

NBC Learn Higher Ed

A Collection of Curated Clips

25 April 2017

NBC Learn is a streaming video collection of 3- to 5-minute news clips relevant to a broad range of disciplines. The product builds upon NBC's strong news operation with original productions to provide a curated collection appealing to institutions seeking this type of content. Enthusiasm for this product might be tempered by the NBC-centric nature of the content and its price, especially when some of the same or similar content is available elsewhere for free.

Method

One reviewer spent about ten hours testing the product and participating in an overview of it with vendor representatives. Responses to a vendor questionnaire and an end user survey were also consulted.

Preview

- Content

NBC Learn Higher Ed is a streaming video database that includes content produced by NBC News and elsewhere within the NBC umbrella. This includes original content created by NBC Learn in collaboration with other organizations (e.g. the National Science Foundation). The product includes more than 18,000 “learning resources,” which are primarily three- to five-minute news clips. These curated clips cover a broad array of subjects, from African American studies and chemistry to macroeconomics and urban studies. The homepage lists more than 35 main subject categories, each with subcategories, plus several multidisciplinary categories such as current events. It's worth noting that some of the clips are available for free via nbcnews.com, but marketing materials suggests NBC Learn provides a deeper archive and that content on the site has been cleared to remain in the collection in perpetuity. Similar content might also be available through YouTube and other websites, but NBC Learn's curated nature makes it superior for an academic environment than those sources.

While many of the subject categories and subcategories found in NBC Learn are common across streaming video products and library databases more generally, there are some that are less common. For example, one intriguing collection of clips pointed out to the reviewer by an NBC representative is the Living Constitution, which organizes relevant footage by article and amendment to the Constitution. The result is a fascinating collection of multidisciplinary video clips on critical Constitutional issues, a topic more often associated with dry-sounding texts. Unfortunately for users, finding these clips requires knowing how to browse to them. While a search may return results associated

with Living Constitution, there doesn't appear to be a way to know from a search that the collection as a whole exists. That being the case, improved discoverability would be welcome.

Nearly all of the subjects this reviewer browsed or searched for included current clips, often from within the past couple of weeks. At the same time, historical clips are available back to the middle of the 20th century. Indeed, quality archival footage is one of NBC Learn's strengths.

- Interface

As noted, NBC Learn supports both browsing and searching. Indeed, while many of the same or similar clips appear to be available for free on nbc.com, that access point lacks some of the search functionality available through NBC Learn. Search results can be limited by collection (i.e. subject) and date, which is helpfully divided into both event and air/publish, allowing greater search precision. Results can also be filtered by source and type, but these are less helpful given that most clips are from NBC News and the vast majority of items in the database are videos.

NBC LEARN HIGHER ED

HOME
MY PLAYLISTS
TOOLKIT

Browse **Advanced Search**

Search By Keyword:

All

Or

Not

Search By Date:

EVENT DATE AIR/PUBLISH DATE

From

To

SEARCH

Start Search Over

Filter By Collection: ▶

Filter By Source: ▶

Filter By Type: ▼

Thumbnail View **List View**

Sort By: ▼ ▼ Show: results per page



President Trump Warns Iran: "Nothing Is off the Table"



Steve Bannon: Ultimate Outsider Turned White House Chief Strategist



President-Elect Trump Could Undo President Obama's Executive Orders



Once Syria's Crown Jewel, Aleppo Now a City in Ruins

Results lists can be viewed as thumbnails or in a list, with several helpful sort options. While the search functionality is good, occasionally this reviewer encountered situations where the results screen failed to reload after a filter was applied or the sort value changed.

- Accessibility

According to the vendor, 100% of videos in NBC Learn are captioned and also have transcripts. Captions were available for every clip viewed as part of this review. Captions are available in different sizes, colors and background contrasts, and in some cases Spanish as well as English. Such customizability is impressive and should be emulated by other streaming video products. On the other hand, WAVE accessibility checker consistently found dozens of errors and alerts on typical pages within the product. Common errors include missing alt tags on button icons and form controls without labels or titles. aXe accessibility checker found similar problems across the platform.

- Features

NBC Learn provides dynamically generated citations in APA, Chicago and MLA (7th ed.) styles. Finding the citations isn't obvious to new users as they're on the reverse of the video player, accessed via a turned arrow icon on the top right.



NBC Learn doesn't have a dedicated mobile app nor is its website responsively designed. As a result, this reviewer ran into challenges logging in and navigating the product, but the videos themselves played fine. Making the product more mobile-friendly should be a high priority for NBC.

NBC Learn doesn't provide embed codes, but content can be easily integrated into Canvas and other learning management systems via an [external LTI app](#). When an institution installs it, "Browse NBC Learn" and mashup buttons are available to embed content directly within course shells.

- Support

NBC provides 24/7 technical support via phone and email. In practice, during Free training, including webinars and online tutorials are also available. In addition, on-site training can be arranged for full and half-day sessions.

According to the NBC sales team, MARC records are available for all NBC Learn video clips, although it's unclear how useful that would be given the nature of the content.

- Cost and terms of use

NBC Learn is available as a subscription, with cost determined by a tiered pricing model based on institutional FTE. The cost quoted to this reviewer was the second highest of all streaming video products under review by the Committee, second only to the Films on Demand Master Academic Package. Subscriptions allow access for unlimited simultaneous users.

Conclusion

NBC Learn Higher Ed provides a unique collection of thousands of curated news and education clips on a broad variety of topics. Clips are especially relevant for current events and historical issues, or any issue that was a focus of significant news coverage. For all subjects the clips provide a different access point for the material than more traditional academic sources. Institutions with faculty likely to incorporate media into their courses should look closely at NBC Learn to see if the content fits their needs. For many colleges the high cost might make adding NBC Learn difficult without eliminating other, perhaps more essential, streaming video resources.

Other Reviews

Tomaszewski, Jason. (2011) Site Review: NBCLearn. *Education World*. Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/archives/site_reviews/nbc_learn.shtml

Recommendation to CCL-EAR Committee: No Further Review