

TEACH/LEARN

Deliver curriculum-related video content

BROADCAST/SHARE

Share video content with students and faculty

VBrick Products

VBrick MPEG-2 and Windows Media Encoders

VBrick Set-Top box

VBrick Media Control Server Software

Applications

Video-On-Demand and IP Television System

VBrick Partner

HB Communications, Systems Integrator,
North Haven, CT

Challenge Provide a single access point for new on-demand video library

In 2006, Bryant University purchased 100 educational videos from Films Media Group on topics ranging from global politics to psychology. The videos were meant to be a resource for the university's professors, but because the school lacked an efficient way of making the videos easily available, there was a danger the resource would be under utilized. As a result, the school's IT department set out to find an appropriate video on demand (VOD) solution.



Solution An EtherneTV system designed to deliver live and on-demand video to classrooms and dorms

After evaluating several options, the college settled on a VBrick-based solution. It was, says Daniel Greene, Bryant's Media Production Specialist, "by far the best product on the market for on-demand video."

The system configuration adopted by the school consists of just two VBrick™ dual encoders—one in Windows Media® format and the other in MPEG-2. The school also purchased VBrick's Media Control Server software, which it runs on a VMware™ virtual server. For its VOD server, the school initially used a separately purchased IBM computer, but more recently switched to using 500G of space on the school's Storage Area Network (SAN).

Particularly important to the school was VBrick's auto-ingest capability and its customizable file management tools. The auto-ingest capability made it easy for the college to upload its initial collection of 100 videos with minimal manual involvement. "To load them in one at a time would have been a real pain," says Greene.

"With VBrick, we were able to simply hook the hard drive containing the videos up to the server and let the VBrick go through the uploading processes on its own."

Once uploaded, the school's library staff was able to use VBrick's file management tools to create a customized organizational scheme for the videos that matched the library's cataloging system. They also entered the metadata for each video, which students and professors use to properly cite the content in research papers. Because the system is integrated with the school's Active Directory, members of the school community can access the video library using their regular network passwords. Initially the video library was made available only to the academic buildings on campus, but eventually it was expanded to all dorms as well.

The school also purchased a set-top box "mostly just as a toy to see what we could do with it." The purchase quickly proved its worth, however, as a tool for delivering live broadcasts of special events as well as several television stations to computer desktops and monitors across campus. To generate the live feeds, a video stream is sent from the MPEG-2 encoder to the set-top box and out through the campus's cable headend.

Benefit 24/7 access to hundreds of videos and streaming live campus broadcasts

With the new VBrick system in place, professors have found it easy to browse the school's rapidly growing video collection.

"In the past," says Greene, "if a professor heard of a video that they thought might be interesting for their class, they'd have to physically go to the library, get the video, and bring it back home to watch it. And if they discovered it wasn't as good as they hoped, they'd have to repeat that process over again. But now they can just log into one location from anywhere on campus and get access to several hundred videos at once. It saves a lot of time and makes it easier for them to discover videos they didn't know existed"

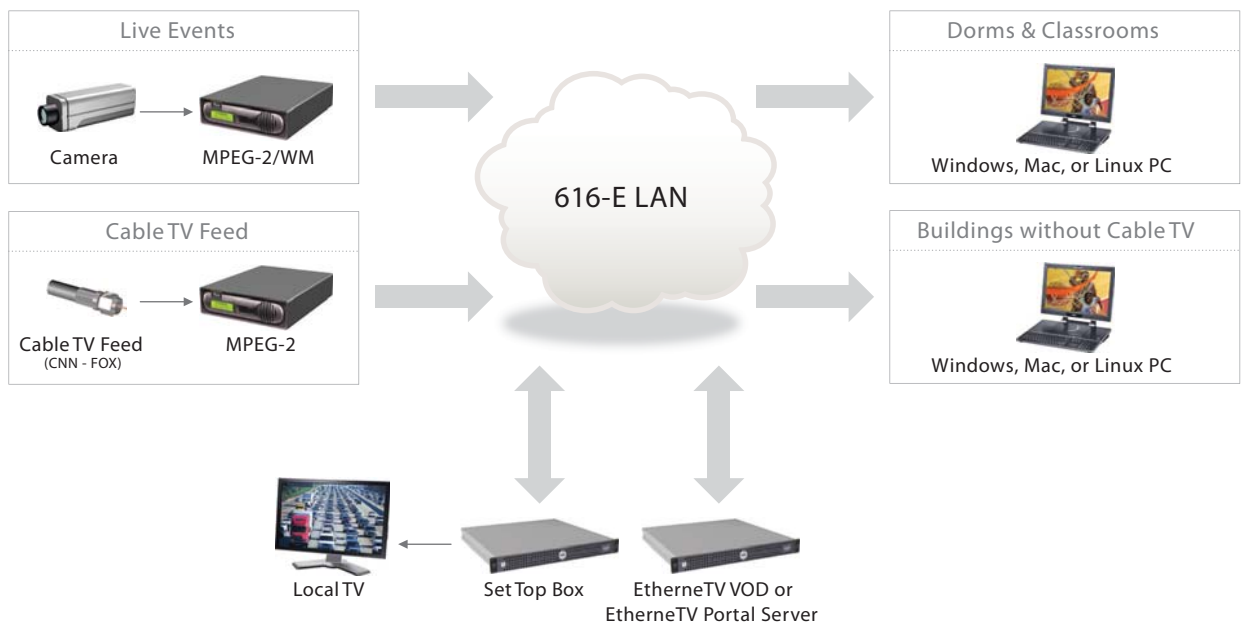
The system is encouraging more and more professors to add videos to their syllabuses. Already the school's video library has tripled in size. For students, the system not only makes it possible for them to watch the videos from the comfort of their dorm rooms, but makes it easy for them to rewatch the videos when preparing for tests.

Greene is especially proud of the quality of the video VBrick delivers. Initially, he says, professors were skeptical of the system, fearing it would only deliver YouTube-like performance. But they quickly became fans when they realized the system was delivering DVD-quality video to users desktops. Noting that most of the videos loaded into the system today are in MPEG-2 format, Greene says, "I like to keep the quality of the video high to protect the reputation of the system."

While the system was initially purchased as a vehicle for providing access to the school's newly stocked video library, over time it has also become a vehicle for broadcasting video of live events as well as distributing four cable channels—Discovery, History, Fox News and CNN—via the IP network. The live event broadcasts have included football games, commencement ceremonies, and speeches by guest speakers.

"Everyone across the board has been happy with the system," says Greene. "They love the quality of the videos and the easy access. Looking ahead, the challenge is to respond to the requests for even more video and access to even more cable channels. For us in the IT group, it's definitely one of the more interesting products we get to work with day-to-day."

System Integration



Solution: EtherneTV system designed to deliver live and on-demand video to classrooms and dorms