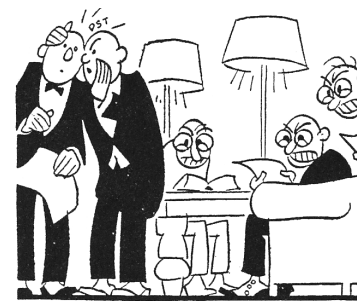# Learning Belongs in the Library – An Interview with the Cadmore Media Partners Five Years on from Founding

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My introduction to academic streaming video occurred in 2013 when I joined Alexander Street Press (ASP). My earliest career experience was in book publishing where I saw the transition from print to digital. In my new role with ASP, I was to learn firsthand about the migration of video from DVD to streaming. During my tenure with ASP, we supported several publishing partners with their streaming video distribution. I learned that it was one thing to deliver a large subscription video database to thousands of libraries, and quite another thing to meet the unique and specific needs of a publisher client using our video platform to support their customers.

In the latter years of my service to ASP, and later ProQuest after ASP was acquired, I came to know Violaine Iglesias and Simon Inger, founders of Cadmore Media. Cadmore Media had launched with a specific focus of supplying a technology solution and a streaming video platform to publishers and scholarly societies that needed to deliver video to their customers. Here was a business without the conflict of selling a product reliant on aggregating publisher video and supplying a platform solution to those same publishers.

Fast forward to 2023 and Cadmore Media has grown dramatically through the pandemic, but always with its core focus intact of supplying technology and strategic guidance to ensure the success of their publisher clients in supplying educational and research-oriented streaming video. What follows is an interview with Violaine and Simon that dives into where Cadmore is today, five years on from its founding.

It has been five years since Cadmore Media was created. Why was Cadmore founded?

Violaine: I always knew that I wanted to one day build a small company. After I worked for a small technology vendor, I felt I better understood what it takes to run a company and I found a market need.

Video is a popular communications channel, and I wondered why video was not bigger in the scholarly communication space. I wanted to see more authoritative video content, and that video needed to not only be produced, but it needed to be found — and then used. So, I co-founded Cadmore Media because we saw a need to help societies and commercial publishers become video publishers.

Simon: To do video well requires a lot of investment, which means that by default it is only accessible to a few wealthier organizations. Forming Cadmore presented a unique business opportunity. We focus on scholarly publishing not only because that is our expertise, but because societies and publishers bring together all the best experts in the world, people who need to be heard. These organizations produce compelling video and audio, and we give them the technology and expertise they need to become video publishers without having to invest in their own custom platform, which very few publishers can afford to do.

Violaine: Simon is too modest. He founded the world's first online journal platform and is a natural entrepreneur.

Simon: Yes, so I ran that business and once that business was sold in 2001, I basically waited another 17 years to meet Violaine and launch another great idea. And now, with our other founding partner Neil, we have created the world's first scholarly video and audio platform, which any publisher or society can leverage for their own content.

Where are scholarly and society publishers today versus where you saw them five years ago in terms of generating and distributing video content?

Violaine: The pandemic happened certainly and that got everybody used to operating on Zoom and other video conferencing platforms. And it got people used to the concept of being recorded and gave rise to demand for virtual conferences and on-demand session playback.

The pandemic turned every scientist into a bit of a videographer, a basic one. It was the thing that took us over the hill, if you like, and it got us rolling down the other side; a bit of momentum, and I think there is an increasing realization among societies that the next generation of researchers is here, not coming,

This is a generation that is used to consuming information through video more than other modes and the fact that students going through the pandemic, experienced their lectures online, and they stayed online.

Simon: Five years ago, we still had societies and publishers who said: "Video? I do not see that as important." Now most of them are saying it is important. That does not mean they are all publishing video, but there is an awareness that it is important.

The overnight switch to virtual conferences was a shock to the system. Some societies skipped virtual events, cancelled their annual meetings, and said we are not doing this, but most ran virtual events. Now, some societies switched permanently to virtual, but I think most of them are somewhere in the middle trying to figure out where video and where virtual conferences sit.

Violaine: With virtual events, like conferences, video is born virtual, born digital, and born online. There is then an opportunity for societies to repurpose that video.

Simon: I think the other interesting external pressure is the rise of Open Access. The rise of Open Access is effectively leading to most societies having reduced incomes from their publications program and a need to diversify their income streams. And many societies are developing e-learning modules, often in video that will allow them to market mostly to individuals, maybe members, and in some cases, it may even be licensable to libraries going forward.

The thing about societies is they have access to the best researchers and academics, much more than a commercial

publisher ever will have. If anybody has an opportunity of building a brilliant product featuring the very best and latest best techniques performed by the best in their field, it is societies that have access to that.

Many societies and academic publishers first placed their video assets on YouTube and Vimeo. Did this surprise you given the care that is taken with delivering digital scholarship in other formats, i.e., journals, reports, eBooks?

Violaine: A handful of (mostly large) societies and academic publishers have embraced video for a long time, and invested in both content and technology that can be considered on par with what has been developed for books and journals. But achieving this level of sophistication has invariably needed clear leadership and a unified strategy, as well as significant budgets. Most societies and publishers are creating video in a more ad hoc fashion, and ownership of streaming strategy is often not centralized within a Publishing division like more established content formats would, which has led to content and technology silos. I also think that video has yet to be fully accepted as a "proper" scholarly format that can be used to advance one's career. Hosting content on YouTube (which is a social media platform owned by a large advertising company — it still puzzles me that it would be considered as a workable option for a content repository in an academic environment) betrays video's lingering status as a "consumer" medium. But academics — especially younger generations — are regular people who increasingly watch and make video content.

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Simon: To be fair to societies and publishers, they have not had specialized hosting options in the past. To our knowledge, we are the first company to try and lower this technological barrier.

What changes would you hope to see in how scholarly video is consumed, presented, or published?

Simon: Some of the responsibility for change lies within higher education. It is important that video is accepted for tenure and promotion. Video might appear on an author's ORCID profile. Because if they get credit for it, if their research that is published via video, it is recognized as proper research, then the submissions publishers receive will be wider ranging.

Violaine: The biggest change is that there should be more of it, and it needs to be quality content. And then it needs to be better integrated into existing products or designed as new products. All this content was created during the pandemic, but you must think back and ask if the speaker is important, if the speaker is a person that people want to hear from. If you like the content, you need to then ask if the format is engaging, is it navigable, is it searchable, and is it discoverable?

Simon: It is getting societies and publishers to embrace video, which will, in turn, allow researchers to give video evidence. And I think that is important because in this age, when we are talking about reproducibility of results, video evidence is powerful.

Violaine: But the submission and peer review systems, the publishing platforms, the preservation systems, the entire ecosystem needs to embrace video technically.

Do you think that distributors of educational documentary film have the same or different challenges as societies and scholarly publishers?

Simon: The main difference is they have video for which they are passionate; this is their entire business. They would not survive 5 minutes if their video was not good stuff, would they? In terms of technology, they might not need the same modules in the platform, but ultimately, they need video hosting and right now they do not have independent and scalable options. Their main revenue source is dependent on external aggregators that control the purse because they can control prices.

Violaine: Aggregated selling requires aggregated buying and so it is down to libraries as to whether independence can be supported, assuming the film makers offer their videos on platforms that meet accessibility requirements and follow other industry standards.

Simon: A librarian once said to me, and it has always stuck with me, that libraries are short of cash, but shorter of time. Anything that is fast to set up to is at the top of the pile and anything that is slow gets pushed to the bottom of the pile. The products independent film distributors offer libraries just need to be simple to acquire and easy for their users to consume.

Violaine: As a platform provider, this means we need to resolve more than issues around a player. In addition to meeting industry standards for video, we think about how the end user watches video and provide tools to help them enjoy a film and succeed in a class. We allow them to consume video, but, at the same time, we allow them to consume it more efficiently and faster, and to consume the right video, too, because they can check what is in it before they watch it, the same way you would might skim an abstract or an article to say, is this worth mytime? Similarly, having the transcript allows the user to navigate these long form videos very, very quickly.

For the documentary distributors, we can make the technology ready for them, but they have got more to consider than just the technology. We hope that we free them up to do that.

What do you perceive to be the most significant challenges today facing distributors of educational documentary and feature film to academic libraries?

Violaine: I think that much like book publishers, video distributors migrated from physical to digital. But book publishers were relatively quick to develop the products and platforms that allowed them to sell digital and that has not been the case with educational film distributors. Most of the small, independent distributors had to rely on aggregators, large and small. In the earliest days of this shift from DVD to streaming, the platforms were offering generous advances, guarantees, royalty splits, and other incentives to the documentary distributors. This is less the case today and most distributors now would, I would argue, be better served with a mix of "publisher-direct" and licensing solutions deployed across their entire catalog of content

Simon: Documentary distributors need to reach more faculty, more librarians, and more students with their content. This is obvious, and something we know from working with

society publishers. But the use case for the streaming of documentary and feature film in current video platforms and players is largely confined to faculty assigning a film. This needs to be enhanced by applying what we know at Cadmore about broader methods of exposure and discovery of content in library discovery and metadata enhancement. This can be bolstered through more film screenings and live events and through increasing awareness of the pedagogical value of the documentary content with faculty. We think documentary distributors can take a page from the book publisher world and its focus on marketing new titles to faculty based on areas of research and interest.

Can you envision a role for Cadmore in supporting the university library's needs for storing, hosting, and streaming locally held/locally created content?

Violaine: Of course! We are a technology solutions company focused on the very specific requirements and opportunities presented by media. We have invested, and continue to invest, in a media-first content management system, video and audio player, and in developing media sites that are client-specific for patrons and end-users to access the media. Because our focus is on the academic market, our player and our platform deliver on accessibility and research, teaching, and learning use cases. With all this in mind, I think we are well-suited to support libraries in the collection, preservation, curation, and delivery of the institutions' video and audio assets.

Simon: Faculty are always creating content and in need of platforms to share and cite that content. In some cases, it is for the classroom and in some cases, it is in support of their research. In the former, lectures and online courses might need to be preserved apart from the learning management platform. In the latter case, researchers are increasingly multi-media creators for themselves and for their publishers. Where will the content live? What is the Institutional Repository strategy? These are big questions, but what I can say is at Cadmore, where it is media concerned, our technology is designed with video and audio at the center and we know libraries and librarians. 🌳