

INTELECOM

Low-Cost Clip Library in Need of Updates

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INTELECOM, a division of the non-profit, California Community College-aligned [Intelecom Learning](#), offers low-cost subscriptions to educational video clips through its “Search Center” platform.

Method

A reviewer explored INTELECOM’s Academic collection on its Search Center interface and examined materials from the vendor.

Preview

- **Content**

INTELECOM specializes in educational videos. While most videos are produced by its parent company Intelecom Learning (formerly INTELECOM Intelligent Telecommunications), many come from the National Science Foundation, National Geographic, Medcom Trainex, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and a few other smaller producers.

Most of the videos are more than ten years old, with a significant portion produced in 1998-2002 (perhaps there was a burst of grant funding in those years?). Math videos hail from the 1970s and 80s. With the advent of Khan Academy, it would be interesting to know if these older productions are still considered useful in instruction. Videos on medical topics tend to be less than ten years old.

Productions range from brief interviews with content experts (names of whom are often provided in the video’s metadata) to more extensive documentaries and, in some cases, dramatic stories meant to illustrate discipline-related ideas.

While the site features a few titles longer than 20 minutes, most run less than 10 minutes, and a great deal are 5 minutes or less, covering small topics: “Converting Between the U.S. Customary and Metric Systems” (2:00); “Factors that Contribute to Excess Weight” (3:00); “Paying Down the National Debt” (clearly a cinch at just 38 seconds!). Short clips may prove useful to instructors seeking to illustrate a particular point.

- **Interface**

INTELECOM is marked by an overall frumpiness. While one would like to think we can distinguish between form and content, in our current state of video saturation, when video editing has become a consumer good and university libraries produce TV-ready parodic shorts, INTELECOM's modest production values, low-budget musical scores and earnest voiceovers constitute a hurdle to perceiving the strong academic content its videos often provide.

As a platform, INTELECOM does not reward browsing. While a discipline list is shown on the start screen allowing one to click through to (often idiosyncratic) subtopics, at no point is it possible to scroll through individual video clips accompanied by basic metadata - you must select a clip by title in order to see such information as description, length, year and so on. One can export an Excel file of all videos in a particular topic, perhaps indicating that the site's developers considered spreadsheet-fixated librarians as important a user group as students and teaching faculty. Note also that this navigation setup was not functional at all when accessing the site via the Innovative WAM proxy server.

The screenshot shows the INTELECOM interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Discipline', 'Course', and 'Topic'. The 'Discipline' tab is active, showing a list of subjects: Art, Astronomy, Atmospheric Sciences, Biology, Botany, **Business**, Career Exploration, Chemistry, and Civic Education. The 'Business' discipline is selected. Below this, there are two columns of sub-topics. The first column lists: Sales Management, **Selecting the Right Location**, Setting Priorities, Setting Up a Business: Legal Options, Social Responsibility, Staff Development and Maintenance, Startup Capital, Strategic Planning, Styles of Leadership, and Succeeding In Your Organization. The second column lists: **Choosing A Specific Site**, **Home-Based Businesses**, Leases, Selecting the Right Location: Region and City, Small Business Incubators, and Where to Hang the Sign. The 'Home-Based Businesses' clip is selected.



Home-Based Businesses

Identifier: INT_SV_08K_003 Run Time: 00:01:02 Copyright: 1991 Total Views: 5

This clip explores the pro's and cons of having a home-based business. The primary advantage is the cost savings. One disadvantage can be a sense of isolation.

- [URL](#)
- [Embed](#)
- [Citations](#)

Featured Experts

Feldman, Beverly Neuer, author

Searching is also less than ideal, owing chiefly to the scanty metadata provided. While the search function is set to search title, description and keywords by default, a search for "determinism" retrieved only six titles; querying an EBSCO Discovery Service instance (with INTELECOM records loaded) using the same keyword retrieved sixteen INTELECOM titles. Many of the titles missing from the INTELECOM Search Center

results had the keyword in a subject heading, which would also be in the vendor-provided MARC records, but these subjects are not part of the Search Center record.

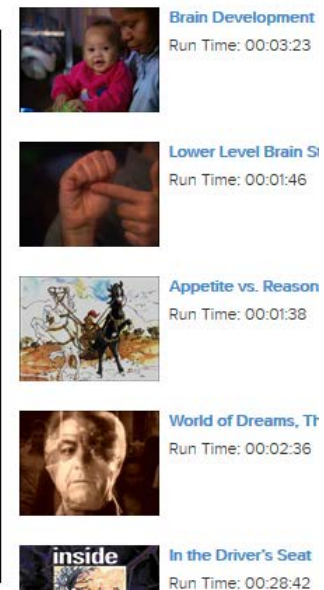
Brief result displays show total views of a given title. The count is from all subscribers, indicating whether the content is actually used by anyone anywhere and might therefore be worth a closer look. For instance, the 3-minute “Risk Factors for Violence: Guns and Drugs” from 1999 has racked up nearly 13,000 views, while the 2-minute “Monsters of the Deep” from 1998 (it’s about giant clams) has attracted just 12. Unfortunately, it’s not possible to get a display showing a large number of videos sorted by view count.

Videos automatically play when one goes to a individual record page; if users do browse the site at all, this behavior might inflate usage statistics. “Related Videos” are displayed to the right of the selected video.

In the Driver’s Seat



Related Videos



Citations are provided in APA, Chicago and MLA formats, but are of such poor quality it would be better if they were not provided at all.

Video pages include easily findable durable links and embed codes. INTELECOM actually goes beyond most academic streaming video products by including embed code that will not only play nice with secure sites such as Canvas, but will even bypass any need for authentication via a proxy server or password. This openness goes for the permalinks as well. While this behavior is certainly convenient, it may pose problems for users unaware that the INTELECOM license prohibits posting links on unauthenticated sites (warnings to that effect are found in the site FAQ but not anywhere else).

The site is not optimized for mobile devices, making browsing difficult on small screens. Video performance suffered as well because the video window's controls (including the full-screen option) were not accessible when using a touch-screen on an Android device. (Videos embedded on other pages fared better in this respect.)

An administrator site provides usage reports, which can be downloaded as Excel, CSV or MS Word files, and MARC records for download, though libraries might consider whether they want to add over 6,000 clips, many just a few minutes long, to their catalogs.

- **Accessibility**

All videos provided by INTELECOM are closed-captioned. The vendor's attention to captioning is commendable, and libraries should have no concerns about the videos' compliance with expectations in this area.

INTELECOM's website, however, does not meet WCAG 2.0 standards. The automated AXE checker found abundant cases in which form elements lacked labels and links had no discernable text. These oversights would likely cause significant issues in browsing the site using a screen reader. In addition, using the Discipline/Topic selection screen was extremely awkward with a keyboard; having selected a discipline, it was necessary to tab through all remaining disciplines before getting to the topics associated with the selected discipline, and then, having selected a topic, it was not possible to get to the selected video result. Even the FAQ page was impossible to navigate using a keyboard.

- **Support**

The site includes a FAQ with basic information on site functionality. A contact form is also provided. Librarians can contact INTELECOM by phone or email, and the company provides webinars.

- **Cost and terms of use**

The Academic collection goes for such a modest yearly price that institutions with a need for a handful of its clips could easily justify a subscription. The vendor has additional subject-specific collections for Nursing, Information Technology and Water Quality Management (not reviewed here) that are higher-priced.

The product's standard contract comes with a few problems. First, "walk-in" users are not authorized to view the content, and, unlike several streaming media products, public performance permission is not granted. Much stranger is a clause stipulating that that users "shall not use the Product or the Content in a manner that disparages the Content owner(s), or in any manner that may be deemed inappropriate by the Licensor at its sole discretion." While vendor licenses typically contain admonitions protecting proprietary

technology and copyright, INTELECOM is here seeking to limit its users' academic freedom. Arguably this very review, if written by a subscriber, could violate those terms. Libraries contracting with INTELECOM should request that the vendor strike this clause.

Conclusion

INTELECOM'S low price means that, if faculty can be enticed to include particular videos into their curriculum, a subscription might make sense. Otherwise, you get what you pay for. Librarians will not feel good leading users to a site in such dire need of update: INTELECOM needs higher video production quality and a better user experience on its platform, with attention to standards-compliant, accessible web design. With so many other streaming video products on the market, not to mention free and open-access instructional content available via Youtube and other sites, until INTELECOM ups its game, libraries can take a pass.

Other Reviews

Bergman, B. J. "INTELECOM Online Resources Network." *Choice: Current Reviews For Academic Libraries* 47, no. 3 (November 2009): 466.

CCL-EAR Committee. "INTELECOM Online Resources Network." September 2012.
http://www.cclibraries.org/reviews/Documents/ccear_review_intelecom_9_2012.pdf

Recommendation to CCL-EAR Committee: No Further Review.