learning ways to better engage with them. Ultimately we want the Kanopy video platform to be a key destination for students, not only for academic requirements, but also for more social and cultural reasons.

CEOCFO: *What is your geographic reach today?*

Ms. Humphrey: Our headquarters are in San Francisco and we have offices in Australia and Hong Kong. In terms of our geographical reach, USA and Canada are our biggest markets followed by Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region. Interestingly, Europe is a growing market for us and one that we are actively starting to pursue.

CEOCFO: *What is some of the subject matter that has surprised you with the extent of interest?*

Ms. Humphrey: There are some subjects that perform well in all markets, including psychology, nursing, film studies and gender/race studies. As our user base has grown so rapidly over the past year, we have seen some new trends

appearing. Students are now using Kanopy as a destination for reasons that may not be faculty aligned. An example is our most viewed video in the USA up until a few months ago was a video called *Killing Us Softly 4* about the way women's bodies are perceived through advertising. Over a period of 3 days, we saw all our sexual assault videos skyrocket to the bestseller list. This correlated with Obama coming out with his sexual assault on campus laws (i.e. the "It's on Us" campaign). For me, this was a pivotal time in Kanopy's evolution as it was concrete evidence that students were using the Kanopy platform for reasons other than coursework. They are choosing Kanopy as a destination to learn about things that are important to them in their college life. We are seeing this trend increasing across a variety of our video collections, including some of the transgender, race and suicide videos.

CEOCFO: Do you rate the videos?

Ms. Humphrey: Success for us is a simple metric - the number of views for any given video. Our blockbuster videos are very different from the home video landscape. One of our best performing channels is the Criterion Collection that is a must-have collection for film schools. Criterion Collections' bestselling video of all time is *Seven Samurai*. Yet on Kanopy, it is our 22nd most viewed Criterion Collection video. There are 21 Criterion Collection videos viewed more heavily than *Seven Samurai*. This is very interesting to us and to Criterion Collection because the question arises: why are Kanopy best sellers so different from other home video platforms and the DVD market?

In terms of video curation, we do not believe that it is our role to curate or censor any film. Many of our videos deal with very sensitive or controversial issues. We want to encourage conversations around these issues and connect students no matter where they are located in the world. The passion and emotion that is ignited amongst our community offers another level of engagement, particularly as we invite students to bring their own unique perspectives of the world into the debate. Students in Doha, Qatar have a very different view on the world versus a student in Boston, and I think that is a very exciting part of the platform that just adds an extra level of engagement to the video viewing experience.

CEOCFO: What might be different a year from now at Kanopy?

Ms. Humphrey: As we continue to scale, one of the most interesting aspects of the business is better understanding our viewer behavior which we know is very different to other video platforms. With the benefit of millions of visitors from around the world, we are building a profile of our user base to explore why students are choosing Kanopy as a destination, how and why they engage with the platform and how we can better service them. We are constantly working on improving our platform to make sure it is a better user experience to ensure our fans continue to visit, share and engage.

CEOCFO: Why is Kanopy a noteworthy company? Why pay attention?

Ms. Humphrey: Three reasons. The impact on:

- 1) Students and professors: For the first time, students and professors have access to a really exciting educational video platform. It is a fun and desirable destination for them to complement their studies and to explore issues relevant to their college lives. They attend college not just to study but also to form an understanding of their identity and explore issues that may be important to them. It is really the foundation of adulthood so we want them to choose Kanopy to help them navigate the complexities of college life.
- 2) Filmmakers: We are genuinely committed to creating a sustainable economy for filmmakers. From our generous rev-share model to transparent operating systems, filmmakers are beginning to believe in the educational channel again, and are becoming empowered not only to sell directly to their customers on Kanopy, but also able to connect directly with the students for the first time.
- 3) Librarians: We are encouraging librarians to think differently about the way they manage and curate their video collections. They are genuinely excited about the model and believe it is transforming the way video is integrated in education.

For me, I am excited about the way we are not only changing the way students learn, but we are also changing the way professors are teaching. Recently a professor wrote to me and said she had been teaching film for 23 years and students come to her classes armed with their Kanopy playlists. She wrote that she had never felt more connected to her students than ever before. So Kanopy is playing a small but important part in the new educational paradigm through the power of video.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



Kanopy Streaming

**For more information visit:
www.kanopystreaming.com**

Contact:

**Olivia Humphrey
415 939 0064**

Olivia.humphrey@kanopystreaming.com