

## **Kanopy on an Academic Campus**

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### Abstract

This article describes the collaborative process involved in selecting the streaming service Kanopy as a learning resource for in-person and distance instruction in a university setting. The process of implementing the service, as well as the service's special features that aided in that process are outlined. This article discusses how Kanopy has been used for marketing library resources and outreach to our academic community. Moving forward, strategies will be employed to transition our patronage's sentiment of Kanopy from a resource for entertainment, to a research tool as well.

*Keywords:* Academic library, library outreach, minority communities, programming, Kanopy, streaming service, purchase in perpetuity

### Introduction

"Be Entertained, Be Enriched" is the slogan of Kanopy, a streaming service similar to Netflix and Hulu. However, only Kanopy's subscribers are libraries and their patrons (*About Us - Stream Documentaries and Must-Watch Movies on Kanopy*, n.d.). Available for both public and academic libraries, Kanopy's streaming content and features vary based on the library type. The Kanopy version catered to academic libraries incorporates valuable tools such as the ability for professors to integrate segmented Kanopy videos into Learning Management Software. On the other hand, some features shared between the academic and public library Kanopy versions

benefit both types of libraries, such as group showing rights. The Levi Watkins Learning Center (LWLC), Alabama State University's (ASU) Library, has selected and successfully implemented the Kanopy version for Academic Libraries. After the implementation process, marketing and outreach strategies and activities were set forth to advertise the service to library patrons. Data and analytics were evaluated as quantitative methods to assess success. These successful events and efforts have inspired more ways to advertise the other, more educational, features of the service.

### **Implementation of Kanopy in an Academic Setting**

The COVID pandemic required the LWLC to look at other ways to help students and faculty with their classroom needs. While we had databases that focused on journals and article access, we had nothing that focused on video streaming access for classes that required access to documentaries and movies. “Two-thirds of polled librarians said streaming media has become more important in meeting student needs since March of 2020, and 42% said demand for streaming media has increased since then (Spitalniak, 2022). The library signed an agreement with Kanopy in August 2022; however, the site went live in September 2022. Kanopy was not the library's first choice; the library initially went with Academic Video Online (AVON), a ProQuest streaming service. AVON was chosen because of the size of its collection and connection to other platforms that the library subscribes to from the vendor. While AVON's collection size is large, we quickly found a lack of Hollywood films and documentaries; this, along with low usage numbers, called for the library to look at other streaming platforms.

The library reviewed two other streaming services, Films on Demand and Swank, but decided to go with Kanopy. Kanopy was chosen for three reasons: one, it provides access to

academic and Hollywood titles; two, the library has access to the platform's whole collection; and three, the subscription pricing would not change. Dr. Natasha Jenkins, the library's Acquisitions, Collections, Assessment, and Resource Management Coordinator, stated, "I am leaning towards Kanopy. It provides access to both academic and Hollywood titles so that we would have access to the whole collection. The capped model guarantees unlimited access to Kanopy's Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) program for a full year. Included in the price is the option to purchase some titles in perpetuity. These will be selected at the end of the term. About 50% of their catalog is available for perpetual licensing. If we select the Capped Model, they can gather usage throughout the year to see what titles are re-triggering and discuss options for purchasing those titles in perpetuity. If we are underperforming against the Capped budget, towards the end of the term, they may be able to use some of the funds to purchase those perpetual titles" (N. Jenkins, personal communication, August 4, 2022).

The LWLC's constituents had previously been exposed to the Kanopy database during the library's initial research into streaming services in 2020. In the Fall of that year, the LWLC obtained a trial Kanopy subscription and invited faculty, staff, and students to explore the database. For two weeks, they could log in with generic credentials and watch films. Faculty were also asked to note titles they were interested in the LWLC purchasing permanent access. Twenty-three individuals (15 faculty and 8 students) responded to the survey with positive feedback, all stating that Kanopy would be helpful in their courses and personal research.

Twenty-nine academic departments are served each year using the Kanopy platform. Each academic department at ASU has a dedicated librarian who operates as the subject specialist or liaison for the college and can reach out to faculty and staff for input on areas of interest. The librarian carefully curates the collection based on the special curriculum needs of

the department's faculty and students.

### **Marketing with Kanopy**

A particularly appealing feature of Kanopy is its extensive collection of titles with established Public Performance Rights. The LWLC's license gives access to over eleven thousand films with the right to show them in a group setting beyond the classroom if no admission fees are charged. The collection includes an impressive mix of recent Hollywood films, classic movies, and educational films. The extensive collection allows the library to integrate films with other resources it offers, allowing Kanopy to be used as a marketing tool within the Academic Community.

When the library hosts public screenings, special signage is displayed advertising the coming attractions. Within the signage collection are bookmarks, QR codes, and flyers that direct students, faculty, and staff to other resources (databases, books, and journals) that directly relate to the coming attractions. During the 2023-2024 academic year, in the same way that the exterior walls of most movie theaters are often used as a canvas to advertise movies that are currently showing or coming soon, the LWLC used empty bookshelves to advertise some of Kanopy's more popular documentaries and movies. A handful of these films were shown on the 5th-floor Movie Wall. Framed in black borders on a brick wall background with a "Now Showing" caption, we aimed to relate Kanopy to fond memories our patrons associated with their favorite cinemas. Additionally, QR codes were made available on movie posters, connecting patrons directly to the film on the Kanopy platform and other library resources.

### **Outreach**

Throughout its five floors, the LWLC has several locations that lend themselves to group movie-watching. In addition to its more formal Lecture Hall and classrooms, three projectors and screens are mounted in open areas throughout the building. Once committed to hosting public viewings of films, it was quickly decided to move away from closed-off rooms to make the screenings as attention-grabbing and welcoming as possible to library visitors. An area on the fifth floor, with its open floor space, proximity to two well-trafficked computer labs, and distance from areas designated to be "quiet," was selected. This space was quickly dubbed the "5th Floor Movie Wall." The LWLC administration invested in a collection of comfortable reclining chairs designed for movie-watching. When not showing Kanopy films, reclining chairs are removed from the floor, and this space reverts to standard library tables and chairs where students regularly congregate.

Since the establishment of the 5th Floor Movie Wall, the LWLC strives to host public screenings, at least once per month. The films typically highlight themes in support of holidays or occasions of that month. Some themes have included Women's History Month, Black Music Month, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, and recently, the 50th Anniversary of Hip Hop. The LWLC librarians collaborated to curate films to show during National Library Week. In addition to the films shown publicly, fuller playlists are regularly created and shared with the ASU community to access on their personal devices. Examples of playlist themes have included October Fright Fest and Friends & Family-related titles to be viewed during the winter break.

### **Impact of Kanopy**

The 2022 implementation of Kanopy coincided with the library's efforts to reestablish itself as a hub for cultural exposure after the campus reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 5th Floor Movie Wall screenings are included in the LWLC's outreach activities. Monthly "At the LWLC" fliers are disseminated to the ASU community via email, social media, on the LWLC's website, and prominently displayed throughout the building. In addition to a schedule of films to be screened, the link to a more extended playlist is included to encourage individual access. From the onset, in-person attendance was lower than online viewership. It was apparent that more targeted promotion of the 5th Floor Movie Wall was needed. For example, the LWLC hosted a Black History Month Film Festival from February 19 to February 23, 2024. Two films were shown daily. The LWLC librarians contacted specific instructors to encourage attendance at screenings relevant to their disciplines. In support of the 2024 Black History Month theme "African Americans and the Arts," the faculty of the Visual Arts Department was contacted to view the documentary *Black Art: In the Absence of Light*. Three professors brought their students for a combined class session, and an audience of approximately thirty enjoyed the film. Recognizing an opportunity to promote the LWLC's educational material, librarians also created a "*Black Art: In the Absence of Light*" resource list, which included QR Codes linking to relevant databases, lists of physical and electronic books, pertinent archival collections, and additional films. The archives also created a pop-up exhibit of fine art from its collection of Black art. These efforts were well-received. According to an "LWLC Satisfaction Survey," positive feedback was received from student and faculty attendees, requesting more attractions incorporating the resource Kanopy.

One of the first things that pulled the library into purchasing Kanopy is having access to the platform's whole catalog. However, the most positive feature is that film purchases can be made at the end of the year, allowing the library to collect statistics on the number of patrons who viewed the film. Kanopy also allows the library to purchase any titles they are removing

from its platform; before the title is removed, Kanopy sends an email to the library's administrative users, notifying them of removal and giving them the option of purchase. Kanopy provides usage analytics reports which help keep track of what patrons are watching. Multiple variables are tracked, including the number of video pages browsed, the number of visitors that accessed a video, and the number of times a user clicked the play button on a video. Library personnel who are granted Kanopy's administrator privileges can input date ranges to understand usage data for a specific time-period, a helpful feature for monthly and annual reports.

### **Conclusion**

Kanopy filled a void that was made readily apparent by the COVID -19 pandemic: access to documentaries and movies. Although Kanopy is not the only streaming service, access to its entire catalog won the LWLC. With 29 distinct colleges and departments at ASU, Kanopy's collection of thoughtful entertainment can meet the needs of each department's faculty and students. Marketing the library and its resources using Kanopy through extensive in-house public screenings at the LWLC's Movie Wall is made easy with the Public Performance Rights attributed to over 11 thousand films in its collection. Kanopy's extensive array of culturally and socially aware titles allows the LWLC to recognize month-long themes targeting minority communities efficiently. Its access to Hollywood movies and documentaries is precious for patrons looking for a temporary, free-of-charge escape from academia.

Moving forward we aim to change our patron's sentiment of Kanopy from a mostly entertainment resource to an instructional, academic, and research tool. Strategies to accomplish



a successful transition include providing classes for professors teaching how to select Kanopy films relevant to their disciplines and embed them into courses on Canvas. Additionally, we plan to play trailers of interesting academic documentaries correlating with majors on campus. Trailers can be played on TV monitors in high traffic areas such as the front entrance of the LWLC attract patrons. Although Kanopy's usage analytics are helpful for administrative users to keep track of what patrons are watching, we hope Kanopy adds additional levels of granularity to allow further analysis. Kanopy has added much value to the LWLC and has proven to be a beneficial resource for our patrons.

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**Author Note**


Ashley Eaton is an accomplished Acquisition, Procurement, and Budget Manager at Alabama State University's Levi Watkins Learning Center, where she leverages her expertise to streamline operations and enhance resource allocation strategies. With a keen interest in Library Marketing and Outreach, Ashley is dedicated to expanding the center's reach and impact within the academic community and beyond.


Ashley's career in higher education administration is marked by a commitment to financial stewardship and strategic procurement practices. Her leadership ensures that the Levi Watkins Learning Center maintains a robust collection of resources that support teaching, learning, and research initiatives.

Ashley holds a Master's degree in MLIS from Alabama State University and continues to pursue professional development opportunities to stay abreast of emerging trends in library management and procurement practices. Known for her proactive approach and collaborative spirit, Ashley Eaton is dedicated to advancing the mission of academic libraries through innovative strategies and effective resource management.

Beyond her professional achievements, Ashley is an avid traveler and photographer. Her passion for exploring new cultures and capturing moments through photography not only enriches her personal life but also informs her approach to understanding diverse perspectives in her professional endeavors.

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