

Multimedia Matters

The key to maintaining and extending the University of Illinois' reputation for academic excellence lies in offering a global audience the core of the University: the minds and achievements of our faculty, staff and students.

Everyone at the University is a potential multimedia content producer. Video can be created with a digital camera, a cell phone, or a computer. But once we create content, how do we share it and store it? How do others find it? How do we preserve it for future use in a world where media is changing so rapidly?

Increasingly, the first impression the world has of Illinois comes to them via some piece of media produced by faculty or students, and delivered on a site like YouTube. This is problematic because while the content is seen, opportunities for context, educational outreach, and preservation of the Illinois legacy are lost because there are few connections back to the University from the external website.

While pockets of multimedia expertise reside in some units, we lack a system-wide vision and strategy to support media at the University of Illinois. We need to create efficient and scalable institutional solutions for multimedia data management, distribution, accessibility, outreach, and production. Multimedia services must become a core service and strength of Illinois and everyone in our community has a role.

Faculty are enhancing teaching and learning experiences with multimedia assignments, in-class video, lecture capture, and distance and blended learning. They must have solutions to achieve their pedagogical goals without relinquishing intellectual property rights to third-party vendors such as YouTube. They need institutional resources to comply with copyright laws, protect student privacy, and meet accessibility requirements for students with disabilities. Faculty must be able to control and preserve their multimedia research data in a trusted digital repository, and to easily share that data with other researchers and scholars.

Staff need institutional resources to meet the growing needs for multimedia by faculty and administration, to control access to media content, and to deliver and archive live online events such as Board of Trustees meetings, conferences and symposia, and campus activities such as commencement and convocation, for viewing by current and prospective students, alumni, and partners.

It is essential that students have institutional resources to create, store, and share multimedia for use in class assignments. In order to compete in today's media-heavy environment, it is a necessity for students to be able to distribute multimedia related to class projects and campus life to other students, alumni, and potential employers.

Spread across the University a vast and undiscovered treasure trove of historical documents exists in the form of film, video, audio and other antiquated media. These artifacts are the enduring heritage of the institution, but due to the inherent instability of the medium they are in danger of being lost forever if not digitized, preserved and properly treated. Our historical media could reframe the Illinois story by opening content to new audiences through a common content catalog.

To remain competitive, we need to reach current and prospective students, research partners, alumni, donors, and the public in new and innovative ways. The University of Illinois must have the institutional resources to do this using the language of the global network, which is digital media.

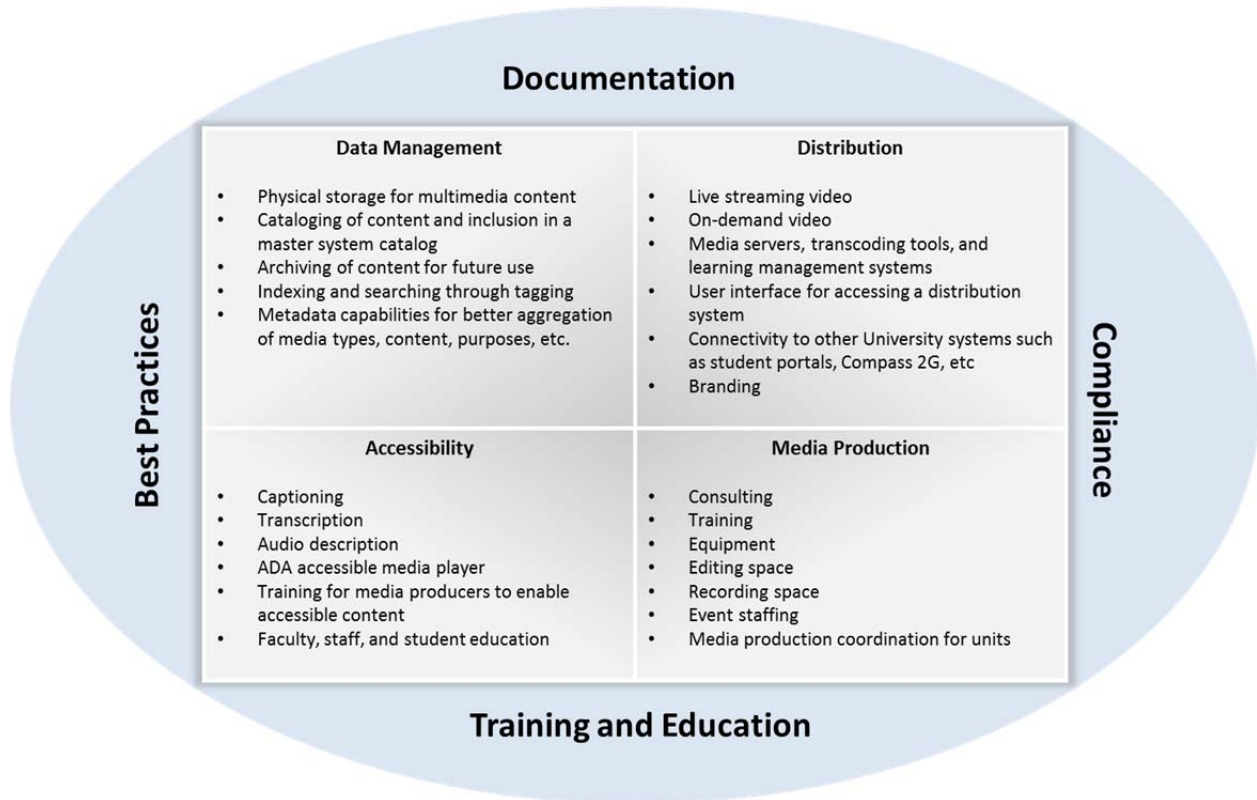
Solutions

To be effective with multimedia, we must move from individual excellence at a unit level to coordinated planning on an enterprise level. The Center for Multimedia Excellence (CME) proposes a new service model that builds upon our existing capabilities in technology and staff while enriching our mission of learning, discovery, and engagement.

The multimedia services the University needs to provide can be categorized into five primary areas:

1. Data management
2. Distribution
3. Accessibility
4. Media Production
5. Documentation and training

Illinois Media Services

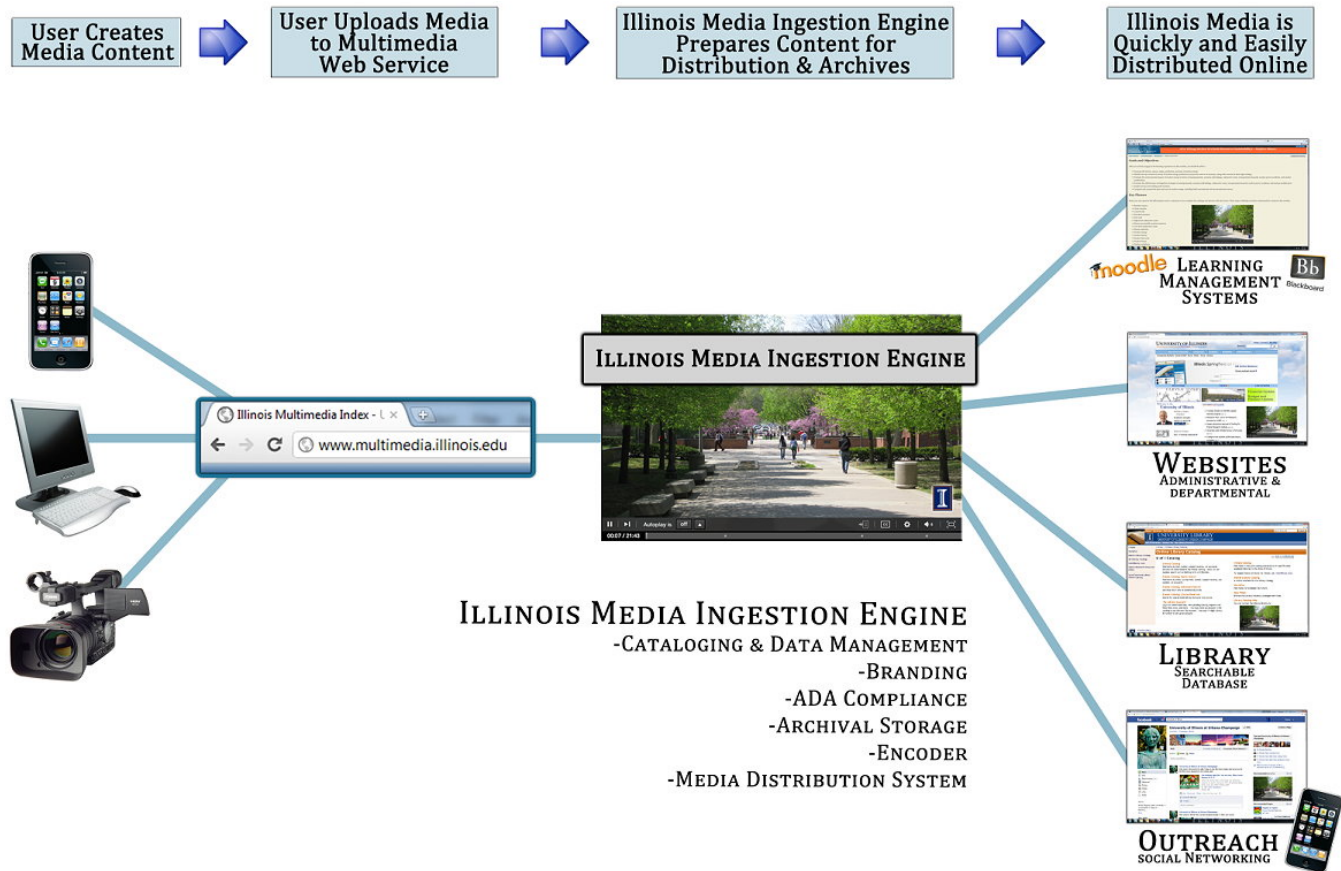


The services addressed in these categories would include system-wide support for users and provide computing and multimedia resources to the community. It would also provide documentation, training, and best practices for each service area.

Some of these services will need to be built and others purchased or outsourced. Other components will require coordination and shifting of existing tools and initiatives. Where individual units are building solutions to solve their own media challenges, opportunities must exist for consolidation to scale these resources to serve more units.

Critical to the success of these services is ease of use to the content creator. Users need control over their creation through a streamlined interface with transparent distribution services. The ideal workflow for multimedia distribution is pictured below.

PROPOSED MEDIA WORKFLOW & DISTRIBUTION



It is important to note that these proposals are not meant to pull control away from colleges or units, but rather to offer more strategic alternatives and alignment with these stakeholders as partners. Collaboration between central infrastructure and individual colleges and units is critical to the operational efficiency of the proposed Illinois Media Services.

Organizational Model

The strength of our technology community is that we encourage edge entrepreneurship with core infrastructure. However, we have lacked coordination to bridge the gap between units in order to align strategic and tactical goals, resulting in duplicated and non-scalable efforts. Too often our solutions have been purely technology driven and the user perspective is lost. The University needs a paradigm shift with respect to how we model user service. We must adopt a “service mentality” to support rich media - a mindset that looks at services not just from a technology implementation perspective, but also from the end user point of view.

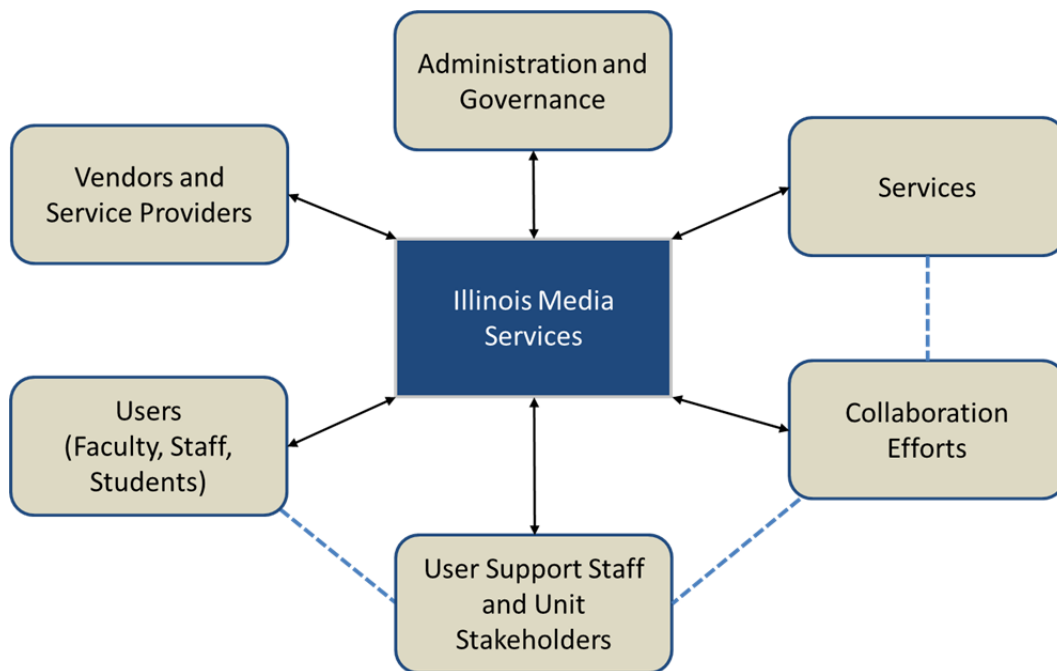
We propose a new organizational model named Illinois Media Services (IMS). This new unit will include a small staff of multimedia subject matter experts that will coordinate teams, workgroups and multimedia service offering across campus. The group must be positioned as a campus level resource and must function as an aggregator of multimedia resources and expertise that will exist throughout the enterprise. The new unit will serve as the architect and integrator of multimedia technology services across boundaries by partnering with central and unit IT

to deliver services to the end user. This model will require the deliberate cooperation of IT (core and unit), campus communicators, educational technologists, librarians, and campus and University administration.

Most importantly, Illinois Media Services must be accountable within the new campus governance structures, but also driven by the mission needs of campus units. To ensure that the multimedia needs of our mission are met, there must be active participation at all levels and clear guidance. The cross-disciplinary Center for Multimedia Excellence members have collectively served to identify, and where possible, address campus multimedia needs. CME membership includes a steering committee and individuals from colleges, departments, central and unit IT organizations. Illinois Media Services will be guided by CME and will leverage that proven cooperative model with dedicated resources and collaborative efforts to deliver real services.

A staffed Illinois Media Services will:

- Align strategic efforts for the University, both in decision making and in terms of governance
- Integrate management of services related to multimedia by overseeing the services listed above in partnership with campus stakeholders
- Interface with vendors and service providers to meet the needs of the University
- Ensure that solutions are not solely technology decisions
- Document services and work with unit staff to train users and co-workers on multimedia tools and practices



A use case provides an example of this new model. The Urbana campus has multiple methods of capturing classroom content. Each model is effective, and could be useful to other units that lack the resources to deploy a large-scale system. Currently we lack a model to scale these services beyond one unit or college. If we discuss expansion to CITES or a collaboration of colleges, the discussion focuses solely on technology and solving the problem directly in front of us. We also focus solely on the solution in terms of instruction, and fail to consider how other problems might be solved with the same technology. We can't get past our existing models.

To truly scale to a system level, we need to think and act as an integrated community. IMS staff would be the connectors and coordinators for Illinois. This unit would be able to connect the units to central resources, interact with vendors to speak as one voice and negotiate the best contracts, and manage cross-unit service teams from installation to end of service life.

Where it makes sense to outsource, the unit would interact with the vendor and a stakeholder team. When a service can be migrated or consolidated to central infrastructure, this group would oversee the project. If a service needed to reside in a college unit, the Media Services staff would understand how that component interacts with the rest of the campus ecosystem.

In the lecture capture example, Illinois Media Services would see the broader picture and how the deployment of a lecture capture system would interface with a central catalog and Learning Management Systems experts on campus. The team would also understand that the computing resources required for the service would also be cross functional with other campus needs, creating a more efficient use of resources. We need to start connecting the problems we have with subject matter experts and the right resources. Until we empower a staff to act for the University we will continue to address our problems on a small scale, and inefficiently.

A significant guiding principle of the group will be to “make the job easier for the user.” Staffing Illinois Media Services will provide us with agility to act on new technologies; align goals and resources, connect users with the resources they need, and ensure the end user is appropriately accommodated when deploying multimedia services.

Summary

The proposed solution calls for scalable, efficient, and coordinated services focused on the multimedia needs of faculty, administration, staff, and students. We propose a new organizational model for how we manage and preserve media at the University of Illinois for teaching, discovery, outreach, and public service. It calls for staff to coordinate communication, services, and technology decisions in direct consultation with stakeholders and end users. We must treat digital media with the same care as our physical library assets, and develop an institutional plan to share and preserve our digital heritage.

The University needs a new paradigm for how we support technology services, particularly multimedia creation, support, and delivery. We need to provide resources to our users. We need a staffed organization to connect technology, data, and opportunities in the field of multimedia. Lastly, we need to reconsider how we provide system-level services between infrastructure and edge units.

Making multimedia a core service of the University of Illinois will result in the following:

- System-wide multimedia solutions
- Findable content through a central catalog
- Greater efficiencies and reduction of duplicated and non-scalable services
- Creation of more accessible content
- Shared documentation and training services

If realized, we will provide students with enhanced educational environments that benefit diverse learning styles. Faculty will be able to reach new audiences in learning and research via tools that reside at Illinois. We'll improve the ability of alumni and future students to see the vibrancy of our campus community. The general public will experience unprecedented access to informal learning opportunities. All of this is achievable if we leverage our strengths to develop an end-to-end solution that allows faculty and students to create, catalog, and distribute their knowledge in an enduring digital athenaeum.

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